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SIGN — SYMBOL — ALLEGORY

The main point of this paper is logical in character. We intend to offer an explication of the term "sign" — which, to be sure, is merely one of the indefinitely many possible explications of the term's meaning — and to consider, in part II, several of its consequences for the semiotics of art. Hence, we will not try to settle any substantive issues in semiotics directly or construct a particular theory of signs (or a part of such a theory) in order to pit it against other theories in the field; nor are we going to describe the results of empirical semiotic research based on some such theory. We will merely give a more rigorous expression to some theoretical intuitions, mostly those concerning the notion of sign, by explicating them in terms of more precise concepts. Naturally, to explicate an intuition is not only to report or articulate it, but also to make it precise, retain some of its elements while discarding the others, and to reconstruct it.

We do not mean to suggest, however, that this kind of inquiry is of no substantive scientific interest, being of significance only to philosophy. For we believe that if the subject of a logical reconstruction consists of interesting and theoretically fruitful intuitions then such a reconstruction indicates, at the very least, that the intuitions in question deserve to be developed into a full-fledged scientific theory. Also, more often than not, a logical reconstruction suggests how to go about constructing such a future theory and, in the limiting case, may even form its core.

I. An Explication of the Notion of Sign

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It seems platitudinous to claim that every work of art is a sign or a system of signs (a complex sign composed of some more basic signs). Yet it is mainly from this platitude that we attempt to derive some consequences in part II of this paper. Indeed, the statement in question does not imply anything interesting when the word "sign" is taken in its ordinary meaning, which is the product of fusing a haphazard collection of various conceptions into a single eclectic whole; on this interpretation, then, while perfectly true, the statement is utterly trivial and uninteresting. Our aim in part I is to select from this wide range of meanings a single concept with a well-defined connotation.

One can carry out this task in a variety of ways. Given the aim of this article, it would make sense to explicate the notion of sign as a notion that belongs to the conceptual apparatus of the humanities. This does not imply that we believe that it would be impossible to take this or that natural-science notion of sign and apply it to art, or to use a notion general enough so as to be neutral with respect to the methodological divide between natural science and the humanities, but it is only natural that a reconstruction of such a generality would yield a relatively small number of consequences concerning works of art.

Our point of departure, therefore, is the assumption that the *explicandum* (the notion of sign) should be construed in terms of concepts taken from the humanities. However, this assumption does not settle anything as long as we remain silent on the vexed question of the methodological differences between the humanities and natural science, especially those concerning their conceptual resources.

This is not the place to analyze this problem.[1] Suffice it to say that our position toward it can roughly be captured by the following claims:

1. The thesis of anti-positivist methodological naturalism: The basic methods of investigation are common to natural science and the humanities. We take these methods to overlap, to a degree, with those posited by Popper's hypothetism.

a. Every system of empirical science comprises, besides analytic sentences, only hypotheses; hypotheses can be theoretical or observational in character.

b. A conflict between a theoretical hypothesis and an observational hypothesis need not lead to retaining the observational hypothesis in favor of the theoretical one.

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[1]For a more detailed discussion, see Kmita, Nowak 1968.

c. All descriptive terms, be they theoretical or observational, are on a par with respect to reference; *pace* instrumentalism, the language of empirical science is not a conventional combination of two autonomous languages: theoretical and observational.

d. Basic research operations include explanation and prediction by appealing to strictly universal claims; prediction is closely associated with hypothesis testing. Induction has no role to play in science.

2. The thesis of the rationalizing character of research in the humanities.

3. The thesis of methodological structuralism.

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We have already discussed thesis 1 in sufficient detail. We shall not return to it. Instead, let us say more about thesis 2.

Given thesis 1, thesis 2 asserts that explanation (and prediction) in the humanities is often based on the assumption of the rationality of the human acts that are to be explained (or predicted). This assumption functions in much the same manner as do the laws in natural science: it is a strictly universal statement that allows us to derive the *explanandum* from the so-called initial conditions; it says that human acts are determined by (a) the agent's order of values and (b) by the agent's knowledge about how these values can be fulfilled. In other words, according to thesis 2, people's acts and the products of those acts are explained in the humanities by appealing to the agent's goals and his or her knowledge of the situation. But we should not treat the assumption of rationality as a law of psychology in the positivistic sense; instead, we should understand it as an expression of a relatively far-reaching idealization. This is why thesis 2 is in direct opposition to positivistic psychologism and does not conflict with thesis 1. It would have come into such conflict if similar idealizations did not occur in natural science. But they do. In fact, almost every law of nature that one considers turns out to be an idealization in that its application requires scientists to introduce a variety of corrections — stemming from the character of local conditions — which make it possible to derive approximate predictions.

Of course, in practice, explanation in the humanities is enthymematic, but the same goes for explanation in natural sciences. One can see just how many enthymematic premises it really involves by comparing research in the humanities with the posits of decision theory, which is a theory of rational behavior. According to decision theory, an agent satisfying the conditions of rationality behaves in the following manner:

1. She is to perform one of the acts $A_1, \ldots , A_n$ (to be more precise, one of the acts of type $A_1, \ldots, A_n$); in light of the agent's knowledge, these acts are collectively exhaustive (the acts include the act of not performing any of the other acts).

2. Given the agent's knowledge, the states of affairs $s_1, \ldots , s_m$ need to be considered as relevant, in light of that knowledge, to the particular acts' outcomes; states $s_1, \ldots , s_m$ are collectively exhaustive and mutually exclusive.

3. The acts' outcomes, each of which can be expressed symbolically as o_{ij} (the outcome of the i-th act given the j-th state of affairs; $i = 1, \ldots , n$ and $j = 1, \ldots , m$), are ordered by a preference relation of type $\leqslant$.[2]

4. If all the conditions above have been met then one of the following three situations is the case: (a) the agent believes that only state of affairs $s_j$should be taken into consideration and so she is certain of attaining outcome o_{ij} if she carries out act A_i $(i = 1, \ldots , n)$ — this is acting under certainty; (b) the agent assigns a particular degree of probability to every state of affairs s_j $(j = 1, \ldots, m)$ and so she is only able to calculate the probability of the outcomes o_{ij} — this is acting under risk; (c) the agent cannot even assign probabilities to the relevant states of affairs — this is acting under uncertainty. Now, describing an act in terms of rationality depends on the conditions in which the agent makes the choice. For the sake of simplicity, we shall only consider acts performed under certainty and their corresponding type of rationality.[3] Thus, an agent satisfying conditions 1—3 (acting under certainty) behaves rationally if and only if she performs act A_i, leading (in light of the agent's knowledge) to outcome o_{ij}, which the agent most desires.

As we can see from the characterization above, in order to explain, in

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[2]The preference ranking relation can be characterized in a variety of ways, depending on the construal of decision theory. For example, R.C. Jeffrey (1965) takes it to be defined over a so-called probability matrix, with propositions as its elements; the probability matrix is closed under negation, disjunction and conjunction; it contains propositions concerning acts, outcomes of acts and propositions relevant to choosing acts to be performed. We shall not analyze the difference between various construals because they are not relevant to our discussion.

[3]Though bear in mind that, by taking into account risk and uncertainty, one can raise a number of interesting problems concerning cultural acts, esp. creative activities.

light of the rationality assumption, why an agent performed act A_k, we have to know:

1. Acts $A_1, \dots , A_n$ that the agent could have carried out.

2. State of affairs s_j the agent believed to obtain at the moment of their decision.

3. A preference ranking defined on act outcomes o_{ij}; from now on, we shall call these outcomes "values" and the preference ranking — "the order of values."

Of course, given s_j, we can specify the function assigning particular values to pairs $\langle A_1, s_j \rangle, \dots, \langle A_n, s_j \rangle$. So, from the data given in 1—3, it follows, given the rationality assumption, that act A_k should be performed (o_{kj} must be the dominating value). In practice, explanation of an act in the humanities is usually restricted to providing the dominating value ("the goal," "the motive") and perhaps sketching s_j.

Now consider a relational system, or structure

$$S = \langle U;\ A,\ O,\ R,\ s_j \rangle,$$

where (1) the universe U is a set of states of affairs, describable in terms of the agent's knowledge, (2) A is a subset of U; its elements are acts $A_1, \dots , A_n$, (3) O is a subset of U; its elements are values, (4) R is an order relation on values belonging to O, (5) s_j is the state of affairs relevant to performing the act and considered by the agent to obtain at the moment of the decision.

Structure S also determines: (1) the value dominating in the order of values — call it o_{kj}, (2) act A_k, which is characterized by the fact that it corresponds with o_{kj} (and the fact that the agent acts rationally). Let us call o_{kj} the meaning of act A_k and the whole structure S — the meaning structure of act A_k.

These terminological conventions allow us to say that to explain a rational act in the humanities is to assign to it an appropriate meaning structure. Henceforth, we shall call such explanations interpretations.

The universe U of the meaning structure consists of states of affairs. We use "states of affairs" rather than "propositions," as does R.C. Jeffrey, because this allows us not to go beyond extensional logic. It is also worth noting that we individuate states of affairs in terms of s-equivalence; namely, two states of affairs s_1 and s_2, corresponding to sentences S_1 and S_2 of

the agent's language, are s-equivalent if and only if sentences S_1 and S_2 are equivalent in light of the agent's knowledge, which is to say S_2 follows logically from the conjunction of $S_1$and a finite subset X of all sentences comprising the agent's knowledge such that X does not contain S_2, and vice versa — the conjunction of S_2 and X (without S_1) logically implies S_1 (S_1 occurs essentially in the first case whereas S_2 occurs essentially in the second). By analogy with s-equivalence, we can speak about the s-negation, s-conjunction, s-implication and s-disjunction of states of affairs.[4]

Let us now say a few words about thesis 3, the thesis of methodological structuralism. It asserts that knowledge about meaning structure is epistemically primitive with respect to knowledge about the rational act to be explained, or, in other words, that the interpretation of an act is more epistemically primitive than the act's description (or the description of the act's product). We cannot justifiably describe an act (or the product of an act) as a rational act of a given kind (as the product of a given kind of rational act) unless we have formed some kind of hypothesis concerning the act's (product's) meaning structure — in other words, unless we have some kind of interpretative hypothesis.[5]

We shall now use the notions we have introduced to define some further concepts.

First of all, let us specify the concept of a rational act of the n-th order.

Two rational acts A_i and A_j stand to one another in the relation of instrumental subordination (given the agent's knowledge and order of values) just in case the meaning of act A_i is a state of affairs s_i such that s_i is an s-conjunct of state s_j relevant to act A_j and the occurrence of s_i in s_j is a necessary condition for fulfilling the meaning of act A_j (of course, all these conditions are relative to the agent's knowledge and order of values).

In such a case, we shall also say that s_i is instrumentally linked with act A_j.

A rational act of the n-th order is a rational act A that can be characterized as a directed graph $G = \langle U;\, R \rangle$, where: (1) U is the set of rational acts comprising A, such that they are at most of the order of n—1

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[4]In the semiotics of art, it may be more profitable to use the concept of a meaning isomorphism, carrying with it the requirement that the two sentences have the same structure and that their corresponding elements be synonymous; however, the weaker notion of s-equivalence is entirely sufficient for our purposes here.

[5]The thesis of methodological structuralism is incompatible with the methodological individualism advocated by the logical positivists and their chief opponent, K. R. Popper.

and one of them is of the order of $n{-}1$, (2) R is the relation of instrumental subordination whose field is identical with U, (3) directed graph G has a unique terminal vertex, (4) the meaning of the rational act being the terminal vertex of graph G is identical with the meaning of act A.

If the meaning of a rational act is to produce a particular object or the production of an object is instrumentally linked with that act, we call the object a product of that rational act. Just like acts, products have meaning structures associated with them; these are the same meaning structures as those associated with the rational acts leading to the making of the products. In particular, the meaning of a product is identical with the meaning of the act of making it.

We can now express the following conclusion: if the *explicans* of the term "sign," which we are going to construct in the first part of this paper, is to be a notion from the humanities then it should denote a class of rational acts and their products. In other words, we should construe signs as a certain kind of rational act or their products, in the sense of the terms "rational act" and "product" specified above.

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A further approximation of the *explicans*' denotation follows from the intuitively obvious observation that not every rational act and not every product of a rational act is a sign. For instance, under normal circumstances, the making of a pair of shoes by a shoemaker, though, to an extent, a rational act (of a higher order), is not a sign. Incidentally, it is easy to see why this is so — namely, because, among other things, there is no act of interpretation, performed by some other individual, instrumentally linked with it. At any rate, the meaning of this act is not of the kind that requires that someone come up with its interpretation. Under normal circumstances, the shoemaker achieves his or her goal regardless of whether there exists an interpreter who can discover the meaning of the whole act along with its instrumental constituent parts (i.e., constituent rational acts).

Conversely, the rational act of tipping one's hat to greet someone will not fulfil the agent's goal if it is not accompanied by an act of interpretation performed by the addressee of the gesture (alternatively, by some bystanders witnessing it). We can even say more: for the meaning of the act to be realized at all, not only does the greeting's addressee (alternatively, some bystanders witnessing it) have to be aware of its meaning, but he or she (alternatively, some other witness) has to accept the gesture's meaning as well.

It may happen that one type of greeting gesture is not used in a given community, but if members of the community accept greetings as such and the gesture is interpreted as an instance of greeting then there is no reason why the gesture's meaning should not be realized.

An interpretative act accompanied by an acceptance of the meaning of the interpreted act (or the meaning of its product) — i.e., an interpretative act in which the interpreter and the interpreted share the order of values — will be called understanding.[6] It follows from the assumptions concerning rational acts, applied to the interpreter, that if person X understands a rational act of type A performed by person Y then X would also perform a rational act of type A if she had the same knowledge as Y (or, as they say, if X were in Y's shoes).

We shall call a rational act that is instrumentally linked with another agent's act of understanding a rational act directed toward understanding. It goes without saying that a sign is either a rational act directed toward understanding or a product of such an act.

Of course, the notion of a rational act directed toward understanding is, in a certain specific sense, a "subjective" notion. Understanding is instrumentally linked with a given act from the agent's point of view, relative to his or her knowledge. But it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that the agent's holding of such a subjective belief does not suffice for the act or its product to be a sign.

If someone makes an odd gesture and believes that it will be understood as a greeting, while in reality no one can ascribe any meaning to it, then the act in question is not a sign, not now at any rate.

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Clearly then, not every act directed toward understanding and not every product of such an act is a sign. We must, therefore, restrict the denotation of the *explicans* of the term "sign."

Note in this connection that the rational acts and their products that we usually call signs (though probably other things as well) have a certain characteristic feature: such an act, or an object produced by it, is directly and spontaneously recognized as, respectively, a rational act or the product of a rational act. Typically, no one who lives in our culture has any doubt as to whether this or that kind gesture, made in such and such circumstances,

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[6]We appeal here to certain intuitions present in the German philosophy of the humanities.

is a greeting. This is because, in every culture, there is a body of widespread knowledge that, under appropriate circumstances, enables its members to gain an immediate kind of understanding of certain rational acts and their products. We call this knowledge the rules of cultural interpretation. They ascribe meaning to rational acts and their products. More specifically, these rules define a given act A (or an object produced by it) as a rational act directed toward understanding (respectively, as the product of a rational act directed toward understanding), thereby assigning a meaning to act A (respectively, its product) and thus determining what kind of act or product it is.

These rules can be expressed in terms of sentences such as "Act A (performed in such and such a manner, in such and such circumstances) is a rational act with the meaning of type M." Similar rules can be formulated for products of rational acts.

For what follows, it is of utmost importance to distinguish between two kinds of acts and their products interpreted by the rules of cultural interpretation as rational acts or products of rational acts directed toward understanding. Namely, some of them only have what we call global meaning — which is the same for whole classes of rational acts (products) — whereas others have individual meaning, which is a specific variety of global meaning. Understanding global meaning is instrumentally linked with an act or product that has individual meaning.

The global meaning of a rational act (or product) directed toward understanding is the kind of meaning ascribed to it by the rules of cultural interpretation. This is why we can say that knowledge of the rules of cultural interpretation is both necessary and sufficient for interpreting (understanding) those acts and products that only have global meaning, whereas it is necessary but not sufficient for one to understand acts and products of the second kind.

If, to borrow and generalize Chomsky's terminology,[7] we define knowledge of the rules of cultural interpretation as cultural competence, we will now be in a position to state that, for example, possessing cultural competence is necessary and usually sufficient to interpret (understand) a greeting

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[7]N. Chomsky talks about the „linguistic competence" of an "ideal speaker-hearer," clearly a special case of a rational agent. There is a contrast here between the conceptual apparatus of N. Chomsky's linguistics and the various theories employed within structural linguistics in that Chomsky's conceptual apparatus is typical of the humanities. Linguistic competence comprises syntactic, phonological and semantic rules of generative grammar (see Chomsky 1965, esp. pp. 3-4, 8-9, 47-53). It is obvious that the rules of generative grammar are a special case of the rules of cultural interpretation.

gesture, whereas it is necessary but insufficient to interpret (understand) most works of art. We shall come back to this problem in part II.

Global meaning defined by the rules of cultural interpretation can vary in generality. The most general meaning is assigned to acts and products by what we may call qualification rules; these are rules such as "This inscription is a sentence of the English language with such and such a grammatical structure," "This is an act of reciting such and such a poem," "This is an act of moving a chess pawn from *e2* to *e4*." The rest of the rules of cultural interpretation — the secondary rules of cultural interpretation — "refine" the picture provided by general meaning. They take the form of sentences such as: "This pawn move from *e2* to *e4* is a first move" or "This first chess move with the pawn from *e2* to *e4* opens the way for the bishop on *f1*."

The more secondary rules of cultural interpretation a cultural competence includes, the more refined meaning one can assign thanks to it to particular acts or products. Bear in mind, however, that even the most refined meaning is still a global meaning; many various acts can be chess moves, first chess moves and first chess moves opening the way for the bishop on *f1*, even if the classes in question are getting progressively smaller.

Let us call a system of rules of cultural interpretation containing the subsystem of qualification rules that ascribe the same global meaning to a particular class of acts (products) a cultural system.[8] The system of language acts (or, from the perspective of products, language), the system of a given type of ritual acts, the system of artworks, the system of literary works, the system of visual artworks, musical artworks, etc. are all examples of cultural systems.

Every rational act directed toward understanding governed by the rules of cultural interpretation will be called a cultural act and its product will be called a cultural object.

Note that these are restricted concepts of a cultural act and cultural object. For example, they do not, in the usual case, cover the modern activity of farming or its products. For, usually, the acts involved in modern-day farming are not directed toward understanding (at least not from the European point of view). It is possible to construct broader concepts of a cultural act and cultural object — ones that would cover farming and its products. Such concepts would surely mesh with common usage ("agriculture"). However, we are not interested here in such broader notions, so in what follows we use the terms "cultural act" and "cultural object" in

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[8]This notion is characterized in more detail in Kmita, Nowak 1968.

the narrow sense specified above.

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One question that still needs addressing is: Should we accept the following *explicans* of the term "sign:" "a cultural act or object," in the sense defined above, or should we impose on it some further restrictions?

The matter, it seems, is of a purely practical nature. Clearly, among the many uses of the word "sign," one can identify the — rather common — one according to which every act (product) open to interpretation or requiring understanding is called a sign. So, for instance, A. Brodzka writes in "Dyskusja o analizie strukturalnej" [The structural analysis debate]: "The scope of semiotic research is practically unlimited; every human activity signifies something and one can study it under the aspect of communication" (Brodzka 1967: 199).

Whether or not we use the word "sign" to refer to any cultural act or object, we must distinguish a subclass of those acts and objects such that the global meaning shared by all its elements consists in communicating states of affairs.[9] Now, it seems that the most appropriate and least misleading name for this subclass would be "sign," whereas we can refer to elements of its superset using the expressions "cultural act" and "cultural object." Our definitions of these concepts imply that every cultural act as well as every cultural object is amenable to interpretation (understanding), which appeals to the rules of cultural interpretation.

There is an account in Poland according to which all cultural acts, construed in a particular way, are signs and yet, construed in a different way, are not signs. Following L. Vygotsky, proponents of the account in question distinguish between the "psychological" and the "technical" functions of a cultural act ("cultural behavior"). Only some cultural acts, taken under the aspect of their technical function, are signs; these include, for example, most language acts. By contrast, taken under the aspect of their psychological function, all cultural acts are signs: "One and the same outfit is both a technical and a psychological tool. It can be explained in terms of the need it satisfies ('we wear woolen clothes in winter because it is cold outside and wool is a poor conductor of heat'), but it can also be understood as providing information about something other than clothes, something that

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[9]The term "state of affairs" refers to "single" states of affairs (corresponding to simple sentences) as well as to whole structures constructed out of such "single" states of affairs by means of relations such as *s*-implication, *s*-conjunction, temporal succession, etc.

has nothing to do with the 'technical' function — the outfit communicates this information to anyone who looks at it and knows the right code. This information can be about the owner's financial status, his or her prestige, his or her generation, sex, the role he or she is playing (hunter, horseback rider, skier etc.), his or her good or bad intentions" (Brodzka 1967: 78).

According to this account, cultural acts are signs of objective social relations because the so-called syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations that hold between the signs are an "isomorphic" mapping of the system of social relations.

If we gloss over the objection that this account appeals to a virtually nonexistent systematic analysis of relations between the "signifiers," on the one hand, and between the "signified," on the other, and, above all, if we turn a blind eye to the fact that the isomorphism requirement is too strong,[10] it seems that this is a rather interesting — though apparently unintended — attempt at constructing a notion of sign that would be neutral as regards the methodological opposition between natural science and the humanities. That this notion is not purely humanistic is confirmed by the following two considerations: (a) the "signified" is "external" to the agent's knowledge; it is not a subjective (or, especially, intersubjective) picture of what, according to the agent's knowledge, is an "external" reality; (b) in contrast to the "technical" function, which seems to be subjective-teleological in character, the "psychological" function seems to be grounded in some relation of "unconscious expression" (which is also clear from the material we have quoted).

However, what we are interested in is a purely humanistic concept of sign. Of course, a garment can be a sign in the sense of the word we have adopted here, but on the condition that the subject's cultural competence is associated with a cultural system that assigns communicative meaning to clothes. The mere fact that, by looking at an outfit, one can infer (even in a systematized way) something about its wearer does not imply that clothes are a sign in the sense explicated here.

Before providing the final explication of the term "sign," let us discuss briefly an issue we have not dared to broach for fear of making our exposition too complicated. Namely, although we would like to use the term "sign" to refer to any cultural act or object whose cultural meaning is to communicate a particular state of affairs, it is clear that the word also applies to some elements of said acts and objects: these acts or objects do not communicate

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[10]The isomorphism condition can be retained only if one adopts a very optimistic epistemology.

states of affairs on their own, but are such that replacing one of their elements with another (one that is, as a linguist would say, paradigmatically related to it) changes the meaning communicated by the whole act or object. In language, these elements include lexical morphemes, grammatical morphemes and phonemes.

This is why we distinguish between an autonomous sign and a distinctive element of an autonomous sign.

An autonomous sign, relative to cultural system S, is a cultural act or object whose global meaning within S is to communicate a state of affairs.

A sign, relative to cultural system S, is either an autonomous sign (relative to system S) or a distinctive element of an autonomous sign (relative to system S).

We believe that, given this explication of the concept of sign and some additional assumptions, one can revisit and, in some cases, formulate anew various problems from the general methodology of science, the methodology of the humanities, the methodology of studies into art, theory of culture, theory of language, etc. The fruitfulness of these applications would be the standard by which to judge the usefulness of the explication. Here, we restrict our attention to showing some applications of our concept to a single domain, namely the theory of art. To wit, we will assume that:

(A_1) Every artistic creation is a sign in the sense explicated above.

And then we will attempt to show that, given assumption (A_1), one can explicate two important concepts of the theory of art, namely those of symbol and allegory. The explications will be such that their semiotic *explicantia* will have sufficiently precise meaning and be in agreement with the most common linguistic intuitions associated with said concepts.[11]

II. Symbol and Allegory

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We are now going to add three further assumptions to assumption (A_1). They are utterly uncontroversial. The second assumption simply reflects the obvious observation that artistic creations are autonomous signs composed of simpler autonomous signs. Parts of an artwork can communicate certain states of affairs outside of the context provided by the artwork itself (although, outside this context, the communicated meaning is usually

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[11]Of course, the explication of the two concepts merely serves to illustrate how the proposed concept of sign can be used.

modified). Thus, in accordance with the terminology introduced in part I, we say that:

(A_2) Artistic creations are autonomous signs of a higher order.

The third assumption expresses the following. Consider a work of literature and an academic paper. The striking difference is that the latter communicates a complex state of affairs, a structure whose elements of the lowest order are assigned to the distinctive elements of the text, namely predicates, individual terms and logical constants (this assignment is accomplished by the reference relation); in contrast, the structure associated with the text of a work of literature — also expressed through the reference relation — is not identical with the state of affairs communicated by the work. The structure in question is the depicted reality. The depicted reality is somehow related to the state of affairs communicated by a literary work; we use the depicted reality to infer the state of affairs communicated by the work. So, we have here an additional, intermediary element which is not present in an academic paper. Even in the case of a newspaper report that is true to the "facts," when we treat it as a work of literature, we start treating the "facts" related in the article in the same way as we treat the depicted reality. This is why the newspaper report communicates to us more than an ordinary record of "the facts" — it communicates, for example, a certain generalized state of affairs.

It is worth emphasizing that the reference relation associated with an academic paper or a work of literature can be regarded as (more or less) well-defined only relative to a particular system of knowledge. The same goes for specifying the connection between the depicted reality and the state of affairs communicated by a work of literature.[12] This relativization is introduced as soon as we form an interpretative hypothesis as to the communicative meaning of the academic or literary work in question, i.e. a hypothesis identifying the state of affairs communicated by the work. It also follows from what we said earlier that the hypothesis involves assumptions concerning the author's knowledge of the world, since it is on the basis of that knowledge that the academic or literary work achieves its communicative goal. The author's knowledge includes: (1) a substantive component, which

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[12]Strictly speaking, even relative to a given body of knowledge, the reference relation remains ambiguous (more precisely: there is more than one reference relation). This happens because the systems of knowledge that we have are incomplete, so every system of knowledge has a whole class of standard empirical models. More specifically, every sentence corresponds to a whole class of states of affairs. Here, for the sake of simplicity, we assume that every sentence corresponds to a single state of affairs.

goes beyond cultural competence and does not contain any rules of cultural interpretation; this component corresponds — via the reference relation — to those states of affairs that do not belong to the cultural system; and (2) a competence component, consisting of rules of cultural interpretation. In the cases under discussion, the competences are linguistic-academic and linguistic-literary in nature — they enable the author to communicate a state of affairs through a given medium.

The communicated state of affairs can just as well be stated by a sentence from the substantive component as by a sentence from the competence component of the agent's knowledge.

It follows from the above that a work of literature is a two-layered sign (an ordered pair of signs), as it communicates through the depicted reality as well as through the text. By contrast, an academic work is a one-layered sign.

Much the same thing can be said about fine arts, ballet, theater and opera. There may be some doubts concerning music, however. This would require a separate analysis; if its results were to be negative, the following assumption would have to be modified:

(A_3) Artistic creations are two-layered signs.

Note that, while many theorists and art critics would surely accept assumption (A_3), most of them do not distinguish the last two links, or ignore the intermediate element, in the following chain: painting (in Ingarden's sense) — depicted reality — communicated state of affairs. This phenomenon has found expression in the act of distinguishing, within the fine arts, works that are nonrepresentational. We shall discuss this unfounded distinction later and, in the process, shed more light on the justifiability of assumption (A_3).

Generally speaking, then, every work of art consists of: (1) a depicting structure (e.g., the text of a work of literature, a painting), (2) a depicted structure (e.g., the reality depicted in a work of literature), and (3) a communicated structure (the state of affairs communicated by the work).

As we remarked above, there are two kinds of structure communicated by an artistic creation: the structure can be asserted by a sentence from the substantive component of the author's knowledge or from the competence component. Aside from this, one can draw a further distinction between the communicated structures. There can be structures such that the fact of their communication is the global meaning of the work and structures such that the fact of their communication is an individual meaning of the work. In the first case, we interpret (and understand) an artistic creation

only by appealing to some widespread substantive knowledge and a certain common cultural (artistic) competence. In the second case, we also have to rely on additional interpretative hypotheses concerning the artist's individual substantive knowledge or her individual artistic competence. The expression "an individual artistic competence" need not be internally inconsistent; the act of individualizing interpretation, in so far as it is also an act of understanding, produces a new cultural system, represented — initially — by two people: the artist and the critic.

Indeed, by distinguishing artistic creations that possess individual communicative meaning, we make precise expressions such as "an evergreen," "a novel work," "a work of everlasting artistic value," "a work that has outgrown its epoch," etc. Thus, the assumption that

(A_4) Some artistic creations have individual communicative meaning articulates more precisely these common intuitions.

<div align="center">2</div>

Before we continue, let us summarize some of the conclusions we have reached so far.

From the viewpoint of the humanities, an artistic creation is a certain rational act of a higher order (theater, opera, ballet, performance of a musical composition) or the product of such a rational act (literary work, a piece of visual art). Like every rational act or product of a rational act, it is open to interpretation, which is a species of scientific explanation unique to the humanities. Because any artistic creation is a sign, its interpretation consists chiefly in identifying the works' communicative meaning, which is to say, in defining the structure communicated by the work. The structure may be a substantive state of affairs (sometimes an individually constituted one) or a class of artistic interpretation functions, corresponding to the rules of artistic interpretation (the class of "artistic conventions"). If an artistic creation is to realize its meaning, the work's meaning must be understood, or, in other words, the work has to be interpreted and the communicated structure accepted.

In keeping with methodological structuralism, an artistic creation constitutes itself at the moment of its interpretation; no uninterpreted act or object is an artistic creation and, furthermore, there can be no artistic creation without a cultural system whose rules of interpretation would classify the act or object as a work of art.

As a consequence, depicting structure S_1 and depicted structure S_2 constitute themselves relative to: substantive knowledge about the world

$k(W)$, artistic competence $k(C)$ and communicated structure S_3. If we designate the interpreter's knowledge of the corresponding factors (or their semantic correlates) as, respectively, $K(S_1; S_2)$ (the work of art is an ordered pair of signs, a two-layered sign), $K(W)$, $K(C)$ and $K(S_3)$, we can assert that, given our assumptions, the implication

$$K(W) \wedge K(C) \wedge K(S_3) \rightarrow K(S_1; S_2)$$

is a thesis of the interpreter's language, assuming the language contains the rationality assumption. In other words, given the assumption that the artist is rational, the consequent of the implication follows from its antecedent.

Of course, the rationality assumption, applied to the artist, is sometimes a severe idealization. It is therefore worth remarking that the interpretative hypothesis (the antecedent of the implication) can take the form of a historical hypothesis, which is satisfied to a better or worse approximation by the real artist, or of an ahistorical quasi-hypothesis, according to which the artist is a purely instrumental construct that allows one to assign to the work a largely arbitrary meaning structure. It is easily seen that historical hypotheses are used by researchers, whereas critics seem to favor ahistorical quasi-hypotheses.

It also follows from our assumptions that there is an assignment relation between S_1 and S_2, which, in the case of a work of literature, is based on the reference relation; we will later discuss the assignment relation associated with visual artworks. Here we shall define it as a first-order semantic assignment. We shall similarly define the relation between the text of an academic paper and the structure the text communicates. Of course, the relation between the depicting structure and the communicated structure is not a first-order semantic assignment, although the assignment has to obtain between the depicting structure and the depicted structure in order for the relation in question to obtain.

If we now abbreviate "$K(W) \wedge K(C)$" as $K_{W,C}$ we will be in a position to assert that the following is a thesis of the interpreter's language:

$$K_{W,C} \wedge K(S_3) \rightarrow (K(S_1) \rightarrow K(S_2)).$$

And if we also assume that the interpreter individuates depicting structure S_1 up to its semantic type, and we classify two depicting structures as being of the same type if they determine the same structure S_2 (given $K_{W,C}$ and $K(S_3)$), then we can transform our thesis into:

$$K_{W,C} \wedge K(S_3) \rightarrow (K(S_1) \equiv K(S_2)).$$

That is to say, in light of the interpreter's knowledge about the substantive and competence components of the author's knowledge and about the structure communicated by the work, a description of depicting structure S_1 (up to its semantic type) follows from a description of depicted structure S_2 (up to s-equivalences), and a description of depicted structure S_2 (up to s-equivalences) implies a description S_1 (up to its semantic type).

<div align="center">3</div>

Before turning to the problem of the first-order semantic assignment in visual artworks, let us discuss briefly the character of this assignment in a work of literature.[13]

Every sentence of a literary text corresponds to what we call a semantic system. The system's elements include the denotations of the constants in the order of the constants' appearance in the sentence.

This is a characterization of semantic systems corresponding to simple sentences.

1. A simple sentence of the form "$Pa_1, \dots, a_n$" is associated with a semantic system

$$\langle \subset , \{\langle den(a_1), \dots , den(a_n)\rangle\}, den(P)\rangle,$$

where "$\subset$" stands for inclusion and "$\{\langle den(a_1), \dots , den(a_n)\rangle\}$" represents a class whose only element is an n-tuple of the denotations of a_1, $\dots$, a_n, whereas "$den(P)$" represents the denotation of predicate P.

And so the semantic system that corresponds to the sentence "Warsaw is a city" is $\langle \subset , \{\text{Warsaw}\}, \text{class of cities}\rangle$ and the semantic system that corresponds to the sentence "Warsaw lies on the Vistula River" is $\langle \subset , \{\langle \text{Warsaw, the Vistula River}\rangle, \text{the relation of lying on}\rangle$.

2. A simple sentence of the form "Every P is Q" is associated with a semantic system

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[13]This brief discussion is based on Kmita 1967. The notion of a state of affairs is slightly different here.

$$\langle \subset,\ den(P),\ den(Q) \rangle.$$

For example, the semantic system corresponding to the sentence "Every raven is black" is

$$\langle \subset,\ \text{the class of ravens, the class of black objects} \rangle.$$

3. A simple sentence of the form "Some P is Q" is associated with a semantic system

$$\langle \subset',\ den(P),\ den(Q)' \rangle,$$

where "$\subset'$" stands the complement of inclusion. For example, the semantic system corresponding to the sentence "Some ravens are black" is $\langle \subset',$ the class of ravens, the complement of the class of black objects$\rangle$.

The semantic systems we have considered above, corresponding to simple sentences, take one of two forms:

$$\text{I } \langle \subset,\ K,\ L \rangle$$

$$\text{II } \langle \subset',\ K,\ L' \rangle.$$

A system of the form $\langle \subset,\ K,\ L \rangle$ is a state of affairs if and only if $K \subset L$, and a system of the form $\langle \subset',\ K,\ L' \rangle$ is a state of affairs if and only if it is not the case that $K \subset L'$.

It is easy to see that, according to the characterization presented above, semantic systems are states of affairs only in those cases when the sentences that correspond to them by rules of denotation are, given the denotations established by those rules, true.

The system of denotation rules, which assigns denotations to the terms of the language, provides the language with a semantic model. Given a system of empirical knowledge K, we can specify what we call the standard empirical model (for simplicity's sake we assume that there is only one) of a given language with respect to knowledge K. The standard empirical model with respect to knowledge K satisfies the following conditions: (1) the only individuals that belong to the universe of discourse are physical objects, (2) individual terms refer to these objects in the standard manner, and (3) all the sentences comprising knowledge K are true in the model.

Scientific pronouncements, which always presuppose some knowledge K, are formulated in such a way as to come out true in light of knowledge K in the standard empirical model, or, in other words, to state states of affairs in the model. In other words, scientific pronouncements do not feature fictional sentences relative to given knowledge K.

Fictional sentences relative to knowledge K include: (1) contradictory sentences — which are false in every model of the language (in terms of which knowledge K is formulated), (2) non-contradictory sentences that are counter-empirical, or inconsistent with knowledge K, and (3) sentences that are consistent with knowledge K, but contain individual terms that do not refer to any physical objects. It is clear that the denotation rules assigning states of affairs that make up the depicted reality to sentences of a literary text must differ from the standard rules of denotation providing a language with a standard empirical model (with respect to knowledge K). Otherwise fictional sentences, typical of literary texts, would not be associated with any states of affairs, and, as a result, the depicted reality could not "constitute itself." Roughly speaking, the rules of denotation for expressions occurring in a literary text have to provide the language with a semantic model in which all the fictional sentences of the text come out true. Depending on the type of text, such a model is either a model of a modified language and modified knowledge K, or a model of an unmodified language and modified knowledge K, or a model produced by extending the standard empirical model (with respect to knowledge K) in such a way as to populate its universe by some fictional objects. The modification of language and knowledge makes them compatible with the truth of the fictional sentences occurring in the text. We will use the term "fictional states of affairs" to refer to states of affairs that correspond to fictional sentences in the appropriately constructed semantic models. The reality depicted in a literary work is a structure (a relational system) whose elements include particular (mostly fictional) states of affairs that stand for one another in particular relations (e.g., causal or temporal ones).

The structure communicated by the reality depicted in a work of literature — also a relational system with states of affairs as its elements — stands in the following relation to the depicted reality:

Every simple state of affairs in depicted structure (reality) $\langle \subset, K_1, L_1 \rangle$ or $\langle \subset ', K_1, L_1' \rangle$ is associated with a single state of affairs in communicated structure $\langle \subset, K_2, L_2 \rangle$ or $\langle \subset ', K_2, L_2' \rangle$ and the structures involved satisfy the following two conditions: $K_1 \subset K_2$ and $L_1 \subset L_2$, where state of affairs $\langle \subset, K_1, L_1 \rangle$ can correspond to state of affairs $\langle \subset ', K_2, L_2' \rangle$

only if K_1 is a singleton.

For example, depicted state of affairs $\langle \subset$, {Zagloba}, the class of defenders of Zbarazh$\rangle$ (more informally speaking, that Zagloba was one of the defenders of Zbarazh) corresponds to the communicated state of affairs $\langle \subset$ ', the class of Wisniowiecki's soldiers, the complement of the class of the defenders of Zbarazh$\rangle$ (that some of Wisniowiecki's soldiers defended Zbarazh). We see that the following conditions are met: {Zagloba} $\subset$ the class of Wisniowiecki's soldiers and the class of the defenders of Zbarazh $\subset$ the class of the defenders of Zbarahz. In such cases, we shall say that the depicted state of affairs is included in the communicated state of affairs.

Naturally, the relevant inclusions are relative to an appropriately constructed model, not to the standard empirical model (with respect to knowledge K). Otherwise the inclusions of the kind {Zagloba} $\subset$ the class of the defenders of Zbarazh would be guaranteed trivially by the emptiness of the class {Zagloba}. By contrast, states of affairs comprising the communicated structure cannot be fictional: they have to be describable in terms of non-fictional sentences (relative to knowledge K).

This is what the relation between particular depicted states of affairs and the corresponding communicated states of affairs looks like. But, apart from this, generally: if the depicted structure is a relational system $\langle U; R_1, \ldots, R_n \rangle$ (R_i can be a one-place relation, or a class) and the communicated structure is a system $\langle U'; R'_1, \ldots, R'_n \rangle$ then $U \subset U'$, $R_i \subset R'_i$ ($i = 1, \ldots, n$). These inclusions also obtain in the appropriately constructed model of specially modified knowledge K, not in the standard empirical model (relative to empirical knowledge).

<center>4</center>

We have attempted to show the character of first- and second-order semantic assignments in works of literature, using the example of simple sentences and their corresponding states of affairs. The problem of the semantic assignment applied to the visual arts is much more complicated because, among other things, it has never received systematic treatment.

Let us begin by considering a concrete example: a description of the structure depicted in the painting *Winter* (also known as *Hunters in the Snow*) by P. Breughel the Elder. This is how an art historian writes about it: "We are looking from a hill at a vast valley covered in snow. The ponds are frozen over. Above the horizon, on the left — the sea. In the back, on the right, loom hills crowned with rocky crags. The air is crisp and clear. In the foreground, three hunters descend, followed by a pack of dogs, from the

snowy slope into the valley. Against the light background of the snow, the hunters cut sharp dark figures; the decorative silhouettes of the dogs stand out. The hunters' path is punctuated by black vertical accents of leafless trees whose dry twigs form fine arabesque patterns against the sky. The valley bustles with life: there are skaters on the frozen ponds and black human figures on the roads and around the houses. Far in the background, is a town on the sea. In the foreground, a tavern the hunters and their dogs are passing by. There is a bonfire in front of the houses; people are stewing something over the fire and a child is warming himself by it. Ravens are sitting in the trees. A black bird is gliding toward the valley, clearly visible against the grey shapes of the distant mountains" (Białostocki 1966: 389).

As we see, this is a description of the reality depicted by the painting (the depicted structure) that ignores the depicting structure ("the painting"), although the author of the description seems to suggest something else. As evidence one can cite the fact that the description begins with the phrase "We are looking . . . at a vast valley . . .;" after all, one can look, in the strict sense of the word, only at a "painting," or — the depicting structure.

Now consider the following two systems: $S_1 = \langle \subset, \{\langle$this ellipsoid splash of black paint, this oblong and branching splash of black and white paint$\rangle\}$, the relation of being on$\}$ and $S_2 = \langle \subset, \{\langle$this figure of a black raven, this outline of a branch$\rangle\}$, the relation of being over$\rangle$. System S_1 is an element of the depicting structure of the painting *Winter*, whereas system S_2 is an element of the painting's depicted structure. S_2 is a semantic system corresponding to the simple sentence "This silhouette of a black raven is located over the outline of a branch." It is clear that the relation between the two systems is based on the relation of analogy.

Since the concept of an analogy is far from clear, let us first provide one of its possible explications.

It is usually said than an analogy is a relation obtaining between individual objects, between properties, or between relations. The relation is characterized in such a way as to warrant an explication according to which there is an analogy between two relations R_1 and R_2 just as in the case where there exists relation R_3 such that both R_1 and R_2 are included in R_3. In particular, relation R_3 can be a so-called "formal relation" (Bocheński 1962).

Because the concept of analogy relevant to our purposes is the one obtaining between two structures, it is necessary to generalize the concept of analogy explicated above in order for it to also cover relational systems (structures). We shall say that two relational systems $S_1 = \langle U^1; R^1{}_1, \ldots$

, $R^1{}_n\rangle$ and $S_2 = \langle U^2; R^2{}_1, \ldots, R^2{}_n\rangle$ are analogical, relative to a *tertium comparationis* in the form of system $S_3 = \langle U^3; R^3{}_1, \ldots, R^3{}_n\rangle$, if and only if $U^1 \subset U^3$ and $U^2 \subset U^3$, $R^1{}_1 \subset R^3{}_1$ and $R^2{}_1 \subset R^3{}_1$, and $\ldots$ and $R^1{}_n \subset R^3{}_n$ and $R^2{}_n \subset R^3{}_n$ (Bocheński 1962: 113).[14]

As we can see, an analogy between systems S_1 and S_2 implies the existence of system S_3 such that $S_1 \subset S_3$ and $S_2 \subset S_3$ (in the sense of inclusion of structures specified above). The notion of analogy established by the proposed explication is relative to a third system, which we call *tertium comparationis*.

Returning to the example under analysis, we can now assert that between structures $S_1 = \langle \subset, \{\langle$this ellipsoid splash of black paint, this oblong and branching splash of black and white paint$\rangle\}$, the relation of being on$\}$ and $S_2 = \langle \subset, \{\langle$this figure of a black raven, this outline of a branch$\rangle\}$, the relation of being over$\rangle$, where S_1 and S_2 are, respectively, fragments of the depicting structure and the depicted structure of the painting *Winter*, there is an analogy relative to the following *tertium comparationis*: $S_3 = \langle \subset\,'$, the class of ordered pairs of black raven figures and outlines of branches, the relation of being over$\rangle$.

The analogy we are considering is of a special kind. Before we characterize it more closely, let us distinguish in a general manner several basic kinds of analogy. First of all, we must distinguish between a formal and a substantive analogy. A formal analogy obtains between two systems if they are isomorphic. By contrast, when two systems are analogical, whether or not they are also isomorphic, there is a substantive analogy between them. As we see, the two kinds of analogy are not mutually exclusive: two systems can be both formally and substantively analogical. Note also that a formal analogy is a special case of analogy in the sense specified above. For let $\{S_1, S_2, \ldots\}$ be a class of isomorphic relational systems — we can construct a relational system that is the union of systems $S_1, S_2, \ldots$ (we add up the universes and the other corresponding elements listed in our characterization), which — as it is easy to see — is a *tertium comparationis* for any two isomorphic systems S_i, S_j ($i, j = 1, 2, \ldots$); system S — to generalize J. Bocheński's terminology — can be called a "formal system."

It is understandable that a substantive analogy is much more important than a formal one when works of visual art are concerned. This is why

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[14]The concept of analogy characterized above can be regarded as a generalized one, because it refers to two relations (which can be treated as a special case of relational systems), two properties (one-place relations), as well as n-tuples of individual objects (n-place relations).

we will not discuss the latter any more.

From a different point of view, one can contrast a visual analogy with an abstract one. A visual analogy (in light of knowledge K) obtains between the depicting and depicted structures in a work of visual art when the corresponding *tertium comparationis* is describable[15] in terms of sentences containing only observational terms (in light of knowledge K). It follows from this that every visual analogy is also a substantive analogy, which does not preclude the existence of a formal analogy as well. It is easy to recognize that the analogy we have been considering in connection with the painting *Winter* is a visual analogy.[16]

We can draw a further distinction concerning visual analogies to mark whether or not the depicted structure is describable in terms of non-fictional sentences. In the former case, we have an observational analogy, in the latter — a quasi-observational analogy. The character of the depicted structure is the only difference between an observational analogy and a quasi-observational one. The depicting structure is always observational in character.

Now the problem of how it is possible for a fictional depicted structure (relative to $K_{W,C}$) to be non-trivially included in a non-fictional structure of the *tertium comparationis* is solved in a manner similar to that concerning works of literature: the fictional depicted structure is describable in terms of a fragment of $K_{W,C}$ — a fragment in light of which the structure is not fictional. It is there that the relation of inclusion obtains.

A detailed discussion of this problem, as well as the general problem of semantic assignment (of the first and second orders) in works of visual art, would require a separate study and, especially, a more thorough formal characterization of all three structures involved.

Our analysis of depicted structure descriptions offered by art historians leads to the conclusion that an analogy assigning depicted structure to depicting structure is always as exact as possible. The structure serving as the *tertium comparationis* for such an analogy does not contain another structure that could play the part of a different *tertium comparationis*. So, if

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[15]We use the concept of description as superior with respect to the concept of stating (the denotation of "description" is a superset of the denotation of "statement"): if a sentence describing a state of affairs is non-fictional then that state of affairs is also stated by the sentence.

[16]Note that the *tertium comparationis* with respect to which an analogy obtains can be nomothetic or idiographic in character. For example, a structure of the type $\langle \subset, K, L \rangle$ or $\langle \subset', K, L' \rangle$ is idiographic when class K is spatio-temporally "closed," otherwise it is nomothetic. This distinction is relevant to a precise formulation of differences between realism and naturalism.

we assert that a fragment of the depicting structure represents a raven on a branch then we will not agree that it represents just any bird, any creature, or any physical object, although — obviously — whenever there is an analogy between the given fragment of the structure depicting a raven, the analogy also obtains between the fragment of the structure and an arbitrary bird, creature, object.

Moreover, the way in which the "content" of a work of visual art (communicated state of affairs) is usually characterized clearly indicates that the *tertium comparationis* with respect to which there is a maximum analogy between depicting and depicted structures is in most cases identifiable with the structure communicated by the artwork. And since, as we have assumed, the depicted structure is constituted by an interpretation that assigns to it communicative meaning, it follows from the above that, in most cases, the principle of maximum analogy allows us to assign communicative meaning to the work and the depicted structure to the depicting structure. The principle of maximum analogy usually obtains even when the connection between depicting structure and depicted structure is based on an abstract analogy.

The case of the *tertium comparationis'* of a maximum analogy being different from the work's communicated structure will be discussed later. We can now assert, at any rate, that second-order semantic assignment, or the assignment of depicted structure to depicting structure, in a work of visual art is much the same as in the case of works of literature (at least when the *tertium comparationis* is identical with communicated structure): namely, the depicted structure is included in the communicated structure. The chief difference is that, whereas in the case of a work of visual art the analogy underlying first-order semantic assignment serves also as the basis for second-order semantic assignment, in the case of a work of literature first-order semantic assignment is grounded in the reference relation.[17]

Of course, the principle of maximum analogy cannot guarantee that the first-order semantic assignment in works of visual arts be unambiguous (in practice, more or less approximately unambiguous); artistic competence needs to be involved as well. What is more however — it seems to be an obvious fact for every sociologist of culture that the spectator would not even be able to recognize the analogy between depicting and depicted structures without having some artistic competence (K_C); usually substantive knowledge alone (K_W) does not suffice. This is especially true of works of

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[17]Which is in no conflict with the fact that in the case of literary works the analogy between depicting structure (the text) and depicted structure also plays an important part; the suggestion seem especially true about works of poetry.

art involving an element of "deformation."

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We should emphasize that it is no accident that art historians do not use notions related to abstract analogy, and especially theoretical analogy, which we will discuss presently. So far, art history has not produced any theories, in the strictest sense of the word; instead of theories, there are various intuitive and metaphorical suggestions. The same goes for many more methodologically mature fields of study; most theories in such fields are far from complete and large parts of every theory are reconstructed only hypothetically. This lack of serious methodological reflection in the theory of art has led theorists of art to ignore the distinction between the observational and the theoretical, so when discussing the notion of analogy, they only see the more "palpable" observational analogy and do not consider analogies based on theoretical knowledge, or, more generally, on abstract knowledge.

We characterize the notion of abstract analogy as follows: in light of knowledge K, there is an abstract analogy between structures S_1 and S_2, relative to the *tertium comparationis* S_3, if S_2 in not describable in the language of knowledge K solely in terms of observational sentences (relative to K).

It follows from this characterization that specific simple sentences that state particular states of affairs comprising S_3or asserting the existence of specific relations between those states of affairs have to feature some theoretical (unobservational) terms.

Just like in the case of visual analogy we can appeal here to the fictional vs. non-fictional character of structure S_2, and thereby distinguish between theoretical and quasi-theoretical analogies.

Abstract analogies play the same part with respect to first- and second-order semantic assignment as do visual analogies. As an illustration, let us use the well-known painting by Malevich entitled *Black Square*.

Let S_1 be the following fragment of the depicting structure: $\langle \subset ,$ $\{\langle$this square surface of black paint, this square surface of white paint$\rangle\}$, the relation of being on$\rangle$. The corresponding fragment of depicted structure S_2 can be established as follows: $\langle \subset , \{\langle$this black surface, this white surface$\rangle\}$, the relation of movability of planes$\}$ (the phrase "the relation of movability of planes" refers to the relation consisting in the distance between the two planes constantly changing). This choice of S_2 is justified by appeal to the following *tertium comparationis* S_3: $\langle \subset ,$ the relation between black surface

and white surface, the relation of being perceived as changing in relative distance⟩.

It should be added that we have only considered a fragment of the depicting structure of Malevich's painting, which is why we only identified a fragment of its depicted and communicated structures.

At first blush, it may seem that an abstract analogy occurs — as a basis for first- and second-order semantic assignment — only in so-called abstract art. In fact, however, this is not the case: abstract analogies have always played an important part in non-abstract art in general, a in traditional art in particular. Moreover, positive assessments of classic artworks formulated by art historians are usually motivated, more or less consciously, by an appreciation of factors constituting the depicted space and communicating particular spatio-temporal relations. These factors occur in the depicted structure because they have been assigned to elements of the depicting structure by abstract analogy.

Since abstract analogies co-establish first- and second-order semantic assignments in pieces of visual art, even artworks regarded as abstract in character (in which visual analogy is of little significance) have both depicted and communicated structure. Hence, describing these works as "non-representational" is misleading.

6

The remarks above, which give a sketchy characterization of first- and second-order semantic assignments in works of literature and visual art, have set the stage for the following question: Does the relation between the symbol and the meaning communicated by the symbol obtain in the framework of semantic assignment of the first or second order? Having subjected various pronouncements about symbols to a close examination, we believe that the word "symbol" has two essentially distinct meanings. In its first meaning, the relation between symbol and communicated meaning occurs in the context of semantic assignment of the first order, whereas in its second meaning — of the second order.

A classic example of the first way of construing the meaning of the word "symbol" is the one present in C. S. Peirce's theory of signs; he divides signs into: icons, indices and symbols. Icons stand for particular objects because of some shared properties — or, in other words, because there is an analogy between the iconic sign and the object it stands for. The analogy involved is almost always observational (though Peirce misleadingly

talks about analogy in general). Indices are symptoms of objects they represent. And symbols are "conventional" in character; they include linguistic expressions (onomatopoeias are both symbols and icons).

It is easy to see that symbols, in this sense, belong to the semantic assignment of the first order. Indeed, they are "conventional" in character, whereas symbols in the second sense belong to the semantic assignment of the second order and are not "conventional."

Because in what follows we will only be interested in the notion of symbol in its second sense — which is more frequently employed in research into art (though equally often conflated with the notion of symbol in the first sense) — let us quote some pronouncements that make use of this notion of symbol. Let us stress that it is closely associated with the notion of allegory, which is used in a much more uniform manner than the term "symbol," for it only appeals to second-order semantic assignment.

This is what we read about symbol and allegory in *Reallexicon zur Deutsche Kunstgeschichte*:

"An allegory is a representation in which a non-visual conceptual or mental content (e.g., justice) is represented by means of imagery. It is not easy to distinguish allegorical from symbolic representations. Nonetheless, the two should not be equated — even if they often are. We see symbolism in its purest form in cases where simple, usually object-like forms serve as substitutes for higher and more general contents because of some shared rationally intangible, essential qualities . . . The capacities of symbolic representations to express content are both different and incomparably more extensive than the expressive capacities of allegorical representation . . . Symbolic and allegorical representations merge together when, through the process of rationalizing its content, an initially symbolic image becomes open to didactic interpretation." Allegories are often described as ". . . fantastic representations that lay no claim to empirical probability . . . An allegory is naturally grounded in language; every noun carries a seed of personification; every metaphor suggests an image. The content of an allegory in fine art is usually derived from these and many other forms of linguistic expression . . ." (Held 1937: 317).

Note, above all, that the "allegorical representation" ("symbolic representation") described in the quotation can be understood either as a situation (a state of affairs) or as a thing (an object). For reasons that will soon become clear, we explicate this "representation" as a certain situation. Here are the most significant claims suggested by the quotation above; we express them in terms of the conceptual apparatus we introduced earlier:

A. Both an allegorical and a symbolic situation are represented states of

affairs (featuring in the depicted structure).

B. Both an allegorical and a symbolic situation are fantastic in character: the sentences that describe them are not only fictional, but also incompatible with the nomothetic component of contemporary knowledge (hence their lack of "empirical probability").

C. The predicates featuring in sentences describing an allegorical or symbolic situation are observational in character ("the conceptual content of an allegory is expressed by means of imagery").

Claims A — C list the shared properties of allegorical and symbolic situations, whereas the following theses contrast them:

a. The state of affairs communicated by an allegorical situation is uniquely assigned to it (an allegory expresses its "content" completely, there is no room for further interpretation); symbolic situations lack this property ("the capacities of symbolic representations to express content are incomparably more extensive").

b. The state of affairs communicated by an allegorical situation is discursive in character: it consists of denotations of particular expressions belonging to a given, commonly used language ("an allegory is naturally grounded in language"); symbolic situations lack this property.

c. A symbolic situation is transformed into an allegorical situation when people begin interpreting the situation by assigning to it a particular discursive state of affairs as the state of affairs communicate by the situation (the "content" of "an initially symbolic image" becomes "rationalized").

Claim A is self-evident, so we are going to cite several pronouncements alluding to claims B and C.

"The symbolized motif always appears in new associations: once in rational, once in irrational mental combinations; thus, in partly conscious and partly unconscious associations of ideas; in various individual experiential combinations, which constantly confer different meaning to identical objective sensations" (Hauser 1958: 49) ". . . the external, visible part of a symbol must be a concrete image of the world experienced through the senses, so that it will have a clear and ordinary meaning even for those who are not going to seek in it any profound significance . . . behind this concrete image

lie vast horizons of the hidden, eternal, immutable and inconceivable essence of things" (Przesmycki 1894: lxviii).

The last two quotes emphasize the property of a symbolic situation which is often somewhat misleadingly called its "double layeredness," "indirectness." The elements of a symbolic situation — the properties and relations — are recognized by the interpreter whether or not she is aware of the symbolic meaning of the situation; establishing this meaning involves an additional hypothesis that further structuralizes these recognized elements. This "indirectness" of a symbolic situation is secured by claims B and C: recognition of particular elements of a symbolic situation involves observational knowledge (claim C), but the meaning communicated by the symbolic situation is not describable in terms of that knowledge because, as a whole, the situation is fantastic in character (it is incompatible with the nomothetic part of that knowledge — claim B).

The unambiguity of the meaning communicated by an allegorical situation and the ambiguity of the meaning communicated by a symbolic one are stressed by the following pronouncements: "To name an object is to take away three-fourths of the pleasure given by a poem. This pleasure consists in guessing little by little: to suggest it, that is the ideal" (Mallarmé 1956: 869). That is the ideal of S. Mallarmé, an eminent symbolist. Goethe writes in a similar vein, contrasting symbolism with allegory: "Symbolism transforms an object of perception into an idea, the idea into an image, and does it in such a way that the idea always remains infinitely operative and unattainable so that even if it is put into words in all languages, it still remains inexpressible" (Goethe 1998, 1112, 1113). E. von Sydov (1928: 28) and A. Hauser (1958: 47) write about the "ambiguity" of symbols and their "variable interpretability." S. Skwarczyńska also stresses this difference between a symbolic and an allegorical situation: "We talk about allegory when the represented object evokes a superstructure with a uniquely defined content."

The represented object ". . . has to have such a form as to irresistibly evoke that and only that interpretation" (Skwarczyńska 1954: 306). The authors of *Zarys teorii literatury* [An Outline of Literary Theory], M. Głowiński, A. Okopień-Sławińska and J. Sławiński write: An allegory occurs "when some linguistic sign or some object is always substituted for some concept . . . nothing of that sort happens when a symbol is involved; a symbol directs us toward the represented object, or suggests it, but never completely replaces it" (Głowiński, Okopień-Sławińska, Sławiński 1962: 117).[18]

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[18]Note, by the way, that by including "linguistic expressions," the authors do not

It is easy to see that almost all the authors we have quoted associate thesis a (about the "unambiguity" of allegorical situations and the "ambiguity" of symbolic situations) with thesis b (about the linguistic expressibility of the meaning communicated by the former and the linguistic inexpressibility of the meaning communicated by the latter). Thesis c is rather historical in character, although the transformation it characterizes can always be explained in terms of theses a and b.

<div align="center">7</div>

Claims A — C and theses a — c will serve as a criterion of adequacy for the explications of the terms "allegorical situation" and "symbolic situation." The explications should imply these claims and theses.

An allegorical situation, relative to $K_{W,C}$, is a depicted state of affairs that jointly satisfies the following three conditions: (1) the sentence described in terms of $K_{W,C}$ contains only observational predicates (relative to $K_{W,C}$), (2) the sentence is fantastic in character (inconsistent with the nomothetic component of K_W), (3) the meaning communicated by the situation has a global meaning, determined by a competence from K_C.

A symbolic situation differs from an allegorical situation only with respect to condition (3): the meaning communicated by the situation is individual in character — not determined by any competence from K_C.

It seems that it might be useful to define the following concept:

A symbol or allegory in the narrow sense — relative to $K_{W,C}$ — is any distinctive element of a symbolic or allegorical situation (relative to $K_{W,C}$) such that replacing it with a different, paradigmatically equivalent element (e.g., the property of being a lion with the property of being a kangaroo) causes the situation to lose its symbolic or allegorical character (relative to $K_{W,C}$).

A disjunction of the concept of a symbolic situation and the notion of symbol in the narrow sense is equivalent to the concept of a symbol in the wider sense. Likewise for an allegorical situation and allegory in the wider sense. Note that art theorists frequently conflate the elements of both series: symbolic situation, symbol in the narrow sense, symbol in the wider sense; allegorical situation, allegory in the narrow sense, allegory in the wider sense.

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distinguish between the two kinds of semantic assignment we have identified. In consequence, every linguistic expression with an established meaning is allegorical in character.

It is obvious that the explications of "allegorical situation" and "symbolic situation" imply claims A — C, so let us examine briefly whether they also imply theses a and b.

The fact that an allegorical situation is associated with a uniquely defined communicative meaning (the state of affairs it communicates) is guaranteed by condition (3) of the explication; the rules of cultural interpretation included in competence C specify this meaning unambiguously and the assignment is uniform for all members of the community using the cultural system in question. At the same time, the non-uniqueness of the assignment of communicative meaning to a symbolic situation also follows from condition (3) of the (corresponding) explication: the communicative meaning can only be reconstructed in a hypothetical mode, by trying various interpretative hypotheses, which may in time form the basis for new rules of cultural interpretation (see thesis c).

Condition (3) of the explication of "allegorical situation" also implies that the state of affairs communicated by the situation is discursive in character (thesis b); this is because rules of cultural competence must appeal to a body of substantive knowledge (K_W) accepted at a given time, in terms of which the corresponding state of affairs can be stated. By analogy, the fact that the meaning communicated by a symbolic situation is not uniquely defined (the second part of thesis b) follows from condition (3) of the explication of "symbolic situation." According to this condition, the communicated meaning is individual in character, which is to say it is not covered by rules of cultural competence. One can only reconstruct it in hypothetical mode and the choice between various interpretative hypotheses is largely arbitrary: every hypothesis that explains the depicted structure (and organizes it) is acceptable.

The range of acceptable interpretations of a symbolic situation and the extent to which these interpretations are underdetermined are considerable, given that the fantastic character of the situation in question (condition (2) of the explication). Hence, the part of our nomothetic knowledge, concerning regularities in the domain of observable phenomena (condition (1) of the explication), that is compatible with the symbolic situation may not be sufficient for us to discover the symbolic situation's communicated meaning. Indeed, this is often the case. More often than not, the whole nomothetic knowledge that is not "cast into doubt" by the symbolic situation is also not enough. So, as a result, we are forced to reconstruct the meaning communicated by the symbolic situation by appealing to some new knowledge, which is sometimes incompatible with the received knowledge $K_{W,C}$. If this new

knowledge never gains currency (never becomes assimilated into a cultural system) then the meaning communicated by the symbolic situation will never be fixed; the symbolic situation will never be transformed into an allegorical one. This is Goethe's ideal and, above all, Mallarmé's.

From among many consequences of the proposed explications, relative to the assumptions we have adopted, let us select one more.

Since the depicted structure constitutes itself only at the moment of defining the artwork's communicative meaning, it follows that the same goes for symbolic and allegorical situations. The structure of an allegory is given immediately, as it were, owing to the rules of cultural competence (this is why the fantastic character of an allegory never causes the interpreter any problems and why many authors stress its "conventional" character, so that its interpretation does not involve substantive knowledge), by contrast, a symbolic structure has "a Janus face:" it is as indeterminate and changeable as the hypotheses we appeal to when interpreting it. Note further that, in the case of visual artworks, both situations are only partially structured — given their fantastic character — by appeal to visual analogy; this analogy allows us to recognize certain distinctive elements of a situation, but does not provide us with the structure of the situation as a whole (be it allegorical or symbolic in character). It follows from this that the meaning communicated by the situation, allowing us to discover the structure of the situation, is different here from the analogy's *tertium comparationis*. The fact that when interpreting an allegorical or symbolic situation we largely abstract away from its depicting structure, whose role is essentially restricted to determining particular elements of the depicted structure (by appeal to the *tertium comparationis*), explains why many theorists disapprove of (broadly construed) "symbolism" in the visual arts. The artist creating such works does not compel the spectator to enrich his or her artistic competence as far as "pure painting" is concerned.

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