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Sign, Discourse and the Construction of Meaning: An Inquiry into Jean-Blaise Grize’s Semiotic Analysis

Abstract: This paper investigates a few key elements from Jean-Blaise Grize’s semiotic developments. For the Swiss author, it is necessary to understand not only the functioning of reasoning (formal and informal) or the argumentative structures that we use in everyday life. In order to get a better image of the latter, we have to dive into the depths of semiotics and try to figure out the life of signs. This leads to a certain peculiarity within Grize’s work, as long as his considerations concerning natural logic, reasoning or discursive schematisations are by far clearer than the semiotic elements which would constitute their basis. Nevertheless, the fact that he opted for an explicative schema that encapsulates a lot of semiotic elements proves that Jean-Blaise Grize had a nuanced view of the matter. In his *Logic naturelle et communications* (1996), Grize offers an explanation of meaning through an inspired construction of a theoretical hybrid (Saussure and Peirce are brought together in spite of the common view according to which those two traditions are hardly compatible). Far from being a naïve standpoint (as Grize joked about his own view, in a playful self-referential sequence), this hybrid incorporates enough concepts in order to be not only a mature structure, but also a useful one (signifier, signified, reference, meaning, object of the sign, denotation, designation). Understanding these concepts and the relations that are established among them allows us to grasp two forms of discursive representations, namely models and discursive schematisations. The problem of meaning is innovatively tackled by a two-way approach. On the one hand, we have to keep in mind that in front of us we find several sources of difficulties (lexical, semantic and syntactic). On the other hand, we must pay attention to the process of semiosis that involves a creative form of activity from both speaker and receiver. Moreover, this activity (comprising receiving, understanding and interpreting the signs) is presented by Grize against the background of Michel Meyer’s problematology. One important result of this theoretical network developed by Grize is the fact that the classical model of

communication created by Shannon and Weaver seems inappropriate a tool for the description of the real communication sequences. Finally, my paper states a few objections that can be made to Grize's project.

Keywords: meaning, sign, symbolic function, discursive schematisation, reference, semiotics