

Foreword

The present book is based on polycontextural semiotics as introduced in a series of papers by Rudolf Kaehr. Polycontextural semiotics differs from classic or monocontextural semiotics basically by introducing inner semiotic environments for every sub-sign (Cartesian products) of a semiotic matrix. Therefore, a sub-sign does not belong anymore to only one semiotic contexture, but to several, depending on the number of contextures involved. Rudolf Kaehr has also shown in many papers that my preliminary theory of semiotic diamonds is not really polycontextural, because the Law of Identity of classical logic still holds. Although I was all the time fully aware of that (and pointed it out in my publications), it turned out in the last months how unexpectedly big the increase of semiotic structure becomes, if “real” polycontextural semiotics is introduced. The biggest surprise was that the notion of sign itself has not to be abandoned if semiotics, according to Peirce the deepest possible level of representation, is set even deeper.

Therefore, we are now technically satisfactorily equipped to fulfil the promise given in my book “In Transit”: to develop a mathematically, logically and semiotically consistent theory of dissolution of Mind. In “In Transit”, I presented several formal models on how to handle in a hopefully near future a metaphysics of the death of Mind in addition to a metaphysics of the death of Matter. However, all these models are monocontextural, and so the present book offers a complete polycontextural semiotic model of the dissolution of Mind based on studies by me and Rudolf Kaehr, yet restricted to triadic semiotics. Triadic semiotics is based on the assumption that for the definition of a sign relation a media, an object and an interpretant are sufficient. Since the sign relation becomes polycontextural through its semiotic environments, the introduction of the categorial object like in my two volumes of “Semiotics and Pre-Semiotics” is superfluous. And, consequently, also superfluous is the assumption of a “pre-semiotic space” as suggested already by Bense in his work “Semiotische Prozesse und Systeme”. Thus, it turns out that polycontextural semiotics according to the model of Kaehr does not only lead to much more complex semiotic systems, but is also much more elegant because it allows to drop several theoretical auxiliary assumptions caused by the monocontexturality of classical Peircean semiotics.

According to my model, dissolution of mind can be characterized by three basic steps: First, the occurrence of hallucinations, second, the loss of reality testing, and third, the loss of identification. From the standpoint of poly-contextural semiotics, hallucinations require the abolishment of the borders between subject and object. This assumption is consistent with the fact that for certain persons the hallucinations are real. Moreover, this is also the viewpoint of the philosophical theory of Illusionism (Stirner, Panizza). Different from the occurrence of mere hallucinations, the symptom-complex of, e.g., schizophrenia requires, in agreement with present-day psychiatric research, the loss of the boundaries between the Self and its environment. In semiotics, this corresponds to the loss of testing signs by their dual reality thematics. If the operation of dualization does not work anymore and a reality thematic can thus not be reconstructed anymore from a sign class and vice versa, the classical logical identity is abolished, too. The reason is that identity means logically the coincidence of two values and semiotically the coincidence of a sign class and its dual reality thematic. Therefore, when a reality thematic is not reachable anymore, there can be no coincidence and thus no classical identity either anymore. When the final step of mental dissolution is reached, f. ex. in dementia, this means the loss of any form of identification and thus not only the loss of self-identification. From the standpoint of polycontextural semiotics, we then have that, in addition to the loss of the classical identity, the loss of the two or more non-classical (reflective) identities. Hence, here that point is reached, where the individuality of a person is abolished.

I have called the three-step-process presupposed here “Trip into the Light”, an expression borrowed from Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s 1978 film “Despair”, based on the novel “Otchayanie” by Vladimir Nabokov. According to Fassbinder, insanity is a Trip into the Light. The light, therefore, implied in this expression, has nothing to do with the redeeming light of the Christian-Bonaventuran Metaphysics of Light. Since Fassbinder dedicated his movie to Unica Zürn, Antonin Artaud and Vincent van Gogh, I have searched for a possible origin of this mysterious expression. In Zürn’s novel “The Man in the Jasmin”, I have found: “There, she does a jump amidst into this ray of light and starts from now on to watch herself”. The reason why I am convinced that this sentence was the motivation for Fassbinder’s subtitle, lies in the fact that his protagonist Hermann Hermann’s Trip into the Light starts exactly then, when he begins to watch himself while having sex with his wife Lydia. Insanity, therefore, according to Fassbinder, is illumination through never foreseen mental possibilities and not darkening.

Although from a psychiatric viewpoint, this three-step-model presented here may look too simplistic, it has to be pointed out that the semiotic model is so rich in complexity that it can virtually cover probably all cases of mental dissolution. Therefore, the three-step-model can be enlarged and refined almost arbitrarily, and since I am not a psychiatrist, I have restricted myself to a small but hopefully uncontroversial model. It has also to be pointed out that according to the present author there is indeed a need for a semiotic model in questions related to mental “diseases”. First, mental “diseases” show basically in the perception and in the production of communicative structures and are therefore highly semiotic. Second, the respective “diseases” are even defined by different qualities and quantities of deviations from the “normal” or “regular” communicative structures and are therefore again most highly semiotic, although not all psychiatrists are aware of this fact.

I have allowed myself to put the word “disease” through the whole book in quotation marks, since in semiotics, there are no diseases. On the other side, I suggest that psychiatrists may make themselves aware that by defining these “diseases” they mostly use semiotic terms or terms of semiotic origin. However, semiotic notions or terms are not appropriate as definitions in medicine – as one would hardly accept medical definitions for semiotic notions. Therefore, in order to avoid violations of competence as well as circular definitions, by the model presented in this book, the multitude of “diseases” between hallucinations and total loss of cognition is not treated as subject to medicine but as subject to a metaphysics of the dissolution of mind. Moreover, it is shown that this metaphysics can be formalized in an appropriate manner by aid of mathematical polycontextural semiotics.

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