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PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MORRIS' SEMIOTIC THEORY

ABSTRACT
The subject of this paper is Charles Morris' semiotic theory that has as one of its major projects the unification of all sciences of signs. However, since the above project has proven to be unsuccessful, we will try to examine here the reasons that led to this. Accordingly, we will argue that to transcend the particularities of individual disciplines that he wanted to unify, Morris had to make certain ontological assumptions, instead of theoretical and methodological ones, that they could share. However, because the 'sign' as an ontological category could in our view only be established if we follow the principles of the pragmatic philosophical tradition, we will try to show that the reasons for this failure should be primarily sought in different effects that consistent application of the pragmatic principles has in each of them (primarily in linguistics and the philosophy of language). On the other hand, this should enable us to draw several important conclusions regarding Morris' project: namely, that his failure does not have to mean giving up semiotics as a potentially key discipline in approaching some fundamental philosophical problems, but also that it would demand return to the original semiotics developed in Peirce's works.

KEYWORDS
Semiotics, semantics, syntactics, pragmatics, ontology, pragmatism, sign, semiosis, linguistics, philosophy of language

1. Introduction

Morris' semiotic theory is an offshoot of pragmatic philosophical tradition, and although we could speak of two aspects of Morris' theory that rely equally on pragmatism, this paper will primarily deal with Morris' semiotic theory in the strict sense. In other words, we will not focus on the details of what is known as Morris' pragmatic-behavioural theory of meaning, but on his attempt to lay the foundation for a unified theory of signs on pragmatic grounds.

The idea of a unified theory or science of signs was known before Morris, and the founder of modern linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure saw it as a special field of a more comprehensive science that he called semiology. However, unlike Saussure who anticipated it but never really tried to lay the foundations for this science, Morris really embarked on this project, although he thought that the best way to do it would be to develop not Saussure's but Peirce's ideas, or the discipline that this philosopher had established and which is known as semiotics.

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Therefore, if Morris took from Saussure the idea of a comprehensive science of signs, it could be said that he adopted the means for its implementation from Peirce. However, Morris' efforts greatly exceeded both Peirce's and Saussure's.

Namely, unlike the first, Morris believed that, once established to its full extent, semiotics should not remain just one of the sciences, but the Organon of all sciences; in contrast to the second, he nurtured a vision that disciplines with essentially different aims and methods than linguistic ones could be subordinate to this science. In other words, despite the differences among them, Morris thought that achievements of the disciplines such as linguistics and the philosophy of language could be translated into a unified theory of signs, which means that he – which is basically our thesis – tacitly assumed a relative ontological unity among them.

Although it was convenient that Morris's approach was halfway between the methodology of linguistics and the philosophy of language – as evidenced by the fact that we will point out in this paper, that he used quite freely segments of both conceptual apparatuses – a comprehensive science of signs has never achieved a firmer theoretical and methodological unity, and despite Saussure's anticipation and Morris' efforts, it has not been constituted as an independent discipline. However, although today it could be rightly said that Morris' project has failed, we consider it to be very significant and so this paper will attempt to investigate the reasons for this failure, hoping it will lead us to some conclusions that might be relevant.

For this purpose, we will argue that the main obstacle to Morris was the pragmatic theoretical position that mainly inspired his thought and which, given the specificity of the process of semiosis, had to be included in some way in a comprehensive science of signs. Accordingly, in order to defend our thesis, we will primarily strive to set forth some insights related to the later development of the disciplines that Morris tried to unify, which could indirectly point to the philosophical implications of his (comprehensive) theory of signs. In other words, we will try to show that the implementation of some basic pragmatic principles proved to be significantly different in each of them, meaning that the gap that existed among them was insurmountable from the beginning, and that Morris unjustifiably assumed that they shared a common ontology.

2. Basics of Morris' Semiotics

As in similar occasions, it would be wise to approach the subject matter cautiously and avoid reaching conclusions lightly. Namely, we could, as stated in the introduction, share Morris' opinion that it would be quite normal to expect that a unified science of signs includes all specific ones, but it should be said that it is not easy at all to determine which sciences would be sciences of signs. Accordingly, in the introductory chapters of the work to which we will mainly refer here, in determining the most important tasks of his semiotics, Morris suggests the following list of disciplines that should be included in it: "The significance of semiotic as a science lies in the fact that it is a step in the

unification of science, since it supplies the foundations for any special science of signs, such as linguistics, logic, mathematics, rhetoric, and (to some extent at least) aesthetics" (Morris 1944: 2).

However, although he talks about the unification of all special sciences of signs as one of his most important objectives, and which sciences would that be exactly, Morris ignores an important fact, that none of these sciences is *per se* a science of signs. In fact, the only two disciplines that are explicitly addressed as such are semiotics and semiology, but since semiotics should become this unifying science, it seems that we are left only with semiology, which, as we have seen, Morris does not even mention. Reasons for this should not be sought elsewhere but in the fact that semiology has always been strongly linked to linguistics that, compared to it, succeeded in establishing more solid theoretical and methodological grounds. This, however, was not the case only in Morris's time, but also today to a great extent; in other words, every discussion about the achievements of semiology is still to a large extent about the achievements of linguistics, which will in no way improve Morris's position because linguistics is not a science of signs, but primarily of language.

Therefore, since Morris's suggestion about which sciences should be included in his semiotics does not seem particularly convincing, and by referring to semiology we have not succeeded in improving his position substantially, in order to preserve the plausibility of Morris' standpoint on this issue – and therefore, the plausibility of his whole project – it seems that we have no other choice than to try to assume that, instead of similarities in terms of their subject matter, Morris has noticed a certain ontological similarity between these disciplines, which encouraged the idea of the possibility of their unification.

One could get the impression that, by shifting the discussion to ontological level, we would significantly and unjustifiably reformulate the problem, primarily since Morris has not explicitly stated his view on ontological issues.[1] On the other hand, even if we succeed in showing that ontology of the disciplines that Morris wanted to unify is actually one and the same, this unification might seem not a goal to which Morris or anyone else could strive, but a result of this simple fact. However, for us it is favorable that Morris also does not engage in any systematic attempt of reduction, which would be expected, having in mind his goals. Namely, Morris acts as if, given his other observations are correct, this reduction is guaranteed, and even though he has not expressed it in appropriate terms, he seemed to have tacitly assumed just what we ascribe to him here – that the disciplines that should be unified actually share the same ontological base. If this is the case, as we will try to show, then

1 This, however, is not particularly unusual because, on the one hand, it should be noted that at the time when Morris presented his thesis, these questions had yet to come into focus of philosophical interests (primarily through Carnap's and Quine's attempts to answer questions like "What is there?" or "What exists?"), and on the other, addressing them systematically has never been a special characteristic of pragmatic tradition to which he belonged.

Morris' thesis on *which are the sciences of signs,* in spite of all obvious weaknesses, still retains a certain value.

In other words, although the sciences that Morris mentions are undoubtedly not the sciences of signs, with appropriate interventions, they just might be reinterpreted *as such*, which was in fact Morris' intention.[2] All this, however, should be examined in more detail, which is why it is necessary to briefly outline the main characteristics of Morris's intellectual heritage that are also the fundamentals of his theoretical position.

As we have said, Morris' approach to semiotic issues is decidedly pragmatic in spirit, and Morris is in this respect a true follower of his great predecessor and founder of the pragmatic doctrine Charles Sanders Peirce. However, although they are the basis of his approach, the ideas that Morris took from Peirce are not numerous, and they basically come down to two.

The first is the idea of the so-called semiosis that signifies every process in which something figures as a sign, and that it is one of the central concepts of semiotics in general can be seen from Peirce's definition of it as a "doctrine about fundamental nature and fundamental varieties of possible semiosis" (Peirce 1998: 413). Another important achievement of pragmatism in this area that Morris adopts is the notion of the sign as a triadic relation. Peirce defines this triadic nature in the following way: "A sign is a thing which serves to convey a knowledge of some other thing, which it is said to *stand for or represent*. This thing is called the *object* of the sign; the idea in the mind that sign excites, which is a mental sign of the same object, is called an *interpretant* of the sign." (Ibid: 13).

Thus, for the semiosis process to be actualized, there must be an object that indicates something else than itself for an interpreter, which is in this case a sign.[3] However, although Morris will leave this central semiotic concept intact, he will modify to a great extent or, more precisely, further develop Peirce's thesis on the sign as a triadic relation.

Namely, Morris accepts Peirce's thesis on the triadic nature of the sign, but for him this triadic nature consists in relations in whom it stands 1) to objects 2) to persons or interpreters and 3) to other signs. Therefore, we can note that Morris introduces a type of relation that Peirce has largely neglected, and it is the relation of the sign to other signs. Another important difference is that Morris strives to point out the specifity of each of these relations, which enables him to abstract a number of dyadic relations (three in total), studied by three separate disciplines within semiotics itself.

In other words, the novelty that Morris brings is that, within semiotics, three separate disciplines or sub-disciplines can be distinguished, which have

2 "In the development of semiotic the disciplines which now are current under the names of logic, mathematics and linguistics can be reinterpreted in semiotical terms" (Morris 1944: 55).

3 Peirce is a pioneer in this area and his thought is unusually complex and he has developed it in a long period, which makes it difficult to present it in more detail in such limited scopes. However, what is significant is that, despite many modifications of his own views, he has never significantly deviated from the definitions presented here.

a clearly defined domain of research, since each one would be dedicated to the study of one of the three dimensions of semiosis that he differentiates: "One may study the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable. This relation will be called the *semantical dimension of semiosis* (...) and the study of this dimension will be called *semantics.* Or the subject of study may be the relation of signs to interpreters. This relation will be called the *pragmatical dimension of semiosis,* and the study of this dimension will be named *pragmatics* (...) and since all signs are potentially if not actually related to other signs, it is well to make a third dimension of semiosis co-ordinate with the other two which have been mentioned. This third dimension will be called the *syntactical dimension of semiosis* and the study of this dimension will be called *syntactics*" (Morris 1944: 7).

Generally speaking, this modification of Peirce's thesis on the triadic nature of sign that, as we have seen, will enable a new and rigorous systematization, is today considered to be Morris' most important achievement, because it is thought that Morris succeeded here in unifying, within the same research program, philosophical traditions that were until then believed to have little in common. These are pragmatism on the one hand, and empiricism and logical positivism on the other, and Morris is considered to be "the first who recognized similarities between them, showing that, at the same time, their differences does not make them contradictory" (Posner 1987: 24). However, unlike his interpreters, it is interesting that Morris did not attach any particular importance to this fact, which is due to, in our opinion, at least two reasons.

First of all, although Morris may have succeeded in, as claimed, unifying three of the most important philosophical traditions of his time,[4] it was not his main goal at all, but to establish a comprehensive science of signs that would integrate all the specific ones. Secondly, although, as we shall see, Morris adopted virtually all the positive results of research conducted within these traditions, he was also well aware of their inadequacies for the task he set himself. This can be best seen in the case of syntactics, or more precisely, logic syntax that positivists dealt with, because in spite of the significant achievements in this field that, in Morris's words, 'make syntactics the most developed of all semiotic disciplines', logic syntax "cannot be equated with syntactics as a whole. For it (as the term 'sentence' shows) has limited its investigations of syntactical structure to the type of sign combinations which are dominant in science, namely, those combinations which from a semantical point of view are called statements, or those combinations used in the transformations of such combinations. Thus on logical positivist's usage commands are not sentences, and many lines and verse would not be sentences. 'Sentence' is not, therefore, a

4 This unification would consist in the fact that each of these traditions would cover one dimension of the semiosis process. Thus, since it studies the relation of the sign to the interpreter, pragmatics is closely related to pragmatism; syntactics, on the other hand, which deals with relations between the signs is related to the tradition of logical positivism and logical syntax research, while semantics, which studies the relation of the signs to the objects, is empiristic in its spirit. For more detailed information, see: Posner 1987.

term which in his usage applies to every independent sign combination permitted by the formulation rules of language – and yet clearly syntactics in the wide sense must deal with all such combination" (Morris 1944: 16).

Therefore, Morris points out that syntactics, as part of a comprehensive science of signs, should itself be much more than can be found in the works of logical positivists, or that "there are syntactical problems in the fields of perceptual signs, aesthetic signs, practical use of signs, and general linguistics which have not been treated within the framework of what today is regarded as logical syntax and yet which form part of syntactic as this is here conceived" (Ibid.). However, the situation is similar in the case of semantics and pragmatics, because although these disciplines are "components of the single science of semiotic but mutually irreducible components" (Ibid: 54), one should bear in mind that, in Morris' opinion, their subject covers only one of the three dimensions of semiosis process, which is why, ultimately, they should not be regarded as independent of each other.[5]

Thus, in order to be complete, the research results in each specific area would have to be supplemented with those from the other two areas, and we could say that Morris' view was that each of these disciplines – and consequently, semiotics in general – would make the most efficient progress only if it was in constant dialogue with the other two. However, while on the one hand he points out the peculiarities of each of them, and on the other, the necessity for their synthesis, we should point out something that is in our opinion quite certain, that syntactics, semantics and pragmatics are not and cannot be, in Morris' view of semiotics, in a quite equal position. Namely, although he defines their individual inadequacies quite accurately by pointing out how "none of them can define the term 'sign' and, hence, cannot define themselves" (Ibid: 52), it seems that this does not apply to pragmatics because it is precisely through this discipline that the concept of semiosis is introduced, and therefore, the notion of sign defined.[6]

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5 "The intimate relation of the semiotical sciences makes semiotic as a science possible but does not blur the fact that the subsciences represent three irreducible and equally legitimate points of view corresponding to the three objective dimensions of semiosis. Any sign whatsoever may be studied from any of the three standpoints, though no one standpoint is adequate to the full nature of semiosis" (Morris 1944: 53).

6 That the pragmatic dimension is the most important dimension in semiosis can be seen from the following lines: "Syntactical rules determine the sign relations between sign vehicles; semantical rules correlate sign vehicles with other objects; pragmatical rules state the conditions in the interpreters under which the sign vehicle is a sign. Any rule when actually in use operates as type of behavior, and in this sense there is a pragmatical component in all rules" (Ibid: 35). Also, it should be noted here that Morris refers to the behavior of the subject as something that, given it is conditioned by it, reveals the character of the sign, from which another, the third important concept that he took from Peirce originated. It is the concept of habit; however, although fundamental to Morris' pragmatic and behavioral theory of meaning, this concept is not directly relevant to what we called Morris' semiotic theory in the strict sense, so we will not discuss it any further.

In a word, we believe that in Morris' conception the pragmatic dimension has an obvious dominance over the other two, so the question remains whether one can speak, in Morris' case, of a unification of these traditions, or whether Morris succeeded in subordinating the achievements of empiricism and logical positivism – which we will from now on call the achievements of the philosophy of language (and we believe there is no need for some special explanation here) – to those of pragmatism? As this other thesis seems more convincing, in what follows we will try to show what Morris had to do in order to implement this reduction, hoping that it will enable us to approach the problem that we consider to be the most important one, concerning establishment of a comprehensive science of signs.

3. Ontological Assumptions of Morris' Semiotics

Although we do not intend to insist on an absolute correspondence – all the more so because we are aware that they serve very different purposes – there is no doubt that there are a number of concepts used both by semiotics and the philosophy of language among which we can identify certain analogies.

First of all, there are concepts such as sense and nominatum (reference), introduced in the philosophy of language by its founder, Gottlob Frege, which correspond with Morris' concepts of designatum and denotatum: "The regular connection between a sign, it's sense and it's nominatum is such that there corresponds definite sense to the sign and to this sense there corresponds again a definite nominatum; whereas not one sign only belongs to one nominatum (object). In different languages, and even in one language, the same sense is represented by different expression" (Frege 2008: 218). In Morris, we come across the following formulation that could justify our thesis: "A sign must have a designatum; yet obviously every sign does not, in fact, refer to actual existent object (which in that case, would be its denotatum – *An*)" (Morris 1944: 5).

Thus, it seems that we succeeded in detecting similarities on the level that semiotics implies, since sense and reference, or, in Morris' case, designatum and denotatum are obviously related terms and can be brought under the title of semantics, a discipline that studies the relationship of signs to objects. However, this is not the end of analogies, because in addition to semantic level, they are also evident on the syntactic level.

When it comes to syntactics, there is, as we have said, the relation of sign to other signs, and we know that this type of relation existed in the philosophy of language, and was, moreover, extremely important from the appeal of its founder for the validity of the so-called context principle, according to which words acquire meaning only in the context of a sentence: "We should never ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition, because only in it words have the meaning" (Frege 1964: 60).

Therefore, it seems that the reason why Morris does not attribute to himself the merits that others will do lies, among other things, in the fact that semiotics and the philosophy of language already shared too many things for their

unification to be declared as some kind of a first-class success. On the other hand, Morris was undoubtedly aware that this fact still does not make semiotics what he wanted to make of it, a comprehensive science of signs, because for it to be that, it is necessary for semantics, pragmatics and syntactics to absorb not only the achievements of the philosophy of language, but also of disciplines such as rhetoric, aesthetics and – above all – linguistics. Anyhow, it seems that there are now sufficient grounds for trying to move the discussion to the ontological level, as we have suggested, or to set forth, based on detected similarities between the conceptual apparatus of semiotics and the philosophy of language, the thesis about ontology that could be called, for the sake of clarity, the ontology of sign.[7]

It is not particularly important what name we will give to this ontology or even what kind of entities it would ultimately recognize, but it is certain that its distinctive feature would be that it would have to recognize one type of entities, and that would be the signs. However, it is necessary to point out a few additional remarks to prevent possible misunderstandings.

Namely, the fact that traditional philosophy of language lacks a component concerning the relation of the sign to the interpreter (*viz.*, pragmatic component) does not in any way undermine the thesis that Morris succeeded in subordinating all research conducted within this tradition to semiotics by integrating them into semantics and syntactics. However, this fact nevertheless tells us something important, namely, that the sign is primarily a semiotic concept and that we could succeed in establishing it on ontological grounds only if we follow the principles of this discipline. In a word, since adding a pragmatic component in no way undermines, but only expands the ontological landscape, for an entity such as sign to exists, it seems it would have to possess all three dimensions differentiated by semiotics: semantic, syntactic and pragmatic.

Therefore, although the traditional philosophy of language research does not know of the pragmatic component of the sign, there is no reason why we should not keep attempting to talk about it in ontological terms; what would undoubtedly support the thesis that by establishing ontology such as the ontology of sign it could be possible to unite otherwise disunited disciplines, is that even at first glance it is clear that the relationship of linguistics to semiotics is much more consistent than that of the philosophy of language, because besides syntactic and semantic dimension, in linguistic theses we can find what we would like to call the pragmatic dimension of the sign. However, while

7 In support of this, we will note that Frege also used the term 'sign', and although it will largely lose its significance in the later philosophy of language – and in Russell's case even be replaced by the term 'symbol', which is completely inconsistent with traditional semiotic (pragmatic) terminology – it is important to note that its use in its founder's work is indisputable. Similar fate will affect some other Frege's notions, but whatever form they would get in further shaping up of the conceptual apparatus, it is an indisputable fact that Frege laid the foundations for all subsequent research both in the field of semantics and in the field of logical syntax, which will give its best results in Russell's, Carnap's, and Tarski's works.

Morris' connection with the philosophy of language is much easier to trace,[8] those with linguistics, aesthetics and other disciplines that he thought should be subordinate to semiotics are less clear. Nevertheless, although it is primarily a science of language, for Morris it is convenient that linguistics also uses the notion of the sign (linguistic sign) with the difference – which will be discussed later – that the class of entities that would fall into this category would be somewhat different than in other disciplines.

Namely, for the founder of modern linguistics Ferdinand de Saussure, the notion of linguistic sign has an undeniable theoretical value, and it consists of two components, signifier and signified. However, since the nature of this relation is such that there is no motivation between the physical form of the signifier (that is, 'acoustic image', as Saussure calls it) and the notion it is connected with, Saussure will claim that the linguistic sign is arbitrary: "The linguistic sign is arbitrary. A particular combination of signifier and signified is an arbitrary entity. This is a central fact of language and linguistic method" (Culler 1976: 19).

In other words, Saussure holds that there is no existential connection between linguistic means on the one hand, and ideas or objects signified by them on the other, and this thesis is one of the central principles of his approach to the subject. However, a more important thing for us than the arbitrary nature of the sign is the fact that, for Saussure, it consists of signifier and signified, which allows us to isolate the semantic level in linguistic theses where the concept of signified would, contingently speaking, correspond to the concepts of denotatum in Morris, and nominatum in Frege. On the other hand, its arbitrary nature is something that can be associated with pragmatic dimension.

Namely, since "every means of expression used in society is based, in principle, on collective behavior or – what amounts to the same thing – on convention" (Saussure 1959: 68), the relationship of the sign to the interpreter or its pragmatic dimension becomes more than clear, because what else can be concluded from these Saussure's words except that, thanks to the linguistic convention he is using, what would be a sign of something for one interpreter, for the other not only does not have to be a sign of the same thing, but it need not to be a sign at all. In other words, the impression is that by emphasizing the arbitrary nature of the sign, that is, the conventional character of the relationship between signifier and signified, we come across pragmatic dimension in linguistic research, and it is almost certain now that, since all ontological commitments are met, we can speak of an ontology that would enable Morris to eliminate all disciplines that deal with signs in one way or another, and to subsume all examination under the examination within the above three. Unfortunately, the matter is complicated by the syntactic dimension that is found in linguistic research.

8 Namely, Morris maintained close contacts with few of its prominent representatives (above all, with members of the so-called Vienna circle), and in general, felt strong sympathies both for empirism and logical positivism. On the other hand, this affinity for the above philosophical programs will, as we shall see below, prove to be decisive when it comes to his own views.

Namely, since according to Saussure, the connection between signifier and signified is unmotivated one, it follows that, "since the sign has no necessary core which must persist, it must be defined as a relational entity, in its relations to other signs" (Culler 1976: 36). However, these are by no means the relations that Morris and philosophers had in mind.

In fact, although he adopts the concept of language as a social convention, and unlike Peirce focuses only on linguistic entities as relevant mediators in the process of semiosis,[9] the relationship between its individual units or the syntactic dimension that Morris has in mind is not the linguists' one, but essentially Fregean. This difference, however, will have profound consequences that will initially be reflected in a completely different understanding of "What is the language?", which we come across in Morris and linguists; because while for Morris "a language (...) is any intersubjective set of sign vehicles whose usage is determined by syntactical, semantical and pragmatical rules" (Morris 1944: 35), for linguists it is "a system of signs that are intercorrelated so that the value of one sign is conditioned by the presence of others" (Ivić 1996: 107).

In other words, "the language system is based on oppositions, that is, on mutual opposing of language signs" (Ibid.), which means that the context in which a word acquires a meaning, or in which, if we may say so, it becomes a sign, is not the sentence as the smallest unit of meaning (Frege), but the whole system. It is clear now that syntactic relations discussed by linguists are not relations that Morris and philosophers of language have in mind, and the consequences of this difference in our opinion diminish any possibility of establishing a kind of ontology that we assumed at the beginning of this paper in order to eventually save Morris' project.

4. On the Impossibility of Establishing the Ontology of the Sign

Let us recall how Morris complained that commands and verses are not sentences for logical positivists, or that for them the term 'sentence' does not include any sign combination allowed by linguistic rules of formation, which is why syntactics, as the most developed of all semiotic disciplines, could not progress any further and realize all its potentials. Now, it seems that linguistics should be the science that would contribute to a fruitful expansion of syntactics that Morris hoped for, because it seems that precisely this discipline, rather than any other one, has to deal with all 'sign combinations allowed by linguistic rules of formation'.

This is true in a sense, as we shall see; however, although in linguistics there is quite a unity in defining the conditions that should be met for an entity to be a sign, the problem is that these conditions do not correspond to the ones

9 In other words, Peirce thought that mediators in the process of semiosis could be both linguistic and nonlinguistic entities, which is evidenced by his famous classification of signs into icons, indices, and symbols, where only the last would be linguistic in character. See: Peirce, Charles Sanders, *What is a sign*, in: *The essential Peirce*, *Vol II*.

set by Morris. On the other hand, we shall see that these conditions are met by the classes of essentially different entities, which implies different approaches to the question "*What are* 'sign combinations' that would be the subject of research in this discipline?"

Namely, while in Morris' conception a sign is an entity that has three dimensions, which is, as in Peirce's case, a key factor in the actualization of semiosis process, in linguistics its identity *as a sign* is conditioned solely by the presence of other signs. Although based on this we might conclude that there is a syntactic dimension in linguistic postulates, in structural linguistics, however, we come across something that does not exist even in semiotics, let alone in the philosophy of language, and that is the postulated phenomenological priority of the entire system *that is language* over its individual manifestations. This is a key fact that entails that the research subject of this discipline would be only the one whose identity is indicated, or *dependent* on the entire linguistic system that sentences are not, which is why, as we shall see, they are not included in the class of linguistic entities.

In fact, in addition to the thesis that the relationship between signifier and signified is unmotivated, and that the sign is primarily a relational entity, one of the most important principles of the structural approach to language concerns the distinction that structuralists make between *langue* (language) and *parole* (speech), where, somewhat generally speaking, *langue* would correspond to the paradigmatic dimension of language, while *parole* would belong to the so-called syntagmatic dimension. However, although the syntagmatic dimension is the one that refers to individual speech acts, in which, for this reason, we can find all those sign combinations that should be included in Morris' syntactics, since it concerns the area in which it is 'extremely difficult to determine what is relevant and what is irrelevant' (Culler), structural linguistics excluded it from the domain of its interests, and focused on *langue*: "*La langue*, Saussure argued, must be the linguist's primary concern. What he is trying to do in analyzing a language is not to describe speech acts but to determine the units and rules of combination which make up the linguistic system" (Culler 1976: 30).

Thus, just as there is supremacy of the pragmatic dimension in Morris' case, expressed in semiotic terms, in the case of structural linguistics there is supremacy of the syntactic dimension. However, since the syntactic dimension in structural language research is sufficient for specifying what would be the pragmatic and semantic side of its individual elements (primarily signs), semantics and pragmatics could not in that case achieve any autonomy as independent disciplines, even the relative one, which is why it is not clear why they would be introduced into the conceptual framework of this science at all. In a word, the application of semiotic categories on the linguistic subject seems inappropriate, which is best evidenced by the fact that linguistics has developed its own sub-disciplines that are, by aims and methods, substantially different from the ones in semiotics. Moreover, in one of them we come across a considerable expansion of the area covered by the concept of sign, which still does not include syntax as a significant concept in any sense.

Namely, because "in all languages phonemes relate to one another as if they are members of a single, organized whole – a system" (Ivić 1996: 113), adherence to the main principles of the structural approach to language led to the emergence of a discipline in which the phonemes, or individual sounds are treated as entities to which Saussure's principle of priority of the (language) system over its individual manifestations is applied. This discipline is phonology, whose founder Nikolai Trubetzkoy started from the fact that a phoneme is already a sign, because, although it does not have the meaning component which we customarily identify with semantic, it still "serves to recognize the meaning of words and therefore it cannot be replaced by other language signs without consequences for the meaning" (Ibid.).[10]

Thus, it could be said that the way of understanding what language is a largely entails the interpretation of *what would be the subject of language research*, which in the case of structural linguistics does not include the syntax, because it does not have a property that is essential in this respect, that is, a property of relational entity. Nevertheless, one should not for this reason think that the history of this discipline does not know of the research on the level of syntax (sentence), but this fact, however, will not contribute to the extension of syntactics that Morris hoped for.

Namely, the break with structuralists that Noam Chomsky made by introducing his transformational-generative grammar in the middle of the last century, also marked the break of continuity with the tradition of interpreting linguistically relevant objects as only those that possess a differential value. However, although this break enabled Chomsky to bring back the sentence, or so to speak, the syntagmatic dimension of language in the center of linguistic interests, he did not adopt the conception of the sign that we attributed to Morris and philosophers.

In other words, in order to analyze them, Chomsky does not decompose sentences into a set of interdependent parts, but tries to discover through them the principles governing our linguistic competence, or the principles that enable us to form and understand virtually unlimited number of sentences by using a limited number of grammar rules. For this purpose, Chomsky introduces the concepts of surface and deep structure, where the transformations observed on the level of the first, or the structure of actual sentences that we come across in everyday speech, should point to the latter as the more *fundamental* ones, which, being formal in character, enable these transformations: "Syntactic theories developed in structural (taxonomic) linguistics could be succinctly characterized as theories based on the assumption that deep and surface structures are actually one and the same. The central idea of transformational grammar is that they are mainly distinct, and that the surface structure is determined

10 "Meanings exist only because there are differences of meaning, and it is these differences of meaning which enable one to establish the articulation of forms. Forms can be recognized, not by their persistence in a representational or historical continuity, but by there differential function: their ability to distinguish and thus produce distinct meanings" (Culler 1976: 70).

by the repeated use of certain formal operations, called "grammar transformations" on objects of a more elementary kind. If this is true, then the syntactic component has to generate deep and surface structures for every sentence and to interconnect them" (Chomsky 1979: 97).

Thus, it is clear that, whatever the results of syntax research that Chomsky obtained, they could not be added to syntactics as Morris imagined it, for although he dealt with the language combinations that logical positivists failed to cover, we saw that he was not really interested in those that would only be surface structures as such, but in the principles that enable their transformation. Nevertheless, given that the ability of understanding and linguistic competence of the subject are here at the forefront, in support of the thesis on a certain similarity with Morris, we will note that the pragmatic component is also dominant in Chomsky's postulates. However, since the concept of the sign in this type of research does not play any role, it remains to be seen what the pragmatic dimension we talk about is.

Namely, we said that for the process of semiosis to be actualized, an object that indicates something else instead of itself should mediate, which would, in that case, be a sign. However, since it does not know of the concept of sign, Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar *ipso facto* does not know of the concept of semiosis as defined by pragmatism. Nevertheless, we think that it is important to preserve this concept so we could speak of the pragmatic component in Chomsky's research, which is, in our opinion evident and implies a radical methodological turn. This turn concerns above all the fact that, if we assume the pragmatic component in Chomsky's theses, it would imply a break with the traditional concept of meaning *as a property of an object,* replacing it with the concept of understanding as a central one, which would, *as a property*, belong to the subject or interpreter.

Thus, since instead of the sign, the abstract principles that enable subject's understanding would mediate in it, the process of semiosis, although substantially modified, would in Chomsky's case retain some important features that are, above all, the mediation factor, and the role of interpreter.[11] Nevertheless, it might seem that, by excluding the semantic dimension, we irreversibly lose the pragmatic one, since nothing can be the subject of someone's interpretation and understanding if it does not have the meaning component itself. However, it is precisely opposition to this way of thinking that is the general and most prominent feature of pragmatism in this area, and the best example is pragmatism in the work of late Wittgenstein. In fact, if it is appropriate at all to speak of an ontology in this context, our thesis is that it would be the ontology established by the philosophy of language, more precisely by its founder,

11 In favour of the use of semiotic terminology in this context, that is, the legitimacy of speaking of the pragmatic component in Chomsky's research, there is, among other things, the fact that in this period linguistics has largely adopted the conceptual apparatus of semiotics and the division into semantic, syntactic and pragmatic research of language, and the precondition for this was, as we have seen, a break with the structural tradition: See: N. Chomsky, "Syntax and Semantics", in Chomsky 1989.

which was, in our opinion, fully adopted by Morris, and brought down completely by Wittgenstein.

Namely, we can ascertain that Morris' ontology is Fregean on the basis that he accepts the same assumptions about where, in the analysis of language, the justification regress ceases, which is the same as in Frege, at terms.[12] On the other hand, since for Frege terms (words) acquire meaning only in the context of a sentence – and syntactics that Morris has in mind is limited to syntax – a sentence would represent another class of entities that we could include in this ontology inventory. However, since it would not recognize all the sentences that formation rules of the language allow, but only those for which it is possible to construct the higher-order sentences, i.e., sentences that we could use instead of words to talk about their names, this ontology would include languages too, more precisely, two categories of them; the first, which would include languages that belong to the object-level, and the second in which we find the meta-level languages. The essence of the difference between these levels is specified by Frege in the following way: "When words are used in the customary manner then what is talked about are their nominata. But it may happen that one wishes to speak about the words themselves or about their senses. The first case occurs when one quotes someone else's words in direct (ordinary) discourse. In this case one's own words immediately name (denote) the words of the other person and only the latter words have the usual nominata. We thus have signs of signs" (Frege 2008: 218).

Recognition of the hierarchical relationship between languages has proven to be a methodological necessity both for the logical syntax research, and for the formal semantics one, and that it existed in Morris is evidenced primarily by the following lines: " ' 'Fido' designates A', where ' 'Fido' ' denotes 'Fido' (i. e., the sign or the sign vehicle and not a nonlinguistic object), while 'A' is indexical sign of some object (...) ' 'Fido' ' is thus a term in metalanguage denoting the sign 'Fido' in the object language" (Morris 1944: 22). However, since it is clear by now that these would in no case be languages in terms of the 'systems of signs that are interconnected so that the value of one sign is conditioned by the presence of others', in our opinion it would be more appropriate to speak, instead of languages, of words and sentences of object-level and meta-level. On the other hand, since the practice has shown that for each of these sentences, no matter what level it belongs to, it is possible to construct a sentence of higher order (level), this approach has, at least for pragmatism, an entirely unacceptable consequence of falling into an infinite regress. Nevertheless, this unfavorable effect is completely neutralized as soon as the realistic concept of meaning is replaced with the above pragmatic concepts of understanding and use, for which there is no better example in recent philosophy than the one given by late Wittgenstein.

12 At one point we said that for Frege, sentence is the smallest unit of meaning, which contradicts to what we are saying now, that they are individual words and terms. However, although they do not possess the meaning, words and terms in Frege have the sense, and as such would satisfy the condition of being a special class of entities.

Namely, our ability to use language is, in Wittgenstein's opinion, completely determined by our ability to follow certain rules. However, as these rules do not have some rational foundation, but are dictated by circumstances or life activities – or, as Wittgenstein says, 'forms of life' – they are woven into language games and cannot be viewed independently of them: "The whole, consisting of a language and the actions into which it is woven I will call the "language game" (...) the term that is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the *speaking* of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (Wittgenstein 1958: 7; 23).

The idea of the so-called language games rests on Wittgenstein's thesis on the impossibility of reducing the normative to non-normative, on the basis of which he will, already at the time of *Tractatus* (that is, at the time he largely accepted semantic realism and shared many common beliefs with Frege) oppose the construction of meta-languages as an acceptable methodological procedure. However, definitely abandoning the realistic principles and adopting the pragmatic ones will later enable Wittgenstein to reach a completely new and coherent interpretation of the unacceptability of this strategy, which could be summarized so that, instead of words and sentences that would be in hierarchical order, we would now deal with different language games, and the only condition for playing them would be knowing the rules.

The impossibility of reducing the normative to non-normative lies for Wittgenstein in the fact that for every action, no matter how irrational it may seem, it would ultimately be possible to find a rational explanation (that is, to bring it into line with some rule), just like it could be shown for the most rational ones that they actually have no rational basis. In the case of language and 'actions into which it is woven', this thesis would, in our opinion, testify to the impossibility of differentiating the rules of language game from the language game itself, because, by eventually explicating them (rules), we would only get another language game and so on, *ad infinitum*. In other words, instead of an infinite number of languages that are in hierarchical order, we would now have an infinite number of language games, but because of the impossibility of reducing the normative to non-normative, there would be no hierarchical order between them, and therefore, no regress.

Thus, with the catchphrase that "to understand a sentence means to understand a language, and to understand a language means to be a master of a technique" (Ibid 199), although he does not adopt its terminology, it is clear that Wittgenstein adopts pragmatic methodology and applies it uncompromisingly to oppose semantic realism and the ontology based on it. However, we should not think that what Wittgenstein does is just to replace one ontology with another, where instead of words and sentences, there is now just one type of entities – language games. Namely, to postulate an ontology, apart from observational concepts – which would constitute its content – we would also need to have theoretical concepts in order to talk about them, such as sense, meaning, truth, falsehood, etc., in the philosophy of language. However, in Wittgenstein's case we would not have this, which stems from the fact that he

rejects Frege's central ontological distinction object/concept, so it follows that all concepts known in the philosophy of language would be absorbed and finally lost in the concept of language games. This is, of course, a view we are not obliged to accept and there might be some strong arguments against it, but it is significant that it has been brought about by a consistent, although not explicit application of pragmatic principles that shift the focus from investigating meaning and truth to actual language practice, its conditions and consequences.

5. Conclusion

Therefore, because as Quine says, he adopted the same "domain of variables to quantify over" as the philosophers of language, which would therefore include words and sentences of object and meta-level, in an attempt to establish an ontology, it seems that we succeeded in identifying another ontology that we could relate to Morris' project. However, this would by no means be the ontology of the sign, because in order to establish the sign as an entity, that is, in all its three dimensions, it would be necessary to break down the wall that Saussure constructed between paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions of language, which, in our opinion, has survived to this day and is in many ways the same one that exists between linguistics and related disciplines on the one side, and the philosophy of language and Morris' semiotics on the other side of the theoretical spectrum.

In other words, since he remained on the side of the theoretical and methodological spectrum for which the influence of pragmatic principles has proven to be particularly destructive – Wittgenstein's work served as an example for this – Morris' pragmatism remained in one important sense only on paper. This is not surprising in a sense, because if Morris had consistently applied pragmatism in practice, apart from advocating it, given other assumptions he adopted it would not have taken him any further than late Wittgenstein. However, since from the pragmatic perspective that Wittgenstein offers, which divides the use of language primarily into efficient and non-efficient one we do not need any additional assumptions like "What is language?", "What are its units?" and so on, not only for the philosophy of language, it would seem that the effects of this approach would be equally destructive for linguistics too, in short, for any ontology in the traditional sense of the word.[13] Nevertheless, we have seen that consistent application of pragmatic principles has, besides this one, another outcome, and pointing out precisely the difference between them is, in our opinion, the most important implication of Morris' failure to establish a comprehensive science of signs.

13 Recently, echoes of these effects that, unfortunately, we cannot address here in more detail can be found in Davidson's work and his thesis about the non-existence of such thing as language, "not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with" (Davidson 2008: 595).

Namely, the application of pragmatic principles in the latter case leads to the research of the so-called innate ideas that we had in Chomsky, who, by studying transformations on the level of surface sentence structures, strived to discover the deep ones as more 'fundamental', because they govern those transformations and our linguistic competence in general.[14] Although the real subjects of such research may not have a clear ontological status – which is why, among other things, they successfully resisted criticism such as Wittgenstein's – these studies nevertheless have a rich and long past that could be traced back to Plato, whose germs can be found even in structural linguistics that Chomsky openly distanced himself from, that is, they have already been sown with Saussure's thesis about the dominance of paradigmatic over syntagmatic relationships: "The syntagmatic relation is *in praesentia*. It is based on two or more terms that occur in an effective series. Against this, the associative relation unites terms *in absentia* in a virtual mnemonic series" (Saussure 1959: 123).

Thus, despite not small differences in their theses, we saw that there is already a thesis in Saussure that is quite explicit in Chomsky – that the language and the modes of its functioning are something predominantly unconscious. In our opinion, this does not require any special explanation, since the knowledge of the language that Saussure has in mind is the knowledge of the entire language system, therefore, *totalitarian*, so it seems that it has to belong to the sphere of the unconscious. Within the structuralist tradition, this idea will find fertile ground for development in structural anthropology, where, using a model taken from structural linguistics Levi-Strauss intended to discover the unconscious principles of functioning of the human mind in general. In this respect, we think that it might be useful to draw attention at the very end to certain similarities that Levi-Strauss shares with Chomsky.

Namely, given that, apart from the role of interpreter one could also isolate the mediation factor in Levi-Strauss' theses, which would, like in Chomsky, consist of some abstract principles that in his case would not be deep structures but systems of binary oppositions, the concept of semiosis would, in our opinion, be also applicable to Levi-Strauss theses. However, the fact remains that this concept would be significantly *different* from the one found in Morris, because instead of a behavioral, it would have a predominantly cognitive sign. On the other hand, since the problems of perception and abduction are closely related to Peirce's semiotic research in general, the above transition from the behavioral to cognitive paradigm in Levi-Strauss' and Chomsky's works would seem to be completely in line with the spirit of Peirce's semiotics. This return to the original semiotics and Peirce would, in our view, be the second important implication of the Morris' semiotic theory failure: "To understand how knowledge is acquired according to rationalist view that Peirce outlined,

14 "I am at least more intrigued with the possibility that we might discover, through the study of language, abstract principles that govern its structure and use, principles that are universal due to biological necessity rather than mere historical coincidence, and which originate from mental properties of the mankind" (Chomsky 1979: 275).

we must penetrate the mysteries of what he called 'abduction' and we must discover that which 'gives a rule for the abduction and so puts a limit upon admissible hypothesis'. Peirce maintained that the search for the principles of abduction leads us to the study of innate ideas, which provide the instinctive structure of human intelligence" (Chomsky 1979: 256).

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Miloš Bogdanović

Filozofske implikacije Morisove semiotičke teorije

Apstrakt

Predmet ovog rada će biti semiotički teorija Čarlsa Morisa koja kao jedan od svojih najvažnijih projekata ima ujedinjenje svih nauka o znacima. Međutim, pošto se pomenuti projekat pokazao kao neuspešan, ovde ćemo pokušati da istražimo razloge koji su do toga doveli. S tim u vezi, zastupaćemo tezu kako je, ne bi li prevazišao osobenosti pojedinačnih disciplina koje je želeo da ujedini, umesto teorijsko-metodoloških Moris bio obavezan da pretpostavi određene ontološke pretpostavke koje bi im bile zajedničke. Međutim, pošto se 'znak' kao ontološka kategorija po našem mišljenju može uspostaviti samo ako sledimo načela pragmatističke filozofske tradicije, pokušaćemo da pokažemo kako bi razloge ovom neuspehu pre svega trabalo tražiti u različitim efektima koje dosledno sprovođenje pragmatističkih načela ima u svakoj od njih (pre svega u lingvistici i filozofiji jezika). Sa druge strane, ovo bi trebalo da nam omogući iznošenje nekoliko važnih zaključka u vezi sa Morisovim projektom: naime, da njegov neuspeh ne mora da znači i odustajanje od semiotike kao potencijalno ključne discipline u pristupu nekim fundamentalnim filozofskim problemima, ali i da bi za tako nešto bilo neophodno vratiti se originalnoj semiotici razvijenoj u Persovim radovima.

Ključne reči: Semiotika, semantika, sintaktika, pragmatika, ontologija, pragmatizam, znak, semioza, lingvistika, filozofija jezika.