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For a Quasi-Transcendental Semiotics”

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# Sense, Sign's Sense, and Gesture. For a Quasi-Transcendental Semiotics

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## 1. Introduction

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant states that transcendental is “our mode of cognition of objects insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*” (Kant 1998, B 25), that is to say, the mode through which “we cognize that and how certain representations [*Vorstellungen*] (intuitions or concepts) are applied entirely *a priori*, or are possible (i. e., the possibility of cognition or its use *a priori*)” (ibid., B 80). In the *Prolegomena*, he then specifies that the word “transcendental” does not signify “something that surpasses all experience, but something that indeed precedes experience (*a priori*), but that, all the same, is destined to nothing more than solely to make cognition from experience possible” (Kant 2004, 127).

Therefore, transcendental means both the *that* and *how* of representations are possible only in the link between *pure* and *empirical*.

Now, since the transcendental is related to cognition which is related to judgments, which in turn are possible only through fundamental propositions [*Grundsätze*], then transcendental seems destined also to the *that* and *how* of language. The problem of synthetic judgments seems, in fact, the same as the problem of determining the meaning of a possible reference to an object from a universal point of view. The issue concerns the formal conditions of possibility for transition from/subsumption of sense to meaning, in other words, the conditions of possibility for the application of categories of possible meanings to the sense of what can be known as a perception in space and time. Here, the transcendental doctrine of the faculty of judgment and particularly of the transcendental scheme as the

sensitive condition under which only the concepts of the intellect can be used comes into play.

In this paper, I wish to offer a new theoretical solution to the issue raised by the Kantian transcendental scheme concerning the connection between the sensible manifold and the unity of the concept. To do this, I intersect Frege's notion of sense [*Sinn*] as distinct from meaning [*Bedeutung*], with Morris' semiotics and his idea of the "sign vehicle" (Morris 1938a, 1946), and with Maddalena's theory of gesture (Maddalena 2015).

The paper will be developed as follows: I expose the core passages of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* on transcendental schematism; then I refer to Frege's distinction between sense and meaning, Morris' notion of "sign vehicle" and Maddalena's theory of gesture. I use them for developing the last part the argument in favour of the notion of gesture as a dynamic sign vehicle bringing the sense to sign, and for suggesting the possibility of working out a *quasi-transcendental semiotics*.

## 2. Kant's transcendental scheme

As Rorty (1981, 148 ff.) argued, Kant has set a milestone in the path of a conception of knowledge as cognition of propositions rather than of objects, by maintaining that we are aware of intuitions only in their synthesis through the concepts which are such in their application to the intuitions only. In particular, Rorty referred to paragraph 15 of the first *Critique* in which Kant argues that, although the manifold of representations can be given in a sensitive intuition, the *conjunction* of the manifold cannot be contained in the sensitive intuition as "capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations" (Kant 1998, B 33). The combination/conjunction is "an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation [*Actus der Spontaneität der Vorstellungskraft*]", that is a *synthesis of the understanding* (ibid., B 130). The combination cannot be given in turn by objects. It can be constituted by the subject that connects the sensitive representations in an intellectual representation. It is, therefore, a *spontaneous act of combination* of two concepts—subject and predicate—in judgment, the combination being "the representation of the **synthetic** unity of the manifold [*Vorstellung der synthetischen Einheit des Mannigfaltigen*]" (ibid., B 130–1). The subject at the roots of the possibility of understanding and its logical use of the categories is the *transcendental unity of self-consciousness*. This unity prior to any thought is called *intuition*, namely the *original-synthetic unity of apperception* which cannot be accompanied by any representation.

The *I think* accompanies all representations which, otherwise, would “either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me” (ibid., B 131–2). And since it is an act of spontaneity at the basis of the act of combination in judgment, the unity of apperception cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. Kant calls it the *pure apperception* as distinguished from the empirical. He calls it also the *original apperception*, as it is that self-consciousness which produces the representation *I think*, that is, the representation which must be able to accompany all other representations and cannot be accompanied by any further representation. He also calls its unity the *transcendental* unity of self-consciousness at the basis of any possible *a priori* cognition.

Involved here is that the identity of the conscience in the combined representations presupposes the synthetic unity of apperception, which is “the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy; indeed, this faculty is the understanding itself” (ibid., B 134 n). The unity of apperception is, therefore, identified with the understanding, of which the “supreme principle” is the *Grundsatz* in the whole of human cognition (ibid., B 135). *Satz* can be translated in two ways: either as “principle” or “proposition”. *Grundsatz* can, therefore, be translated in both directions: either as “supreme principle” or as “supreme proposition”. In the following sentence, Kant seems to lean toward the second interpretation. He argues that the necessary unity of apperception is “itself identical”, that it is *ein analytischer Satz*, an analytical proposition. *Principle* is identical with *proposition*. Furthermore, Kant uses “proposition” and “judgment” as synonyms, so that he can argue that synthetic *a priori* judgments are possible, by relating the formal conditions of *a priori* intuition, the synthesis of the *imagination*, and its necessary unity, in a transcendental apperception (ibid., B 197).

The supreme analytical proposition is based on the logical principle of non-contradiction, which is the universal principle of any analytic cognition. Such a principle applied to the supreme proposition affirms that the self of the conscience cannot be different from what it is.<sup>1</sup> However, Kant suggests another thing, namely that, as far as transcendental apper-

<sup>1</sup> “Now, in every judgment I am always the **determining** subject of that relation that constitutes the judgment. However, that the I that I think can always be considered as **subject**, and as something that does not depend on thinking merely as a predicate, must be valid—this is an apodictic and even an **identical** [namely *tautological*] **proposition**; but it does not signify that I as **object** am for myself a self-**subsisting being** or **substance**. [...] That the I of apperception, consequently in every thought, is a **single thing** that cannot be

ception is an analytical proposition, it needs a synthesis of the manifold given in intuition, since without such synthesis the uninterrupted identity of self-consciousness cannot be thought. The question is, then: what kind of synthesis?

In the previous, tenth paragraph, Kant refers to the synthesis in the most general sense as the *action* of bringing representations together and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition (Kant 1998, B 103). He then refers to the synthesis of the manifold of sensible intuition calling it *figurative* (*synthesis speciosa*), and distinguishing it from the synthesis of the understanding (*synthesis intellectualis*). The *figurative synthesis* is the result of the power of *imagination* (*Einbildungskraft*), namely “a blind though indispensable function of the soul [*einer Funktion der Seele*]” (ibid.), without which any cognition is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Imagination is, thus, the faculty of representing an object even *without its presence* in intuition. And since intuition is sensible, the imagination should belong to sensibility, for it can give a corresponding intuition to the concepts of understanding on account of its subjective condition. However, the synthesis is an act of *spontaneity* of imagination. The imagination is, therefore, not only reproductive but also *productive*, for it determines the form of sense *a priori* in accordance with the unity of apperception. The transcendental synthesis of the imagination is “an effect of the understanding on sensibility and its first application [...] to objects of the intuition” (ibid., B 152).

All that being said, the problem of subsuming the figured synthesis under an intellectual synthesis remains. The pure concepts of understanding are, in fact, heterogeneous in comparison to sensible intuitions. The problem of synthetic judgments is, therefore, that of determining the meaning from a universal point of view as a possible reference to an object. The issue concerns the formal conditions of possibility of transition from sense to meaning. That is, in other words, the issue of the condition of possibility for the application of categories of a possible meaning to the sense of what can be known as a perception in space and time. And this is where the transcendental doctrine of the faculty of judgment, and particularly of the transcendental scheme as the sensitive condition under which only the concepts of the intellect can be used, comes into play.

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resolved into a plurality of subjects, and hence a logically simple subject, lies already in the concept of thinking, and is consequently an analytic proposition” (Kant 1998, B 407).

<sup>2</sup> In an autographed note on his working copy (first ed.), Kant substituted *einer Funktion der Seele* with *einer Funktion des Verstandes* (understanding); cf. Kant 1881, 45.

## 2.1 Transcendental scheme and the monogram as a complex sign

Since the synthesis of representations is rooted in imagination, the synthetic unity required for judgment is based on the principle of supreme unity, that is, as aforementioned, a *Grundsatz*, an analytical proposition. But the principle of the logical self is accessible only through its exemplification.<sup>3</sup> The empirical self exemplifies the logical self, but it implies the latter as the condition of possibility of every general synthesis always already exemplified. The logical self is given in time, and as the unity of time is not thinkable as a concept, rather as a condition of possibility for the determination *a priori* of the sense, this is where the transcendental scheme comes into play as a third homogeneous element between understanding and sensibility.

The transcendental scheme is a “mediating representation [...] yet intellectual on the one hand and sensible on the other” (Kant 1998, B 177). On the one hand, the concept contains the synthetic unity in general, on the other, time as the formal condition of the manifold of internal sense is contained in every empirical representation of the manifold. In other words, *time* is the *homogeneous element* common to sensibility and understanding, its transcendental determination being homogeneous as regards the category of the unity of manifold. And since time is the scheme of the concepts of understanding, it also mediates the subsumption of the latter under the former. *The sensitive manifold is mainly temporal*, and it implies the *becoming* of manifoldness, namely the *act of synthesis*, which is, let us repeat, the action of combining different representations together and comprehending, that is, synthetizing, their manifoldness into one cognition.

The transcendental scheme is in itself always only a product of imagination, and it is distinct from the *image* (*Bilde*) (ibid., B 179). Kant gives the example of the image of five points “.....”, defining it as an image of the number five, and distinguishing it from the number 5, which is the universal *mode* imagination proceeds to connect to a concept, an image. This *mode* is the scheme on the basis of the sensible concept (*sinnliche Begriff*). The scheme constitutes, therefore, the *sign* for the sensible concept, and it is a rule to determine our intuition through an *image*. In other words, the

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<sup>3</sup> “The proposition of the identity of myself in everything manifold of which I am conscious is equally one lying in the concepts themselves, and hence an analytic proposition; but this identity of the subject, of which I can become conscious in every representation, does not concern the intuition of it, through which it is given as object, and thus cannot signify the identity of the person [...]; in order to prove that what would be demanded is not a mere analysis of the proposition ‘I think,’ but rather various synthetic judgments grounded on the given intuition” (Kant 1998, B 408–9).

scheme mediates among an object as it appears to the subject, the empirical intuition, and the concept. *It is, indeed, what determines the sense through the sign.* As Kant argues:

the **image** is a product of the empirical faculty of productive imagination, the **schema** of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product and as it were a *monogram* [italic added] of pure *a priori* imagination, through which and in accordance with which the images first become possible, but which must be connected with the concept, to which they are in themselves never fully congruent, always only by means of the schema that they designate. The schema of a pure concept of the understanding, on the contrary, is something that can never be brought to an image at all, but is rather only the pure synthesis, in accord with a rule of unity according to concepts in general, which the category expresses, and is a transcendental product of the imagination, which concerns the determination of the inner sense in general, in accordance with conditions of its form (time) in regard to all representations, insofar as there are to be connected together *a priori* in one concept in accord with the unity of apperception.

Kant 1998, B 181

The scheme is nothing but *a priori time-determinations*, that is, “the sensible concept of an object, in agreement with the category” (ibid., B 186). And it is the only way to provide concepts of understanding with a relation to objects, thus with *meaning* (*Bedeutung*). Therefore, *the meaning is the relationship between concepts and objects.* Kant gives the example of the concept of dog, which “signifies a rule” in accordance with which the imagination can identify “the shape [*Gestalt*] of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any particular shape that experience offers me or any possible image [*Bild*] that I can exhibit *in concreto*” (ibid., B 180).<sup>4</sup> The meaning of the concept of dog is exemplified by images, and it has to be representable as a way to provide the concept with *sense*. In other words, the meaning must be the condition of exemplification of concepts.

To sum up, the imagination produces something to give to some sensible figures (*Figuren*) a conceptual form. Such a something produced by imagination is a *scheme* which mediates among empirical intuitions, namely objects of experience, and the concept, namely a determined meaning, the nature of which is “as it were” that of a *complex sign*, namely a *monogram*.

<sup>4</sup> As Matherne argues, “we could think of the sensible aspect of a schema as involving a *gestalt*, i. e., a sensible, holistic presentation of a concept” (Matherne 2014, 188).

Now, in “The Transcendental Doctrine of Method”, Kant defines monogram as an “outline” [*Umriss*] “of the whole into members” (A 833/B 862), and in the “Transcendental Dialectic” as “a wavering sketch” [*schwebende Zeichnung*], composed of “individual traits, though not determined through any assignable rule”, which mediates between various experiences [*verschiedener Erfahrungen*],<sup>5</sup> “such as what painters and physiognomists say they have in their heads”. These *Erfahrungen* are necessarily *vague*. The monogram is here similar to “an incommunicable silhouette [*nicht mitzuteilendes Schattenbild*]”, an *indeterminate image* which can, though only improperly, be called an “ideal of sensibility”, because it is supposed to be “the unattainable model for possible empirical intuitions”. And yet, at the same time, it is “not supposed to provide any rule capable of being explained or tested” (A 570/B 598).

A monogram is therefore a sensible, holistic, still indeterminate *figure* (composed of individual traits) of how the various marks of a meaning become manifest in a unified sensible way. It is a “nascent” meaning, like a point on the border between two surfaces—that of the sensible manifold and that of conceptual unity—that is vague in still having a sense *in individuo* (a kind of “ideal of sensibility”<sup>6</sup>), and, even if not representing a semantic rule, it would eventually become general, as representing the possible meaning. The scheme is the mode of imagination which determines the sense by attributing to the latter a complex sign (monogram), having a still vaguely significant character.

## 2.2 Frege's “sign's sense” and Kant's schematism

Now, the “complex sign” can be considered *as* what Frege defined a “*sense of sign*”, that is, a mode of presentation of the sensible figures not yet determined through any assignable semantic rule. To better understand the connection between Frege and Kant we have to refer to “The Transcendental Aesthetics”. Here, Kant argues that the effect of an object on the capacity for representation is *sensation*. The intuition related to the object through sensation is empirical, and the “undetermined object of an empirical intuition is called **appearance** [*Erscheinung*]” (Kant 1998, B 34). The sensitive intuition is only given in the process of mediation, that is, through the formal conditions of time and space. These conditions determine the *sense* of appearance; they then can be seen as the “mode of

<sup>5</sup> The English translation of *Erfahrungen* in this passage is “appearances” (Kant 1998).

<sup>6</sup> As Kant argues, an ideal is “an individual thing” merely determined through the idea (A 568/B 596; A 574/B 602).

presentation" of something as *sense* and as determinability of sense by concept/meaning.<sup>7</sup>

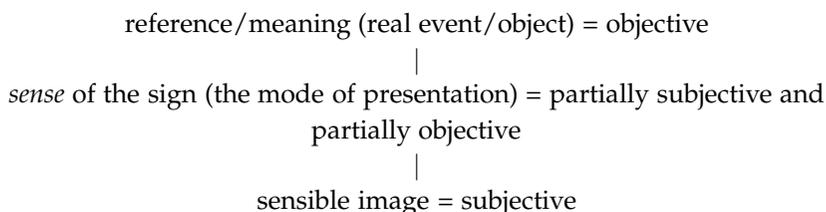
The expression "mode of presentation" used here is Frege's expression. Frege conceives the "sign's sense" as the mode of presentation of the sense by a sign. Taking Frege's example of the observation of the moon through the telescope, we can consider the optical image of the moon projected in the telescope as one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation, but it is still different from the retinal image of the observer, and from the moon as an object. The optical image is still objective, "inasmuch as it can be used by several observers" (Frege 1960, 60), whereas the retinal image is subjective because each one would have his retinal image. In other words, similar to the glass object in the interior of the telescope, space and time are the formal conditions for the sign's sense to designate the "moon" through an image that is analogous to the Kantian scheme. That image of the intuition is the sign's sense, namely the sensible image (retinal image) of empirical intuition.<sup>8</sup> The real object is, instead, the reference or *meaning*. The distinction between meaning, sense, and image depends on the gradual approach to objectivity. The meaning is objective as the object, the sensible image is completely subjective, whereas the sign's sense "may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part or a mode of the individual mind" (Frege 1960, 59).<sup>9</sup> The sign's sense partially depends on the observation point, that is from the subjective perspective, but it can also be understood by other subjects, and this is proved by the fact that "mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another" (Frege 1960, 59). Thus, the condition of possibility of a sign's sense is related to a diachronic network of *senses* of sign and meanings. We may schematize Frege's distinction as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> J.P. Nolan argued that "Kant should not use 'Sinn' in any but those contexts concerned with sensibility" (Nolan, 1979, 116). Despite Nolan's view, I will try to develop an interpretation of the notion of *Sinn* as partially akin to Frege's notion of "*Sinn des Zeichens*".

<sup>8</sup> "If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which I have had and acts, both internal and external, which I have performed" (Frege 1960, 59).

<sup>9</sup> "If two persons picture the same thing, each still has his own idea. It is indeed sometimes possible to establish differences in the ideas, or even in the sensations, of different men; but an exact comparison is not possible, because we cannot have both ideas together in the same consciousness" (Frege 1960, 60).



The relationships that usually intervene among sign, sense of sign, and reference are

to the sign corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference, while to a given reference (an object) there does not belong only a single sign. *The same sense has different expressions* in different languages or even in the same language. To be sure, exceptions to this regular behavior occur. To every expression belonging to a complete totality of signs, there should certainly correspond a definite sense; but natural languages often do not satisfy this condition, and one must be content if the same word has the same sense in the same context. Frege 1960, 58. Italics added.

It is worth noting that Frege argues that a sense can be meaningless, but a meaning cannot be senseless. He then suggests distinguishing the signs having only a sense from signs having sense and meaning, naming the first ones “images” (*Bild*) (Frege 1960, 63). Such images are not related to the question of their truth value,<sup>10</sup> but rather to subjects’ aesthetic delight (as that of painters). Nevertheless, as Frege argues, the sense of two signs, “a” and “b” may differ from each other, and thereby the thoughts expressed are different, not having the same cognitive value.

Now, Frege’s reference to the sign’s sense as an *image* is particularly interesting. The sense of sign is, in fact, something related to the dynamic nature of the construction of sense through sign. In this regard, pivotal is Frege’s reference to the actor and implicitly to the latter’s linguistic and gestural behaviour on the stage as an *image* (Frege 1960, 63 n).

We can then see Frege’s “image” as the dynamic *mode* of presentation of the sense (similar to the Kantian’s *Gestalt*) as the *mode* of giving a complex sign, mediating between sense and concept.

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<sup>10</sup> “We are therefore driven into accepting the *truth value* of a sentence as constituting its reference” (Frege 1960, 63)

### 2.3. Scheme of action, figurative synthesis, and sign

Makkreel suggests that “as a schema a monogram cannot be empirical and must be understood as a rule for generating configurations of lines” (Makkreel 1990, 31). However, the question that arises is how do I recognize an object or event previous to my experience of it? Since, according to Kant, all our cognition begins with experience, and the transcendental is nothing more than what makes cognition from experience possible, this means that, to understand the concept of e. g., a dog, an empirical counterfactual is needed. So that the scheme does not remain on a purely syntactic level, namely a mere relation of signs without any cognizable determination, it has to be considered primarily as a *scheme of action* related to experience. Thus, previous to the application of the rule of the scheme which involves the determination of *sense through the sign* as the condition for judgment, the process of comprehension, namely the process of interpretation through the mediation of object or event, should be initiated. Otherwise, we would have to presuppose a previous comprehension of the concept of the object, e. g., the dog, that is to say, we would have to presuppose an innate comprehension of empirical concepts.

The question about the transcendental structures of *meaning (Bedeutung)* is the same as the question about the conditions of possibility of determination of the *sense of a sign (or of a complex sign determined by individual traits)*: what are such conditions? Are they related to a formal structure of meaning as concepts presupposed by the semantical and logical-syntactic nature of signs, or have we to assume an action which realizes the determination of sense through the production of sign empirically? According to the first approach, a transcendental semantics is developed assuming an already complete theory of meaning as correspondence (cf. Hoguebe 1974). According to the second approach, the process of determination of sense is part of a semiotic process in which the rules of determination of sense and intensionality refer to a *synthetic act of constructing a complex sign*, that is, what Kant calls monogram as mediating between sense and concept.

Assuming that the *image* is a product of the empirical productive imagination, and the *schema* of the *figures in space* is a product of pure *a priori* imagination, that the scheme can be seen as a *scheme of action* related to experience, being the homogeneous element between the *dynamic* sensitive manifold and the unity of concept as meaning, and that *imagination* as the faculty between sensibility and understanding *produces* both the image and schema and *determines* the passage between dynamic sensitive manifold and intellectual unity, we can then suppose that imagination

determines the sense by *producing* complex signs composed by individual traits which act as semantic and syntactic elements for understanding. Monogram, in fact, interweaves signs analogous to that which figurative syntheses do through the scheme of time. Since concepts are predicates of possible judgments, the scheme provides them with semiotic and syntactic elements. Within this framework, time would be interpreted as the diachronic form, on the basis of a syntagmatic relationship among the elements of different signs (phonemes and other material characters). Time is, in fact, the formal condition of passage from sense to the concept. In this sense, we speak of the *scheme of action*, for the scheme is not limited to a purely syntactic level. Thus, the mechanism of language seems to be rooted in it; the scheme being the semiotic condition of the conjunction between sensation, sign, and that to which the sign refers.

At this point, however, there is an issue which we have to face: How are the complex signs built, and how also are their syntagmatic relations?

To face this issue, I propose to intersect the above reflections on Kant's transcendental scheme and Frege's concept of sign's sense with Morris' notion of "sign vehicle". What in fact Frege calls the "*sense of sign*", namely "the mode of presentation" of the reference (Frege 1960, 57), seems to be very close to Morris' idea of the relationship between sign and *designatum* or *significatum* (Morris 1938a, 23; 1948).

### 3. Morris' sign vehicle

A "sign vehicle" is a *sensible event*, namely a physical perceptual event that functions as a sign (Morris 1938a, 1946, 1964).<sup>11</sup> Morris distinguishes between "sign vehicle" and "sign", arguing that the first is anything physical (a physical perceptual event such as a sound, a movement, etc.) that acts as a sign; the second is something that directs behaviour towards something, the observability of the "sign vehicle" not involving that of the sign.

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<sup>11</sup> Morris often overlaps "sign vehicle" and "sign". The *sign* is part of a semiotic process consisting of six factors: (1) the sign vehicle (s), namely what acts as a sign, (2) the *designatum* or *significatum* (D), which indicates what the sign refers to, (3) the interpretant (I), which indicates the effect that the sign has (4) on the interpreter and (5) the context in which the sign is used. A further factor is (6) the *denotatum*, which differs from the *designatum* (or *significatum*) because while the latter indicates a type of object that has properties that the interpreter recognizes thanks to the presence of the sign vehicle, regardless of the presence of real objects or situations, the former is the reference object of a real object.

In the context of this paper, I refer to sign vehicle as a *sensible event* interpreted as determinability of sense which is also seen as the recognition of an image yet still indeterminate. In the case of *sign factors in perception* that are the sensible event that we are focusing on here, the signs become “interconnected because the sign vehicles are interconnected” (Morris 1938a, 12). Sign vehicles are then the sensible side of the *interpretant*, namely a habit, which an individual has, to construct some sense of signs.<sup>12</sup> In other words, sign vehicle is the sensible construction of the passage from sensible event and the sense of the sign which stimulates some responses to it. Now, Morris’ idea that a sign vehicle has a semantic dimension in so far as there are semantic rules “which determine its applicability to certain situations under certain conditions” (1938a, 24),<sup>13</sup> seems similar to Kant’s idea that a concept is applicable to a sensible image in so far as there are some “rules” which determine its applicability to certain empirical intuitions under certain conditions. The sign vehicle *designates* the object for the sign’s sense, being, in a Kantian perspective, the sensible image of the empirical intuition. And it thus supports the three types of relationships with the sensible event (existential dimension), the signifying process (pragmatic dimension), and the relationship between signs (syntactic dimension).<sup>14</sup>

Now, similar to Kant’s proposal, there are also, in Morris’ theory, some problematic issues. Particularly, according to Morris, the sign vehicle is used to denote objects similar to “models”, following the rules for the use of a sign vehicle by means of other sign vehicles whose rules of use are not themselves a matter of discussion. To assume this rule, if, on the one hand, it safeguards the semiotic theory from a *regressus in infinitum* in the determination of the rules for the use of a sign vehicle, on the other hand, in assuming that there are some rules of the use of sign vehicles already determined and out of discussion, Morris does not solve the problem of the relation between the unity of concept and the indeterminate mani-

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<sup>12</sup> The interpretant characterizes the pragmatic dimension of the semiosis in Morris’ theory: it indicates the disposition of the interpretant to respond to a sign. Dewey has criticized Morris’ use of the notions of “interpreter” and “interpretant”, accusing him of misinterpreting Peirce by converting the interpretant into an interpreter. Morris admits his attempt to carry out Peirce’s approach to semiotics in a resolute way, but also criticises Dewey for not being able to see the close relationship between these two concepts in Peirce (Morris 1948, 289)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Morris 1938a, 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> “If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which I have had and acts, both internal and external, which I have performed” (Frege 1960, 59).

fold sensible experience which provokes the semiotic process. In other words, the question of Kant's schematism remains: how do I recognize the rule of application of a sign vehicle to a sensible event that I am experiencing? Morris tries to reply to this question by appealing to the pragmatic dimension of sign vehicle. Previous to the application of the rule of the application of sign vehicle, which involves the determination of *sense through the sign* in the process of comprehension, the process of interpretation through the mediation of object or event should be initiated. Indeed, the semiotic process represents the *scheme of action* related to experience. However, following his rules for the use of a sign vehicle, a previous comprehension of the concept of the object, namely the same sign vehicle that should follow the sensible event, is presupposed. In fact, it seems that it is not possible to disregard the ideal dimension in the process of interpretation of a sign vehicle by an interpreter. Even if we invert the order between concept and sign vehicle, referring to the concepts as present when sign vehicles of a certain type occur, the difficulty is not solved. A sensible event of the view of e.g., a dog recalls to the individual the concept of dog which "signifies a rule" in accordance with which the imagination can identify the shape of a four-footed animal in general, without being restricted to any particular shape that experience offers to the individual or any possible image that he can exhibit *in concreto*. As seen above, the concept of dog is exemplified by images, and it has to be representable as a way to provide the concept with *sense*, which in Morris' semiotics is the sign vehicle. Then one should ask oneself if concepts cannot be identified with the interpreters of these signs. Nonetheless, this does not solve the question of the definition of the experience prior to sign vehicle, offering no explanation of the passage from non-signity to signity.<sup>15</sup>

There is, however, a fundamental difference between Kant and Morris that could help to break this deadlock, namely the different meanings they have of the *a priori*. According to Kant, *a priori* is the knowledge that takes place independently of experience, attributing to judgment necessity and rigorous universality. Distinguishing the "pure" *a priori* knowledge, which is that with which nothing empirical is mixed, and the *a priori* which is in the simply logical, chronological or psychological sense, he refers to the "pure" *a priori* as at the basis of the structure of knowledge. Morris (1937), on the contrary, refers to "*a priori*" as the product of a dynamic process. In particular, he does not consider the *a priori* as static and im-

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<sup>15</sup> On this critical aspect of Morris' theory see Hoguebe 1974, Garroni 1977.

mutable, but rather subject to change through contact with new data that we come across through its use, and through changes in a *continuous spiral process*. This implies that the *a priori* is variable and must be interpreted as the result of empirical generalizations, or rather of regularity, transformed over time into rules. Behind this idea is Morris' assumption that static formalism that evaluates meaning in terms of significance is only possible admitting that the system of meanings is *stable* but not static, that it is in the becoming process because it primarily refers to the becoming nature of human beings. Morris' "*a priori variable*", therefore, indicates a set of meanings through which empirical data are approached to and to which logical analysis refers. In this perspective, every *sensible event* is already a *sign vehicle*, since the same distinction between the non-signic and signic dimensions is part of the semiotic process, the latter being already included in the perceptive activation and the identification of the sensitive stimulus. But being already a sign vehicle does not mean that we have the same universal structure for our immutable rational "essence", rather because we construct our way to mediate with reality in our evolving process. On this point, Morris follows Peirce's idea that there is no *primum cognitum* and Mead's theory of signs that supported the bio-social and procedural nature of logical thought, highlighting its constitutive sign character on the basis of the constitution of behavioural habits.<sup>16</sup>

From this perspective, we can face the question about the conditions of possibility of the determination of *sign vehicle* related to a formal structure of meanings as concepts. In particular, we can try to reply to the question of how the sign vehicles construct the sign's sense and what act realizes the determination of the sense of the sign vehicle through the empirical production of the sign.

What we need to identify is a process of determination of sense as part of an act of constructing the sign vehicle in a context of habits of responses to some empirical stimuli. Our proposal, then, needs some further development, appealing to another aspect that derives from the Pragmatist tra-

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<sup>16</sup> As Morris (1938b) claims, his behavioural semiotics is the result of the combination of Peirce's general theory of meaning and logic as general semiotics with Mead's social psychology. According to him, despite the difference between Peirce and Mead with regard to their philosophical attitude—the first more metaphysical, the latter more connected to the context in which the thought was taking place—Mead's theory of signs appeared to be in agreement with Peirce's results through logical analysis, without making it necessary to interpret these results in an idealistic manner. Morris tried to integrate the two perspectives in the elaboration of a pragmatic semiotic that combined traditional empiricism, logical positivism, and critical pragmatism.

dition, namely the concept of gesture. In fact, we might try to indicate the act of the interpretant as a *gesture* that synthesizes through the sign vehicle the sensible image of the object. In particular, a *gesture* has to be regarded as a dynamic *sensible* synthesis *bearing* an *identity* between the sensible manifold of the sign vehicle and the *sense of sign*. I propose, in fact, that the notion of gesture, defined from a pragmatic logic-semiotic perspective, could contribute to overcoming the sensibility-understanding dichotomy, that is, the dichotomy between the sensitive dimension of experience and the logic-semantic dimension of thought, helping to understand how the mode of presentation of a dynamic sense is given dynamically. On this point, however, I will not appeal, as might seem natural for my references to Morris' semiotics, to Mead's notion of gesture. Mead's conception of gesture, in fact, is clearly related to the beginning of acts which serves as a stimulus for a response of another organism (Mead 1934). That is, as Morris (1946, 43) argues, more similar to a signal than to a sign vehicle.

For my aim, I need a notion of gesture which already presupposes some complexity, because I am referring here to the way of connection of the sensible manifold with the unitary concept in a logic-semiotic process. Therefore, in what follows I will refer to Maddalena's theory of gesture.

#### 4. Maddalena's theory of gesture

In *Philosophy of Gesture* (2015), Maddalena proposes a new paradigm of synthetic reasoning that considers gestures as the ordinary way in which we carry the meaning of *identity through change*. The word "gesture" is taken from its Latin origin "*gero*", the etymology of which is "I bear", "I carry on", but also "I produce", "I show", "I represent". As Maddalena puts it, gesture is "any performed act with a beginning and an end that carries a meaning [...] pragmatically understood as the cluster of conceivable effects of an experience" (Maddalena 2015, 69–70).

With his "conceptual tool", Maddalena aims at overhauling the Kantian distinctions between synthetic and analytic reasoning as well as between subject and object, and at overcoming the sensibility-understanding dichotomy. A gesture coincides, in fact, with a synthesis bearing with it the recognition of an identity between two parts of a transitional experience. He refers to the "forms of the synthesis" and to the analytic composition of gesture synthesis, revoking through singular gestures, which substitute Kantian empirical intuitions, the schema part-whole, preserving necessity within the same part-whole schema. In other words, gesture

is a sort of dynamic *outline* of the *whole into members*, which is a complex sign similar to a monogram.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the monogram can be considered as the synthetic construction of the sense of a sign related to the *production* of it from some single sign vehicle in which universal meanings convey as hypotheses. In other words, the determination of the image as the sense of the sign is produced by means of a gesture that allows the connection between the indeterminate sensible event as sign vehicle and the vague sense of the sign. To know “something in a vague way [...] is the beginning of any definition and any gesture” (Maddalena 2015, 82). This means that vagueness is an intermediate kind of reasoning. And this vagueness is related both to the various experiences [*verschiedener Erfahrungen*] and to the wavering sketch [*schwebende Zeichnung*] which mediates between various experiences [*verschiedener Erfahrungen*]. The gesture, therefore, is similar to an *act* of reasoning that determines the sense by attributing to the latter a complex sign having a still vague significant character. And a monogram is similar to a sensible holistic still indeterminate *Gestalt*, a “nascent” meaning, like a point on the border between two surfaces—that of sensible manifold and that of conceptual unity—that is vague yet still has a sense *in individuo* (a sort of “ideal of sensibility”<sup>18</sup>); this eventually becomes general, through its representing the possible meaning of the change from sensible experience to intellectual concept. From this perspective, the sensible representation and the monogram could be considered as a more elementary form of “*moving pictures of thought*”.

I then would modify Maddalena’s definition of gesture as follows: a gesture is a sign vehicle, namely an act with a beginning and an end that carries a *sense*, and that sense carries some possible cognitive and behavioural values. Then, we may say that a gesture is a *synthesis* in which

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<sup>17</sup> It is not by chance that one of Maddalena’s approaches to studying the change is Peirce’s *existential graphs* (the other being that of logical modalities). In particular, according to Peirce and to the synthetic way of reasoning, “working” is the necessary and sufficient condition of reality. Generally speaking, *existential graphs* are the basic iconic level of relationship with the dynamic reality, and it is accordingly the original “evidence” of change through continuity for their being moving pictures of thought which represent “the creation of explanatory conjectures” (Maddalena 2015, 56). The basic idea is that the *conclusion of a synthetic reasoning is perceived in all its generality*, and that the existential graphs are synthetically conveying universals into singulars, the generalization being the analytic result of the diagrams which are “the synthetic happening of generals” (Maddalena 2015, 57). Now, in the context of the reflection developed here, the diagram can be seen as one of the ways of constructing the sign, such as Kant’s monogram.

<sup>18</sup> As Kant argues, an ideal is “an individual thing” merely determined through the idea (A 568/B 596; A 574/B 602).

the initial vague experience of the sensible manifold is linked to the generalized unity of a *sense of sign* through a singular action in that determinate part of experience that refers to our body. In other words, gesture has a complex function, namely that of representing a synthetic process which creates new semiotic habits to some sensible experience.

Now, if the gesture is the synthetic performance of continuity, the latter can be known only *a posteriori* through its expression in the product of a synthesis. We therefore witness a reconstruction of both the analytic/synthetic distinctions as two essential parts of the experience processes. The analysis of elements composing the synthetic reasoning is always *a posteriori*, different from Kant's affirmation that analytic judgments are always *a priori*, as *a priori* is the unity of apperception as *ein analytischer Satz*. But since there is no *primum cognitum*—as Peirce stated in the context of his criticism of intuition and as we have seen Morris takes up in his idea of “*a priori* variable”—we have to conclude that synthetic and analytic reasoning are two sides of the same process of “embodied” experience.

## 5. Gesture as an act of synthesis

We can now recover Kant's notion of schema. If we assume time as the formal condition of the mode of presentation of something as appearance and as *sense*, time is then at the basis of the constitution of apprehension of the transcendental scheme. Time is the condition of passage from sense to a concept. As seen above, we speak of a *scheme of action*. The scheme, as it is in the case of the monogram, presents both sensible and intellectual dynamic dimensions. So, the scheme precedes the concepts, but they are also unified under the unity of time, which accompanies all the synthesis in continuity. Time as the form of internal intuition is included in the continuity of the self's perceptions of the objects; it is thence the *medium* of passing from the indeterminate sensible manifold to the determinate object of concept. The scheme can be seen as the *how* between image and concept; it is the condition of determinability of sense, which can be nothing but a sign-vehicle.

However, it goes without saying that an image is a sensible form occupying a space. The idea of a *figurative synthesis* suggests that the schemata of pure intellectual concepts first conceived in terms of time, not only may (as according to Makkreel 1990, 31) but *do* also incorporate some *spatial qualities* associated with the schemata of pure sensible concepts.

How could we think about an image as a vehicle sign that does not fill space? Now, if the construction of graphic signs, namely monographs, needs time, which is the condition of the synthesis of images, and if these graphic signs are traced in space, we could imagine the construction as a *gesture* carrying with it the dynamicity of time *and* space. The *sense* of sign is akin to an aesthetic dimension rooted in the gesture as regarded as an act with a beginning and an end, constructing an image of motion that carries a *sense*. In other words, a gesture is a *sensible event* carrying with it both the sensorimotor dimension and the determinability of sense. Such a sensible event is a sign vehicle which determines the sense of sign, allowing the recognition of a sensible manifold in the unity of a graphic act by focusing on its potential cognitive values different from determinate meaning. Meanings are in fact, in this framework, concepts that arise empirically, namely *a posteriori*. Schemes as the product of a construction are the (empirical) determinability of sense. Therefore, if we consider gesture as an act, or better a synthetic act, we can interpret the sense of a gesture as part of a “common store of senses transmitted from one generation to another” (Frege 1960, 59).

So, to sum up, my main idea is that gesture determines the sense of sign through the construction of the image of sense starting from a sign vehicle. For this reason, it can be regarded as a para-linguistic sign which is part of the syntagmatic construction of linguistic sense through graphic and phonetic elements (Saussure),<sup>19</sup> highlighting the intersection of reality, sign vehicle, and sign’s sense. The gesture is, therefore, a dynamic semiotic device which moves in time and space carrying with itself a *sense*, which in turn carries some potentially different cognitive values. It is a conceptual tool that allows us to highlight the indissoluble unity of the different characters of sensibility and the determining logical-semiotic character of thought. It constructs its own sense, producing the graphic sign for the concept. For this reason, the pragmatic dimension is presupposed in the semantic and syntactic dimension: gesturing (acting, writing, saying) has physical value, and since it produces itself on the threshold of thought, it makes something happen, namely a synthesis of “sense” and “sign”. It has a sensible nature, and since it is rooted in the phenomenological/appearance dimension, it can be seen as a vague image communicating something to someone. Since it constructs a sign as re-

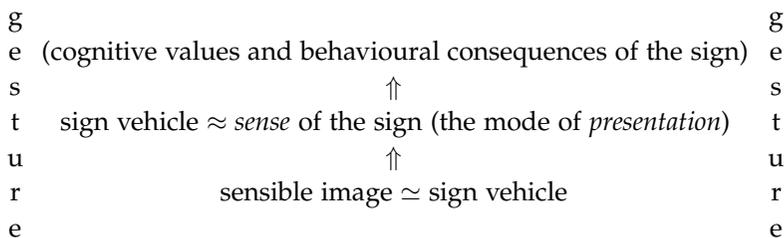
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<sup>19</sup> Monogram can, therefore, be considered as a kind of *signifier* (cf. Saussure 1965 [1922]) which provides concepts with a relation to objects.

lated to a sense, that is, a sense's sign, it allows the connection between sense and sign.

We can now provide a provisional definition of gesture as follows: *a gesture is an act of synthesis that functions as a semiotic para-linguistic device constructing hypothetical senses of a sign.*

The hypothetical character is related to the logical category of possibility and to the idea that there can be different cognitive values for different interpretations of gesture and then different cognitive and behavioural consequences.<sup>20</sup> In this respect, Frege's scheme is modified as follows



Frege's view of different signs senses related to different cognitive values is consistent with the view according to which gestures carry the possibility of conferring more than a sign to more than a sense. Time is the formal condition of its possibility and the dynamic nature of the construction of sense open to the construction of *identity through change* (Maddalena 2015).<sup>21</sup> This idea seems to be more akin to Frege's idea of the sign of sense as an image (*Bild*) as well as a behavioural-linguistic sign (as it is for the actor as an image).

To refer to a sign as an image, as a figure that has no meaning but makes sense, offers us the possibility of recalling the transcendental scheme and to trace in the sensation the anchoring factor of the mediating activity of gesture as a logical-semiotic tool not yet determined, and therefore vague as the experiences that it mediates, that *builds* in time and space *the sense of a sign* recognizable in the *image* of the scheme.

## 6. Conclusion. For a quasi-transcendental semiotics

The proposal I am making here as a synthesis of the entire reflection carried out so far is as follows. We could try to put together the sign vehicle

<sup>20</sup> On this point see Mead (1934) and Morris (1946)

<sup>21</sup> In this respect, insight is needed into Peirce's notion of teridentity as "the continuity of possibilities of an individual considered to be a changing object in its becoming" (Maddalena 2015, 61).

as a sensible event *via* Morris, the idea of the sensitive representation *via* Frege and the Kantian monogram. In doing so, it would be possible to read the sensitive representation and the monogram as more elementary forms of *moving pictures*. A gesture is therefore the construction of this moving picture which has to be repeatable to become a *rule* determining the sense of a sign potentially, that is to become a *scheme of action*. Such rule functions as criteria of reference for the observability of performances and re-performances of gestures, becoming a common social property and therefore a tool to communicate and understand common senses. However, in consequence of the evolutionary and processual nature of human knowledge, rules of determination of the sense of signs are not static and immutable elements. As seen above, referring to Morris' variable *a priori* to express a set of meanings in terms of which empirical data are approached in logical analysis, the *a priori* is not static or immutable; it rather undergoes change through contact with the new data which are encountered through its use, and through changes in human interests and purposes. Every change provides new content to logical analyses which in turn affect the content and structure of the *a priori* in a spiral process (Morris 1937, 51). Therefore, the *a priori* has to be interpreted as the product of some empirical generalizations, namely regularities transformed through *time* in rules.

The hypothetical and fluctuating character of semantic rules has then to be considered as the benchmark of a quasi-transcendental semiotics. The adjective quasi-transcendental is meant here to point out the hypothetical and fluctuating character of semantic rules. In line with Morris' idea of the *a priori*, the quasi-transcendental semiotics is in an ambivalent position between constitutive<sup>22</sup> and constructive semiotics. There is no tautological identity, as there was for the Kantian transcendental *apperception*, and it is not related to a referential theory of meaning. For this reason, the use of the expression quasi-transcendental has to do first with the pragmatic character of the acts of synthesis. Such character comes before both semantic and logical-syntactic aspects, whereas the regulative character has to do with the hypothetical modifications and the creative construction of signs that would determine both the semantic rules and their variations.

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<sup>22</sup> In the sense of the Kantian conditions of possibilities—that are neither totally logical nor empirical—in passing from sense to concept.

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