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SIGN AND SYMBOL IN S. LANGER'S SEMIOTICS

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The semiotic approach of S. Langer's philosophical concept through the prism of sign, signal and symbol notions is studied in this article. Demarcation principle of these concepts was established. The characteristics of mind's symbolic function and role of mentality in aspects of their capacity to influence on zoosemiosis and antroposemiosis have been analyzed. The semiotic factors of symbolic process differentiation into discursive and representational types, as well as their functioning principles have been analyzed. The comparison of the M. Polanyi's "personal knowledge" concept and the domain of representational symbolism are proposed and the semiotic ground of their partial authentication has been identified. The semiotic conditioning and mediating of human lifeworld gives it a symbolic integrity and fills with the existential senses.

Keywords: symbol, sign, symbolic transformation, discursive symbolism, representation, mentality, mind.

One of the special features of semiotics is often called its interdisciplinary. It has been elevated to the level of positive attitude of philosophizing. It happened not because semiotics tries to raise own prestige at the expense of already formed and advanced sciences, but because semiotics has the potential to integrate these achievements into something more comprehensive. J. Deely claims that semiotics can be "matrix of all sciences". But before making visionary predictions, we have to reflect on the existing achievements in the integrating sphere. Semiotics tries to get out of the scholastic scientific and comprehend the world and knowledge about it as entirety that requires "common denominator". Such "denominator" is proposed by S. Langer, who defines it as symbol.

R. Innis, R. Auxier, B. Lang, D. Dryden and others dedicated their works to disquisition about anthropological, mental and aesthetic issues in S. Langer's works. In particular, R. Innis proposed a broaden overview of S. Langer's semiotic works such as "The Practice of Philosophy" (1930), "An Introduction to Symbolic Logic" (1937), "Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art" (1942), "Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art" (1953) and "Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling" (1967–1982). B. Lang and R. Auxier critically examine philosophical principles S. Langer's works and reveal the problematic items in the conceptual scheme definition and functioning of symbol. Thus, the aim of this article is to explicate the problems of symbol, sign and meaning in S. Langer's semiotics in philosophical context. It also presupposes researching the factors of symbolic transformation process and analysis of dangers and aberrations in the process of symbolic interpretation of the world.

R. Auxier says, that in forties of the 20th century the concept of symbol was actively studied in different disciplines, that's why there are a lot of differences between understanding of symbol,

for example in logic and psychology. It was important for S. Langer to show an universal definition of symbol for its rational interpretation and understanding. Semiotics, considering the etymology (from Ancient Greek σημειωτικός – fitted for marking, portending; σημεῖον – a mark, sign, token), uses the concept of sign rather than concept of symbol. In Ch. Peirce's and Ch. Morris's works the sign is a mediator at all levels of human interaction with world and sign-symbol is a highest mental form of such mediation. S. Langer demarcates sign and symbol: sign is based on reference to a concrete designated object and the symbol is rather polireferencial, as it involves a series of analogies and associations of sensory-intellectual kind, therefore symbol has different structure and mode of existence. "The sign is something to act upon, or a means to command action; the symbol is an instrument of thought." [3, p. 60].

From the preface to the "Philosophy in a New Key" (1951) we found, that S. Langer having acquainted Ch. Morris's "Signs, Language and Behavior", would change the word "sign" on the "signal" because "sign" is used to denote any vehicle of meaning, signal or symbol [3, p. 6]. That is sign acts as a principle of mediation while signal and symbol indicates the degree of difficulty of this mediation. Therefore the chapter "The logic of signs and symbols" would be "The logic of *signals* and symbols". R. Auxier says, that in a book "Feeling and Form" (1953), sign was considered as integral term for the signals and symbols [6].

S. Langer tries to comprehend the phenomenon of human as logical development of mind from body, and thus to prevent the Cartesian dualism in all its transformations. The mind is a natural phenomenon, that's why the sign as a signal is typical for animals too, because it emerges with reflexes. Depending on the complexity of the nervous system and senses, the ability to perceive signals complicates as well. The sign is the first expression of mentality and the symbol is a top of its development on the level of human mind. Thus, the mentality is formed as adaptation to the environment [3, p. 30–31].

According to S. Langer human differs from animal with lack of need of the immediate presence of a signals' sources, and human can abstractly think and talk about the sign in any aspects. "Signs" used in this capacity are not symptoms of things, but symbols" [3, p. 32]. The use of signs is vital to all living beings, but human mind, which has evolved to the use of complicated symbols, has primary and permanent function – the symbolic transformation [3, p. 30]. The symbolic transformation is a basic human need and it consists in the in the creative transformation of experience. S. Langer says that mind always has surplus of the symbolic material which is being transformed even without conscious goal. The process of symbolization needs the end in outer action, what in fact leads to creation of such phenomena as ritual, myth, art, science, language, etc.

R. Innis regards that symbolic transformation, i.e., interpretation and construction of symbolic environment, is the antroposemiotic analogue of Peirce's semiosis [8, p. 4]. The common for Ch. Peirce and S. Langer is the aim for logical argumentation of semiosis and symbolic transformation, R. Innis emphasizes. Thus, S. Langer proposes the understanding of symbol through logical form as concept and conception as mental representation, and the abstraction and analogy as the way to single out the formal structures of feelings and the "recognition" of concepts in the flow of experience. The necessity of mental images is emphasized by R. Innis: "Consciousness of images not as things to be dealt with or undergone but as symbolic tools, as primary carriers of "significance," allows the human organism to abstract and to fix a world, to stabilize the flow of experience even prior to language" [8, p. 6]. The structure of sign process is expressed and presupposes three elements: object, subject and sign; and also the structure of

symbol is expressed, which has four elements: subject, object, mental representation (conception) and symbol [3, p. 60]. S. Langer asserts, that, speaking about things, we do not have the things as such, but the concepts (rus. “представления”), mental images of things, because symbols «has on mind» the concepts, not the things [3, p. 57]. She thinks that the concept is the formal abstracted structure embodied in “conception” as representation through the grasping in the context of personal experience. Consequently S. Langer asserts that what is common for all adequate conception (mental representation) should be the concept of object: “The same concept is embodied in a multitude of conceptions. It is a form that appears in all versions of thought or imagery that can connote the object in question, a form clothed in different integuments of sensation for every different mind” [3, p. 67].

The “Dictionary of European Philosophy” in the article *Conceptus* is pointed out, that “lat. “concipere”, on one side, in literal sense denotes product or sometimes inner thinking process; from other side - his etymology (con-capere: “take together”) per se indicates on connection of plural elements in single perception» [1, p. 280]. R. Innis points out the similarity with G.Frege’s approach to interpretation of *Vorstellung* (psychical representation) and *Begriff* (concept) [8, p. 41].

The perception as representation of mental images in S. Langer’s semiotics is the prelinguistic and prethinking and fall within symbolic transformation of actuality. Representational dimension is the realization of concepts in “not thinking” conceptions, but their common denominator is symbolism, conceptualized through abstraction and formal analogy.

R. Liddi describes the cognition process in S. Langer’s philosophy as “bipolar activity in which the “concepts” of scientific or philosophical thinking are the subjective pole, “matter” is the objective pole, and some type of vision or “looking” is the mediating activity [9]. In fact, this “looking” (grasping) in objects their similarity (for instance seeing symbol of life in the candle flame) is nothing else then abstraction that is the object of symbol transformation. It’s a “logical intuition” which provides the understanding for all human world of metaphors [9].

At the same time the logical intuition concerns not only the realm of rationality. S. Langer as E. Cassirer strives to show unity of sensual and rational, that’s why logical intuition isn’t restricted by thinking, but also includes sensations: “The eye and the ear make their own abstractions, and consequently dictate their own peculiar forms of conception” [3, p. 83]. S. Langer thinks that abstractions born by organs of sensation are the primal mental instruments of intellect. They are also true symbolic material, means of understanding, through the function of which we comprehend the world of things and the events as history of those things [3, p. 84–85]. Thus, if any experience become shaped, then “wherever there is form, there is meaning”, so even any lowest forms of sensation are the objects of meaning and the constructive elements of understanding symbols [8, p. 20].

Specification of representational symbols as transformed feelings is their principle undiscursivity. These symbols are not being expressed in language, but remain as forms of mental representation, transformations and images expressed through products of art, mythology, rituals, emotions, etc. Human mentality, developed by the trial and error way, fundamentally changed and become not just a biological scheme. Speaking about depth of brain symbolic function, S. Langer asserts that only certain products of brain can be used according to laws of discursive reasoning [3, p. 41].

Symbolization according to S. Langer is “prethinking”, but not “preintellectual”. Intellect is broader notion then verbal reasoning, and presuppose existing of symbolical which can’t be

reduced to discursive conceiving in thinking. Human has an experience outside discursive forms of cognition, because “intelligence is a slippery customer; if one door is closed to it, it finds, or even breaks, another entrance to the world. If one symbolism is inadequate, it seizes another; there is no eternal decree over its means and methods... there is an unexplored possibility of genuine semantic beyond the limits of discursive language” [3, p. 79]. If the representational symbols are the objects for transformation in mind, then everything sensational and verbal equally become the material for it. Representativity lies in the fact that all “sense-data are primarily symbols” [3, p. 24]. S. Langer regards that if the feature of intelligence was only discursive reasoning, then everything except products of latter, would be regarded as mistakes, and that is – realm of art, dreams, mythology, religion, etc. Therefore sensuality and thinking have common roots in symbol. Moreover, the notion of experience receives symbolic interpretation at all stages, and we can speak about symbol as common denominator for all human activity.

Sphere of representational symbols seems consonant with M. Polanyi’s concept of “personal knowledge”. Philosopher rejects positivistic absolutization of scientific methods objectivity on the ground that method can’t mechanically produce true knowledge since personal “judgments” is fundamental aspects of any objective knowledge [4, p. 56]. The latter, in fact, is based on meanings of representative character, characterized by him as peripheral, tacit, hidden, implicit knowledge, and attempts of discursive grip just outline the sphere of implicit and can’t completely exclude or avoid it. Thus, understanding of the object isn’t restricted by that, conceived at the abstract-conceptual level, but come out of sensual-emotional as element, fundamental and necessary for coherent comprehending and understanding of object. Therefore, M. Polanyi, like S. Langer, considers that sphere of understanding contains sensuality and isn’t limited by discursive thinking, and consequently, there is a need to study representative sphere though semiotic means.

M. Polanyi claims that scientific knowledge always is philosophically burdened and thus “metaphysical problems” are results of “implicit knowledge” (or “knowing” (ukr. “відання”) which more accurately reflects laid sense [2, p. 86–92]) or representative symbolism, which elimination deprives scientific knowledge of its natural ground in human epistemological capabilities, that aren’t reduced to ratiolinguistic grip. According to philosopher, we believe in more than we can justify and know more than we can express. S. Langer complements arguing that “on different stages of thinking humans need different types of confidence in their beliefs”, and this confidence is provided by the sphere of implicit sensual symbolism [3, p. 243].

Difference between M. Polanyi’s and S. Langer’s approaches lies in implicit competence interpreted as unformalized while S. Langer considers any sensuality framed, though unlike discursive symbols it doesn’t have sustainable meaning. Moreover, according to M. Polanyi, implicit competence precedes every logics ranked by philosopher to the sphere of thinking. For S. Langer sensuality has its own rationality (logic) and can be identified through expressive forms in art, ritual, myth and so on. Moreover, both sphere of explicit and implicit competence and discursive and representative symbolism are in state of complementarity. Personal knowledge abreast sensual-emotional symbols accompany process of any knowledge, and representative symbolism is basis of intuitive thinking.

“No symbol is exempt from the office of logical formulation, of conceptualizing what it conveys; however simple its import, or however great, this import is a meaning, and therefore an element for understanding” [3, p. 89]. Meaning is not only a product of logic and symbol structure but an experience construct as well. Meaning functioning requires prime sensual experience, which

fundamentally complicates in historic and socio-cultural process. S. Langer claims that “symbol and meaning make man’s world far more than sensation” [3, p. 29], since senses provide material for symbolic transformation and products of such process has no analogues in nature. If there are two types of symbolic – discursive and representative – still, meanings have much more types and its description often measures between two types of symbolism without obvious signs of preference. Thus, according to S. Langer, meaning raises because of complex relationship between symbol, object and human, simultaneously involving denotative and connotative potentials as precondition for adequate implementation of symbol.

Symbolic reality of human life world expresses in any activity, though there is a possibility of domination of one expression modes over others. For example, philosopher calls verbal language the most developed discursive scheme, which virtually equates human essence as such, involved discursive thinking to its factors. If for animals language performs implicit, exclusively signal utilitarian function, for humans due to symbolic transformation it deepens and strengthens social connections. The reality has changed dramatically since the time of language intensive use and thus status and meaning of representative symbols have changed as well.

Discursive symbolism differs from representative by virtue of dictionary, grammar and syntax. There are no fixed dictionary and syntax in images, pictures, colors, sounds etc. They can’t be translated and defined in terms of other symbols. Discursive symbols concern with language, and presentative – with sensation, audial and visual forms. Thus if such parts of sentence as interjections, prepositions, etc., are considered by positivists as insensible, then S. Langer asserts that they belong to a different type of symbolism.

S. Langer criticizes positivistic attitude “to demand more and more signs” that refer to facts, for elimination the symbols in certain spheres of human spirit. Symbols that are set to serve science make our life more based of facts, thus causality and determinism begin to predominate over spontaneity of natural process of symbolic transformation. Construction the world picture solely on facts constrains the natural creativity of human brain. It leads to intellectual overload, furious technocratic progress and in the same time it leads to gap between man and nature [3, p. 247]. So far as nature was a fountainhead of symbols and signs, this gap leads to loss ground in lifeworld. Symbol losses its import under pressure of utilitarian apprehension of the world, which is totally saturated by instrumental sign-symbols, through which “we see only so much as is needful for our purposes”. For discovering of humanitarian potential of symbolical world, producing refreshed senses and meanings person needs the permanent mental attraction such cultural artifacts, texts and contexts, which are formed under the influence of benevolent communicative environment and rational educational knowledge and practices.

S. Langer in this context exemplifies symbols historically and personally “charged with meaning”. It could be cross, which is entwined in human life, i.e. charged with different meaning, but it often losses its sacral meaning. “This loss of old universal symbols endangers our safe unconscious orientation,” and therefore the authenticity of humanity as such, which is cultivated for hundreds of years on symbolic ground of nature, is under the threat [3, p. 256]. Symbols of our orientation in the world compose outlook and life understanding, therefore absence of profound comprehension causes the mistakes, biggest of which is ruining of outlook orientation and destruction of vital symbols. S. Langer asserts, that intellect losses reliable ground and begins searching for new meanings to fill up symbols, and therefore sense of existence. Thus philosophy is a permanent search of meaning and senses.

Barriers to the freedom of symbolic transformation of reality will be represented by symbolical errors. Because “the freedom of conscience is the basis of all personal freedom” [3, p. 258]. The type of barriers is pressure, imposed by another discursive language which can lead to loss of vital, humanistically made signs, images and abstract notion. This can lead to pathogenic discursive repression that will be represented in distortion of personally acquired, conceived symbolic meanings and appropriate forms of emotional and axiological response to environment and social reality.

Therefore there is a need for “intellectual hygiene”, i.e. direct personal critical intellectual resistance that a person should do in his thinking to repressive, authoritarian or purely domineering symbolic environment that is constituted through hegemonic discursive and representational sign systems. Because the loss of symbolic identity caused by the highest aspiration of freedom of thinking and action is identical to the loss of the freedom, without which the human mind becomes a carrier of perverse meanings and symbols concerning its artistic vocation and authenticity [3, p. 259]. Neglecting the authentic symbolic human lifeworld is a violation of natural law on the free, creative interpretation of the world.

Thus, S. Langer’s philosophy, based on the achievements of the theory of sign systems, renewing understanding of reality, revealing the natural origins of the creative man’s relation to reality.

Author’s translation of the article

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