

New Challenges in Communication Practice

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Ethics and Morality as Axiological and Praxeological Semiospheres of Culture: First Steps to a Conceptual Framework

Abstract: Against the background of logical-philosophical conceptions of sign and meaning coming from general semiotics, which operatively function as superordinating classifiers in the domain of human-centered semiotics, this article aims at construing a unified model of ethicality and morality of humans as two complementary axiological and praxeological semiospheres of culture. In this model, the significant goods of culture, manifesting either in values or virtues, are labelled as axiosignificates, whereas the significant tools, manifesting either in functions or interests, are esteemed as praxeosignificates. Accordingly, the distinctions between two orders of culture, as “value-and-purpose” vs. “function-and-need”, are counterposed to the opposition between “virtue-and-duty” vs. utility-and-interest”. Appropriately, axiosignificates of an ethical individual are rendered in terms of competence, in other words, knowledge of the public self, and the praxeosignificates of a moral individual respectively as performance of a private self. While confronting the virtue- or utility-oriented semiospheres, the article refers *ethics* to the responsibility-awareness of a public self as a participant of group decision-making, and *morality* to the interactive conduct of a private self as an agent of individual decision-making. Finally, it ascertains that the duty-related choice of virtues belongs to the axiosemiotics of culture, and the utility-related acts constitute its praxeosemiotic sphere.

Keywords: culture and civilization, ethics and morality, meaning and significance, axiology and praxeology

1. Linguistic-Semiotic Conceptions of Sign and Meaning

1.1. Controversies in Approaches to Sign Conceptions

In the writings of linguists and semioticians (cf. Wąsik 2016, 166), the most controversial issues make up questions about the ontological position and investigative approachability of the sign. The opinions of respective representatives are divided as to whether the sign forms a concrete or an abstract entity, and whether its bodily or mental appearance can be estimated as a real or an ideal object. With respect to forms of its manifestation, the question arises whether the sign might be examined subjectively or objectively as a sensible or an intelligible, i.e., as an extraorganismic or an intraorganismic form of being. Theoreticians of language as a system of signs have always disputed whether the sign is to be treated as a separate phenomenon or as a complex of related phenomena, specified in terms of a monolateral entity or a plurilateral unity comprising either interrelated constituents or networks of interrelationships. An overview of semiotic thought can illustrate that the conceptions of the sign have been expressed either in terms of (1) a unilateral sign, which it treated as an object (of signifying function) standing for another object (of reference), or (2) a bilateral sign, in which both parts, the signifier and the signified, constitute a twofold unity. Some linguists have favored the concept of (3) a semantic triangle, or the sign as a triad, which forms a threefold unity of observable and inferable constituents. However, the search for epistemological foundations has revealed that all conceptions of signs—existing as concrete and mental constituents, that is, to say in other words, residing in the intraorganismic and extraorganismic reality of communicating individuals—encompass four common elements: an externalized stimulus serving as a concrete sign, an internalized stimulus acting as mental reflection of the sign, an externalized response serving as concrete referent of the sign, and an internalized response acting as a mental reflection of the referent of the sign (cf. Wąsik 2016: 166–167). Thus, the followers of such a semantic quadrangle have recognized that its roots may be found in four types of philosophical reasoning: (A) logical positivism, referential antipsychologism = concretism, (B) rational empiricism, psychological logicism = moderate psychologism, (C) empirical rationalism, logical psychologism = moderate psychologism, and (D) absolute rationalism, extreme psychologism = mentalism (cf. Wąsik 2016, 211).

1.2. Semiotic and Non-Semiotic Conceptions of Meaning

In view of the fact that the inventory of sign conceptions does not stand in one-to-one correspondence to the definitions of meaning (cf. Wąsik 2003, 104–105), semioticians have often resigned from using the term *meaning* in favor of its synonymous expressions, such as, for example, sense, importance, reference, value, or significance. They have recognized that the essence of meaning depends on the choice of answers given to the following instances of questions: (1) whether the meaning exists as a process or a product, a token or a type, and whether it is approachable as a real or ideal, concrete or abstract, observed or concluded, intrinsic or intentional, objective or subjective phenomenon; (2) whether the meaning resides in the signifier-side or the signified-side of the sign, or whether it constitutes a part or a whole, and furthermore, inherent or relational properties of the sign or its referent; (3) whether the meaning is to be detected from extrospective or introspective observations of the effects the sign causes upon feelings, reactions or behavior of the sign users; (4) whether the meaning should be inferred from the mutual relations between signs and/or between signs and their referents, signs and their users, signs and their contextual usage, and/or among the users of the signs (cf. Wąsik 2016, 212).

2. Sign and Meaning vs. Meaning Making as Signification and Significance vs. Semiosis

Since the concepts of *sign* and *meaning*, developed on the grounds of language-related sciences, logic, philosophy and linguistics, are not necessarily parallel to the concepts of sign and meaning that originate from an anthroposemiotic theory of culture, or even from a biosemiotic theory of nature, it is postulated here to use the terms *signification* and *significance* while referring to the static position of a signifying subject. However, there is a dynamic usage of the term *meaning* in the sense of ‘becoming meaningful’ or ‘making meaningful’, in other words, also ‘becoming significant’ or ‘making significant’, which is generally rendered by a common term *semiosis*, closely related to the understanding of ‘sign process’ or ‘meaning process’ (cf. Emmeche, et al. 2009, 167–172). In such a case the user of a language is not expected to say or ask what a given statement means but rather what he himself, as a signifying subject or communicational agent, means by using this statement in a given contextual setting.

2.1. Semiotic Perspectives on Culture

As regards the sign- and-meaning-including approaches to culture, it is worth to cite (after Wąsik 2003, 10) some of its descriptions: (1) “as an integrated system of human activity or institutions that satisfy human needs and fulfil social requirements, or a system of patterns and norms of behavior which is respected by individuals or groups participating in social inter-actions”, (2) “an exchange of the culturally determined dimensions of language and the spatial behaviors of people”, (3) “as final effect of learning ... consisting in the knowledge of people, i.e., in a directly unobservable ideational order” (4) as “the rules generating the sphere of the so-called cultural texts and their (significant) functions”.

Worth mentioning in the latter context are “Theses on the Semiotic Study of Culture” formulated at Tartu University by Jurij Mihailovič Lotman together with Boris Andreevič Uspenskij, Vjačeslav Vsevolodovič Ivanov, Vladimir Nikolaevič Toporov, Aleksandr Moiseevič Pjatigorskij ((973 [1973]), and the articles of Lotman “The Semiotics of Culture and the Concept of a Text” (1988 [1981]), “On the Semiosphere” (2005 [1984]), which have applied the concept of text to the description of the sign mechanism of culture, and the concept of the so-called semiospheres of culture, against the background of the notions of biosphere and noosphere, to the species-specific characteristics of the life and activity of humans as organisms and members of communicative collectivities (for details see the summary made Peeter Torop in his article of 1999 “Cultural Semiotics and Culture”).

2.2.1. Culture as an Axiosemiotic Sphere

In addition to the depiction of culture as a class of rules generating the sphere of so-called cultural texts, one should also highlight a distinction of two orders in the system of culture, the semiotic and the “axiotic” (i.e., axiological),¹ postulated under the label of axiosemiotics²

¹ The term *axiotic*, coined here by Pietraszko, comes from the name of the discipline *axiology* (from the Greek *axiā* + *logia*) introduced towards the end of the nineteenth century by Karl Robert Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906) in his article of 1890 « L'axiologie et ses divisions », which has been subsequently popularized in two books, published in French by Paul Lapie under the title *Logique de la volonté* (1902) and in German by Hartmann under the title *Grundriß der Axiologie oder Wertwägungslehre. System der Philosophie im Grundriß* (1908).

² The notion of axiosemiotics, introduced by Stanisław Pietraszko (1980), has been developed by the author of this paper in several publications, the last of which available in English, include *Epistemological Perspectives on Linguistic Semiotics* (Wąsik 2003),

by Stanisław Pietraszko, the founder of cultural studies in Poland, in his articles “O sferze aksjosemiotycznej (On the axiosemiotic sphere)” (1980), and “O przedmiocie teorii kultury (On the subject matter of the theory of culture)” (1982).

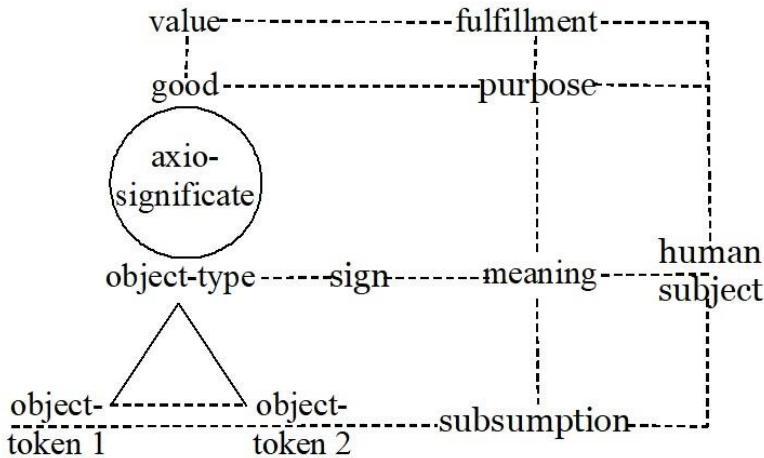


Figure 1. Meaningful goods fulfilling the purposes of human subjects in the axiosemiotic sphere of culture

In the light of Stanisław Pietraszko’s distinction, culture should be seen as a system of axiosemiotic regularities occurring between the values and meanings that condition and (co)determine the modes of human life and that become realized (materialized) in the sphere of products and the behaviors of people. Pietraszko considers the axiosemiotic activity of man as an ascription of new values and meanings to the objects being hitherto known as cultural or natural. In his view, the ascription of new values to the same objects by human subjects contributes to the creation of new things in an epistemological sense and transferring them to another class of reality. In the case of the acquirements of new meanings, a new value-related situation takes place in their relation to human subjects.

The “axiosemiotic subsumption” of things, resulting in the transfer of products and behaviors of people to the realm of cultural

objects, is not necessarily connected with their usefulness. An object can possess, apart from its functionality, an axiological significance given to it through the ascription of a certain value. Thus, an “axiotic” act may be accompanied by a semiotic act when a cultural object enters into a new relation with the human subject (cf. Figure 3).

2.2.2. Culture as a System of Signification

In the introduction to his book *A Theory of Semiotics*, Umberto Eco takes for granted that culture, as a whole, should be investigated as a communicational phenomenon based on systems of signification (1979 [1976], 23–25). These systems of cultural signification should be analyzed in terms of semantic fields established for the structures of sign-vehicles in their multidimensional semantic analysis. Thanks to the exchangeability of sender-and-receiver roles, cultural objects as semantic units may become the content of potential intrapersonal communication.

According to Eco (1979, 26–28), the semiotic representation of culture in its totality, should take into account every function of a given object, its every possible semantic content, its every meaning, thus registering every kind of functional synonymy and homonymy. That is, every cultural aspect should be considered as a separate semantic entity. The multidimensionality of semantic analyses of cultural objects, Eco illustrates with the example of “automobile”. “Automobile” is to be treated not only as a semantic entity related to the sign-vehicle, e.g., /automobile/ in English. “Automobile” turn out to be a full semantic unit with various aspects being placed on the axis of oppositions and relations with other units. Distinguished among several kinds of transportation, for example, “by car” vs. “on foot”, etc., it can be opposed to “carriage” or “bicycle” or “feet”. “Automobile”, as such, can be analyzed from different viewpoints, for example, on diverse levels, sometimes physical or mechanical, sometimes economic or social, sometimes on verbal on nonverbal ones, etc. Thus, semiotics is interested in every plane, on which the car is considered as a sign-vehicle of certain value, for example, with regard to its utility or symbolic value, when it connotes the social status or prestige of its owner, when it co-determines his/her comfort, speed of ride, etc. Similarly, as in the verbal communication where the sign-vehicle of the type /automobile/ can become the meaning of another sign-vehicle of the type /car/, the exchange value of one cultural good can be compared with the meaning of other goods which are positioned in the code of cultural semiotics (cf. Wąsik 2003, 133).

2.2.3. Meaning as Subjective Significance: Bridging the Semiospheres of Culture and Nature

Approaches to culture as a system of signification demand, in the light of definitional reasoning, finding also a superior frame of reference. The ascriptions of meanings to objects having certain values or functions is a feature characterizing not only human subjects. This process takes also place in the realm of non-human subjects.

Thus, the semiotics of culture may be also explained in the light of terminological distinctions used in the semiotics of nature by representatives of the so-called *Umwelt-Forschung*, adhering to the biological theory of meaning as subjective significance introduced by Jakob von Uexküll, in his book of 1909, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere* (cf. 1921 [1909]).

According to this biological theory, developing the concepts of *Umwelt*-related semantics, as summarized by Thure von Uexküll (the son of Jakob) in his article “Introduction: Meaning and Science in Jakob von Uexküll’s Concept of Biology” (1982, 7), all living systems take part in the process of creating and utilizing meanings. Even the simplest forms of life, the unicellular systems, are considered as having the ability to respond to external impulses through species-specific reactions characteristic of each individual form of being. Therefore, all living organisms, because of their capability of meaning creation and meaning utilization, should be considered as autonomous systems. That means, plants and animals share the same capacity to categorize stimuli, encoding them as signs. Self-regulating processes, called homeostasis, play an important role in their individual growth and progress ending in death. Living systems tend to maintain their internal stability through interactions with their surroundings, owing to the coordinated response of their parts to any situation or stimulus that might disturb their normal condition or function (cf. Waşık 2014, 135–136).

Discussing the subjective conception of meaning as relevant for the anthroposemiotic theory of culture, followers of biosemiotism (cf. Waşık 2014, 136–137) restrict their interest to the so-called *Umwelttheorie* of J. von Uexküll, in the light of which certain objects can be said to possess an “ego quality” (*Ich-Ton*). In this subject-centered theory, primary attention is put on the understanding of what the meaning is, with reference to the role of a meaning-receiver and/or meaning-utilizer.

In the semiotics of nature, the sign is described as something that has a meaning for someone because of something. Certain objects from the environment can evolve and function as meaning-carriers when they

possess the qualities which are significant for the fulfillment of subject-related needs, as, for example “drinking-quality”, “eating-quality”, “sitting-quality”, “obstacle-quality”, “climbing quality”, etc. (cf. Uexküll, J. 1982, 28 and *passim*).

The most representative definition of such a biosemiotic concept of meaning as subjective significance may be found in the article “Semiotics and the Problem of the Observer”, written by T. von Uexküll: “A sign is something that signifies to the activity of a living system something that has significance for the maintenance of the structure, the homeostasis of this system (its system needs)” (1984, 188).

2.2.4. Praxeosemiotics in a Means-and Ends-Related Perspective on Culture

An appropriate framework for a function related conception of meaning as subjective significance have been found in the theory of praxeology proposed by Ludwig Heinrich Edler von Mises (1881–1973).³ For Mises, praxeology as a general theory of human action deals with a purposeful action of an individual human being.⁴ As such, it is concerned with an acting man who strives towards the attainment of desired ends with the implementation of appropriate means. As he defines it: “Praxeology ... deals with purposeful human action. If it mentions ends, what it has in view is the ends at which acting men aim. If it speaks of meaning, it refers to the meaning which acting men attach to their actions” (Mises 2007 [1949], 18). In another contexts, he adds: “An end is everything which men aim at. A means is every thing which acting men consider as such” (Mises 2007 [1949], 92–95).

Praxeology takes for granted the assumption that individual human beings act or engage in conscious actions when they strive toward chosen goals. In other words, acting men employ means in order to try to realize adopted ends.

³ Against the background of Mises, another understanding of praxeology or praxiology was provided by Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1886–1981), a Polish philosopher, in his book of 1955 under the title *Traktat o dobrej robocie* (A treatise on a good work), which had been edited in an English translation as *Praxiology: An Introduction to the Sciences of Efficient Action* in 1965 (cf. Wąsik 2003, 140).

⁴ As one may learn from the footnotes provided by Ludwig von Mises in *Nationalökonomie: Theorie des Handelns und Wirtschaftens* of 1940, p. 3 as well as in *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* of 1949, on page 3. The term *praxeology* was first used in 1890 by Alfred Victor Espinas in his article «Les origines de la technologie», and, later on, in his book published in Paris in 1897, under a similar title *Les origines de la technologie : étude sociologique*.

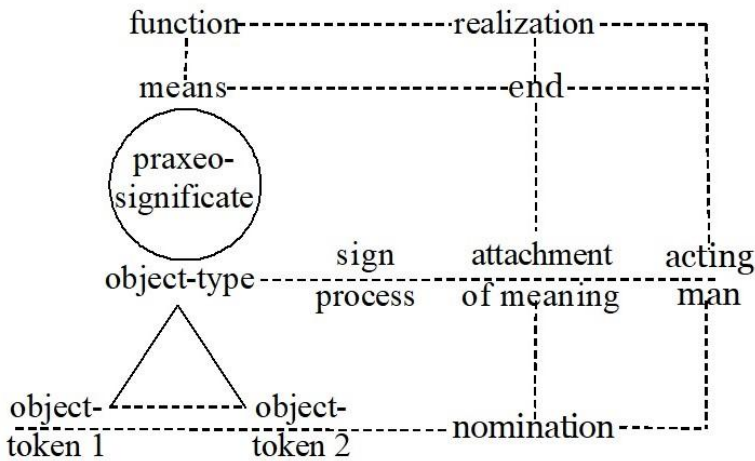


Figure 2. Meaningful means realizing the ends acting men in the praxeosemiotic sphere of culture

Speaking in terms of a praxeosemiotic sphere of culture, human selves attach meanings to objects, as products or behavior, that are serviceable in the attainment of their (con)temporary goals. Such sign processes occur in conformity with the rules of utility, demand, supply, and price but without regard of the type of goods and services which are used, formed or expected. Undoubtedly, certain types of objects constitute instrumental means (praxis-driven tools) which function for the realization of man’s ends.

In brief, *praxeosemiotics* rests on the assumption of the universal rule that people act semiotically, since they employ meaningful means to try to attain the referential value of chosen ends constituting the satisfaction of their individual needs. In this context, praxeology is usually supported by other disciplines, for example, technology, social psychology, ethics and morality, as well as history. Hereto, praxeologically inclined semioticians might deal with contentual questions of, firstly, how to satisfy subjective needs by an indiscriminate adoption of individual means, secondly, why people adopt various means for various ends and *how* they go about adopting them, thirdly, what ends, or values, people ought to adopt to be considered, or not, as decent or evil, selfish or altruistic in the communitarian context, and, finally, which

ends in the past were adopted, what means in the attempts to achieve them were used, and what the consequences of related actions were.⁵

2.2.5. Culture as an Axiological and a Praxeological Semiosphere in the Lifeworld of Humans

With reference to the distinctions made by Stanisław Pietraszko (1980) and Umberto Eco (1979), as well as against the background of Jakob von Uexküll's (1982) biological conception of subjective meaning, culture is defined, in the following approach, as a set of regularities occurring between the signs of functions or the signs of values that become realized in non-verbal and verbal products of the activity and attitudes of human beings which co-determine and condition the modes of their life and behavior. In such a human-centered theory of culture, the role of a subject who acts as a meaning-utilizer or meaning-evaluator, i.e., who nominates and subsumes the particular objects of nature under the types of cultural objects as signs of purposes or signs of needs are especially made visible. This human-centered theory of culture puts emphasis on the role of a subject who acts as a meaning-utilizer or meaning-evaluator, and who subsumes and nominates the objects of culture as signs of purposes or needs.

In the semiotic activity of human beings, who interchangeably play the role of senders or receivers of messages, the particular subsumptions and nominations from the viewpoint of axiosemiotics result in the transfer of products and behavior of people to the realm of cultural objects. In turn, the subsumptions and nominations of natural objects as types of cultural objects from the viewpoint of praxeosemiotics are connected with the ascription of functions to the objects hitherto being not useful which begin from that time on to be utilized as for the satisfaction of someone's needs. One can, thus, distinguish two kinds of meaning-related subsumptions or nominations of cultural objects, from the viewpoint of axiology or praxeology. The "axiosemiotical subsumption" results in the transfer of products and behaviors of people to the realm of cultural objects, which is not necessarily connected with their usefulness. And the "praxeosemiotical nomination" is connected with the ascription of function to the natural objects or cultural objects hitherto being not useful

⁵ Worth mentioning are here the positions of Ronald C. Arnett, Janie M. Harden Fritz, and Leeanne M. Bell Mcmanus. *Communication Ethics Literacy. Dialogue and Difference* (2017 [2009]), and of Lorenzo Magnani, *Morality in a Technological World, Knowledge as Duty* (2007), "Structural and Technology-Mediated Violence: Profiling and the Urgent Need of New Tutelary Technoknowledge" (2011).

for certain needs. However, there is no contradiction between a purpose-related approach to value and need-related approach to function in the semiotics of culture. Both axiological and praxeological formulations of sign and meaning, relevant for the explanation of the semiotic character of culture, reveal only an aspectual difference between values and functions of cultural objects in the context of purposes and needs of cultural subjects.

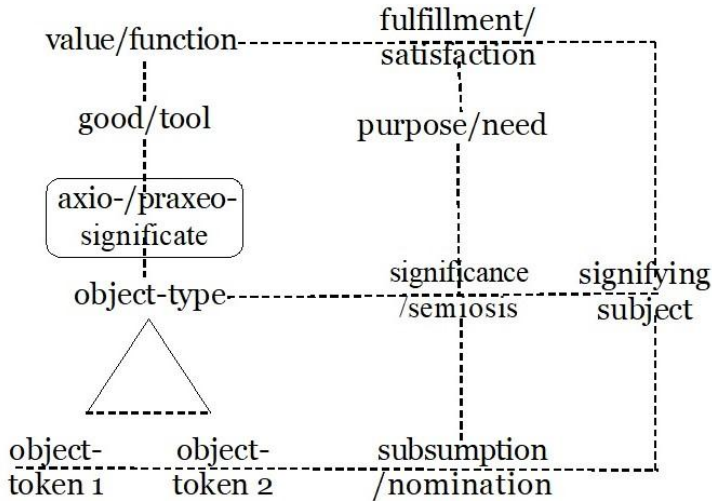


Figure 3. Axiological subsumptions or praxeological nomination of objects under the signs of values or functions

In an axiosemitic and/or praxeosemitic conception of culture, as visualized in Figure 3, the emphasis is placed on the interpretative activity of a signifying subject who subsumes the cognized objects of nature and objects of culture (object-token 1 and object-token 2) as significant, firstly, because they possess a certain expressive value for the fulfillment of his or her purpose, and secondly, when they play a certain practical function for the satisfaction of his or her need (meant as a signaled systemic lack, desire or expectation).

Considered against the background of anthropological and biological conceptions of meaning as subjective significance, the problems of function or value of significant objects, on one hand, and the problems of purposes or of needs living subjects, on the other, appear to constitute a link between the semiotics of culture and nature. An object of

cognition, found in the surroundings of social life-world, can possess, apart from its axiological significance also a praxeological significance.

For the aims of their specific interpretation, the particular terms from Figure 3 (modified to some extent after earlier proposals of the author) have been defined here as follows (cf. Wąsik 2003, 119–120; 2016, 233–235): *Object of culture* is any perceivable thing or state of affair in a value- or function-related sphere of culture; *Signifying subject* is a meaning-creator, meaning-recipient, meaning-beneficiary and meaning-utilizer, who subsumes or nominates certain objects of culture (object-token 1 and object-token 2) under the object-type of either an axiosignificate or a praxeosignificate; *Axiosignificate* is a valuable object of culture, regarded as a significant good, i.e., a sign of a value; *Praxeosignificate* is a functional object of culture, regarded as a significant tool, i.e., a sign of a function; *Good* is an object of culture which possesses a certain value enabling the fulfilment of a purpose of a signifying subject; *Tool* is an object of culture which serves a certain function enabling the satisfaction of a need of a signifying subject; *Significance* is the meaning of an object for a signifying subject. *Semiosis* is a process of making an object significant for a signifying subject. *Value* is a relational property of a cultural object that fulfils a subjective purpose of a signifying subject. *Function* is a role played by a tool while satisfying a need of a signifying subject; *Purpose* is a goal intended to be fulfilled (to be attained), which means for the activity of a signifying subject, an impulse to utilize a good with respect to its a valuable property; *Need* is a systemic lack, which means, for the activity of a signifying subject, an impulse to satisfy a disturbed equilibrium in his or her biological urges and/or socio-psychological wants; *Fulfilment/satisfaction* is the utilization of a good or a tool which is significant for the attainment of a certain purpose or the realization of a need of a signifying subject of culture with respect to its value or function; *Subsumption/nomination/* is a semiotic detection and/or recognition of an object-token 1 with an object-token 2 as identical with the general properties of an object-type.

As it comes out from the interpretation of individual constituents included in Figure 6, an object of culture can possess, with regard to its expressive value or practical function an axiological significance or a praxeological significance for a signifying subject of culture. In the same (or similar) communicational context, an “axiotic” act or a “praxeotic” act may be accompanied by a semiotic act when a cognizing subject enters into a new relation with a cognized object. That means that the ascription of significance to objects, known before as natural or cultural with regard to

their values or functions, contributes to the creation of entirely new types of semiotic objects, while transferring them from one kind to another kind of reality. Having in view the analytical applicability of an axiology- and/or praxeology-related model of cultural semiospheres, the practitioners of semiotic studies may investigate all semiotic systems of culture either from the viewpoint of value they possess for the fulfillment of their individual and social purposes, or from the viewpoint of function they execute in satisfying communicational needs of the subjects of culture.

3. Modelling Ethics and Morality as Axiological and Praxeological Semiospheres of Culture

3.1. Public Patterns as Competence and Private Practices as Performance of Human Selves

This analytical part of the paper aims at characterizing the *ethics* and *morality* as axiological and praxeological semiospheres of culture (realized in human civilization). Having considered the distinctions between *ethos* and *mores* within a unified model of culture composed of *virtue* and *duty*, or *utility* and *interest*, while paying attention to permissible versus unacceptable patterns of ethicality and practices of morality in the realm of group interactions and individual experiences, it puts emphasis on the ethical *competence* and moral *performance* of an individual self being determined by his/her location in society.⁶

For the purposes of further considerations, it is enough to make reference only to the classical concepts of ethics⁷ as outlined by Aristotle (384–322 BC), a Greek philosopher, and morality⁸ as originated by

⁶ Worth reading is the article of Nendra Reynolds, “Ethos as Location: New Sites for Understanding Discursive Authority”, 1993.

⁷ The most representative conceptions of normative ethics, including objections to utilitarianism and hedonism, are to be found in the works of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 1891 [1820]; Franz Brentano (1838–1917), *The Foundation and Construction of Ethics*, 1952 (first published posthumously in 1952, based on series of lectures on practical philosophy, given at the university of Vienna from 1876 to 1894); Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), *Prolegomena to Ethics*, 1899 [1883]; as well as John Dewey, *The Ethics of Democracy*, 1888. A good inquiry into the essence of virtue-oriented morality in terms of ethics and metaethics has been made by Alasdair C. Macintyre, a British philosopher (born 1929) in his mostly cited book, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2007 [1981].

⁸ The issues of morality are discussed in the works of David Hume (1711–1776), *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751 and *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751; John Dewey “Green’s Theory of the Moral Motive”, 1969

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), Roman statesman and philosopher. Worth quoting are here the selected statements from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (presumably dedicated either to his father or to his son Nicomachus, or compiled and edited by the latter) and from Cicero's *De Officiis* (On duty).

To the most popular quotes from *Nicomachean Ethics* belong two quotations. The first one states what is the good: "Every art and every investigation, and likewise every practical pursuit or undertaking, seems to aim at some good: hence it has been well said that the Good is That at which all things aim." (Aristotle 1926 [ca 347–330 B.C. (or 349 B.C)], book I Happiness. cc. i–iii. Introduction: the nature of the subject. Section 1–2). And the second one exhibits the importance of human striving for goodness: "...the Good of man is the active exercise of his soul's faculties in conformity with excellence or virtue, or if there be several human excellences or virtues, in conformity with the best and most perfect among them" (Aristotle 1926, book 1, chapter 7, section 15).

Cicero wrote his work dedicated to his son Marcus explaining how the individual's pursuit for private happiness might be in conflict with the ideals of public gains, in dependence whether they are honorable or selfish. In his opinion: "The discussion of duty is twofold. One division relates to the supreme good in itself considered. The other to the rules by which the conduct of life may in all its parts be brought into conformity with the supreme good" (1879 [44 BC], 6). However, as he continues: "There is another division of duty. Duty may be said to be either contingent or perfect. ... what is right in itself is perfect duty; that for the doing of which a satisfactory reason can be given is a contingent duty (Cicero 1879, 6). In the later case: "It is first to be determined whether the contemplated act is right or wrong, ... whether the act under discussion is conducive to convenience and pleasure, to affluence, and free command of outward goods, to wealth to power, in fine, to the means by which one can benefit himself and those dependent on him" Cicero 1879, 6–7). In conclusion, Cicero speaks in favor of principles in life: "that the interest of each individual and that of the entire body of citizens

[1892] and "Self-Realization as the Moral Ideal", 1893. Recent deliberations on the rules of moral conduct of the human self as a person and a subject are popularized in the works of Jennifer Jordan, Elisabeth Mullen, and J. Keith Murnighan, "Striving for the Moral Self: Effects of Recalling Past Moral Actions on Future Moral Behavior", 2011; Laurence Thomas, *The Fragility of the Moral Self: Self-Love and Morality*, 1997; Karl Aquino, "The Self-Importance of Moral Identity", 2002; Marc D. Hauser, *Moral Minds: The Nature of Right and Wrong*, 2006, and *Moral Minds: How Nature Designed Our Universal Sense of Right and Wrong*, 2006.

are identical, which interest if anyone appropriate to himself alone, he does it to sundering of all human intercourse. ... that man shall desire the promotion of man's good for the very reason that he is man, it follows in accordance with that same nature that there are interests common to all" (1887, 183–184).

With the aim-in-view to construe a unified model which strives to exploit semiotic-communicational distinctions of linguistic pragmatics, the paper refers the term *ethics* to the communicative competence (or knowledge of permissible comportment) of a public self as a participant of group decision-making and the term *morality* to the communicative performance (or behavioral conduct) of a private self as an agent of individual decision-making.

Respectively, the notion of the communicating self, as a knowing and signifying individual pertains here to a mental subject and a physical person. However, in the spheres of public and private worlds, it will be also referred to citizens of a society or a state. The subject matter of our discussion will constitute thus the distinction that ethics, governing the choice of socially permissible virtue-and-duty-oriented competence, belongs to the axiological sphere of culture, and morality, admitting the applicable utility-and-interest-oriented performance belongs in turn to praxeological spheres of culture. In view of interdisciplinary approaches to the public domains of ethics and private domains of morality, a theoretical model developed in the following presentation will consider its investigative consequences for text-and-discourse-oriented linguistic studies.

Postulated here, the semiotic-communicational competence & performance, encompasses their linguistic-and non-linguistic behavior of people which depend upon their cultural embedding. Semiotic-communicational competence & performance include the totality of human knowledge & skills, which communicating selves as knowing subjects & signifying persons, employ in surroundings of language- and culture-related situations. Due to their knowledge and skills, communicating selves, as observable persons and inferable subjects, are bound through nonverbal and verbal means with extralinguistic and extrasemiotic reality conditioned by their physical, biological, psychical and social endowments. What will be demonstrated then, in such a human-centered linguistic semiotics, is the role of a communicating self as "public self/private self" who is engaged in the activity of evaluating his/her choices as goods and executing his/her acts as tools, which become cultural with regard to virtue-oriented (axiological), or utility-

related (praxeological) significance for the fulfilment of his/her duties, or the satisfaction of his/her interests.

In the characteristics of the individual's ethos, or moral character, considering a unified model composed of virtue-duty- and utility-interest-related semiospheres, as a basis for applicative purposes, the central frame of reference constitutes here the understanding of culture as a set of axiological and praxeological regularities occurring in the lifeworld of humans, which codetermine the means and ways of their existence, being materially and spiritually realized in human civilization through significant choices of valuable goods or significant acts performed with the use of appropriated tools.

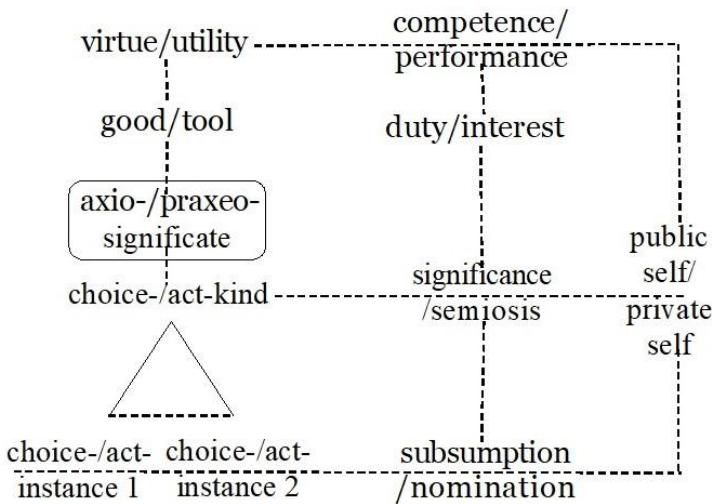


Figure 4. Ethical choices in the competence of public selves being aware of their duties and moral acts in the performance of private selves realizing of their interests

Accordingly, a semiotic-communicational ordering of ethics/morality (as shown in Figure 7) is considered in terms of a bifocal “subsumption” of choices and “nomination” of acts, “choice-/act-instance 1” and “choice-/act-instance 2”, under a significant “choice-/act-kind”. To explain separately, one can say – in terms of ethics – that, being aware of its duty, the “public self”, as an average citizen in a given society or state, possesses a “competence” to choose a certain “good” as an “axiosignificate”, i.e., picked out as a sign of a “virtue”, and – in terms of morality – that, being

driven by its “interest”, the private self, as a unique citizen in a given society or state, displays a “performance”-ability to act using a certain “tool” as an “praxeosignificate”, i.e., pondered as a sign of a “utility”. Accordingly, in the axiological and/or praxeological semiospheres of culture, one may be entitled to distinguish two kinds of semantic approaches, a static subsumption of meaning as subjective significance, and a dynamic nomination of meaning as semiosis.

3.2. Conclusion: Axiosemiotics of Public Ethics and Praxeosemiotics of Private Morality

In detaching the axiological semiospheres of public ethics, governing the virtue-and-duty-oriented trajectories of choice, from praxeological semiospheres of private morality, determining the admissible or inadmissible utility-and-interest-oriented conduct, one postulates to make a distinction between the autonomous status of culture and its heteronomous manifestation in human civilization. Discussed in the light of rhetoric and communication sciences, this distinction will bear in mind the competence of public citizens and the performance of private citizens.

Hence, the conceptual content of a general semiotic competence is specified in terms of foreseeable dispositional properties of individuals, which enable them to effectively communicate with other individuals as “the significant others” in interest-oriented acts of speech under the pressure of collective sanctions. As a result, such attributes of communication participants as efficiency and acceptability will be shown as interrelated with the modelling processes of personality traits in the not-yet-becoming of their multi-discursive and inter-discursive competences, governed by the rules of generationally transmitted traditions and socially construed norms.

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