

TRANSCENDENTAL SCHEMATISM AND QUASI-TRANSCENDENTAL SEMIOTICS:

A WORKING HYPOTHESIS

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In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant states that transcendental is «our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*» (KrV B 25), that is to say, the mode through which «we cognize that and how certain representations [*Vorstellungen*] (intuitions or concepts) are applied entirely *a priori*, or are possible (i.e., the possibility of cognition or its use *a priori*)» (KrV B 80). In the *Prolegomena* he then specifies that the word “transcendental” «does not signify something that surpasses all experience, but something that indeed precedes experience (*a priori*), but that, all the same, is destined to nothing more than solely to make cognition from experience possible» (Kant 2004: 127). Therefore, “transcendental” means both the *that* and *how* of representations possible only in the link between *pure* and *empirical*.

Now, since the transcendental is related to the cognition which is related to judgments, which in turn are possible only through “supreme propositions” [*Grundsätze*], then transcendental seems destined also to the *that* and *how* of language. The problem of synthetic judgments seems in fact the same of the problem of determining meaning of a possible reference to an object from a universal point of view. The issue concerns the formal conditions of possibility of transition from/subsumption of sense to meaning. In other words, the issue concerns the condition of possibility of application of categories of possible meanings to the sense as to what can be known as perception in the space and time. This is where the transcendental doctrine of the faculty of judgment and particularly of the transcendental scheme as sensitive condition under which only the concepts of the intellect can be used comes into play.

The transcendental scheme is «in itself always only a product of imagination» and it is distinct from the image [*Bilde*] (KrV B 179). In particular, the scheme is the *mode* in which imagination gives an image to a concept and such mode is the *scheme* at the basis of the sensible concept [*sinnliche Begriff*]. As Kant writes: «the **schema** of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product and as it were a **monogram** [bold added] of pure *a priori* imagination, through which and in accordance with which the images first become possible, but which must be connected with the concept, to which they are in themselves never fully congruent, always only by means of the schema that they designate» (KrV B 181). The imagination produces something to give a conceptual form to some sensible figures [*Figuren*]. Such something which imagination produces is

a scheme which mediates among empirical intuition, namely objects of experience, and concept, namely determining meaning, and which nature is as it were that of a *complex graphic sign* composed by interwoven letters, namely a monogram. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that *the scheme is the mode of imagination to determine the sense attributing to it a complex sign*, and such complex sign can be seen as the *sense of sign*, namely the mode of presentation of the sensible figures.

However, previous to the application of the rules of schema, which involves the determination of the sense through the sign as the condition for judgment, the process of comprehension, namely the process of interpretation, determination and synthesis of the object through sign should be initiated. Otherwise, we have to presuppose a previous, innate comprehension of the empirical concepts. We have to face here with the question about the conditions of possibility of determination of the sense of the sign. In particular, we have to face with the question about the nature of such conditions: are they related to a formal structure of meaning as concept presupposed to semantical and logical-syntactic nature of signs? Or have we to assume an action which realizes empirically the determination of sense through the production of sign? According to the first approach a transcendental semantics is developed assuming an already developed corresponding theory of meaning to a theory of sign (Hogrebe 1974). According to the second approach the determination of sense is part of a logical-semiotic process in which the rules of determinations of sense and intensionality goes together with the act of construction of complex sign (namely, monogram) as an act of synthesis which mediates between sense and concept. Say differently, a theory of sign is previous to a theory of meaning.

My suggestion is to offer a new solution to the issue raised by Kantian transcendental scheme by intersecting Morris' semiotics and his idea of "sign vehicle" (Morris 1946) with Maddalena's theory of gesture (Maddalena 2015). In particular, I consider *gesture* as a *sign vehicle*, namely a particular *sensible event* that act as synthesis *bearing an identity* between the sensible manifold and the sense of sign. In this regard, I take from Maddalena's idea of gesture as "bearing", "carrying on", "producing", "showing", "representing" something (from latin origin "*gero*") which coincides with a synthesis bearing with it the recognition of an identity between two parts of a transitional experience. As Maddalena puts it, a gesture is «any performed act with a beginning and an end that carries a meaning [...] pragmatically understood as the cluster of conceivable effects of an experience» (Maddalena 2015: 69-70). For the sake of my proposal, however, I modify Maddalena's definition as follows: a gesture is a vehicle sign, namely an act with a beginning and an end that carries a *sense*, and that sense carries some possible knowing effects. The reference to the *sense of sign* is here derived from Frege's distinction between sense and meaning. What in fact

Frege (1960) calls the “*sense* of sign”, namely «the mode of presentation» of the reference (Frege 1960: 57), seems to be very close to Morris’s idea of the relationship between sign and *designatum* or *significatum* (Morris 1938: 23; 1948).

Thus, interweaving Morris’ notion of “sign vehicle” with Maddalena’s notion of “gesture” and with Frege’s notion of “sense of sign” I suggest it is possible to figure out a *quasi-transcendental semiotics*. The adjective “quasi-transcendental” is meant here to point out the hypothetical and fluctuating character of semantic rules. In particular, Morris refers to “variable *a priori*” to express «a set of meanings in terms of which empirical data are approached» in logical analysis. The *a priori* is not static or immutable, it rather «undergoes change through contact with the new data which are encountered through its use, and through changes in human interests and purposes». Every change provides new content to logical analysis «which in turn affect the content and structure of the *a priori*» in a spiral process (Morris 1937: 51). Therefore the *a priori* has to be interpreted as the product of some empirical generalizations, namely regularities transformed through *time* in rules. Such rules functions as criteria of reference for the observability of end-in-view acts.

This perspective of semiotics is ambivalent with a “constitutive” semiotics, in the sense of the Kantian conditions of possibilities not totally logic nor totally empirical of passing from sense to concept – and a “constructive” semiotics. There is no tautological identity, as it is the case for the Kantian transcendental apperception, nor it is related to a sense of meaning as reference. Rather, it refers to the gesture as an act of constructing the sign and its sense as a synthesis bearing an identity between two parts of a transitional experience.

The paper will be developed as follow: I expose the core passages of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* on transcendental schematism, then I refer to Frege’s distinction between sense and meaning and use it for developing in the following part the argument in favor of the notion of gesture as a dynamic “sign vehicle” bringing the sense to sign.