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INTRODUCTION: PERSPECTIVES ON STUDIES OF MEANING-MAKING

I

Cognitive semiotics is often characterized as the study of *meaning-making*. This brief statement is at best a bit unclear and requires an elaboration.

First, some interpretation of the extremely ambiguous term "meaning" must be introduced and adopted. The philosophers of mind, philosophers of language, linguists, semioticians, psychologists, cognitive scientists refer this term to different phenomena in incommensurable ways. Cognitive semioticians attempt to remedy this proliferation of interpretations by means of the so-called Semiotic Hierarchy framework (Zlatev, 2009; 2017). Meaning in this view requires the subject embedded or immersed in some world (either an *Umwelt* or *Lifeworld*) who is engaged in the value-based interaction with phenomena in this world. The stress on the three elements of the relationship: the subject, a world and an internal value system results in the four-levelled hierarchy of meanings. Specifically, the Semiotic Hierarchy framework assumes that basic meaning emerges already at the level of *life*. Living organisms acting in their Umwelts make sense of environmental factors in their striving for survival. In other words, environmental factors are meaningful to organisms when their influence improves the chances of organisms' survival. The emergence of consciousness (initially interpreted as the subjective, phenomenal consciousness) gives rise to the second level of meaning, namely *phenomenal meaning*. The "world" in which the subject is embedded is a world of phenomena given in consciousness, i.e. *Lifeworld*. In other words, meaningful phenomena are consciously experienced. Consciousness is necessary for the third level of the Semiotic Hierarchy, the level of signs. What distinguishes meanings at the second and the third level is the capacity of representing. This, in turn, crucially requires ability to differentiate between a sign and its content (and in some cases its referent as well; cf. Sonesson, 2012). The asymmetrical relationship between a sign and its content is established by a subject on the basis of relationships of: proximity (indexes), broadly understood iconicity (icons) or conventionality (symbols). Finally, the fourth level of meaning, i.e. the level of language, is

attainable to subjects who are able to use conventional signs in ways regulated by norms. Language is understood here as "a conventional-normative semiotic system for communication and thought" (Zlatev, 2008). What is worth emphasizing, in spite of the name of the discipline—cognitive *semiotics*—signs are just a subset of all the meaningful phenomena. In other words, meaning-making activity is much broader phenomenon than usage and interpretation of signs.

The transition from meanings to meaning-making activities is of crucial importance. Cognitive semiotics adapts a specific view on the cognitive (or meaning-making) subjects: namely, it is argued that the cognitive subjects are always engaged in a kind of interaction with their environments. In simple words, to cognize is to be active. The idea—stressed by James J. Gibson (1979) in the context of visual perception, and developed by researchers within enactive-embodied approach to cognition—forces cognitive semioticians to focus on active, dynamic *meaning-making* rather than on static meaningful structures. Consequently, cognitive semioticians are interested in the change of meaning (on the multiple time scales) rather than in some particular meaning at a particular moment. This focus on the dynamicity of meaning results in the inclusion of developmental and evolutionary psychology in the "coalition" of approaches constituting cognitive semiotics.

The above statement leads us to the third feature of cognitive semiotics: meaning-making activities are the subject of *transdisciplinary inquiries*. Initially, meaning-making activity was considered from the three perspectives: semiotic, linguistic and cognitive scientific. Semiotics and linguistics equipped us with the very notion of meaning. Although cognitive science was not considered as providing an answer to the question "what is meaning," it provided a description of cognitive processes which are responsible for the usage and interpretation of meaningful statements, and it provided a large database of empirical results on actual meaning-making activities.

The difficulty of the cognitive semiotic approach consists in the integration of theoretical commitments and results of various disciplines. This difficulty has two dimensions. First, (traditional) semiotics is seen as a discipline engaged in theoretical considerations and the conceptual analyses which disregards empirical data (cf. the autonomy principle). On the other hand, cognitive sciences, evolutionary and developmental psychology, primatology, neuroanthropology, neuro- and psycholinguistics are focused on empirical experimental methods. Cognitive semiotics strives to combine these two aspects in one, consistent approach (cf. Zlatev's *conceptual-empirical loop*). Second, various disciplines contributing studies on meaning-making take various perspectives on sense-making activities. On the one hand, sense-making can be considered from the first-person perspective; in particular the role of phenomenological considerations on conscious embodied meaning-making activities in subject's environment is stressed. On the

other hand, we can take a third-person perspective on the acts of meaning-making, in particular, on the "objective" methods applied by cognitive scientists, psychologists or neuroscientists. Francisco J. Varela and Jonathan Shear stress the necessity of these two perspectives as follows: "don't leave home without it [first-person perspective] but do not forget to bring along third-person accounts as well" (1999, 2). The apparent gap between these two perspectives is supposed to be bridged by a second-person perspective where an experimenter (with her or his third-person approach) must engage in an intersubjective relationship with the subject of the experiment (providing first-person data). It is often emphasized that such a "triangulation of perspectives" (Zlatev et al, 2016) is practically realized in the form of neurophenomenology (Varela, 1996). To appreciate contribution of the papers collected in the present volume to the discipline of cognitive semiotics, it is necessary to see them in the context of the above-mentioned features. In particular, the reader should try to interpret them as addressing one and the same topic: the process of meaning-making considered from different perspectives.

II

This volume includes part of results initially presented and discussed during the second conference of the International Association for Cognitive Semiotics in Lublin in 2016. The authors submitted modified, usually extended written versions of their lectures, the papers also have been peer-reviewed. The common topic unifying all the papers is *dynamic meaning-making* as characterized in the preceding section. The collected papers focus on two levels of the Semiotic Hierarchy framework, namely on the level of signs (Part I: Semiotic Perspective) and on the level of language and communication in language (Part II: Linguistic Perspective). The volume closes with the paper discussing metatheoretical problems of a relationship between objective knowledge and subjective nature of cognition. In line with one of aforementioned features of cognitive semiotics—transdisciplinarity—the authors of papers present and discuss semiotic and linguistic processes of meaning-making in the context of studies on culture, psychological (developmental and evolutionary) inquiries, or communication studies.

Göran Sonesson, in the opening paper entitled *Semiosis in History. The Emergence of Alter-Culture*, draws the readers' attention to the emergence of various kinds of meaning-making (semiosis) on the evolutionary time scale. The author considers semiosis and communication in the context of inter-cultural differences. Sonesson calls his proposed model the *extended model* of cultural semiotics which consists of Ego-culture, Alius-culture and Alter-culture. The establishment of Alter-culture is deeply dependent on empathy understood as "the ability to conceive and adapt the position of

the other." Empathy, the author argues, should be distinguished from altruism (although the two attitudes often co-exist). In this context, Sonesson refers to Michael Tomasello's idea of communication as a kind of collaboration and elaborates this idea. Specifically, Sonesson proposes a model for cooperative communication. Drawing on Merlin Donald's typology of memory, Sonesson discusses the interdependence of semiotic structures, on the one hand, and cultural evolution, on the other. From the cognitive semiotic point of view, the emergence of mimetic, mythical and theoretic memory can be related to the emergence of: imitation and gestures (mimetic), language (mythic) and pictures, writing and theory (theoretic memory). In conclusion, Sonesson states that he initiated the "understanding of human beings as human beings, [...] human beings [who] emerged out of animal life, evolution and more or less deep history." And this is the way in which he understands the enterprise called "cognitive semiotics."

The two following papers draw on the Peircean view on signs. **Shekoufeh Mohammadi Shirmahaleh** in the paper *Peircean Metaphor Reexamined: Creation, Function and Interpretation* discusses one of the key phenomena in cognitive semiotics, namely, the phenomenon of *metaphor*. The author analyses metaphors in the terms of the Peircean notion of *iconic metaphor*, significantly broadening the scope of metaphors. Cognitive linguistic discussions on metaphor focus on mappings between the two domains: source and target ones. Consequently, linguistic studies on metaphors focus on structures and functions of metaphors. Shirmahaleh departs from such a point of view and takes the perspective of the meaning-making subject, i.e. the perspective of a creator of metaphors. The two important features of metaphors are stressed: they—as instances of iconic signs—are based on similarity, but such a similarity requires creative activity of the creator's mind. In other words, meaning-making by means of metaphors crucially involves creativity. Although the reference to a creative mind suggests subjective nature of metaphors, Shirmahaleh stresses that one cannot treat metaphors as either exclusively objective nor exclusively subjective phenomenon: the "Peircean metaphor [...] has both subjective and objective aspects." Such a view on the phenomenon of metaphor clearly reflects the role of multiple (first-, second- and third-person) perspectives on meaning-making processes.

Donna West in the article *Semiotic Determinants in Episode-Building: Beyond Autonoetic Consciousness*, takes episodes-building activity as her starting point. This phenomenon—discussed within developmental psychology—is interpreted as one of the ways in which children dynamically make sense of their environments. The process of construction of episodic memory—as the author argues—is facilitated (i.e. informed and hastened)

by such phenomena as e.g. gaze, head orientation or finger pointing. These, in turn, can be interpreted as instances of Peircean indexical signs. As West notes: "It [i.e., the index—P.K.] makes salient to self and to others the flow of spatial and temporal features within event complexes." To justify the connection between cognitive development and the Peircean view on signs, the author discusses in detail empirical evidence on the development of episodic thinking in children by the age of 4. According to the Semiotic Hierarchy framework, capacity for significational meaning-making (the third level) is dependent on the second level of the hierarchy, namely the level of consciousness. This relationship between these two levels is reflected in West's paper: on the one hand, episode-building activity driven by indexical signs is dependent on autonoetic consciousness, on the other hand, this activity "reaches beyond autonoetic consciousness." Donna West stresses the dynamical (and development-dependent) character of meaning-making.

The second part of the volume contains papers that deal with linguistic meaning-making, in particular considered in the context of communication.

Jens Allwood and **Elisabeth Ahlsén** (*Dimensions of Context. Classifying Approaches to the Context of Communication*) note that various kinds of meaning-making always take place in some context. As various approaches deal with different notions of a context, the authors attempt to clarify and elaborate the notion of a context in which meaning-making activities take place. The context is initially considered an element involved in linguistic meaning-making ("the surrounding text of a particular linguistic expression in focus"), but the authors aim at characteristics which can be applied to semiotic and cognitive meaning-making as well. What is stressed is the dynamicity of the relationship between a meaningful element and its context(s): meaning-making always depends on *interaction* between these two elements.

The authors relate the linguistic context to the Peircean triadic view on signs and elaborate the context of *Firstness* (the Representamen), *Secondness* (the Object) and *Thirdness* (the Interpretant). The discussion on the context of the Representamen (i.e., syntactic one) raises two important cognitive semiotic issues: the problem of multimodal (multisensorial) communication and the problem of putative artificial meaning-making subjects. Although these problems are just registered by the authors, they seem to be promising areas of inquiries. In sum, the authors claim that these approaches to context (communicative-linguistic and Peircean-semiotic) are not mutually exclusive, but they can be seen as overlapping in the form of the so-called "pragmatic context." Meaning-making (involving such a pragmatic context) is dependent on two types of contextual information: environmental (situation in which communication takes place) and co-activated cognitive information (associations, meta-knowledge etc.)

Paul A. Wilson and **Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk** in their contribution entitled *Cognitive Structure and Conceptual Clusters of Emotion Terms*, focus on interdependencies between experienced emotions, their linguistic expressions and emotion-concepts. Specifically, the authors attempt to answer how do subjects make sense of *emotion terms* and represent emotions at the conceptual level. When discussing the experiential level, Wilson and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk reject the view that emotions are discrete entities in favor of the view that "each of individual emotion is determined by both intra- and inter-cluster relationships, as well as dynamic interactions between these." In line with James Russell's and Lisa Feldman Barrett's conceptions, the authors assume that the experience of emotion is dependent on two factors: core affect and the conceptual knowledge (sensory, motor and somatovisceral information).

At the conceptual level, the authors stress the fuzzy nature of emotion concepts. The leading notion in their research is that of *emotion cluster* that they utilize to model the differences between Polish and English (linguistically coded and culturally shaped) emotions.

The studies on fear, compassion, love/joy, and pride clusters in British English and Polish support the claim that emotion clusters have a *prototype-periphery* structure similar to other, concepts—as predicted by Rosch. In an attempt to assess the relationship between cognition and language, Wilson and Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk discuss such phenomena as cognitive-semantic blending, syntactic construal of emotion as well as metaphors involving emotion-concepts.

In her paper**,** *Exposing the Dialogical Nature of the Linguistic Self in Interpersonal and Intersubjective Relationships for the Purposes of Language-and-consciousness-related Communication Studies*, **Elżbieta Magdalena Wąsik**, focuses on the dynamical nature of meaning-making by means of linguistic interaction in a community of meaning-making subjects. Wąsik distinguishes two views on subjects involved in meaning-making activities, namely, the "subjective knower" view and the "empirical subject" view. This distinction has its linguistic reflection ("I" and "Me" in the case of English) and it is a result of first-person (subjective) and third-person (objective) perspectives on the self. These two perspectives are unified by the conception of "linguistic self" who enters in intersubjective relationships with others. The linguistic self is situated by the author at the top of the Semiotic Hierarchy framework, and as such is dependent on the biology of a subject, its consciousness and semiotic capacities. The meaning-making of the linguistic self is dialogic in nature and it crucially requires other linguistic selves (and ultimately a community of subjects). The dialogic nature of meaning-making implies activity of a subject and depends on "observable interpersonal and assumable intersubjective relationships."

Consequently, the author suggests enriching the cognitive semiotic approach with "investigations [of the linguistic self – P.K.] on the basis of significative-communicative acts performed in different domains of its everyday life." These investigations should combine—in line with the basic assumption of cognitive semiotics—phenomenological inquiries and cognitive-scientific studies. This way, the author underlines the role of triangulation of methods, supplementing subjective methods ("phenomenological semiotics") and objective methods (cognitive science) with intersubjective ones.

The paper closing the present volume can be seen as a metatheoretical one. **Zdzisław Wąsik** starts with epistemological perspective on knowledge and cognition. Stressing the difference between objective knowledge and subjective cognition, the author considers epistemology as a kind of mapping between these two areas. Meaning-making activity would consist—in this view—in meta-cognitive capacity to relate the "extraorgasmic perception" and "intraorgasmic apprehension" of subject's environment (*Umwelt*, *Lifeworld*). Wąsik stresses the role of modelling capacity in making sense of the surroundings of a subject. In particular, Sebeok's three levels of modelling activity are invoked: sense-based, indexical and symbol-based. Semiotic modelling of subject's "world" is combined with metaphorically expressed observation that "the map is not the territory" (Alfred Korzybski, Gregory Bateson). This combination gives rise, according to Wąsik, to epistemology as a kind of "semiotic cartography of human knowledge and cognition." Epistemology—characterized as above—can be treated as a set of "investigative perspectives" and "psychical and physiological aptitude for cognizing activities."

Wąsik's proposal seems to be an alternative to the Semiotic Hierarchy framework proposed by Zlatev. Simultaneously, is worth stressing that these two approaches partially overlap.

III

In the introduction to the first anthology of texts in cognitive semiotics (Zlatev, Sonesson, Konderak, 2016) we announced the end of the "adolescence period" in the short history of cognitive semiotics: "Cognitive semiotics can hardly be characterized as an 'emerging' discipline anymore. It is already here" (p. 9). There are reasons for such an optimism: on the one hand, researchers gain an awareness of metatheoretical assumptions underlying cognitive semiotic enterprise (Konderak, 2018), on the other hand, one can notice a growing number of specific empirical studies and conceptual contributions. I hope that this collection of papers is an illustration of this fact. However, despite such an optimism, one has to admit that cognitive semiotics still faces serious challenges. The diversity of perspectives on meaning-making, insufficient integration and lack of coherence of ap-

proaches, disagreements about cognitive foundations of studies on meaning-making are just few of them. There is still a long way to go, but at least we have already started our walk and this volume is intended as a step on this way.

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