CHAPTER 8

Ideologies manifesting axiologies

In the history of semiotics the concept of ideology occurs in many contexts, but its weight greatly varies with different scholars and periods. It was considered a big step forward when once upon a time the Russian Formalists, and after them the Prague structuralists, concluded that the relationship of a sign to the society which produced it was not causal but arbitrary. The sign was not a direct index of its sender, whether latter was a community or an individual person.

The sign becomes ideological via its enunciator. For Bakhtin, an "ideologeme" was the utterance of a protagonist of a story (see Nöth 2000: 413-417). Particularly in Dostoyevsky this appeared as a "polyphony of consciousnesses". When two persons engage in discussion, it reveals their different ideologies (see Bakhtin 1970). The idea of the autonomy of sign naturally distinguished semiotics from Marxism. But then came the 1960s and ideology came back to some extent with structuralism, not in the vulgar Marxist sense, but influenced by the more hermeneutical Frankfurt school. In Adorno, ideology is a central negative definition, and positive when a "progressive" artist consciously takes a critical approach to his society. When semiotics developed into a discipline in the1970s there were still remnants of ideology in the debate. Roland Barthes paralleled ideology and myth (Barthes 1957), Lucien Goldmann connected it with his notion of vision du monde (Goldmann 1956), and Greimas mentions ideology in his structural semantics (Greimas 1966: 181), which was, however, most particularly an application of his mythical-actantial model. Then ideology faded into the background until it again became pertinent in the post-structuralist period, most notably under the impact of Foucault and in gender theories.

Perhaps the best-known definition of ideology is the one that defines it as "false consciousness" (*falsches Bewusstsein*). From this point of view an ideological utterance is one that tries to mask its own axiological starting points, to justify and universalize them with some myth to deceive the receiver, or by postulating one's own values as if they were "natural". Ugo Volli defines ideology as "a set of discourses that constitute common sense, transformed such that that which is partial and open to change is taken to be something universal, unchanging and eternal in short, reality" (come insieme di discorsi che, costituendo il senso comune, trasfora ciò che è parziale e aperto al cambiamento, in qualcosa di

uniservale, immutabile ed eterno, insomma nella realtà) (Volli 2000: 310). For semiotics, however, nothing is just natural. For example, in Greimas the very notion of the "natural world" already represents a semiotized world, furnished with significations.

In speaking of ideology, it is typical that one supposes that what is involved are others, not me. Hence ideology is essentially an egocentric type of utterance. For instance, Americans said that the USSR was characterized by ideologizing everything, whereas their own world was something real. Nowadays it is thought that global markets are real, and all others ideological. Thus an ideological utterance is something that conceals one's own ideology, that suppresses it from consciousness. This is why ideological arguments tend to have a certain fanatical nature.

According to Terry Eagleton, it is characteristic of ideological statements that at the same time as they say something, they also contain an untruth (Eagleton 1996: 16-17). For instance, "It's winning the lottery to be born a Finn! A saying often heard in that country, it is a typically ideological utterance, particularly when a Finn says it. You hear it as a rejoinder when someone criticizes Finnish society, or when a Finn wants to distinguish Finland as better than other nations. The essential content in such statements is not the statement itself but the situation in which it is said: who utters and to whom.

In other words, behind an ideological utterance there always looms a kind of power position. In post-colonial analysis one speaks of how a "dominant" has taken langue into its possession and forces the dominated to produce parole only within certain limits. An ideological art is typically like that. For instance, the series of twelve huge canvases portraying the reign of Maria di Medici, hanging in a gallery at the Louvre, represents a characteristically ideological, multifaceted utterance that legitimates a certain power position of the dominant. Donskoi's films about the life of Lenin are typically ideological representations. In them a mythical-ideological hero is always seen more as a type than as a concrete token.

Iconoclast myth analysis strives to unravel such ideological connotations. In Barthes's analyses of modern myths, he situates as their signified the concept of bourgeois ideology and its hegemony (Barthes 1957). In Barthes's model ideology functions in the place of *signifié* in the mythical sign. The notion of nationalism is also a typically ideological formation. The music of Sibelius's Finlandia has an ideological meaning for the Finns, which cannot be reduced merely to the qualities of its musical signifiers (Tarasti 2001: 3-13). Such qualities can be interpreted only by the Finns, it is thought.

Yet, ideologies are open to analysis; something stands behind them, namely the axiologies of a community. An ideological statement manifests hidden, immanent values. From the existential semiotic viewpoint, the difference between ideologies and axiologies is clear. At first we encounter values which in their virtual state outside the *Dasein* are transcendental. When an individual or group adopts some values as its own, then values transform into axiologies, which constitute more or less compatible collections of values. When ultimately an individual or a group aims to legitimize its axiologies to other subjects of its *Dasein*, those axiologies are transformed into ideologies. Hence ideologies represent a realized phase of originally transcendental values. They constitute a collective modalization of *Dasein*. Furthermore, ideologies function as ingredients of an identity so that they are stable entities in the world surrounding a subject, i.e., inter-subjectively valid and durable. They form certain fixed values, which are common to various subjects, whether individuals or groups.

Such a definition seems to undermine the old one of "false consciousness". Eagleton is particularly unwilling to accept that Marxist view, finding it impossible to think that such enormous amounts of people would accept it into their continuous everyday practices (Eagleton 1996: 12). Unfortunately, just this can happen. Huge numbers of people live under the emotional impact of media, as Genevan professor of psychology Klaus Scherer has stated (Scherer 2001: 16). For instance, when crises occur, their causes receive little analysis; rather, the media dwells on the emotional reactions of quite ordinary people. Typical emotional states, états passionnels, of the contemporary world are anger, frustration and rage, since there is no possibility to intervene in events, Scherer said in an interview in *Le Monde* (Nov. 23, 2001). This has nothing to do with whether these emotional states originating from the media were "authentic" endogenic passions, or external ones, which as Marcel Proust says, keep us for a while under their power, eventually tire us out, then leave us when our subjective judgment of starts to function again. Media represent the world of Appearance, paraitre, expanded to all corners, behind which is être, the level of Being. Ideology is precisely the sphere of Appearing.

Althusser remarked that ideology appears precisely in the field of affectivity, in our smallest gestures and emotions (in Eagleton 1996: 19). On the other hand, ideology is considered invisible in its omnipresence unless it is made conscious. How far can man's behavior, which he thinks to be authentic, endogenic, be explained by the category of Appearance? The situation is somewhat similar to the argument of one art historian, according to which the fact that Kandinsky

never mentions nor evokes Japanese art in his writings or in his paintings, can be taken as the best proof of their Japanese influences. We cannot trust this thesis very far without evidence.

The Italian semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1973) has closely examined ideology as a hidden yet omnipresent category what nowadays feminists and gender theoreticians understand as the "hegemony of patriarchal culture", or Foucauldian philosophers as "panoptic", controlling power system. In his book, Ideologies of Linguistic Relativity, Rossi-Landi quotes the linguists Sapir and Whorf, who studied the languages of North-American Indians (Rossi-Landi 1973: 29). According to them, languages differ from each other not only by their grammar but also by their world-view. He quotes Whorf: "… each language A … is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity…. We are inclined to think of language simply as a technique of expression, and not to realize that language first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in a certain world-order…" (Rossi-Landi 1973: 29).

Hence every language, langue in Saussurean terms, has its own ideology, which lies hidden in its structures. This is precisely where gender theoreticians base their thesis on the dominance of the patriarchal canon. On this view, if there are generative grammars producing surface phenomena (signs) from a deep structure, then the entire process is by nature ideological and present on all levels. American radical gender theoreticians claim that if one has a bad ideology, it is always seen and heard in his/her statements. Man's identity thus "generates" inevitably certain ideological statements and signs. This somewhat argumentum ad hominem thesis would annul the achievement of semioticians since the 1920s concerning the autonomy of signs.

Perhaps we should assume, less radically, that the serpent of ideology wriggles in only at some later moment of generation, distorting its mechanisms into ideologies only on the figurative-narrative surface, but not yet at the fundamental syntax. Such an invisible ideology would appear in many levels of the generative course (Greimas 1979: 179-180; 157-161). Even the basic structures of meaning in Greimas's semiotics can be ideological. S1 vs. S2 is an ideologically loaded distinction, which manifests when one invests it with content such as man vs. woman, rich vs. poor, Christian vs. Muslim, white vs. colored, old vs. young, war vs, peace, and much more. The actantial model is super-ideological. Ideologies also manifest on the figurative level, as in the arts. But is there any non-ideological threshold in the generation or manifestation, beyond which it becomes

ideological?

Augusto Ponzio considers the manifestation of ideology in signs to be iconic: a sign that conveys an ideology is somehow similar to its ideology. But he adds that no sign as such is ideological, but is that way only via some interpreter. "In ideology the relation between the sign and the interpretant is iconic or abductive. A person performs a given piece of behavior in a given context with respect to an ideology that is more or less stable and defined: such behaviors is associated with that ideology by a relation of similarity" (Ponzio 1993: 63). And "if ideology is always contained in signs, it is always contained by an interpretant and for an interpreter" (ibid.: 65). Therefore what is involved is an interpretant which has the indexical power to force one to act according to an ideology, to connect its signs be they acts or things to a certain object, which is the same as ideology. Such an ideological discoursive practice is exemplified by military discipline, and expressions in general, as related to war. "efficiency", "victory", "loss", "strategy", "tactics", "balance of power", "surgical precision", and so on. All these and more have been shifted to discourses of economy, technology, and science. When they still in their original meaning, they were based upon corporeality and indexical signaling in the army. Now they assume a metaphorical meaning in their new contexts, where their ideological foundations support the virtues of society in the global techno-semiotic phase of "efficiency", "precision", "take-overs", and the like. They become ideological statements, whose task is to produce certain act-signs or actions.

To some thinkers, ideologies are structures of communication rather than of signification. Eagleton and Bakhtin take this position, viewing ideologies as utterances or communication, whereas the other view is that they are hidden in the grammar. Let us again think of the classical Saussurean model in which subject A says something to subject B who is facing him (1916 [1995]: 27). As noted in the first chapter, the space between these subjects becomes modalized during communication, and ideology, reducible to modalities, thus manifests in this space. In an ideological statement we might see the functioning of modalities Being/Appearing in such a way that an ideological statement conceals a certain Being under its Appearance; for instance, under the cloak of the mythical. At the same time, the statement reinforces subject A's modality of Can, his power, which is experienced by subject B as Must, which compels him to believe the same as subject A, or act as A wishes him to do. Of course subject A can be aware of the fact that he is subordinated by the Must of an ideology, but still he continues to functioning as the medium of this ideology, like a soldier in the army is disciplined to

obey the ideology that gives the orders.

The only way to break free of this circle is to realize that behind ideologies we have axiologies and, in the end, transcendental values, to which we can compare the modal constellations of *Dasein* and thus notice their relativity. In order to grasp ideology, one needs a transcendental analysis. But what guarantees that the tools by which we try to decipher ideological grammar are not themselves contaminated by some ideology? The concepts we use to deal with ideology should be non-ideological. But is this possible? Or is Rossi-Landi right when he speaks about the relativity of linguistic mechanisms?

Some turn the problem around by developing new methods of analysis. Instead of hiding behind a kind of higher-level objectivity, they adopt an overtly subjective, monological discourse, in which all phases of analysis are reported precisely and made explicit. Some believe that the bold revelation of one's own subjectivity would lead to a more objective result, since such analysis does not even claim to be non-ideological or objective, but expressly tries to make explicit one's own ideologies. Yet, such scholars forget one of the great and unique benefits of being human: the ability to put oneself on a metalinguistic level. That is to say, we can agree, while conscious about the arbitrariness of our contract, that with this part of a language and its concepts, we can speak about another part of language; for example, that part containing ideological statements. In this way, we do not fall into the vicious circle of omnipresent ideology.

Rossi-Landi, in his *Semiotik, Äshetik und Ideologie* (1976), has also pondered how in the arts the so-called realist style emerged as something non-ideological. Such realism meant a kind of direct, "natural" attitude towards the world, without realizing that such a view of "nature" was itself a product of history and society (Rossi-Landi 1976: 105-107). Such a view was common not only in nineteenth-century arts, but one finds it to be the model inherited by mass media. News reporters and art critics believe (quite mistakenly) that they are transmitting reality as it is, simply telling the truth, not blinded by "theory" or presuppositions.

In her brilliant study of censorship techniques, the Estonian scholar Maarja Lõhmus (2002) discusses various forms of information mediation that intentionally masks its as ideological designs. Though confined to Soviet media manipulation in Estonia, her models and conclusions are quite open to generalization. Similarly, when we look at realist paintings by French or Russian artists from the nineteenth century, we believe we are viewing realistic descriptions, though what is involved is a construction of reality by certain semiotic devices.

We can distinguish basically two types of utterances: ideological and ideolo-

gizing. The latter manifests as an effort to dominate the receiver, or "other". In the former case, this power has been already stabilized and is "self-evident". An ideologizing statement concerns the Other as a stranger. In it one can distinguish an ideological tinge in speech; for instance, the British upper-class accent, the pathetic intonation of the speaker in a Russian movie, or the narrator's voice in a Walt Disney film. Yet, as said above, to apply the concept of ideology to another person or to his/her statement is already as such a reification, an hypostatizing of this phenomenon.

If one says to someone in such a situation that this or that is ideological or sounds ideological, it means a relativization of the phenomenon. To join an ideology to an identity goes even further: ideologies emerge from collective mentalities and their qualities of Einfühlung. Identity means the stability of a certain actantial and passional state. An ideological statement strives to justify that state by transforming a certain state or aspect of *Dasein* into a universal; in turn, a de-ideologizing statement aims to reducing it back to the categories of time, place, and actor.

An ideological statement is an utterance that takes something as natural, as a real state of things, though this is basically an arbitrary value-choice. The postulate of arbitrariness does not, however, mean the counterpole: a subjectively narcissistic emotional reaction to everything, as if there were no history, place, or transcendental values at all. In the world ruled by the ideology of consumption, everything is decided on the basis of personal tastes and enjoyment. As a case in point, a teacher once took her class to the opera in Toronto; it was their first experience of it. Afterward, she asked how they had experienced it, and they answered, "I liked it" or "I didn't like it" as if in a highly sophisticated cultural text as opera, the only thing that matters is whether one likes or dislikes it, in the same way as we prefer vanilla ice cream to Coke. This global ideology has even intruded into schools and universities, which are being forced to "go along with the times", where pupils are taken as consumers that enjoy "services" rendered by their teachers. This is quite different from the view of one French pedagogue, which encapsulates the classical view of education up until the past few generations: Schools do not give services to men, they make men (and women).

If one thinks of ideologies as manifestations of axiologies, one can ask whether certain axiologies are more easily ideologized than are others. Or, is the ideology only a certain viewpoint of that axiology in a certain situation of communication? Is the ideology the same as a foregrounded, particularly salient axiology? If we accept the existential semiotic viewpoint that ideology transforms transcen-

dental values into values of *Dasein*, we may ask if concealed, implicit ideologies change into explicit, ones? For instance, the idea of Brecht's epic theater was to make visible the hidden bourgeois ideology by de-ideologizing it, but it was not noticed that this device in turn led to a re-ideologizing practice. According to Greimas, axiologies and ideologies are distinguished from each other by their semiotic way of being, namely, whether the values are paradigmatic or syntagmatic (Greimas 1996: 179). Existentially speaking, in the first case the values, collectively speaking, remain outside *Dasein*. In the latter case they take part in its processes. On the other hand, Greimas refers to the fact that in the deep level of a generative process, the semiosis, we speak about axiologies, whereas when we shift to the surface-level, modalizing activities of a subject his or her Want, Must, Can, etc. then we may speak about ideologies.

Another central dictionary of semiotics, the Handbook by Winfried Nöth, deals with ideology in a broader manner, both as a social system of ideas and as myth, as sign, and as "false consciousness". There we find that both Althusser and Eliseo Veron consider ideology as does Greimas, that is, as a property of the deep structure, as langue rather than parole (Nöth 2000: 415).

Likewise semiotics itself is influenced by ideologies, which, however, semiotic research tries to neutralize by its own strategies. Semiotics is thus a particular discoursive activity which is constantly aware of its own ideological nature, and at the same time freed from it. For Foucault the archeology of knowledge is the same as its ideology: values and epistemes articulate and justify certain discoursive practices in a certain age. By contrast, in Heidegger's philosophy, ideologies may be situated within the ontological pre-state, which rules over our existence as its "pre-understanding" (Vorverständnis). In the next chapter we shall deal with ways of resisting such pre-states, especially as they exist in the values and epistemes that grip our contemporary world.

some images and ideas from those previous worlds and their phases, as illustrated in Figure 1.3.

1-3 FIGURE. The counter-current of *Dasein*.
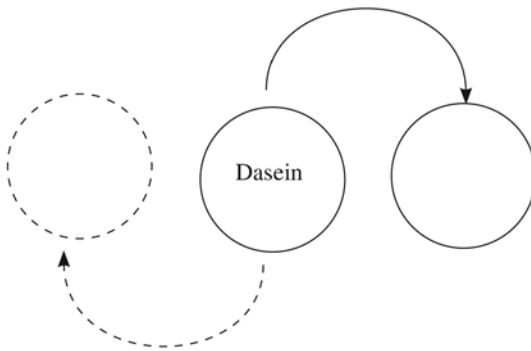
Some of them he may have already forgotten, and similarly the *Dasein* may have forgotten him. There is a risk indeed that, if he dwells too long in his position of resistance and outside the *Dasein,* then he is forgotten—like a text discarded and ignored by the collective memory of a culture. This leads to the strong social implications of our theory. Real thinkers of resistance are always forgotten and suppressed. If they were accepted, they would not be what they wanted to be. Thus, in our model the arrows also go backwards.

1.5. Values

As mentioned earlier, existential semiotics conceives of signs to be in constant movement between transcendence and *Dasein*. Depending on their proximity to *Dasein*, whether they are approaching it or departing from it, one gets new types of signs. We have already mentioned *pre-signs*—ideas or values that have not yet become concrete signs. Such signs are virtual. When they become manifest as a sign "vehicle" or an act, they become *act-signs*. When they make an impact on receivers, they become *post-signs*. In their virtual, potential state as transcendental

entities, they can be called *trans-signs*. These phases correspond to three activities of the human mind: virtualizing, actualizing, and realizing (notions used by both Greimas and by Roman Ingarden).

Ultimately, there is an axiological problem with the existence of values. In the Saussurean tradition values are relative; they are determined only in their context, as opposed to other values by the linguistic community (Saussure [1916] 1995: 116). In my theory, by contrast, values are transcendental but become signs via the activities of the subject. In the field of aesthetics, such a view is of course problematic. How is it possible, say, that the value of a Beethoven sonata existed before its creation? Was it somewhere waiting for its actualization in *Dasein*? To this we may reply that transcendental values do not become a manifest reality without an agent who actualizes them. When actualization occurs, signs may be different from what they were thought to be earlier, when mere pre-signs (Tarasti 2000: 33). Without the help of other modalities Know, Can, Must, and Will they never become concrete. Signs can also be classified into *endo-* and *exo-signs*—either internal or external, respectively, to our subject's world (ibid.: 37–55).

Let us scrutinize this problem in terms of moral values. The following diagram summarizes our discussion thus far:

values →   modalities   →   signs

The movement proceeds from left to right, when in semiosis an abstract idea is formulated and eventually crystallizes as a sign (see Tarasti 2004: 39). But can we call this process semiosis? To some philosophers, to say that something is a "sign" is not any recommendation. But on what grounds could we reason that, just because something has the characteristics of a sign, then it is less "real" or less valuable? To Peirce's way of thinking, to become conscious of a sign is a Second. The French writer Le Clezio says that when we are reading a novel and exclaim, "Oh this was well said!", that that is a kind of sign, and it no longer functions. The functionality of signs has become almost an aesthetic slogan in recent years. But this is the same as stated above—namely, the value-reality escapes our grasp, and everything becomes mere technical problems of functionality. Some may say this the semioticians' fault. They taught us that everything is sign and semiosis: there can be disturbances in their functioning, but such flaws can be corrected with the technical knowledge we have of the functioning of text. Thus, values remain completely external, and transcendental, and one does not need to believe

in their existence: There are only opinions, language, discourse, but no transcendental categories. As Greimas said: "*Il n'y a pas de vérité, il n'y a que véridiction*" There is no truth, there are only statements about truth.

All moral philosophers have to deal with Hume, who proposed that no values can be inferred from facts. From the state of how things are, we cannot logically infer how they should be. In my existential semiotics, I defend the idea that values can be transcendental ideas alongside other values that exist outside *Dasein*. Still, in some cases and under certain circumstances, they start to exercise their influence within the *Dasein,* when a living subject—individual or collective—therein feels such a value as his own, experiences it as moving him/her into something, and finally realizes this value as a sign. The British philosopher John Mackie, in his *Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977), represents the extreme of value-nominalism. Different cultures view right and wrong in different ways, such that no independent value facts exist. All moral statements are thus untrue. Mackie argues that all objective moral theories make a mistake when they say that one cannot step outside or above morals if he/she wants to do so. In his view, morality is a special form of social life, which man and his community create and choose. (This already sounds rather existential.) Mackie argues that, if moralizing leads to quarrels and disputes, then morals ought to be forgotten.

Even so, if we insist on the point that moral values exist in transcendence, it remains up to the person of *Dasein* to believe this and to allow them to have an impact on his/her acts. This idea probably provides us with the key to the problem of how to fit values into modalities and furthermore into signs—that is, how to act. I offer you now such a proposal. No one can say, "I pursue such and such an act because a transcendental value x requires me to do so". When I select value x as my ideal, it is always my own choice, for which I am responsible. This is my main rebuttal to the argument most often used against value-realists. And that argument is, What guarantees that a person will not adopt a completely foolish transcendental value and even imagine himself to be right? When I have picked value x, it falls into the field of the modalities and passions of our *Dasein*, amidst our Wants, Obligations, Abilities, and Knowledge. Then I do the act, x or non-x; that is, I either fulfill an act following this value or I give it up. I do something against it, negating the value by my act (see Figure 1.4). Hence, the signified of the act is the transcendental value, but only insofar as our subject has the proper competence in the code whereby he/she can connect such an act to the transcendental value in question.

1-4 FIGURE. The enactment of values.
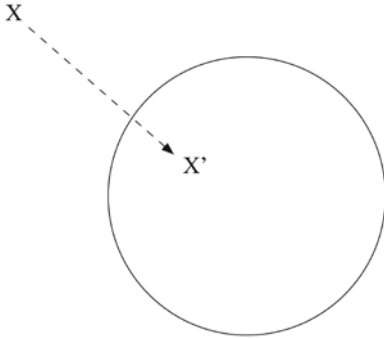
At the same time, this act triggers other acts, which either affirm or negate the act x/non-x. Consequently, we can infer the crucial imperative for any moral activity: If act /x →non-x/ causes in its *Umwelt* other negative acts, which are negative in relation to other transcendental values, then such an act should not be committed. We might, for example, imagine that we have the transcendental value of honesty or of keeping promises. However, somebody does something contrary (e.g., breaks a contract). This negative act, in its social environment, prompts reactions or other acts that can likewise be negative: non-y punishing, non-p abandonment, exclusion from the community, non-q hatred. All these re-active value-acts are, in turn, negations of some transcendental values, such as indulgence, benevolence, abstention from violence, charity, and so forth (see Figure 1.5).

1-5 FIGURE. Reaction to a value-act.
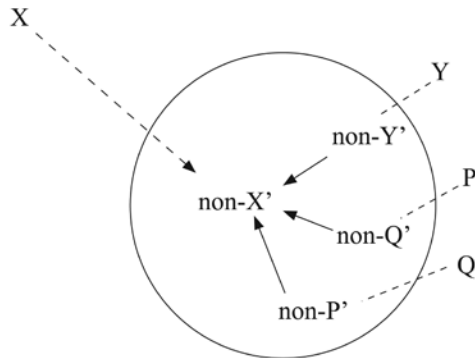
In other words, if the correction of a negative value-act causes more negative acts in its *Umwelt* than the original negative act did, then one has to give up such a correction, give up being morally "right."

As in any fulfillment of a value, two kinds of modalities function in such a moral value-act: (1) modalities that regulate the acts and behaviors of their agents in the *Dasein,* and (2) modalities that regulate the relationships of value-acts to their transcendental values. This is a double movement: (a) It manfests and actualizes values, by the process in which a virtual act changes and may even become real. (b) We return to the value as it is in transcendence and compare the "actualized" value to the virtual value. In this way, the transcendental value serves as the source of the actualized value in *Dasein*. These two acts of meta-modalization presuppose a particular value competency. If our subjects do not possess the right codes by which to connect a potential, virtual value to an act that concretizes it, and if they cannot decode from an act its value content and compare it to the "encyclopedia" of values, then the reality of values is not fulfilled at all.

This model should likewise fit with other values, such as truth or epistemic values or beauty and aesthetic values. In any case, the subject of *Dasein* is completely responsible for his value choices, that is to say, the values that he metamodalizes from the (virtual) encyclopedia of values. Naturally when he is devoid of some value because of, say, a lack of education, one may also hold his community responsible; e.g., his "senders" in narratological terms (school, parents, teachers). Still, he remains existentially responsible for which transcendental values he selects, how he modalizes them into value acts, and the kinds of value acts and modalities that they bring about.

The intermediate phase of modalities is indispensable in making values and signs compatible. It also explains why some originally right value can, when transformed into a value act, get distorted into a caricature of itself: It is caused by modalization, in the transformation of the phase of actualization when the human passions intervene. This explains the nature of metamodalities, mentioned above. If they are altogether the activities of a subject, then how do metamodalities distinguish themselves from ordinary modalities? The answer is, They contribute to the particular act of signification in which a value is connected to a physical act or object of the sign vehicle. This implies the following kinds of modalities:

1. Want (*vouloir*): I want to connect value x to the signified of act x. Should the subject not want it, this value could not manifest. A concern is whether such

a wanting or desire differs from that by which subjects of *Dasein* look after each other or various value objects. Not even a psychoanalyst would presume that Freudian desire can explain, for example, artistic activity, ethical choice, or scientific research. Rather, a special form of human wanting is involved.

2. Know (*savoir*): I know that value x exists; without such knowledge I cannot even want to concretize it in my value act. This kind of knowing is not that of familiarity or acquaintance. Rather, it is more like the kind of knowledge we receive in our *Dasein*, the kind of knowledge that information theory tries to embody in its concepts of entropy and redundancy.

3. Can (*pouvoir*): I am able to (can) connect a value x to an act x. For example, I want to help sick people, but to be capable of doing so I must master medicine; I want to help the poor, but unless I am able give them something, I cannot do it; I want to transmit artistic experiences, but if I do not master the proper techniques, then I cannot produce any such emotions; and so forth.

4. Must (*devoir*): Denoting obligation or duty, must requires the internalization of values such that we can experience the sense that a value *obligates* us to act (or not) in a certain way. But even here, the metamodality of Must is our own existential choice.

1.6. New types of signs

The traffic between these instances of signs—that is to say, between transcendence and existence—is taken care of by metamodalities. Altogether, signs have their *situations*, which is an aspect essential to the existential approach. If we take that traffic as a narrative structure portraying human life, it radically differs from classical story schemes, which are symmetrical. Any narrative starts with a situation in which we are *hic, nunc, ego*—Here, Now, Me—but then something happens that causes a "disengagement" from this primal state, to Elsewhere, Then, Others. Yet, normally in a classical story, we return to the initial state; we are "engaged" with it, hence the syntagmatic line becomes symmetrical. By contrast, in existential semiosis there is no return—what happens next is always unknown and unpredictable.

Another new scientific paradigm that has entered into existential semiotics—perhaps paradoxically to some minds—is biosemiotics. Biosemiotics is one of the new puruits that have emerged in the last 20 years within general semiotics, thanks to the writings of Thomas A. Sebeok (see, e.g., Sebeok 2001: 31–44), and above all to the original doctrine advanced by the Estonian Jakob v. Uexküll