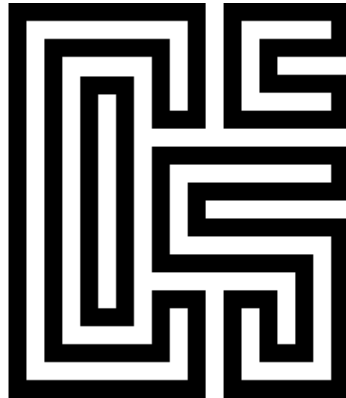


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CENTRO INTERDISCIPLINAR DE SEMIÓTICA DA CULTURA E DA MÍDIA

Open Codification and Cultural Systems



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"Der Mensch, der sonst ständig lernen kann, hat bis heute einige Prägungen seiner Phylogenese - die sich gegenwärtig wieder einmal als lebensgefährdend zeigen - offensichtlich (noch) nicht überwunden. Es ist die Ambivalenz der Codes (der Werte) und ihre prinzipielle Variabilität (wir wissen nur nicht, wie weit sie reicht), worin die Hoffnung liegt." (Ivan Bystrina 1989:125)

The most complex systems we know about probably are cultural systems. They link the inner worlds of dream, consciousness and self-consciousness to the outer worlds. Cultural systems also mediate between the structures of these inner worlds and the inherent biological, physical and ethological structures.

It is evident that cultural systems lack the stringency of technological, biological and ethological systems and often seem to us as being redundant and entropic. Nevertheless any attempt to reduce them in theory or praxis fails (up to modern and postmodern descriptions of *mind* and the neurological interpretations of *brain*).

The validity of our reductions is not sustainable in diachronic perspective and obviously limited in time and space. In spite of this knowledge we have to counterbalance the lacking stringency by establishing ideologies, (social) conventions, economies, repression, subvention, rites of control etc.

This way we tend to produce semiotic and universal patterns negating the provisional nature of our constructions. In this view any given present spacetime is selective by certain criteria and punches in the long run regressive and involuntional tendencies: it operates within a *closed codification*. This presentation will examine the possibilities of *open codification* and its possible impacts on cultural systems and cultural evolution.

While studying living and semiotic structures we detect certain *archeological* and successive but cooperating active strata of coded structures (genetic, ethological, psychic, ethnic/cultural etc.) and the corresponding protective semipermeable membranes (lipoproteid, biological, social, semiotic). The formation of new codes is dependent on the quasi-stability of those osmotic membranes, which functioned as filters between the outer and the inner spaces (the self and the other, the code and the none-code. The none-code means the to be eaten, decoded and within inner spaces of any kind interpreted, de- and/or reconstructed etc. objects.)

This stratification of codes seems to show, that code and membrane are increasingly virtualizing themselves in the run of evolution: they took off from the layer of material reference. On the ethological (social mammals) and ethnic or cultural layers we also meet abstract *social spheres* and *semiospheres* (cf. Lotman 1984) with abstract borders (membranes).

To Arthur Koestler (1978) the so called pedomorphose seemed to be an relapse into the phylogenetic past, used to bypass evolutionary dead ends. It slackens codal stringency by going back to more open forms of codification. His example par excellence are the *holothuroidea*; that is the more or less stationary on the seabed living *cucumaria*. The larvas of these species - in contrast to the adult forms - are able to swim. At one certain point of evolution, as Arthur Koestler states, the *cucumaria* comes out to be an evolutionary dead end. Now some larvas developed sex characteristics to continue evolution, so that we can see us as late descendents of those sexual mature larvas and not of the adult forms. This example shows, how a *closed codification* partially open to give way to an *open codification*.

II

Even Freud's assumption, that we are the descendants of a narrow nosed she-ape, shows in this direction. Assuredly we are some sort of precocious, underdeveloped and subnormal apes, that used a pedomorphose of a particular kind to generate semioses and semiospheres. What Koestler described on the biological level as a pedomorphose, was to Freud (1986:211) a regression on the psychological level. He states that every reflection is a regressive process, without losing its dignity thereby. In the context of his theory of culture he calls for a to be founded metapsychology in order to explain the regressive and creative activities of artists and scientists and their pleasures to do so.

Interpreting Koestler and Freud semiotically we can assume, that every specialized adult condition is a saturated and unconscious state in the sense of evolution. Saturated states lack a codal openness, that is indispensable in producing new cognitive and environmental relations.

Coded change has to be interpreted as a potentiality of the inner spaces where some parts of these codes partially open as processual and process-generating bipolar operating and self-competitive *grip-archetypes* (cf. Thom 1974; 1975), later inducing new forms of membranes (with *grips* [pseudopodia, muzzles, mouths, claws, paws, hands, eyes, 'twinlike double-brains' etc.]), new codes and new accesses to the environment.

III

The sexual active larvae of the cucumaria deceived the systemic adult structure by acting as a sexual bipolar operating code. This new code no more aimed at the former adult state as an integrating "third", but tried to project a new kind of a third. The capacity or the role of the third on a higher level codification comes clear if we compare the placental to the marsupial mammals. Members of both species

possess a brain, that is differentiated into two hemispheres, but the marsupials lack the *corpus callosum*, that bridges the left and the right hemisphere and mediates between them. The direct confrontation of analogous marsupial and placental animals shows a superiority of the placentals, who displaced their marsupial competitors.

Disgusting experiments with humans, where the corpus callosum was cutted - the so-called lobotomy - showed a disintegration of personality. We can assume, that the possibility of higher integration or codification is bound to that corpus callosum. I do not want to defend biologism with this argumentation, because the following organization and structuring of the brain capacities happens within narrative and tropic or graphic forms.

It is true, that the marsupial nervous system and the to it belonging evolutionary old brains are vertically well integrated, but they lack the horizontal integration of the both hemispheres, that our predecessors - the social mammals - had. To them dreaming became a redundant part, first functioning in the sense of Shannon's information theory as a shelter to protect the social and ethological encoded against dissipation. Cats and dogs for example exercise and encode body movements like running and hunting within the sleeping and dreaming phases. But to some of our apelike ancestors these redundant capacities gained a new quality, first to be interpreted as senseless and deviant behavior. Within their dreams a new capacity emerged to deceive the integrated triple level of the ethological community. Now an oscillation between two levels of codification was possible.

IV

I suppose, that this capacity - or at least the phase of transition to other forms of codification - are stored in the worldwide spread twin mythologies. These myth-cycles mark the transition from the former closed to more open and via

mythological codification forward to new closed forms of codification. More exactly: the apparent preceding forms of heroic codification like the trickster-, (hare- and redhorn-) cycles (in the mythologies of the northamerican indians) and the later evolving theisms were reconstructions and reinterpretations of the development of humans as cultural beings. They were constructed by the use of dreamlike forms, mediated by weak and often collapsing forms of codification, similar to the forms that could be found in the oral tradition of fairytales. (Uchtmann 1990ff)

In an exoteric view the twin-myths (e.g. the Winnebago-Indians) mark the shifting from the so called holy (or *waika-*) or dream type of myths to the more profane (or *worak-*) type of myths. It was possible to turn holy (*waika*) myths into profane (*worak*) myths, while a reversion was not possible. The twin-myth is the typical exponent for that shifting (cf. Radin 1953; Kuper/Uchtmann 1990), because it shows the bipolar codification of this transition. All dreams, that are to be transformed into myths have to be modeled along this twin-code.

At this seam, that twin-myths mark, we can for the first time speak of a purely cultural codification. The twins are totally human beings that have left dreamtime behind. They are sinners in biblical sense who not only have lost the unconscious paradise of atemporal and reversible transformations, but also struggled for leaving it. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1984:127) states:

"Yet narrative does not function in dreams precisely as it functions in myth. The compelling causative sequence of events is absent from dreams; the thread of the plot is replaced by a pattern of images that suggest but never actually spell out the story. For this reason, too, proofs cannot be accomplished within dreams, for proofs depend upon the skeletal structure of cause and result that dreams lack. Myths add to dreams precisely the structure that makes such seeming proofs possible."

This way the triple brain enables an oscillation between two different modes of consciousness, the old triple, the bipolar and a new emerging triple codification,

that marsupials lack and that at first was evolved as a powerful and conscious means in shamanic absorption.

V

The cucumarias and our apelike ancestors were not only environmental well shaped and fitted their so-called ecological niches in the biological and ethological sense perfectly, but they also left redundant and open codal ends for further evolution. Thus redundance comes out as an ambivalent factor. Information theory says, that redundance is a means to shelter information against entropic dissipation, but at certain points it will be used in an opposite way - not only in the shamanic excesses and accesses, but also on lower and higher evolutionary levels. The open ends for human evolution mainly were found in the interior of the brains, within the capacities to dream and play.

But the progressive dissoziation of the twin relation, starting at this early level of cultural evolution, does not lead to essentially new forms of codification but instead to an internalization and revival of the before observed, decoded and combatted natural structures in the form of genealogical defined derivations of nature. The aggressor reappeared in the middle of the protected settlement as a powerful person or group of persons, that were in network with the natural, but now under the symbols of totempole, bear, eagle, fire, heaven etc. *acculturized* powers. These persons had taken over the *natural* power to give and to take live and therefore the power to arrange and re-arrange the semiospheric structure. The myths mark this phase as the fixation of the twins on an hilltop in the east, as sun and moon and so on. But still the twins are seen as discoverers and founders of new ways of life and new areas of settlement.

VI

Herman te Velde (1967) has shown how the verticalization of the couple took place in ancient Egypt. He analyzes the gods Horus and Seth as a couple of by mythological operations increasingly verticalized twins. At last Horus is seen as the ruler of the land of papyrus (that is knowledge) and Seth as the ruler of the land of reed (that is ignorance). Eventually foreigners were connected with Seth.

The atavistic and verticalized structure that above all survived in economy, inhibits the today possible scientific and technological foundation of natural philosophy. Nowadays the verticalizing intention is based on a combination of information theory and naturalism. It refers on the equalization of genetic, technical (or signal) and semiotic operations by the use of the terms transmission and information. The underlying intention comes clear if we remember the claims of Shannons theory and their ultimately aim, to unify mathematical genetics and communication theory, eventually under eugenic and geopolitical signs. The blind god of information needs those selective practices to elaborate his quantitative, self-contained and techno-luminary cyberworld, finally trying to reach the global cucumaria-state of mankind.

This fixed idea, to produce universal synchronization, is not a new one at all. We know the Greek term of *apokatastasis*, that means a restoration or a recurrence of the stars and the seasons, but also the return to a former state of the world. The New Testament however speaks about a new creation of the world.

The Egyptian attempt to create an apokatastasis is known as the calender of Thot, that tried to unify all natural and mythological events within a perfect and theological frame. It was aimed to neutralize chance and irregularity by theology and thus to hide or veil the producers of signs (Leitz 1995:36).

But if we follow Baudrillard (1976) and Lévi-Strauss (1977), reality and even consciousness are based on the disjunction of two terms or different fields of reality, that Bystrina (1989) later interpreted as *the first* and *the second indicative mood* (*erste* and *zweite Wirklichkeit*).

In the Egyptian case consciousness should be exterminated by theology, in our postmodern case it shall be exterminated by information. In both cases the extermination would not touch the social or economic stratification, but instead it would anchor them as given by nature and their correct theoretical mirror images. All those attempts negate the horizontalized, oscillating and bridging codification that emerged within the evolution of placental mammals and came to first merits within the twinlike shamanic accesses to the inner and outer worlds.

VII

Today all elaborated societies tend to reconstruct more piled up forms of organization, and often even the sciences take part in this motion that is induced by entropic and economic globalism. That is not modernistic, like the politicians want to make us believe in their inversed and reversible language, but erodes all terminology. These reform-operations aim at the return and resurrection of former and unconscious forms of organization, provoking the next twin-like bifurcation.

The abstract painter and member of the Bauhaus, Oskar Schlemmer, creator of the figurines of the famous triadic ballet was seen as a degenerated artist during the Third Reich. He survived this time in the seclusion of his Swabian birthland and painted unsuspecting landscapes until his death in 1943. But to ensure the subsistence of his family he worked for the German army by order of his oppressors by producing abstract camouflage paintings for buildings, gas tanks etc.

Neither naturalistic nor realistic paintings obtained the effect of Schlemmers abstract art of camouflage. He hid the military objects by using some kind of mimicry, a derivation from well-known practices of the animal kingdom. In the figurative sense the monolithic power structure covered itself with a second and to the official ideology alien and redundant landscape. Not the play of muscles had to resist air raid and bombardment, but the misused and redundant arts.

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