

## Chapter 2

# Semiotics “Today”: The Twentieth-Century Founding and Twenty-First-Century Prospects

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### 2.1 Preliminary Overview

...since the life of signs does not stop, of course,  
with their fixation into objects...existential signs...  
are always in a state of becoming...pause is always temporary. (Eero Tarasti 2000, p. 7)

Interest in signs as a thematic or distinct subject matter of *general interest* in intellectual culture was a phenomenon first witnessed in the twentieth century, under the title of “semiology” (from Saussure) in Western Europe and “semiotics” in Eastern Europe (from Juri Lotman [28 February 1922–1993 October 22], who based his theory on Saussure but also knew, unlike Saussure, of John Locke’s earlier suggestion for a name). Thus, the original twentieth century general interest in signs stemmed, both East and West, from the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (26 November 1857–1993 February 22). Independently, and slightly earlier than Saussure, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (10 September 1839–1914 April 19) had also taken up such a study, which he called “semiotic,”<sup>1</sup> and he called the action of signs, from the study of which semiotic knowledge is culled, “semiosis.”

The original Saussurean view centered on language as a species-specifically human form of communication, and limited its perspective on signs to the realm of culture. In 1963, Thomas A. Sebeok (9 November 1920–2001 December 21) entered the discussion with his argument—demonstration, more accurately—that *all* animals, not only human animals, make use of and communicate through signs, whence he expanded the understanding of sign activity (or “semiosis”) to the whole of the animal kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.cspeirce.com/menu/library/aboutcsp/deely/clearing.pdf>.

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Now of course a sign, to succeed as such, must not simply represent something other than itself (as in the Saussurean *signifiant/signifié* model), but must make that “other representation” to some third, the interpreter of the sign. For Sebeok, this “third” was some—any—animal; but Peirce had introduced an argument that this “third” or “interpreter” need not involve a “mental” event, whence he proposed that the third element required for there to be semiosis should be called rather an *interpretant* than an “interpreter,” thus opening the way for an understanding of signs that went beyond the world of animal interactions.

Sebeok, as Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Semiotica* (in effect a Latin transliteration of the Greek term *σημειωτική* as first found in John Locke’s 1690 original proposal for a “science or doctrine of signs” in the concluding chapter of his *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*), in 1981 published an article by Martin Krampen demonstrating signs at work no less in the plant world than in the world of animals, leading Sebeok to formulate the thesis that “sign science is coextensive with life science.” This thesis became the basis for the more general study of signs known today as *biosemiotics*, i.e., knowledge culled from the study of the action of signs in the human world (“anthroposemiosis”), the animal world generally (“zoösemiosis”), and the world of plants (“phytosemiosis”). In 1989, at the Harvard Peirce Congress of that year, Deely, combining the previously unknown to modern culture semiotic of John Poinset (9 July 1589–1644 June 17) with Peirce’s notion of interpretant, argued further that a semiosis (what he called “physiosesemiosis”) was at work in the physical universe prior to and surrounding the advent of life, in moving the universe from its original lifeless condition to the condition of being able locally to support living things in the first place.

Sebeok was also the first to make the point that semiotics provides the only trans-disciplinary or “interdisciplinary” standpoint that is *inherently* so; in other words, semiotics thematizes the study of what every other discipline had (perforce) taken for granted—semiosis.

As the twenty-first century began, the twentieth-century development of semiotics had “gone global,” and the central organizing figure in that amazing phenomenon, from 1963 onward, was neither Peirce nor Saussure, but Thomas A. Sebeok.

The present chapter provides an overview of the twentieth century semiotic development, and attempts a projection of the twenty-first century trajectory semiotics is bound to follow in the transition (or transformation) from the modern Enlightenment intellectual culture between Descartes and Peirce to the truly *post*-modern intellectual culture within which the development of semiotics has proven to be the central positive force.

The chapter develops through four subsequent sections.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As follows: Sect. 2.2. Outline of the Framework; Sect. 2.3. Overview of the Semiotic Development; Sect. 2.4. Projecting What We Have Learned About Interdisciplinarity: From 330 BC to c. AD 2075; Sect. 2.5. Parting Summation; *Appendix*: Sebeok’s Synthesis (the Tartu–Bloomington–Copenhagen School).

*Section 2.2* is an outline of the framework within which the semiotic development came to occupy a major place within the intellectual culture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

*Section 2.3* provides an overview of the semiotic development as it has occurred within the synchronic framework established as the life time of participants, as that framework nears the inevitable “diachronic turn” where the present author ceases to belong to the living population, which alone defines the nongeometrical reality of “synchrony” as an open-ended “new beginning” which, perforce, will occupy subsequently and diachronically its own “slice of time.”

*Section 2.4* presents an analysis in detail of what we have learned—in this transitional synchronic phase (as pointed out shortly below by Petrilli) that we call “semiotics” today—that is of theoretical import for the “doctrine” or (cenoscopic) “science” of signs as it implies and establishes a definitively postmodern and global intellectual culture revealing the inherent possibilities of semiosis as mastered within semiotics to provide the cenoscopic antidote (both transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary) to the intense specialization which alone made possible the ideoscopic development of science in the modern sense (an original “synchrony” in its own right, in the overlapping lifetimes of Galileo, Poincaré, and Descartes).

*Section 2.5* is a brief conclusion, a “parting summation” (intended especially to finalize the most fundamental sense of “synchronicity” introduced within and applied throughout this essay). The chapter closes with an “Appendix” on Sebeok’s synthesis.

## 2.2 Outline of the Framework

### 2.2.1 *Standpoint of the Chapter*

We come from the womb, each of us, with no experience of the “external world” (as the modern philosophers called our surroundings), so it is not surprising that we all begin with a synchronic view that takes no account of history. A first-time visitor to Beijing in 2004 went on a sightseeing walk with two colleagues, both of whom had been to Beijing previously, but not recently. The two kept uttering marveling comments on the changes in the city, till finally their exasperated first-time visitor companion said emphatically: “I don’t see any changes at all.”

Henri Bergson (1859–1941) called it (1907) “the natural geometry of the human intellect,” to wit, the tendency to see everything in terms of the individual’s “here and now,” as if the present were eternal.

Prior experience forces at least some minimal awareness of a difference between past and present, and of future possibilities not all of which are predictable on the basis of either past or present. But to this historical dimension of human awareness there is a resistance, and only gradually do human animals (as distinguished from other animals) begin to take serious account of a past without which their present would not be at all, or of a future which offers unpredictable possibilities

as well as mere extensions of the past. And *only* human animals, precisely through metasemiosis,<sup>3</sup> are able to become aware of a past preceding their own synchronicity yet entering into and influencing that very synchronicity in ways that elude full consciousness even while shaping present consciousness and passing through it “diachronically” by extending the synchronicity of a given life into the larger synchronicity of the species as a whole<sup>4</sup> in the universe of which it is a part.

This is the a passage from the partial illusion of synchrony to the full reality of diachrony, and both perspectives are essential to the maturation of human understanding; for the present, even though it has no stationary point (inasmuch as each present moment is the simultaneous becoming of past and future), yet is the whole of the “land of the living,” into which new individuals enter and exit, so that the population neither is nor can be wholly constant, determined, once and for all. This side of the grave, for the human as for any animals, there neither is nor can be a “once and for all” synchrony; before conception and birth is too early, after death is too late, and during life the perspective on the external surroundings as it opened at birth is constantly deepening in spite of all,<sup>5</sup> as our “glassy essence” becomes a veritable “bottomless lake” as we ourselves exit that “land of the living” which, at any given moment, constitutes the “present” population of human animals.

When I speak, then, of “synchrony” in this chapter, I do not mean synchrony in the geometric sense of a timeless abstraction horizontally slicing across human experience for all time, as if with no vertical dimension actual or possible.<sup>6</sup> I rather

<sup>3</sup> “Metasemiosis” consists in the awareness which the human animal, in using signs as every animal must, achieves with the intellectual realization that *the being proper to signs* consists in triadic relations, invisible as relations to sense perception, transcending every subjective boundary, and upon which every achievement of human knowledge depends. This is the realization identifying the human being, in order to be a “rational animal” (*animal rationale*) or “thinking thing” (or *res cogitans*), as having to be, *yet more fundamentally and integrally*, a **semiotic animal**, the only such animal on earth, with the responsibility that imposes—semioethics, as we will have occasion below to mention. On this term (and on the oxymoronic internal contradictoriness—the simple illegitimacy—of the linguistic expression “metasemiotics”), see Deely (2009b, pp. iii–iv, xiv, 127, 194, 198, 199). (Of course, one can always try, Humpty-Dumpty style [“Words mean what I want them to mean; no more and no less”—see note 132 below], to stipulate a meaning for “metasemiotics” that overcomes the historicity of its oxymoronic baggage; but the arbitrariness of stipulation seldom trumps historicity (see Deely 2009c, Chap. 6), and what really would be the gain of success, anyway, in this case, even should it be achieved?)

<sup>4</sup> It is the whole problem of a “collective unconscious,” of the Heideggerean “House of Being.” See Deely 2000, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Deely 1992a.

<sup>6</sup> It was in this geometrical sense of synchrony, as we will see, that Saussure (1857–1913) conceived the matter in his original “signifiant/signifié” model proposed for semiotic development in the early twentieth century. Jakobson (1896–1982), more than Lotman (1922–1993), in taking up Saussure’s model, yet qualified its “arbitrariness” sufficiently to leave an opening from Saussure’s own “geometrical synchronicity” to the actuality of “temporal synchronicity” which I employ in this chapter. Actual synchronicity, taken as beginning at any definite “present moment” (e.g., AD 1916), *from that moment* begins to “expand” by constituting a definite temporal cross section within the cultural and intellectual consciousness of a given community—in this case, the “community of inquirers” focused on the matter of signs at work in the world within and around us. The

mean synchrony in the actual or “temporal” sense according to which the present population of living human animals has developed within itself—in contrast to relatively isolated individuals here and there wondering about signs and their role—a veritable “community of inquirers,” species-specifically human, which takes the action of signs as its focus and expands at first mainly vertically (synchronically) but (inevitably), with the passage of time, horizontally (diachronically) as well, especially as living members pass away and new individuals enter the discourse.

It was in this sense of synchronicity, for example, that Susan Petrilli delivered her Sebeok Fellow Address to the Semiotic Society of America on 17 October 2008 (a Thursday, as it happened) on the occasion of the SSA’s 33rd Annual Meeting in Houston, Texas, USA:<sup>7</sup>

In these remarks I want to look at semiotics, as it were, more synchronically than diachronically. It is not the whole history of semiotic development as a consciousness of the fundamental role of signs in life and experience that I want to discuss, but rather the contemporary phenomenon that we today who have lived in both the 20th and the 21st century have witnessed and participated in as the development of *semiotics*. For though there is of course a long history behind the semiotics of today, still there is a sense in which semiotics is, as a widespread intellectual movement, a phenomenon more “of our time” than it is of any time past. So it is mainly of figures alive in the 20th century, and a few of them still alive today, that I want to speak.

So my focus in this chapter is synchronic in the expanding or temporal sense explained above, especially since I have already set out, in my *Four Ages of Understanding* volume,<sup>8</sup> a “whole history of semiotic development” insofar as such an exposition pertains to philosophy as the basic cenoscopic science. My focus is on “the sense in which semiotics is, as a widespread intellectual movement, a phenomenon more ‘of our time’ than it is of any time past,” however much into the future it will perdure.

### 2.2.2 *Synchrony’s Inevitable Seepage into Diachrony: The Historicity of Human Use of Signs*

Yet, indeed, the past is closing in upon us; so much so that we, who are still living members of the societies of human animals who first engendered a “community of inquirers” focused on the action of signs, must already look to the twentieth-century “founding figures,” even among those whom we personally knew and with whom we worked, as no longer living. From them we may still learn, indeed (that is the miraculous aspect of diachrony), but no longer they from us (the main limit of synchrony as intersecting diachrony). We ourselves, indeed, approach that “far

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fact that such a community, as a community among the living, definitely formed in the twentieth century, as Petrilli remarks (2008, p. 3), is the synchronic view I want to present in these pages.

<sup>7</sup> Petrilli (2008, p. 3).

<sup>8</sup> Deely 2001a, subtitled “The first postmodern survey of philosophy from ancient times to the turn of the twenty-first century” (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press).

boundary” where the community of living inquirers, the “temporally synchronic” investigators of the sign, will no longer include us but only—if anything—our works within its boundaries. At that frontier, in short, we may or may not continue diachronically to influence the future of semiotic development, depending on the fate among the living of our recordings in whatever media; but we will no longer be ourselves subjectively existing and adding “new materials” to the heritage of which we shall have (at that point) become a “past part.”

So our “boundary of time” yields our definition of synchrony in terms of those with whom we can intersubjectively have intellectual exchange, in contrast with the bare suprasubjectivity<sup>9</sup> of those whose lifetime does not overlap our own, from whom we can indeed *learn* but without the possibility of *their learning* from us, from what we have learned in turn. So synchrony as a temporal reality is a one-way movement into a limited future, in contrast with diachrony, which not only arises from within synchrony but also invades it from a past before the synchrony in question began in the first place, and extends beyond that synchrony into a future accessible only to those who “come after” into the “land of the living.”<sup>10</sup> As far as concerns the formation of a “community of inquirers,” then, beyond the central matter of a “shared focus,” the already dead define the past; the not yet living define the future; the not yet dead define *the present*, the “synchronicity” within which we are influenced by others (living or dead) but can influence directly (through dyadic interactions presupposed to thirdness) only those around us, but beyond them also (through thirdness alone) can we influence some at least of those to come “after us,” i.e., after we no longer exist subjectively involved in interactions and intersubjectivity, though suprasubjectively, through semiosis, we may indeed continue “objectively” in the indirect influences of pure relativity shaping the future in normally unpredictable ways.

From the standpoint of the present, when did “semiotics” begin? The answer already takes us beyond synchronicity, yet not all that far (backward) from the land of the living, if we distinguish the *actual formation* of a community of inquirers properly called “semioticians” from the *nominalist question* of the coinage of the term “semiotics.” The nominalist question, interestingly enough, already involves us in a diachrony whereby the past invades the serious formation of “semioticians” as the phenomenon of a coalescence of twentieth-century inquirers into a community investigating signs and the action of signs. The “invasion,” on this nominalist point, however, does not pass through the work of Saussure, the first actual figure around whom this community began its coalescence, but directly through Lotman who, as a follower of Saussure in the matter of the model proposed under the name of “semiology,” yet departed from Saussure in his choice of name for the new science by reason of a more informed historicity.

Let us, then, treat the two questions—nominalistic, on the one hand, formative, on the other hand—in turn.

<sup>9</sup> See “Why Intersubjectivity Is Not Enough,” Chap. 9 in Deely 2009d.

<sup>10</sup> See “The Boundary of Time,” Preface to Deely (2001a, pp. xix–xxxiii).

### 2.2.3 *The Nominalist Question*

The term “semiotics” comes to us<sup>11</sup> from a grammatically incorrect coinage by John Locke (1632–1704) in 1690 (December of 1689, to be technical), via a never-expressed Latin derivative *semiotica*, to the present usage of “semiotics” to name “the science”—as Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) put it somewhere early in the interval between 1906 and 1911<sup>12</sup>—that “does not yet exist,” yet “has a right to existence, a place staked out in advance.”

There had been previous discussions of this “science with a right to existence,” most especially in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Spain<sup>13</sup> and Portugal.<sup>14</sup> The Latins had discussed the question of a (cenoscopic) “science of signs” under the moniker *doctrina signorum*, a usage which goes back at least as far as Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430).<sup>15</sup> Though neither Locke nor Saussure evinced any least awareness of this earlier Latin development—what we now recognize to have been the original or “first” florescence of semiotic consciousness<sup>16</sup>—Locke at least equivalated his coinage as “Σημιωτική or *the Doctrine of Signs*,” in this way, albeit unconsciously, establishing a linkage between his own proposal and the earlier Latin discussion—a discussion not only neglected in Locke’s day<sup>17</sup> but thereafter thoroughly forgotten throughout the whole period of “modern philosophy” as it developed “from Descartes (1596–1650) to Davidson (1917–2003).”

When Thomas A. Sebeok (1920–2001), in 1976, came to write the Foreword to his seminal volume *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs*, he made a major point of choosing this *doctrina signorum* expression for his title, with a twofold objective: first, precisely to align himself with the longer tradition linking through Poinot “the ancients and the moderns in the history of semiotics;”<sup>18</sup> second, to contrast the

<sup>11</sup> This is a summary statement of extensive researches into the etymology of all the terminology that has been used in connection with the naming of the study of signs: in particular, besides the references listed in note below, see Deely 2003b, esp. 2004a, 2006c.

<sup>12</sup> Saussure 1916 (=i.1907–1911): 16. But see the detail in note 21 below.

<sup>13</sup> Where Poinot’s culminating *Tractatus* was published in 1632.

<sup>14</sup> Where Poinot’s teachers, the Conimbricenses, had published their commentary *De Signis* in 1606, a work which never appeared outside the Latin language until Doyle’s English translation of 2001. This work was a crucial influence on both Peirce and Poinot (see Beuchot and Deely 1995).

<sup>15</sup> See Deely 2009c: *Augustine & Poinot. The Protosemiotic Development*.

<sup>16</sup> See the “Timeline of Semiotic Development” in Deely 2009c: Appendix E, 237–246.

<sup>17</sup> Ironically, the first systematic treatise fully to establish the semiotic point of view and triadic relation as constituting the formal being of signs, the *Tractatus de Signis* of John Poinot (1589–1644), was published in the very year of Locke’s birth, 1632!

<sup>18</sup> Sebeok (1982, p. x). See the biographical account in Williams 2010; and the contrast between the two “manifestos” of Anderson et al. vs. Gardin et al. deliberately published by Sebeok back to face in the 1984 volume 52.1/2 of *Semiotica*. See Sect. 2.3.8 below, at note 66.



cenoscopic nature of semiotics with the ideoscopic approaches which constitute science in the modern sense<sup>19</sup> (and in terms of which Saussure thought exclusively).<sup>20</sup>

Saussure himself, however, knowing neither Locke nor Peirce, Augustine nor Poincaré, the Conimbricenses nor Lotman, simply proposed his own name for this “new science”:<sup>21</sup>

I shall call it *semiology* (from the Greek *sēmeion* “sign”). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them.

Along with this name, Saussure proposed a model upon which to found or “base” the new science: the linguistic sign understood as providing the “master pattern,” *le patron général*, for the whole development. This proposed “foundational model” consisted in a dyadic relation between, basically, the acoustic image of a word heard, called the *signifiant*, as arbitrarily linked with a concept, the mental representation called the *signifié*. And what about the object *other* than the concept presented by the concept? Especially when that object is also a physical reality, such as a steak ordered in a restaurant, say, or a mineral inside a mine?

There is no room in Saussure’s sign model for any suprasubjective or intersubjective reality respecting the user of signs, linking those users to the external surroundings of physical things objectified, as we will see; Saussure relegates his proposed “new science” of “semiology” to the realm of “general psychology,” even though he demands that this “semiology” be recognized “as an independent science with its own object like all the other sciences.”<sup>22</sup> In the beginning, Saussure’s *model* proposed (stipulatively, “arbitrarily,” as it were) to be the basis for the new science,

<sup>19</sup> See the biographical account in Williams 2010; and the contrast between the two “semiotic manifestos” of Anderson et al. on one hand and Gardin et al. on the other hand, deliberately published by Sebeok back to back in the 1984 volume 52.1 of *Semiotica*. See Sect. 13. below, at note.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Sebeok (1976a, p. ix). Commentary in Deely 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1982b, 1986b.

<sup>21</sup> Saussure (1916, p. 16). As I noted in Deely (2001a, p. 673), however, Saussure’s proposed name for the general study, “semiology,” has been traced back (Godel 1957, p. 275) to November of 1894 in a note definitely from Saussure’s own hand; and Naville (1901, p. 104) reports an earlier version or outline for semiology essentially similar to what will appear in the *Cours* of 1916. Whether Saussure took over the term “semiology,” consciously or unconsciously, from some other source or, less probably, conceived it neologistically in his own mind, according to Meier-Oeser (1997, p. 315) the term has a history of its own among Protestant Latin authors of the late Latin–early modern period. The decisive feature of the proposal so named in Saussure’s writing lies in the advice that natural signs are to be treated within semiology, if at all, only through an assimilation to the model of signs as conventional or “arbitrary” (unmotivated by anything in the vehicle’s physical structure or subjectivity in their link between sign vehicle and object-signified).

Had some student of Giambattista Vico (13 June 1668–1744 January 23) entered the discussion of Saussure’s day, we might also have had to contend with “sematology” as well as “semiology” in the twentieth-century settlement upon Locke’s “semiotics” as the proper name for the new science (about as helpful as was Tycho Brahe’s contribution to the Copernican debate in Galileo’s day!). Perhaps just as well such a student did not seriously emerge in time, for the complication would not have been particularly helpful, especially when we consider that “sematology” carried much the same linguistic/cultural baggage of (mis)orientation for understanding semiosis that Saussure attached to “semiology.” See Eschbach and Trabant 1983; Trabant 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Saussure (1916, p. 16).



which was accepted unreservedly in East and West alike, but his *name* for the new science was adopted initially only in Western Europe and the Americas. The challenge orchestrated by Sebeok over the twentieth century’s last four decades to *both* name *and* model came to be the main “story line” in the founding of semiotics as we understand the “doctrine of signs” today.

### 2.2.4 *The Actual Formation of a “Community of Inquirers” Focused on Signs*

So far as the work of any single individual inspires the initial coalescence of a *community of inquirers* on the subject of semiotics, it would have to be recognized as the *Cours de linguistique générale* of Ferdinand de Saussure. This work, first published (from materials assembled posthumously by students of Saussure’s live classroom presentations) in 1916, provided the original focal point for what became for the first time in the twentieth century something like a *general interest* across intellectual culture in the subject of signs conceived as “a new science with its own object.”

East and West, the study of signs was originally taken up by a whole range of twentieth-century thinkers who based their work explicitly on Saussure.

In the East, the most seminal of these thinkers was Juri Lotman (1922–1993), father of the “Tartu–Moscow School” of semiotics. Coming to the consideration of signs somewhat later than Saussure and, unlike Saussure, not ignorant of Locke’s 1689/1690 proposal that a science of signs be developed under the moniker *semiotics*, Lotman chose to defer to Locke’s historical priority in this matter of naming. Thus, even though Lotman embraced Saussure’s dyadic *patron général* as an “unrejectable cornerstone” of the science,<sup>23</sup> for the *name* of the new science of signs Lotman adopted from the beginning of his work the name “semiotics” in preference to Saussure’s suggestion of “semiology.”

East and West, then, the *model basic*—the sign model taken as foundational—to the developing discussion was the same: Saussure’s *signifiant/signifié* dyad. But the developing discussion itself was called “semiology” in the Western intellectual culture, “semiotics” in the Eastern.

Notice that Saussure’s model is *stipulated*, or *postulated*, as the basis for the new science. Roughly contemporary with Saussure was a relatively unknown and comparatively neglected figure, the American philosopher-scientist Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), born thus 18 years earlier but died only 1 year earlier than Saussure. Peirce too, but independently, and under some influence of his reading of the later Latins<sup>24</sup> (those who wrote in the centuries immediately before Descartes’ advice to his contemporaries to beware of such reading, lest we be unconsciously infected by their errors), came to focus on the idea of semiotics as a possible new “science of signs.” Peirce’s work in this regard would come to be

<sup>23</sup> Lotman (1990), *inter alia*.

<sup>24</sup> Beuchot and Deely 1995.

an influence on Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) and Charles Morris (1901–1979), both of the latter to become teachers of Thomas A. Sebeok (1920–2001). Sebeok, as we shall see, like Saussure, was a professional linguist, but at the same time also a self-professed “biologist manqué,”<sup>25</sup> who would prove to be the *pivotal figure* in moving semiotics from the arbitrary foundation laid down by Saussure to the analysis-based foundation exemplified by Peirce’s work in rejecting a-priori limits for the new science.

With this much preamble, let us sketch first an overview of semiotic development today, and then an analysis of the theoretical components or elements essential to the doctrine of signs which establish it as the positive essence philosophically of a postmodern intellectual culture. Within this culture, philosophy as cenoscopic science should rediscover its proper role (lost since at least the Enlightenment) in providing the means for understanding how the world of culture is not oppositional to but a species-specifically human extension of the world of nature—from which the whole of life, nonhuman as well as human, emerged and upon which all of life depends.

## 2.3 Overview of the Semiotic Development

The twentieth century saw the outburst—for want of a better word—in intellectual culture of an interest in signs. By midpoint, this outburst had spread virtually everywhere, and the work of Ferdinand de Saussure was recognized as having been the development’s principal inspiration. Yet even so, as noted above, the development proceeded under two different proper names: both as *semiology* in Western Europe and the USA (as Saussure himself had proposed), and as *semiotics* in Eastern Europe (as Locke had first proposed, unknown to Saussure, and as including “ideas”—the “formal signs” of the earlier Latins—as well as “words” in the model,<sup>26</sup> a detail which Lotman did not fasten upon, but which, if he had, might have led Soviet semiotics to the semiotic notion of signifié as including, beyond the Saussurean *signifié*, the whole order of physical reality extrasubjectively apprehended as well as “given”).

### 2.3.1 *The Initial Foundation Proposed in the Twentieth Century for a New “Science of Signs”*

Saussure was a linguist, and also a typically modern intellectual, in that his awareness of philosophical culture was confined to the modern era. He was accordingly (inevitably) heir to the epistemological paradigm of modernity that Kant did but

<sup>25</sup> See the memorial essay “Thomas A. Sebeok, Biologist Manqué,” at <http://carbon.ucdenver.edu/~mryder/itc/idmodels.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See Deely (2001a, Chap. 14, esp. 601–603).

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