LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND REPRESENTATION IN THE SEMIOTIC OF JOHN POINSOT[1]

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1) Language and the Semiotic of John Poinsot

THE SEMIOTIC of John Poinsot is to the study of signs what physics is to the study of nature. Physics is both the most fundamental and the most general science of nature. All natural processes, from the motion of planets to the division of cells, are governed by, but not only by, laws of physics. Similarly, the semiotic of John Poinsot (traditionally known by his Dominican name, John of St. Thomas) is the most fundamental and general science of signs. The actions of all signs —from natural signs such as footprints and symptoms of disease, to signs of communication, such as logical operators and linguistic signs, to signs in cognition, such as concepts and percepts—are governed by, but not only by, the fundamental relational logic of semiosis set forth in his *Ars Logica* [1632]. If C. S. Peirce can be said to give us a chemistry of sixty-six sign-compounds, John Poinsot, suitably revised, gives us the basic physical laws of motion that bring sign, object, and mind into relation.[2]

[2] The first modern author to point this out was Jacques Maritain, especially in "*Signe et symbole*," *Revue Thomiste* 44 (April 1938), pp. 299-300 and

570   JAMES BERNARD MURPHY

What I wish to explore here is the question: To what extent does the semiotic of John Poinsot account for the meaning of linguistic signs? In one sense, we cannot expect such a fundamental and general theory of the action of signs to tell us much about language. Language is a surpassingly complex and, in many ways, a unique sign-system. Expecting a general theory of signs to capture the meaning of the linguistic sign is like expecting physics to explain reproductive biology. In another sense, though, we ought to expect his semiotic to illuminate that preeminent system of signs, human language. For in addition to

"*Le Langage et la théorie du signe*," *Annexe au chapitre II* of *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle* (*Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée;* Paris: Alsatia, 1956), pp. 113-124. This latter essay appears in a modestly amplified English version, "Language and the Theory of Sign," from *Language: An Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function,* edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 86-101; and, fully annotated in relation to Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis,* it has been reprinted in *Frontiers in Semiotics,* edited by John Deely, Brooke Williams, and Felicia Kruse (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 51-62.

Following Maritain, a number of authors have attempted to apply Poinsot's semiotic to contemporary debates. I note the principal ones in chronological order: John A. Oesterle, "Another Approach to the Problem of Meaning," *The Thomist* 7 (1944), pp. 233-263; John Wild, "An Introduction to the Phenomenology of Signs," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8 (December 1947), pp. 217-244; Henry B. Veatch, *Intentional Logic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs* was originally published in 1632 as a small part of volume 2 in the original five volumes (Alcala, Spain: 1631-1635) of his philosophical writings. These five volumes have been published as three volumes under the title *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus* in the modern edition by Beatus Reiser (Turin: Marietti, 1930, 1933, 1937). The first independent presentation of Poinsot's complete *Tractatus de Signis* was prepared by John Deely in consultation with Ralph A. Powell and published in bilingual critical edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Since the publication of this edition of the *Tractatus,* two major critiques and reconstructions of Poinsot's analysis of the logic of the sign relation and its divisions have appeared: John Deely, "The Semiotic of John Poinsot," *Semiotica* 69-1/2 (April 1988), pp. 31-127; and James Bernard Murphy, "Nature, Custom, and Stipulation in the Semiotic of John Poinsot," *Semiotica* 83-1/2 (1991), pp. 33-68.

In this article, : will cite from the Reiser edition of Poinsot's *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus* only those texts not included in Deely's edition of the *Tractatus de Signis.*

Poinsot's generic account of the logical and metaphysical features common to the action of all signs whatsoever, he also sets forth some of the *differentiae* defining various species of signs. For example, his account of the relation of the customary to the stipulated sign is meant to reveal the specific differences of the linguistic signs. Moreover, we must recall that Poinsot's semiotic is embedded in his logic—in his analysis of terms, propositions, and systems of inference. So we may expect Poinsot's semiotic to provide a theory of language at least insofar as language is an instrument of logical reasoning. Indeed, as we shall see, Poinsot's semiotic illuminates much more than the strictly logical properties of language.

I will set forth two different models of language and I will then use these models to explore the strengths and the weaknesses of Poinsot's account of the linguistic sign. In the first model, language is understood as a medium of communication: if I wish to get someone to believe or to do something, one way to accomplish this goal is to use linguistic signs. There are other media of communication, such as gesture, facial expression, pointing, etc., but language is quite effective in making an impression on another mind. In this model, language is assimilated to the realm of human action in general; speech acts (that is, the use of what are called "performatives") are but one instrument through which human beings pursue their goals. Here the point of view is that of the agent: to understand deliberate human action we must first look to the intentions (purposes) of the agent. Thus, to understand human communication we first ask: what did he mean by that?—whether he said something or merely slammed the door. In the philosophy of language, this model of communication used to be called "rhetoric" and is now called "pragmatics."

In the second model, language is viewed as a system of representations that facilitate cognition by providing a perspicuous set of symbols to convey information about the world, about our own thought, and about the thought of other people. Language on this model gives articulate form to the buzzing, blooming

world of sense experience as well as to the vague, chaotic world of thought and feeling. In this model, language is assimilated to the realm of cognition in general: words and sentences direct the mind to objects of knowledge just as natural signs such as symptoms, smoke, or clouds direct the mind to their objects. Here the point of view is that of the interpreter: to understand a representation we must look to the object represented. Thus, the question we first ask of any representation is: what does it mean? In the philosophy of language, the study of representations used to be called " logic " but is now called " semantics."

What is striking about these two models of language is that each plausibly claims to provide an adequate theory of linguistic meaning: for semantics, the rules for determining the meaning of the linguistic expression (that is, what it represents to an interpreter) are what counts while the intentions of the speaker are relegated to the " context "; for pragmatics (especially that of H. P. Grice), the communication intentions of the speaker are what count and the literal meaning of the sentence is merely part of the context. The distinction between these two models is especially evident when the meaning of an expression is different from what a speaker means by that expression: A speaker may mean something true by saying something false, as with metaphor; a speaker may mean the opposite of what his expression means, as with sarcasm; a speaker may at once assert and deny an expression, as with irony; a speaker may mean more than what he expresses, as with conversational implications and indirect speech acts.

Such discrepancies between literal meaning and speaker's meaning have led many linguists and philosophers to seek a reconciliation of our two models of language, to seek for a unified conception of linguistic meaning. Some semanticists, for example, are adding illocutionary force indicators to propositional content indicators; others are adding illocutionary force to sense and denotation as the basic elements of meaning.[3] At the same

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[3] See Mark de Bretton Platts, *Ways of Meaning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 68-94.

time, some pragmatists have added to the old truth conditions of propositional content the new condition of successful performance of the illocutionary act.[4]

However, because semantics and pragmatics employ different units of linguistic analysis, such jerry-rigged efforts to combine pragmatic and semantic analyses have not led to a unified conception of meaning. Because semantics is based on a cognitive model of representation, the units of analysis are the elementary units of linguistic representation, namely, the word and the sentence. Yet because pragmatics is based on a model of communicative action, its unit of linguistic analysis is the performance of a speech act. People do not utter words or sentences; rather, they make assertions, issue directives, commissives, expressives, and make declarations by using words and sentences. According to pragmatists, stating a proposition, making a reference, predicating something of something, are all deliberate acts of an agent. Saying that a sentence predicates something or refers to something can only mean that a speaker uses sentences to perform the action of predicating and referring. Part of the meaning of an asserted proposition, for example, is the speaker's commitment to the truth of that proposition; therefore, propositions are not merely signs of their objects the way symptoms are signs of diseases.[5]

Although there are superficial signs of convergence everywhere, pragmatics and semantics resist unification, I believe, be-

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[4] ". . . illocutionary acts with propositional content have in virtue of their logical form both conditions of success and conditions of satisfaction. Moreover, their conditions of satisfaction are dependent on the truth conditions of their propositional contents. As a consequence of this, there are two sets of semantic values in general semantics, namely: 1) the set U-s of success values which are success (or successful performance), and insuccess (or non-performance) and 2) the set U-t of truth values which are truth and falsehood." Daniel Vanderveken, *Meaning and Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 41-42.

[5] "The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, the symbol, word or sentence, or even the token of the symbol, word or sentence, but rather the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act." John Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 16.

cause each approach embodies a profound and yet opposed model of language. Each model illuminates one side of the linguistic moon only by casting a shadow over the other side. P. F. Strawson has described the conflict between semantics and pragmatics as "a Homeric struggle." [6] A truly unified theory of linguistic meaning, if we ever get one, will probably have to be cast in quite different categories.

My task, however, is not to unite but to distinguish. I will develop in detail the opposition of these two models to reveal not only the multi-dimensional character of language but also the multi-dimensional character of the semiotic of John Poinsot. In this way, I hope to distinguish those aspects of linguistic meaning illuminated by Poinsot's semiotics from those aspects made obscure. Predictably, we will discover that Poinsot's semiotic is resolutely representational in character, as any general theory of signs must be.[7] Surprisingly, we will also discover the rudiments of a theory of linguistic communication scattered throughout his *Treatise on Signs*—rudiments that are not likely to be found unless one is looking for them. Does this mean that the semiotic of John Poinsot actually can account for the complexity of linguistic meaning? Or are his insights into the communicative dimension of language superfluous to the basically representational logic of his general theory of signs?

[6] After citing Strawson's remark, John Searle comments: " But the fundamental insight of each theory seems to me correct; the mistake is to suppose that the two theories are necessarily in conflict." See Searle, " Meaning, Communication and Representation," in *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality,* edited by Richard E. Grandy and Richard Warner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 209-226 at 225.

[7] Poinsot's formal definition of a sign perfectly captures the cognitive model of language: " That which represents something other than itself to a cognitive power." See Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 25/11. As we shall see below, Poinsot explicitly contrasts representation with signification, in that all signification involves representation, but not all representation involves signification. Except in the context of such a contrast, I will use representation to mean signification.

2) The Communicative Dimension of Language

The notion of communication would appear to be ideally suited to the description of language. If language is not a medium of communication, then what is it? Recall, however, that the notion of representation also appeared ideally suited to the description

of language—is not language a system of signs?—but that, under scrutiny, the semantic model of linguistic meaning failed to capture much of what linguistic utterances mean. Just as there are hybrid semantics that attempt to capture some of the speaker's intentions by the patchwork of illocutionary force indicators, so there are hybrid models of communication. For example, communication theory (or, as it is often called, " information theory ") is a hybrid between pure communication and pure representation. In communication theory, a message originated by X is encoded by the transmitter into a signal; the signal is sent over a particular communication channel to the receiver; the receiver decodes the signal into a message and passes the message on to Y.[8] In this model, we may distinguish the pure communicative element (the transitive action of X on Y) from the semantic element involving the encoding and the decoding of " signals."

What do I mean by the pure communicative element? If we look at the etymology of communication and the semantic field of related words, I think we can infer a core meaning.[9] The Latin noun *communicatio* means a making common (*communis*), a sharing: we still say that one communicates one's property to others. In rhetoric, *communicatio* was used to translate the Greek figure of speech *anakoinosis,* in accordance with which a speaker turns to his hearers, and, as it were, allows them to take part in the inquiry by saying " we " instead of " I " or " you." [10] Here

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[8] This description of communication is from John Lyons, *Semantics* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 37.

[9] For Latin meanings I rely on Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary;* for English meanings I rely on the *Oxford English Dictionary.*

[10] In sixteenth-century English rhetoric, this figure of speech is called " communication."

576   JAMES BERNARD MURPHY

the speaker communicates with his audience, not by conveying information but by, so to speak, sharing the podium. This rhetorical trope captures some of the characteristic uses of "communicate" in everyday life, as when we say: "he communicated" his feelings, sentiments, attitudes emotions. I take it that what communicate means in these expressions is not that he encoded his feelings, sentiments, emotions and then transmitted them to a receiver, who then decoded them. Rather, what is meant is an unmediated sharing of intentional states; when I communicate such states my object is not to have them interpreted but shared. I want others to participate in my intentions: I want to connect when I communicate. Even though it may well be physically or psychologically impossible to communicate an intentional state unmediated by signs, the limiting case of communication would have to be telepathy.

Thus, one element of communication is the shared participation of communion: to communicate used to mean "partake of Holy Communion" and "to administer Holy Communion"; those who participate in communion are called communicants. Communication in this sense is not the transfer of a gift from one person to another; it is not a zero-sum game in which what is communicated is lost by one person and gained by another. Instead, communication is the creation of a common good between persons, the *communio* of friendship, church, and marriage. As we shall see, one of the dimensions of linguistic communication is precisely the attempt to create such a direct sharing of intentional states.

The Latin verb *communico* means in its original sense to divide something with someone *(aliquid cum aliquo)*; that is, to give someone something by sharing it with him. We can thus see the relation between communication as shared communion and communicate as the transitive action of giving something to someone: I impart something to someone in order to create something common between us. In English the verb communicate often means an unmediated transitive relation: a disease is communicated

from one person to another; motion is communicated from one body to another; heat is communicated from one vessel to another. When we say that the dressing room communicates with the bedroom, we do not mean that they are passing messages! What these usages convey is the notion of an unmediated and therefore non-semiotic relation between entities.

Distinctively human communication is a deliberate action by an agent to share an intentional state with his audience. Not only is language not necessary for such communication, but language can often be an obstacle. What is more eloquent than a tear or a smile? Indeed, often when we most desire to communicate with someone—that is, to be in communion with them—we either say nothing or we say something deliberately meaningless like " it is raining " as we both look out the window—as if to underscore that what we seek is not to convey information but to share a common concern. This is not to deny that human communication normally proceeds through linguistic representation; rather, I wish only to suggest that the intention to communicate is different from the intention to represent and that the two intentions can work at cross purposes. When we communicate with God through the repetitive litanies of prayer we do not intend to represent anything to Him.

Rhetoric is to communication what logic is to representation. Logic uses signs in order to represent the truth; logical argument seeks to convince all rational minds indifferently. Rhetoric uses signs in order to influence minds: rhetorical argument is tailored to persuade particular audiences. Put in pragmatic terms, rhetoric is the use of illocutionary speech acts deliberately to create perlocutionary effects. Rhetors make use of assertives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives in order to persuade, frighten, reassure, or embarrass the audience. Rhetoric is especially effective when it appeals to our sub-rational beliefs and fears; by making " contact " with our deepest prejudices, the rhetor is able to communicate his beliefs directly to our minds— seemingly unmediated by reason. The emphasis in rhetorical

theory and practice on making contact with the audience reveals the communicative as opposed to representational intention.[11]

Language is communicative to the extent that the aim of a speech act is contact with another person's mind; language is representational to the extent that the aim of a speech act is to bring one's own or another person's mind in contact with some object or state of affairs. In this sense, expletives, obscenities, yelling " fire " in a crowded theater, and racial insults are maximally communicative: they create a very direct contact between minds. Communication of this sort is as aggressive as physical violence and, like other forms of violence, such speech is often legally restricted. Legal regulation of speech is thus directed at the communicative as opposed to the representational dimension of language.

The most subtle and far-reaching analysis of the communicative dimension of linguistic meaning is that of H. P. Grice.[12] He draws our attention to a manifest difference of meaning illustrated in the following contrasting pairs:

(1A) Herod presents Salome with the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger.
(1B) Herod says to Salome, " He's dead."
(2A) I leave the china my daughter has broken lying around for my wife to see.
(2B) I say to my wife, " Our daughter has broken the china."
(3A) A policeman stops a car by standing in its way.
(3B) A policeman stops a car by waving.

All of these are examples of communication and the difference between the *A* cases and the *B* cases is subtle. Contrast the above pairs with these illustrations of representation in John Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs:*

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[11] On the importance of " contact of minds " in rhetoric, see Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric* [1958] (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), pp. 14-18.

[12] H. P. Grice, " Meaning," *Philosophical Review* 66 (1957), pp. 377-388. I have made use of David Lewis's cogent exposition of Grice's classic article from his book *Convention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 152-154.

(1) I see smoke, so I believe there is a fire.
(2) I see napkins on the table, so I believe that dinner is imminent.

All of both Grice's and Poinsot's examples involve significa-
tion: in every case, a sign signifies an object to a cognitive power;
in every case, a sign means something in the sense that it has a
tendency to produce a belief in the mind of an audience. But
Grice's examples are communicative in the sense that A means
something by his use of sign x. Poinsot's examples are merely
representational; his signs mean something, but no one means
anything by them.[13] Turning to Grice's examples, they all have
the feature that not only does someone do some action that pro-
duces a belief in the mind of the audience, but also someone in-
tends—expects and wants—to produce that response by his ac-
tion; moreover, in all Grice's examples, someone intends that the
audience should recognize his intention to produce that response
by his action. Indeed, the *differentia specifica* of Grice's B ex-
amples is so subtle that there is still controversy about how to
capture it. Grice's own formulation seems to apply to both the
A and the B examples: "A uttered [or did] x with the intention
of inducing a belief by means of the recogntiion of this inten-
tion." [14]

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[13] Poinsot's first example is what he calls a *signum naturale*; his second
example is what he calls a *signum ex consuetudine (Tractatus de Signis,* p.
27/20-30). It is possible that placing napkins on a table could be intentional-
ly meant to call people to dinner, in which case it would become a communi-
cative sign. Whereas Poinsot has three divisions of signs: natural, customary,
and stipulated; Grice has only two divisions of meaning, natural and non-
natural. See his "Meaning," p. 379.

[14] Grice, "Meaning," p. 384. In Strawson's (1964) reformation of Grice,
for S to mean something by x he must intend:

(*a*) S's utterance of x to produce a certain response r in a certain audience A;
(*b*) A to recognize S's intention (*a*);
(*c*) A's recognition of S's intention (*a*) to function as at least part of A's
      reason for A's response r.

See Andrei Marmor, *Interpretation and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon
Press, 1992), p. 25. Again, even this subtle reformulation does not seem to
capture the difference between our A and B examples. Grice himself offers
several alternative refinements of his analysis in his subsequent article,
"Utterer's Meaning and Intentions," *Philosophical Review* 78 (1969), pp. 147-
177.

Grice's decisive insight was that distinctively human communication involves a reciprocal (and reflexive) recognition of intentions. Communication is not a transitive action whereby an agent creates a belief in his audience the way a carpenter imposes form on raw material; nor is communication the sum total of two acts: the transmission of the encoded message combined with the interpretation of the received message. Rather communication is a genuine meeting of minds, a community of intention, a shared project of meaning. When I speak to you, I signal first of all that I desire your attention; I then want you to recognize that I desire to share an intentional state (a belief, purpose, fear); I also expect that your recognition of my desire to share my intentional state will enable you to understand my belief, purpose, or fear.

Why should your recognition of my desire to share an intentional state play a role in your understanding of what I say? Because the meaning of my utterance will be underdetermined by the semantic rules of interpretation. I may mean the opposite of what I say, as in sarcasm; I may mean more than I say, as in conversational implicature; what I mean may have no relation to what I say, as when I point out that it is raining to console your grief. But if I can engage your powers of empathetic intuition, if I can get you to imagine what you would say if you were in my position, then I will greatly reduce the risk of misunderstanding. Communication is the effort to share a common point of view; and its success depends upon the imaginative power of the listener to recreate a speaker's beliefs and desires.

Grice's project is to reduce the semantic representation of linguistic meaning to the communication intentions of speakers. Instead of admitting a discrepancy or even a distinction between speaker's meaning and utterance meaning, Grice insists that the utterance meaning is reducible to the communication intentions of speakers. Grice has been attacked by John Searle and others for reducing the public, conventional system of semantic rules to

the private, idiosyncratic intentions of individuals.[15] Of course, if our intentional states are themselves linguistically shaped, then Grice's alleged reduction of semantic representation to communicative intentions could rest upon a prior incorporation of semantic conventions into intentions.[16] David Lewis argues that it is precisely these semantic conventions that differentiate Grice's *B* examples from his *A* examples. In the *B* examples, but not the *A* examples, the audience's response is produced by means of signs given in conformity to a semantic system. True, the role of these semantic conventions is itself intended by the speaker; while I can stop your car by standing in front of it, it is more efficient—not to mention safer—to wave.[17] If I intend my communication intentions to be effective, I will probably intend them to conform to a public system of semantic conventions. Thus, among my communication intentions is an intention to represent a state of affairs in conformity with a certain semantic system (gesture, English, semaphore), an intention that you recognize this intention to represent, and an intention that by that recognition you will correctly interpret my representational intention.

3) The Representational Dimension of Language

All of which brings us back to the semiotic of John Poinsot and the representational dimension of language. Language has

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[15] " Meaning is more than a matter of intention, it is also at least sometimes a matter of convention. One might say that on Grice's account it would seem that any sentence can be uttered with any meaning whatever, given the circumstances make possible the appropriate intentions. But that has the consequence that the meaning of the sentence then becomes just another circumstance." Searle, *Speech Acts,* p. 45.

[16] Grice gives us no theory of intentionality, but he seems to slip semantic conventions into his communication intentions when he says: " An utterer is held to intend to convey what is normally conveyed (or normally intended to be conveyed), and we require a good reason for accepting that a particular use diverges from the general usage." Grice, " Meaning," p. 387.

[17] Lewis defines the *differentia* of the *B* examples thus: " He intends the audience's recognition of his intention to produce that response to be effective in producing that response." Lewis assumes that communication is much more effective when it relies on a public system of semantic rules; and indeed, in general the *A* examples invite misunderstanding more readily than do the *B* examples. David Lewis, *Convention,* p. 154.

two irreducible elements: the representational and the communicative. We have seen that Grice's attempt to reduce the semantics of representation to the intentions of communication fails. Here we will discover that representation is not just irreducible but logically prior to communication in the analysis of language. The semiotic of John Poinsot is the most general and fundamental science of signs because what all signs share is the office of representation; only a small subset of signs are used to communicate.

The pure or limiting case of communication, as we have seen, would be telepathy: here we share our point of view directly, unmediated by signs. Pure communication is thus unsemiotic. Curiously, the pure or limiting case of representation is simply the relation of an object to a cognitive power: pure representation would also be unsemiotic.[18] Communication assumes the point of view of the speaker who initiates contact; thus although successful communication depends upon the "uptake" of the audience, that uptake is itself intended by the speaker. Representation assumes the point of view of the listener who must interpret what is said. The semiotic of John Poinsot is thoroughly embedded in the cognitive point of view of the listener, for most signs have meaning even though nothing is meant by them.

Poinsot defines the formal rationale of the sign in terms of its relation to an object; he points out, however, that a relation to a cognitive power is presupposed.[19] Moreover, Poinsot is unsatisfied with the analysis of signification into the two dyadic relations of sign-object and sign-mind; he therefore suggests that we define the formal rationale of the sign in terms of a single triadic

[18] By "unsemiotic," I mean that the limiting cases of both communication and representation make use of no instrumental signs. Each and every act of cognition, however, involves formal signs.

[19] Poinsot claims in several places that the formal rationale of the sign consists in the ontological relation of sign to object, not in the transcendental relation of sign to mind. See *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 119/13; p. 128/14; p. 159/16; p. 141/12. Yet in other places Poinsot says that relation to a cognitive power, though not constitutive, is presupposed in the formal rationale of the sign (pp. 160/10 and 140/22).

relation encompassing sign, object, and mind.[20] Indeed, there is no way to describe the sign-object relation without referring to the sign-mind relation; no genuinely triadic relation can be reduced to the sum of its dyads.[21]

Even if the sign-object relation is first in the order of being, the sign-mind relation is first in the order of Poinsot's exposition to us. For signification is a special kind of representation and representation is a special kind of cognition—meaning that signification is itself a special kind of cognition. To make cognizant, says Poinsot, is said of every cause concurring in the production of knowledge. Now something is made cognizant in four ways, namely, effectively, objectively, formally, and instrumentally. In contemporary jargon, we could define these four factors as necessary and/or sufficient conditions for cognition. Effectively, the mind produces knowledge by its own dispositions and acts; for example, our will directs our attention to the object of cognition or calls to mind the principles of inductive reasoning. Objectively, the thing known produces knowledge by presenting itself to the mind as an object of cognition; for example, a part of any perceptual experience is the belief that an object is causing my perception. Formally, the concept I form of an object or class of objects produces knowledge by being more perspicuous than that of which it is the concept. Instrumentally, the vehicle bearing the object to the mind is a cause of knowledge; for example, a picture of the emperor conveys the emperor to the mind, and this vehicle we call the instrument of cognition.

Representation is a special kind of cognition. To represent is

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[20] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 154/20-30. We will see below (p. xxx) that this point is crucial to Poinsot's solution to the problem of how words apply to physically real objects.

[21] " And it cannot be said that a sign is something relative to a significate and not to a power, but only terminates a power. For that a sign is referred to a significate is unintelligible, if the sign is unconnected with a cognitive power and conceived without any order thereto, because a sign, insofar as it respects a significate, brings and presents that significate to a cognitive power." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 156/10-17.

584   JAMES BERNARD MURPHY

said of each factor which makes anything become present to the mind. What this means is that the effective causes of knowledge, namely, the dispositions and acts of the mind, are excluded: the dispositions and acts of the mind cannot make anything become present to the mind because they are the mind. So to represent is said in three ways, namely, objectively, formally, and instrumentally. For an object, such as a wall, represents itself objectively; a concept represents formally; and a footprint is the instrumental vehicle of representation.

Finally, signification is a special kind of representation. To signify is said of that by which something distinct from itself becomes present, and so is said in only two ways, namely, formally and instrumentally. For every object represents itself, but a sign must represent something other than itself. In the case of an instrumental sign, such as a word, the sign-vehicle must be cognized before the sign can make its object present to the mind; in the case of a formal sign, such as a percept, image, or concept, the sign directs the mind to its object without any sign-vehicle being cognized.

Thus Poinsot's fundamental division of signs into formal and instrumental is the product of a comprehensive theory of cognition. Insofar as signs are ordered to a cognitive power they are divided into formal and instrumental. In addition to this cognitive component, Poinsot' representational semiotics also has a semantic component, namely, a theory of the relation of signs to their objects. We will explore this semantic component in detail when we turn to the linguistic sign; here we will only note that, insofar as signs are ordered to something signified, they are divided into natural, customary, and stipulated. A natural sign, like a symptom, is related to what it signifies by the laws of nature; a customary sign, like a name on a mailbox signifying the owner of the house, is related to what it signifies by tacit social conventions; and a stipulated sign, like a traffic sign or a neologism, is deliberately instituted by some authority. So Poinsot's

general definition of a sign is: " That which represents something other than itself to a cognitive power." [22]

Poinsot's view that something may represent itself or something else, whereas something cannot signify itself, corresponds with the meanings of these words in Latin as well as in English. To represent (*repraesentare*) originally meant to make present, to manifest, to exhibit; later, it came to mean to supply the place of, to portray, to signify. A person may represent himself in court or he may be represented by an attorney. Similarly, representation originally meant the presence, bearing, or appearance of a thing but later also came to mean signification. Any object in cognition may be said to represent itself in the sense that it stimulates a cognitive power, but it seems odd to speak of an object signifying itself. Now the two meanings of "to represent " are connected in the sense that often the only or the most effective way to make something present is to signify it. To signify (*significare*) means precisely to show by signs, that is, to represent something other than itself. Thus the distinctive sense of representation, in contrast to signification, is this sense of manifesting, of making present.

Because something can represent itself, to describe percepts and concepts as representations is to invite skepticism—the very term suggests that there is nothing behind them. Then to go further and describe these representations as mental objects is to turn an invitation into a summons. Yet such is the story of the classic rationalist and empiricist theories of knowledge. If what we know are representations, and if representational objects can represent themselves to mind, how can we know anything beyond them? Indeed, since mental representations are inherently private, the representational theory of knowledge seems to lead to a radical solipsism.

Poinsot's treatment of concepts and percepts as signs avoids these skeptical pitfalls. For, unlike instrumental signs, which

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[22] I have paraphrased, for purposes of exposition, Poinsot's summary definition and division of the sign. See *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 26/21-27/12 and p. 25/11-12.

must be first cognized as objects before they may function as signs, the formal signs of percepts and concepts are not objects at all but merely modes of cognition. A formal sign is not that which we know but that by which we know. Because allowing for any mediation between mind and object invites skepticism— whether we call that mediation a sign or a representation— Poinsot insists that formal signs do not mediate the relation of object to mind. He says that " something is said to be known equally immediately when it is known in itself and when it is known by means of a concept or awareness; for a concept does not make cognition mediate." [23] Poinsot appeals to our own experience: he says that no one first sees a concept or percept so that through it he may see an object; grasping an object through a formal sign " does not constitute a mediate cognition, because it does not double the object known nor the cognition." [24] The intentional object of knowledge is seen in the concept and not outside of it.

The representational theory of knowledge is founded upon a false analogy between formal and instrumental signs. We have good reason to believe that instrumental signs genuinely represent their objects because we often have an opportunity to compare sign to object. We can compare the footprint to the animal, the picture to the person, the map to the terrain; smoke leads us to fire, clouds lead to rain, words effectively convey concepts. But in the case of formal signs no such direct comparisons are possible; since cognition can, on this theory, only reach representational objects, there is no way to compare them to the objects they purport to represent.[25] Indeed, since something may represent itself, there is no contradiction in asserting that representations have no real objects. But if instrumental and formal signs

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[23] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* pp. 223/27-224/2.

[24] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 224/32-34.

[25] " The main difficulty with a representative theory of perception is that the notion of resemblance between the things we perceive, the sense data, and the thing that the sense data represent, the material object, must be unintelligible since the object term is by definition inaccessible to the senses." John Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 59.

play such different roles in cognition, how can Poinsot maintain that: " The division into formal and instrumental signs is essential, univocal, and adequate "? Poinsot reminds us that the formal rationale of the sign concerns the ontological relation of sign to object, not the transcendental relation of sign to mind. Formal signs have a relation to their objects founded upon the natural laws of cognition just as natural instrumental signs have a relation to their objects founded upon natural laws of cause and effect.[26] Formal and instrumental signs differ in the relation of sign to mind, in the mode of representation to a cognitive power, not in the mode of signification.[27]

How do linguistic signs fit into this cognitive model of signification? What is a linguistic sign on Poinsot's account? Poinsot's analysis of signs, like that of modern semantics, is resolutely, though not exclusively, oriented toward the point of view of the interpreter. The question is virtually always: " What does a sign mean? " instead of " What did the speaker mean by a sign? " This semantic orientation determines what counts as a linguistic sign—the unit of analysis. Poinsot's semiotic is a branch of material logic, which is the study of the units or components of logical reasoning, both syllogistic and dialectic. The simplest component of logical reasoning is the term, followed by the proposition, which is followed by systems of discursive inferences. Poinsot explicitly incorporates the term as the basic element of material logic into his theory of signs; he defines a term as: "A sign out of which a simple proposition is constructed." [28] Thus, following Aristotle's example in the *Perihermenias,* Poinsot develops this theory of the linguistic sign as part of the foundations of logic. The philosophy of language is embedded in the philosophy of logic: as we shall see, Poinsot's

[26] How this statement holds even in cases where the object lacks physical existence has been examined in detail by John Deely, " Reference to the Non-Existent," *The Thomist* 39/2 (April 1975), pp. 253-308.

[27] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 229/1-3, 145/10-28 and 238/28-45.

[28] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 24/10-13. A proposition itself is a sign of truth or falsity; see Poinsot, *Ars Logica* [1632], vol. 1 of the *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus,* pp. 23-24.

principal discussion of semantics is found in the fifth article of the first question of the Second Part of the *Ars Logica, "De Termino."* [29]

What, according to Poinsot, is a term and how is it related to a word? The first division of terms is into mental, vocal, and written: the mental term is a concept which signifies by a natural similitude, the vocal and written terms signify by stipulation (*ad placitum*).[30] Now a mental term creates problems for both the theory of logic and the theory of language because a concept is neither an instrument of logic nor a linguistic unit.[31] All instruments of logic must have a stipulated meaning, which rules out mental terms, nonsense expressions, and onomatopoeic words.[32] Therefore, in his attempt to capture only linguistic units with a stipulated meaning, Poinsot relies on the standard Latin translation of Aristotle's definition of a name or noun (*onoma*), *phone semantike kata syntheken,* which is *vox significativa ad placitum.*[33] Unfortunately, a *vox* like a *phone* is simply a voicing of any length; usually Aristotle and Poinsot simply mean a word, but sometmies they mean other kinds of utterances.[34] Moreover, a *vox* is a vocal expression, whereas Poinsot needs to capture both vocal and written expressions.[35]

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[29] *"Utrum Voces Significent Per Prius Conceptus An Res,"* Ars Logica, pp. 104b 29-108a 33, included in the Deely edition of the *Tractatus de Signis* as Appendix A, "Whether Vocal Expressions Primarily Signify Concepts or Things," pp. 344-351.

[30] Poinsot, *Ars Logica,* p. 10a 34 and p. 109b 45.

[31] Indeed, sometimes Poinsot defines terms in a way that seems to exclude mental terms: *"Terminus autem oratio quaedam artificialia sunt . . ."* Ars Logica, p. 111a 28.

[32] *"De essentiali ratione termini logicalis seu artificialis est, quod sit significativus significatione ad placitum, si sit vocalis vel scriptus, non si sit conceptus."* Poinsot goes on to rule out the *voces* that signify naturally, as in Plato's *Cratylus.* See *Ars Logica,* p. 90b 12-35.

[33] For Aristotle's *phone semantike,* see *De Interpretatione* 16a 19.

[34] *"Oratio est vox significativa ad placitum . . ."* Poinsot, *Ars Logica, p.* 17a 7.

[35] Deely often translates *vox* as "voice," sometimes in contexts where *vox* is simply short for *vox significativa,* and a *vox significativa,* which Deely translates as "linguistic expression," often means simply "word." Thus in

Thus, in one way *voces* are a subset of *termini,* since they exclude mental terms; in another way, however, *termini* are a subset of *voces,* since not all significant words are elements of logical propositions—and terms are defined by their relation to propositions.[36] In one place, Poinsot says that all terms are nouns, verbs, or adverbs; and indeed all of his examples of terms or the descriptive words that form the subject or predicate of propositions, such as rock, Peter, man, animal.[37] Unlike many Scholastic logicians, however, Poinsot did not restrict the domain of terms to categorematic signs but included syncategorematic signs, such as logical operators.[38] Still, there are many words that are neither categorematic nor syncategorematic—meaning that Poinsot's theory of the linguistic sign is tantamount to a theory of the logical term.

Since the formal rationale of a sign consists in its relation to a significate, we must ask: what is the relation of a linguistic sign to its object? Although Aristotle had said that words get their meaning by convention or social contract (*kata syntheken*), Poinsot insists that words get their meaning by the deliberate stipulation of public authority.[39] When the public or legal imposition of meaning is forgotten, words signify from customary usage.[40] Now, according to the Scholastic maxim, the word signifies its object through concepts: *"vox significat rem mediantibus conceptibus."* But a concept, or a formal sign, is a natural sign because it signifies its object by a natural similitude. What

the title of the fifth article of the first question *De Termino,* *"Utrum voces significent per prius conceptus an res,"* *voces* is best rendered as "words." I will render *vox* as word whenever the context calls for it.

[36] *"Ratio est, quia essentia actualis termini est esse partem propositionis . . ."* Poinsot, *Ars Logica,* p. 97b 26.

[37] Poinsot, *Ars Logica,* 8b 23.

[38] Categorematic terms signify directly; syncategorematic terms signify indirectly. *"Categorematicus est, qui aliquid per se significat. . . . Terminus syncategorematicus est, qui aliqualiter significat, ut adverbium velociter, faciliter, signum omnis, quidam, etc."* Poinsot, *Ars Logica,* 11b 47-12a 10.

[39] For Aristotle, see *De Interpretatione* 16a 19; for Poinsot: *"Signum ad placitum, quod repraesentat aliquid ex impositione voluntatis per publicam auctoritatem, ut vox homo."* *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 27/22-25.

[40] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 283/9-22.

this means is that words seem to signify through a compound of two relations of signification: first the word " man " signifies the concept man and then the concept man signifies the real man.

One shortcoming of such a double relation of signification is that it makes all concepts into reflexive concepts. If the word " man " first signified the concept man, then the concept man would be the object of the sign " man "; but a concept is an object only when it is a reflexive concept. There is nothing wrong with using the word " man " to refer to the concept man, but then cognition terminates at the concept and cannot reach the real man.[41] We can either talk about the concept man by treating the concept as an object, or we can talk about the real objective man. Moreover, it is logically paradoxical to turn all concepts into reflexive concepts since reflexive concepts are parasitical on direct concepts. A reflexive concept can become an object of cognition only on the pattern (*ad instar*) of a real object reached by a direct concept.[42] Thus, there must be a way for the word man to reach the real man—by way of the direct concept of man—in a single relation of signification.

Actually, for Poinsot, since every instrumental sign signifies its object by means of concepts, the intrinsic unity of the sign relation is threatened for every instrumental sign. Unfortunately, Poinsot analyzes the interplay of instrumental and formal signs only in the case of linguistic signs.[43] But what are we to make

[41] " Consequently the thing signified by means of the direct concept is not represented there [i.e., in the reflexive concept] except very remotely and indirectly. And the reason is that in a reflexive concept the very thing signified [by a direct concept] functions as the terminus-from-which reflexion begins; therefore a reflexive concept does not represent that thing as its object and as the terminus-to-which the representation is borne. . . ." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 329/10-18.

[42] " the whole rationale of reflexion springs from this, that our understanding and its act are not objectively understandable in this life except dependently upon sensible things, and thus our concepts, even though they are formally present, are nevertheless not present objectively as long as they are not formed on the pattern (*ad instar*) of a definable sensible structure or ' essence,' which can only come about by means of a turning back or ' reflexion ' undertaken from a sensible object." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 325/23-32.

[43] See Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, pp. 334-351.

of smoke as a sign of fire? Does seeing smoke signify the concept smoke or the concept fire? Does the concept fire then signify real fire? These notions of double sign relations, or chains of sign relations, strike us as counter-intuitive. The word "man" seems to reach all the way to the real man, just as the sight of smoke seems to reach all the way to real fire.

In his analysis of the linguistic sign, Poinsot indeed rejects the idea of double sign relations. He first distinguishes between ultimate and non-ultimate concepts. Ultimate concepts are concepts of objects; non-ultimate concepts are concepts of words. In order to unify the linguistic sign relation, says Poinsot, we must hold that the real object of the ultimate concept is represented in the non-ultimate concept. In other words, the linguistic concept is itself a compound of an ultimate concept and a non-ultimate concept. For when we hear the word "man" cognition does not cease when we reach the concept man but proceeds directly to the real man. Put more forcefully, we cannot have a non-ultimate concept of a word unless we first have an ultimate concept of the object of that word. A word is not a concept at all unless we grasp its terminal object.

In one of his few vivid examples, Poinsot considers the case of a peasant who, not knowing Latin, hears the word "animal." If there were a double relation in the linguistic sign, if the concept of the word did not presuppose the concept of the object, then the peasant could form a non-ultimate concept of the word "animal" without knowing what the ultimate concept animal signified. But this is impossible. Either the peasant knows that the sound pattern of "animal" is a word or he does not. If he knows it is a word, then he can form a vague non-ultimate concept of it because he knows that it ultimately signifies a word. If he does not think it is a word, but just a meaningless sound, then he cannot form a non-ultimate concept but he will form an ultimate concept—the wrong ultimate concept but an ultimate concept nonetheless. In either case, it remains true that there can

be no concept of a word without a concept of its object; the concept of the real object is represented in the concept of the word.[44]

In quite a different context (*Ars Logica,* 1, p. q. 1, "*De Termino,*" art. 5), Poinsot considers the question: "Whether words primarily signify concepts or things." Poinsot's discussion of language in this article takes a surprisingly pragmatic turn. His emphasis on language as an instrument of communication, rather than as a semantic system of representations, is somewhat startling. For if, as he suggests, language is an instrument for serving human needs, then it makes sense to say that words must primarily signify things, for it is with things (including other human beings) ultimately that human beings must contend. And indeed, Poinsot concludes that words primarily signify real objects, unless, as in the case of reflexive concepts and concepts of second intentions, the object signified is itself a concept.[45]

Thus, Poinsot explicitly rejects the double signification theory of words and insists that "words signify things and concepts by one single signification."[46] How is it that words can signify both concepts and things within one relation of signification? Because the linguistic sign has a two-fold office: "namely, to substitute for the things which the word manifests, and second, to substitute for the concepts which signify those very things in a hidden and interior way."[47] Poinsot argues for a transitivity of ministerial office in the linguistic sign: the concept ministers to the object (as its intentional similitude) by making it more perspicuous to cognition while at the same time the word ministers to the concept by rendering it sensible; thus if the word ministers to the concept and the concept ministers to the object, then the word primarily ministers to the object. He draws a political analogy that I will elaborate: if a prime minister serves the king and a cabinet minister serves the prime minister, then, by transitivity, the cabinet minister primarily serves the king.[48] This translates

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[44] See Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* pp. 336/7-337/30.

[45] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 349/36-41.

[46] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 345/8-9.

[47] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 346/37-40.

[48] See Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 346/45-48.

into a transitivity of signification: the concept signifies the obect, the word signifies primarily the object.[49]

Poinsot deftly unites the pragmatic and the semantic dimension of the linguistic sign by distinguishing two kinds of intentionality. Earlier in the *Tractatus de Signis,* Poinsot distinguished two senses of " intention ": the act of will directed toward an end (pragmatic intention) and the act or concept of the understanding directed toward its object (for a linguistic act or concept, a semantic intention).[50] In this article, he brings both of these senses of intention to bear on the question at hand. He argues that men originally wanted to signify things and in order to effect this pragmatic intention they imposed a semantic intention toward things on to words. In short, that words intend real objects is quite intentional.[51] John Searle's theory of language is based on the same pun on intentionality: " The main function which language derives from Intentionality is, obviously, its capacity to represent. Entities which are not intrinsically Intentional can be made Intentional by, so to speak, intentionally decreeing them to be so." [52]

In this pragmatic vein, Poinsot also briefly considers language from the point of view of the speaker—a point of view typically neglected by semantics. One objection Poinsot considers to his view that words are mediated by concepts is the argument that words cannot be mediated by the concepts of the speaker, because

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[49] " The reason is that the concept itself is ordered ultimately and principally to representing the thing itself of which it is the intentional similitude. Therefore, an outward expression, which is only an instrument of the concept itself in representing and which renders the concept itself sensible, will be ordered more principally to representing those same things, because it is for this very task that it serves the concept." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* pp. 349/42-350/2.

[50] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 58/14-20.

[51] " . . . for men first wished in general, as it were, to signify things, and then sought a way by which they could signify them by means of a stipulation of vocal sounds." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 346/21-24.

[52] Searle, *Intentionality,* p. 175. Also, ". . . language relates to reality in virtue of the fact that speakers so relate it in the performance of linguistic acts " (p. 197).

" if words are formed by the air or by someone sleeping, they still signify." [53] Put in contemporary jargon, this objector is claiming that words and propositions have a literal meaning even if nothing is meant by them. Searle insists, by contrast, that no phenomenon can be recognized as linguistic except on the assumption that it was produced for a purpose—that, in short, the speaker meant something by it.[54] Searle even takes up the question, like Poinsot's objector, of words formed by the wind; Searle, though, excludes these sounds from the domain of linguistic phenomena along with, presumably, the words of someone sleeping or, say, sentences produced randomly by a computer.[55]

Poinsot seems to agree with Searle against the semanticists: " When voices (*voces*) are formed by a non-speaker, those voices (*voces*) are not speech (*locutio*), but physical sound resembling speech; whence they do not signify from imposition, but from the custom which we have when we hear similar words (*voces*), because the voices (*illae* [*voces*]) in question are similar to the words (*voces*) which are speech." [56] Here Poinsot reveals the strongly pragmatic dimension of his doctrine of the stipulated sign (*signum ad placitum*). Poinsot claims that all words have their meanings imposed by public authority; the public authority then deputizes all members of the linguistic community by giving them the right to re-impose the original stipulation of meaning in

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[53] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 347/21-22.

[54] " When I take a noise or a mark on a piece of paper to be an instance of linguistic communication, as a message, one of the things I must assume is that the noise or mark was produced by a being or beings more or less like myself and produced with certain kinds of intentions." Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 16.

[55] " If I regard the noise or mark as a natural phenomenon like the wind in the trees or a stain on the paper, I exclude it from the class of linguistic communication, even though the noise or mark may be indistinguishable from spoken or written words." Searle, *Speech Acts*, p. 16. Note that Searle speaks of the " class of linguistic *communication* " as opposed to the class of linguistic representations. Accidental words do not communicate but they might represent.

[56] Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 349/14-20.

the use of the word as an instrument of communication.[57] Apparently, persons cannot use a word in speech unless they deliberately rehearse the original stipulation of meaning; thus Poinsot insists that words spoken in one's sleep are not linguistic on the grounds that the speaker did not deliberately impose the meaning. Poinsot does not argue that literal meaning can be reduced to the arbitrary impositions of the speaker; rather he argues that to count as speech a word must have the correct literal meaning deliberately imposed by the speaker.

Interestingly, Poinsot claims that such accidental or random speech is not simply non-linguistic but that it is similar or analogous to language. Thus, when we hear someone talking in his sleep, we customarily interpret those sounds after the pattern (*ad instar*) or by analogy with someone deliberately speaking. In short, even where there is no deliberate intention on the part of the speaker, one must interpret all speech as if there were such an intention.[58]

A final aspect of Poinsot's account of the communicative, as opposed to the representational, dimension of language concerns the question of whether signification involves efficient causality. One reason signification seems to involve efficient causation is that the physical energy transmitted by the sound waves of speech directly arouse the attention of the listener. Therefore, since speech physically impinges on the senses and mind of the listener, signification must involve efficient causation. Poinsot denies that signification involves efficient causation on the grounds that the energy of vocalized sound waves serves to arouse the attention

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[57] ". . . words signify from the concept of the one imposing [i.e., of the one who first coined the word] as from the source whence they get signification and imposition, but they signify the concept of the speaker as that for which they are surrogated; for it is to this end that expressions are imposed or coined, that they might be surrogated [i.e., put to use] by anyone speaking." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 349/7-14.

[58] Using Searle's terms, why could not the words of a parrot, of a sleeping person, of a random computer program, have meaning as words but not as speech acts? Or, in Poinsot's terms, why not concede that such utterances are words (*voces*) but not speech (*locutio*)?

of the listener but not to effect the signification. The physical energy of the sound waves opens a channel of communication by capturing the attention of the listener, but the sound waves are not themselves the linguistic representations of speech. In short, the physical energy of sound may bring about a communion of minds, by providing a forum or channel for communication, but the signification of language is not caused by the sound waves.[59] Put in terms of modern causal analysis, sound waves are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for linguistic representation. Not necessary, because linguistic meaning can be conveyed visually or tactilely; not sufficient, because sound waves mean nothing apart from our knowledge of the language.

Although, as we have often noted, Poinsot's semiotics is thoroughly representational in character, he does take note of some of the communicative aspects of language. I have tried to emphasize (and perhaps exaggerate) the difference between communication and representation because they are often conflated —as in the claim that meaning can be captured by communication intentions alone. It is easy to see why they are conflated: typically, when we make a statement we intend both to represent some state of affairs and to communicate this representation to some audience. Things closely correlated are often difficult to disentangle and the intention to represent is highly correlated with the intention to communicate.

John Searle argues that within linguistic behavior representing intentions are logically prior to communicating intentions. What this means is that one can use language to represent something without intending to communicate. " Communicating is a matter of producing certain effects on one's hearers, but one can intend to represent something without caring at all about the effects on

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[59] ". . . the excitative energy in a person's voice is not the actual signification itself or the signifying of the voice." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis,* p. 198/13-14. True, the energy of the sound waves, even in a language I do not understand, signifies the intention of the speaker to communicate. But even here the significance is not caused by the sound waves but by the conventions of addressing an audience.

one's hearers. One can make a statement without intending to produce conviction or belief in one's hearers or without intending to get them to believe that the speaker believes what he says or indeed without even intending to get them to understand at all." Searle does not provide examples of such non-communicative representation but several come to mind. The internal discourse of thought is representational but not communicative; reciting paradigms of Latin conjugations or, in general, all mnemonic utterances are solely representational; many comic, facetious, and other non-serious utterances lack any intention to communicate; talking or singing to oneself seems to be non-communicative.

Yet it seems impossible to intend to communicate without intending to represent—though Mussolini's view that a punch is the characteristic fascist form of communication comes close. As Searle says: "I cannot, for example, intend to inform you that it is raining without intending that my utterance represent, truly or falsely, the state of affairs of the weather." [60] In order to communicate, then, I must represent.

John Poinsot, following Thomas Aquinas, compares the relation of the communicative to the representational dimensions of language to that of the sacraments. For the sacraments both represent and communicate grace. God uses the sanctifying motion of the sacraments as the physical energy to capture the attention of the " communicant " and open the channel for the communication of grace; however, this energetic motion is utterly distinct from the signification itself of the sacraments. This energy is meant only to help us to attend to what the sacraments signify and to be moved by that signification.[61] Thomas Aquinas

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[60] Searle, *Intentionality*, pp. 165-166.

[61] ". . . the sacraments are as it were a kind of sign and words of God exciting us to grace and producing grace. But this energy is utterly distinct from the signification itself of the sacraments, for it is superadded to that signification in the same way that the use and excitative energy of speech is superadded to the signification of words. For excitation occurs to this end, that we attend to the signification and be moved by that signification." Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis*, p. 198/30-38.

598   JAMES BERNARD MURPHY

and his disciple John Poinsot were right to see a parallel between language and the sacraments. The sacraments cannot communicate grace unless they represent it; conversely, the sacraments can represent grace without communicating it. In other words, to serve as an instrument of grace a sacrament must first be a sign of grace. So, too, words cannot be used to communicate unless they represent something; words are instruments only to the extent that they are signs.