

# The Game of Reflection and the Power over People. A Semiotic Approach to Communication

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ABSTRACT. Ogden and Richards emphasized that in an act of communication the message does not exist before being coded; in addition, coding is a process of creation: *the message self-generates in the communication process itself*. As such, the term “receptor” should be replaced by the term “reader” – in other words, the “universal receptor” breaks into a multitude of readers, whose readings are culturally pre-determined. The significance of a sign is not given beforehand, it is born following the encounter between the message and the cultural loading with which the reader welcomes the message. As *homo significans*, we relate not to objects, but to “interpretants” (Peirce). *For man, the world is a universe of interpretants*. But this renders manipulation possible through partial truths or even fake news, i.e. through the *plausible denaturation of reality*. The acceptance of a phrase as true is not related to its relation with reality, but rather to its relation with the reader’s cultural loading. This paper describes the mechanism of semiosis that makes possible the exercise of power to have people over other people, through the management of their cultural loading.

## 1. Separation between reality and its reflection

When naming the science of signs “semiology”, Ferdinand de Saussure fancied that he had just laid the foundation of a new science which would study *semiosis*, i.e. an alternative way in which man could assimilate and appropriate the real, other than through knowledge. *Homo cogitans* was just joined by *Homo semnificans*.

With Saussure, we grasp the idea that language is a structure of thinking which would exist regardless of linguistic forms, since there is a difference between language (*la langue*) and speech (*la parole*) (Ducrot & Todorov 1972: 44). According to Oswald Ducrot “the Saussurian thesis proves that there is a fundamental linguistic arbitrariness, different from the arbitrariness of each isolated sign. Thought exists before language, as an amorphous mass, as a nebulosity, devoid of privileged structures” (Ducrot & Todorov 1972, 30).

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