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Linguacultural Study of Signs and Symbols

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ABSTRACT

It is shown that F. de Saussure, regardless of C. Peirce, distinguished three classes of linguistic signs corresponding to the triad "symbols - icons - indexes" by Pierce. The meaning of the lexeme symbol in general (non-special) use is relatively close to the philosophical and aesthetic ideas about the symbol traditional in European culture, but it differs significantly from the meaning of this term in C. Pierce's semiotics. The expediency of the analytical interpretation of the semantics of the term symbol in the special literature is shown.

Keywords: symbols, icons, indexes, systematic approach, language signs, lexical meaning, encyclopedic dictionaries, non-technical contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper proves that F. de Saussure independently from Ch. Piers distinguished between three classes of language signs according to Piers's triad "symbols - icons - indexes". The meaning of the lexeme symbol in common (non-special) usage is near to traditional in European culture philosophical and aesthetical notions of symbol, but it differs radically from the meaning of this term in Piers's semiotics. The author argues that it is sensible more analytically comprehensive of the term symbol in special language.

Literature review

On the value of analytical reviews. In an article published in this issue of the journal, A.A. Romanovskaya presents an understanding of the lexeme symbol in various humanitarian disciplines - semiotics, linguistics, literary theory, as well as in everyday consciousness.

Organizing this kind of data is useful in at least two ways:

1) as a necessary stage in the self-education of the author who studies the semiotic aspects of knowledge representation and/or means of communication;

2) as an analytical review of different points of view on a bunch of fundamental concepts for a certain discipline (or at least on one of them; however, a "bundle" (in other words, a systematic approach) is obviously preferable).

In philology, a professionally written analytical review, a recognized scientific genre, is so in demand that publications of this kind are sometimes paid (in any case, this happens more often with reviews than with journal articles of other genres).

Analysis

The value of analytical reviews is proportional to the completeness of the bibliography, the representativeness of quotations, the author's ability to see and show the reader the essence of the matter. It is clear that the limitation of the volume of articles in the journal "Vesnik BDU" narrows the possibilities of representative analytics, but the author has the right to look for a publication suitable for his topic. Often, an analytical review develops into the formulation of the author's own concept on the topic.

If we talk about the value of individual author's theories for the reader, then this is another critical point: the reader is interested in such a presentation in which the author clearly distinguishes between "foreign" and "own" (i.e., does not replace the presentation of other people's points of view with their interpretations or assessments) and at the same time explicates not only his disagreement with his predecessors, but also his dependence on them. In the work of A.A. Romanovskaya analysis of opinions about the symbol is combined with their interpretation and

presentation of the author's understanding of the issue. My discussion notes are related to the fact that the article, in my opinion, lacks analyticity in the presentation of fundamentally different understandings of the lexeme (and term) symbol.

A mixture of non-terminological and special understanding of the lexeme symbol. In linguistics, from the works of Potebnya and Shcherba, it has long been customary to distinguish between the content of the lexical meaning of a word and the content of the scientific concept designated by the term. A.A. Potebnya, this distinction is presented as an opposition between the "nearest" and "further" meanings of the word, in L.V. Shcherba - "naive (philistine)" and "scientific" concepts, L.S. Vygotsky - "everyday" and "scientific" concepts.

Later, when attention was shifted "from elements to the system", this distinction appeared as an opposition of different "pictures of the world" – "ordinary" and "scientific" consciousnesses (in the late L. Wittgenstein); at the Moscow Semantic School Y.D. Apresyan - as a distinction between a "linguistic picture of the world" (a synonymous term is a naive picture of the world) and a "scientific picture of the world". The difference between the content of the lexical meaning of the word and the content of the scientific concept is especially prominent when the word of the common language and the term are homonymic (in such cases, the term, especially if it is not a borrowing, goes back to the "spun off" meaning of the ordinary word).

This difference is easy to see if we compare the interpretation of the lexical meaning of such a word (for example, rainbow) in a general dictionary, designed to determine precisely the meanings of words, and in terminological or encyclopedic dictionaries, which define the concepts behind the terms. So, according to the general dictionary, "a rainbow is multi-colored arcuate strip on the firmament, formed as a result of the refraction of the sun's rays in raindrops". The semantic "scissors" between the lexical meaning of the word (which is generally closer to ordinary visual-sensory ideas about the named phenomena) and the content of the concept behind the homonymous term is the more significant and deeper, the more special the corresponding field of knowledge or activity has. The terminology of the humanities (compared to the terms of the natural sciences, mathematics or the latest technologies) is generally closer to the common language, however, even here there are discrepancies ("scissors") between the meaning of the word in the common language and the content of the homonymous term in the system of concepts of specific specialized knowledge. This is easy to see if we compare the interpretation of such lexemes as sound (speech), book, metaphor, myth, image, sentence, symbol, tale, word, style, plot, etc., in a general dictionary with definitions of the corresponding concepts in encyclopedia or in the dictionary of terms. In the article by A.A. Romanovskaya does not take into account the differences between the content of the lexical meaning and the content of the concept.

Meanwhile, in relation to the word symbol (in non-specialized language) and the semiotics term symbol, these differences are especially important, since here they are sharp: the word and the term in this case differ denotatively - in the very scope of the designated concepts (not to mention their content). In the general language, the word symbol has a broad meaning: it is "an object, action, etc., serving as a symbol for a concept, idea". In some non-technical contexts, a symbol is "almost" the same as a sign; this proximity is reflected in the newest general dictionary: "a symbol [is] that which serves as a conventional sign of some concept, phenomenon, idea".

In semiotics, the term symbol has a special, "Peirceian" meaning developed by the American philosopher and psychologist Ch. Pierce, who is recognized as the founder of modern semiotics. Peirce distinguished three classes of signs depending on the nature of the connection between the form and content of the sign - signs-indexes (or symptoms), signs of copy (or icons) and signs-symbols. The class of symbols includes elementary signs with a conventional (unmotivated) connection between the signifier and the signified, in contrast to the signs-indices motivated by contiguity ("metonymically") and the iconic signs motivated by similarity ("metaphorically").

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2. DISCUSSION

The conceptual analysis of the semantics and compatibility of these lexemes reveals the features of the corresponding concepts (i.e., units of the language picture of the world), which make it possible to distinguish between the concepts of 'symbol' and 'sign', 'symbol' and 'image', etc., precisely as linguistic, and not as terms-concepts of this or that semiotic theory.

N.D. Arutyunova in the book "Language and the World of Man" explicates these differences as follows.

1. Sign and symbol refer to different areas of life and different types of activities. "The symbol determines the program of action and creates a model of behavior; he is always elevated above man; the sign serves in the hands of a person as an instrument of communication and regulation of practical actions. A sign corresponds to an external motivation in relation to a person, a symbol - an internal moral conviction.

2. "A symbol (like an image) creates a general behavioral model, a sign regulates specific actions. Therefore, they talk about road signs, but not about *road symbols. Signs regulate movement along terrestrial, water and air routes, symbols lead along the roads of life, the meaning of a sign, unlike a symbol, should be not only conventional, but also specific. It is naturally. Otherwise, the instruction contained in the sign cannot be executed. Losing clarity, the sign becomes a sign. Signs require understanding, symbols and signs require interpretation. Therefore, "signs are conventionalized; symbols are canonized.

3. "The symbol is non-addressable and non-communicative. It rarely enters the semiotic system. A symbol and even an image are closer to thinking - artistic, mythical, religious, a sign - to communication.

4. "A sign and a symbol are capable of different "criminal" actions: a sign can lie; a symbol can deceive. In a symbol one can be deceived, in a sign one can make a mistake. The sign cannot be arbitrarily falsified: the recipient's reaction is programmed by him quite unambiguously. The symbol is powerful, but defenseless. It, like the image, is easy to falsify. In the symbol, and not in the sign, demagoguery is born. Only etiquette hypocrisy can manifest itself in a sign.

"Becoming a symbol means acquiring a function that powerfully dictates the choice of life paths and behavior patterns" and thereby determines the life of a person or a group of people. "The increase in "power" goes to the detriment of the content of the symbol. It becomes general and nebulous." However, in comparison with the sign, the symbol is less communicatively oriented: "The symbol is influential, but not communicative". The quoted excerpts from the book of N.D. Arutyunova are called, firstly, to show that the usual semantics of "semiotic" words and the "crystallizing" on its basis the "similar" concepts of the language picture of the world form a subject that is remarkably interesting for different branches of humanitarian knowledge; secondly, to show that the content of linguistic concepts does not belong to the professional reflection of semiotics, in general, not to scientific concepts, but to the linguistic picture of the world, its fragment, in this case, "naive semiotics". About the imaginary irreconcilability between Peirce's semiotics and Saussure's iconic concept of language. In the work of A.A. Romanovskaya, including in the summary of the article, more than once refers to the "sharp" difference in the interpretation of the concept of "symbol" between Peirce and Saussure. However, are the semiotic approaches really so "irreconcilable" between the two classics of semiotics? I think that in this case it is useful

to take into account a number of historical circumstances. First, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) were unaware of each other's work and semiotic ideas and therefore did not argue with each other, even if across the ocean.

Secondly, Peirce and Saussure belonged to different cultural and terminological traditions, so Saussure could not have known about Peirce's three classes of signs and his particular use of the term symbol. Thirdly, and most importantly, they wrote about quite different subjects: Pierce - about the semiotics of knowledge, primarily scientific and philosophical; Saussure - about the sign nature of one of the semiotics (the one that Peirce touched least of all) - about the sign nature of language. By and large, the semiotic ideas of Peirce and Saussure, innovative for their time, were consonant in the main thing: in understanding the sign nature of all forms of communication and all forms and types of cognitive activity.

Saussure considered "semiology" (as he proposed to call the science of signs) part of social psychology, and linguistics - part of semiology. "For us, the problems of linguistics are, first of all, semiological problems... Whoever wants to discover the true nature of language must first of all pay attention to what it has in common with other systems of the same order".

Saussure pointed out three properties of a linguistic sign of "paramount importance":

1) its "arbitrariness" (or "arbitrarity"), that is, the conditionality, conventionality of the word;
2) linearity of the signifying language sign;
3) "immutability and variability" of the sign.

Considering unmotivated signs to be predominant in the language, Saussure at the same time names two main classes of linguistic phenomena that are characterized by motivation: onomatopoeia and interjections.

However, Saussure considers these exceptions to be small: the principle of the arbitrariness of the sign "subdues the entire linguistics of the language; the consequences of it are incalculable". Saussure could not have known the terms that Peirce used to designate the three main classes of signs (indices, copies, symbols). However, in fact, Saussure, independently of Peirce, singled out the same three classes of signs, but saw them precisely in the language, pointing out the main linguistic phenomena that belong to each class of signs. This distinction of Saussure is now generally accepted. The first and largest class of linguistic signs, according to Saussure, are arbitrary (or arbitrary) signs, i.e., having no natural motivation (in Peirce's terminology, these are signs-symbols); Saussure referred to the second class onomatopoeia, i.e., signs based on the similarity of the signifier and the signified (in Peirce's terms, these are icon signs); in the third class, Saussure included interjections, i.e., signs, where there is a metonymic "adjacency" of form and content (in Peirce's terms, these are index signs); in modern linguosemiotics, non-grammatical components of intonation and the so-called "shifters" (pointers woven into the situation of communication) are also referred to as indices.

Saussure did not bother to terminologically consolidate his classification of linguistic signs, which does not prevent us from seeing its complete consonance with the Pierce triad. I think Peirce could only dream of the linguistic concretization of his doctrine of signs, which Saussure actually carried out. Pierce wrote: "The symbols increase in number. They develop from other signs, especially iconic or mixed signs that share the nature of icons and symbols". Saussure pointed out not only the predominance of unmotivated signs in the language, but also the tendency of onomatopoeic and interjectional motivations to fade over time. For example, Saussure writes, in the French name for the dove (pigeon), in contrast to its Latin source, their common onomatopoeic etymon is no longer felt; this, according to Saussure, is: "an obvious proof that onomatopoeia has lost something of its original character and acquired the property of a linguistic sign in general, which, as already indicated, is unmotivated". Philosophical and aesthetic meaning of the word symbol. It is difficult to say whether Peirce had polemical motives to ascribe to the term symbol a meaning that was fundamentally different from that common in contemporary European cultural tradition to Peirce. However, there is no doubt that this discrepancy, whether accidental or intentional, made it difficult to accept Peirce's term symbol into the terminological convention of the humanities. The use of this term by Pierce corresponded to the most ancient understanding of the symbol in Europe, which is read by Aristotle in the treatise "On

Interpretation": "Words expressed by sounds are symbols of representations in the soul, and letters are symbols of words". Later, in European aesthetics and philosophy, symbols began to be seen as signs motivated and at the same time carrying an important, significant, sometimes inexhaustible and even transcendental content. Similar ideas about the symbol developed in romanticism and especially in symbolism; in a reduced and blurred form, they live in the linguistic concept 'symbol'. Saussure uses the term symbol in accordance with the European tradition, but without symbolist exaggerations of the significance of symbols in cognition. This meaning of the term symbol remains the main one in aesthetics and literary criticism.

On the term symbol in semiotic literary criticism Y.M. Lotman. Lotman uses the word symbol in the traditional philosophical and aesthetic sense, but at the same time, in the spirit of Pierce, symbols are opposed to iconic signs. Lotman, like Pierce and Saussure, sees "the fundamental property of the word as a linguistic sign" in "the unconditionality of the connection between the planes of expression and content", however, unlike Peirce, he does not call this "unconditionality" symbolism. He seems to be hesitant to accept Peirce's use of the term symbol, but, as it seems, only to prevent the homonymy of the literary understanding of the word symbol and the semiotic term symbol. According to Lotman, the property of iconicity appears along with the creation of artistic images from linguistic material. "Verbal art begins with attempts to overcome the fundamental property of the word as a linguistic sign - the unconditional connection between expression and content planes - and build a verbal artistic model, as in the visual arts, according to the iconic principle". Later, Lotman brings significant "artistic images" (or "artistic models") closer to symbols, seeing in them motivated signs (with elements of iconicity); signs highly saturated with meanings ("condensed"); signs that, in relation to other types of signs, act as the main semiotic phenomena: "A symbol differs from a conventional sign by the presence of an iconic element, a certain similarity between the planes of expression and content. the symbol acts as a condenser of all the principles of signness and at the same time leads beyond the limits of signness. He is a mediator between different spheres of semiosis, as well as between semiotic and non-semiotic reality. He is equally a mediator between the synchrony of the text and the memory of culture. Its role is the role of a semiotic condenser".

An example of a differentiated interpretation of the term symbol. Philologists continue to have "confusion and vacillation" in their understanding of the symbol. I will quote from the summary of the article by A.A. Romanovskaya has only a few statements or even just collocations that raise questions. The author talks about the advantages of "considering a symbol based on the main properties of the sign", but it is not clear from the article what A.A. Romanovskaya sees these "main properties"; the author, further, writes "about the relationship of the symbol with other units of the language", but the symbol is not a unit of the language; the author points out that the symbol is characterized by "an extraordinary concentration of its content, which brings the symbol closer to a metaphor", but it is not clear, firstly, how the degree of content concentration can be assessed and, secondly, why the limit of content concentration is seen in the metaphor.

3. CONCLUSION

Questions and discussions, especially in such an interdisciplinary field of knowledge as semiotics, can be helpful. However, an analytical approach, taking into account the ambiguity and homonymy of terms, including the lexeme symbol, seems to be more promising than mixing different things or prematurely neutralizing differences in reasoning about a symbol in "communication in general" (which the boundless title of A.A. Romanovskaya's article suggests). According to F. de Saussure - a motivated sign, that is, a sign containing a vestige of a natural connection between the signifier and the signified; according to C. Pierce - a sign that refers, on the basis of conventional rules, to the object that it designates. In symbolism, a symbol is often understood as a code of reality that reveals its essence".

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