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The Philosophical Dimension of Semiotics The Subsistence Mechanism of Signification

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In the paper translated here, Hiromatsu details an answer to the question “How is signification possible?” The argument is based on an analysis of meaning provided in the first volume of his magnum opus *Being and Meaning* (『存在と意味』, 1982), in which he studies the nature of meaning and the way in which all phenomena (including perceptions, representations, and judgments) bear meaning. In the present paper, he treats language in terms of signs, as a specific example of the meaning-ladenness that pervades all phenomena. Based on this broad approach to meaning, he suggests specific mechanisms whereby signification becomes possible within specific frameworks.

KEYWORDS: Hiromatsu Wataru—semiotics—signification—meaning—reification—intersubjectification—role theory

Translator's Introduction

Wataru Hiromatsu (1933–1994) was a Japanese philosopher active from the 1960s to the early 1990s. Hiromatsu finished the doctoral course in philosophy at the University of Tokyo in 1965, and taught at several universities before returning there in 1976 to teach. Hiromatsu also participated in political and social activities. Hiromatsu's philosophical interests centered on German philosophy, such as Marx and Mach, the Neo-Kantian Marburg school, such as Cassirer, and the phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger. During this period, he published several books about Marx, and subsequently expanded his publications to the fields of physical-scientific thought, political philosophy, economics, and cognitive sciences.

One important theme in Hiromatsu's study of Marx was analyzing his thought in terms of a transition from the viewpoint of alienation to the viewpoint of reification, and then expanding Marx's concept of reification. Reification plays a role in this paper in terms of how we perceive language formation, codes, and roles as reified, external formations that govern our behavior. In addition, his philosophical work on physics showed that contemporary sciences were undergoing a paradigm change from a substantialist paradigm to relationist paradigm, and he examined whether there was a similar movement in philosophy and thought in general. For Hiromatsu, reification is a misunderstanding of relation. Although Hiromatsu originally developed his conception of the transition from substantialism to relationism in the context of physics, as seen in this paper, with his focus on relation and meaning, his relationist approach also has application to relationist sociology.

The first volume of his magnum opus, *Being and Meaning* (存在と意味), was published in 1982, and the second volume was published in 1993

(a planned third volume was not completed). In these volumes, he elaborates meaning using his concept of the “four-fold structure,” in which both the subject and object are analyzed in terms of real and ideal moments, and this plays a role in his analysis in this paper.

Volume 1 of *Being and Meaning* begins “All of the world phenomena exist in an aspect laden with ‘meaning.’” I do not perceive a yellow rectangular cylinder that tapers to a black point on a brown rectangle, but I perceive a “pencil” on a “table.” The perceived is always something more or something other than the given itself, that is to say, a perception has meaning, and I meaningfully perceive the yellow hexagonal cylinder “as” a “pencil.” Meaning pervades all conscious phenomena, and signs are meaningful in the same way that all phenomenal appearances are meaningful, and can be understood in terms of the same mechanisms. Hiromatsu refers to the combination of a real “given” and an ideal “meaning” as a “symbolic combination,” and refers to the given laden with meaning as the “cognized.”

In Part 1 of this paper, Hiromatsu notes that semiotics has treated how signs are possible (their subsistence mechanism) in terms of language, and he explains the problems with this approach. After his analysis of semiotic theories based on language and the problems thereof, Hiromatsu makes the important transition to examining what semiotics looks like from the broader perspective of ubiquitous meaning cited in the previous paragraph. He expresses this at the beginning of Part 1, Section 3, when he writes that “the mechanism of such a symbolic combination is in no way unique to sign activity in the narrow sense because it pervades all conscious phenomena (or more precisely, in the subsistence mechanism of the ‘phenomenal world’).”

Within this broader context of meaning, he proposes mechanisms whereby sign activity is made possible, such as the “fusion association,” the “feature association,” and the “symbolic combination.” Thereby, a sound can acquire a meaning making it a word, such as “pencil,” in the same way that in visual perception, a yellow hexagonal cylinder that tapers to a black point acquires the meaning “pencil,” and he uses cross-modal matching in perception to show how a sound can become a part of the perceptual appearance of the pencil, like the color and shape, in a “fusion association” while acquiring a language as an infant. Thereby, the sound “pencil” and the visual perception of a “pencil” are both laden with the same meaning through the symbolic association.

The same approach to meaning also applies to actions in terms of a role that provides the meaning of actions, and this is covered by Hiromatsu's role theory, which is elaborated in volume 2 of *Being and Meaning*. For example, I do not see a person standing in a room in front of people sitting at tables and talking, but in the context of a "university," I see a "professor" "lecturing" "students" sitting at "desks" in a "classroom." Their actions exhibit meaning in terms of their roles in a certain context, and we thereby understand the meaning of what they are doing. In terms of role theory, Hiromatsu summarizes language acquisition as "the learning in which one acquires sign activity refers simply to a process in which one acquires a type of role behavior."

Hiromatsu's discussion of the formation of the self in the context of intersubjectivity/inter-subjectification grounded in human relations (including the very meaning structure of conscious perceptions, such as language and roles, that we acquire from other people) and the depth of intersubjectification (the individual intersubjectivized through relationships with those around him/her) also provides material that can make a contribution to relationist sociology. Hiromatsu also analyzes the notions of rule-following and codes, and the intersubjective formation thereof. At the end of the paper, he presents his final synthesis of what semiotics looks like in the framework of meaning that he presents.

Hiromatsu Wataru

The Philosophical Dimension of Semiotics
The Subsistence Mechanism of Signification

Translated and annotated by Michael Santone

In studying the being called a “sign” in a philosophical dimension, the immediate solution is thought to be clarifying “how signification is possible.” Thus, I will bring together some aspects of my view focusing on this problem.

In retrospect, although I have occasionally addressed the problems of language and signs over the past 10 years, this has been related mainly to semantics rather than to considerations of the subsistence (存立, *bestehen*) mechanism of signs according to the mechanism of the praxis that is sign activity. Even in volume one of *Being and Meaning* (存在と意味), which was published in the autumn of 1982, considerations related to signs were limited to the context of the “being structure of the cognitive world,” and discussions of the context of intersubjective praxis will be treated in the following volumes.

Considering the limitations on length, thoroughly responding to the current issues is difficult, of course. However, I will present a part of my proposal in this paper with the hope that it will serve as an opportunity to receive criticism from the readers.

From my point of view, when rigorously explicating the subsistence structure of sign expression and understanding while at the same time understanding and elucidating the subsistence mechanism of signification, it is necessary to focus on three moments: (1) the moment of the “combination” relation between the signifying sign and the signified meaning; (2) the moment of the intersubjective “attribution” relation wherein meaning is attributed to a speaker and a listener; and finally, (3) the moment of the “rule-following” relation wherein we follow code rules in sign expression and sign decoding. In actual sign phenomena, these three moments are firmly bound together, and they mutually mediate one another. However, for the convenience of exposition, first, we will attempt to isolate each of these moments, and consider each of them in the above sequence.

SCHEMA FOR THE “SIGNIFIER-SIGNIFIED” RELATION

Obviously, a sign given can be a signifying sign in that it has the function of expressing “meaning.” The signifying sign and the signified meaning are complementarily established, and are first separated as terms that exist in the integrated relation that is signification. This is a very trivial fact, but we must attempt to keep this obvious fact in mind. Specifically, the reason is that, in our everyday preconceptions, there is a tendency to suppose that, on the one hand, there is an independently existing “thing” called the “sign,” and on the other hand, there is an independently existing “thing” called the “meaning,” and that both are “joined” contingently. Based on this supposition, the actual condition of the relation between the sign and meaning (signifier and signified) is easily misunderstood. Of course, even in our everyday suppositions, we accept that “signifier” and “signified” are complementary concepts and that, as concepts, neither can subsist without the other term that complements it. However, there is a tendency to treat these two “things”—one being the given (thing) referred to by the word “signifier” and the other being the something that is designated by the word “signified”—as if they were both independent from each other, and that one could, therefore, exist independently even without the other. It could be true that as a simple perceptual formation, the “sign given” can be one perceptual appearance even if a term that is related to it as a signified does not exist. In addition, even if the sounds or figures and the like that express the “meaning given” do not also exist as signs, meaning seems to exist in a strict sense. Because of this, it is easy to consider these in a framework in which first two “things” are present, and then both become related in some particular manner. From there, one is positioned as the signifying sign and the other is positioned as the signified meaning. According to this view, it is supposed that even though the “sign” and the “meaning” are complementary and correlative as concepts, with respect to the sign and meaning themselves, these two “things” are assumed to subsist independently of one another and that they are not in a mutually influencing and correlative relation. However, this supposition misunderstands the actual condition of the sign and meaning themselves.

While correctly viewing the signifying factor and the signified factor as being correlative and complementarily determining, not simply in a

conceptual determination, but also in the signifier and signified themselves, we must start with the task of correctly determining the relation between the sign given and the meaning formation.

I

In preparation for correctly determining the relation between the signifying sign and the signified meaning, we must first proceed to the task of eliminating inaccurate preconceptions related to “meaning.”

Pre-established ideas and theories related to the signified meaning can be categorized in several ways, but the first theory to consider, the “meaning=object” theory—that is, the theory that considers meaning simply as the external object to which a sign refers—has existed since ancient times. From a different viewpoint, we can say that this theory treats the sign as a type of name. Naturally, when we say “name,” this is not limited to proper names. There are also family names by which many individuals are all called by the same sign. The main point is that the sign is considered a kind of appellation.

This “meaning=object” and “sign=name” theory asserts that the sign-name and the meaning-object are independent givens. Here, when the signifying speaker (who may be the same as the listener) expresses the meaning or sign, the listener intentionally comprehends the object or name, and when a potential speaker apprehends the object or name, the meaning or sign is spontaneously elicited. To the extent that these behaviors have been formed into customs (*nomoi*), this is due to a functional relation in which the sign-names *refer to* the meaning-objects. Others also maintain that a sign *stands for* an object based on a mechanism in which the listener comprehends the meaningful thing simply when the sign-name is presented (in the same way as when the actual object is being faced). According to this theory, in short, the “sign-meaning” relation is understood as a *referring to* relation or a *standing for* relation. Nobody will deny that the sign can have a certain referring to or standing for function as such. In addition, in the systems of semiotic and semantic theories, we would also acknowledge the necessity of appropriately locating the moment of what is stood for or what is referred to by means of the sign itself. However, is the object as an object referred to as such the same thing as the meaning? More fundamentally, by what kind of mediating structure is this referring to function and standing for function of

the sign made possible? This question must be answered, and this naturally lays the groundwork for the emergence of theories that determine “meaning” according to the structural moment in this mediation.

This is the stage at which a second theory, in which “meaning=thought,” appears. In this context, what I am calling a “thought” (想念) can be defined in several ways, depending on the theorist, as referring to anything from a simple individual image-idea to a “concept” *in so far as* the theorist supposes that it is a “general idea.”¹ For the most part, however, these are considered to be something internal or mental. According to these theorists, a sign does not directly stand for an external object, but, as a first step, the sign is related to an internal or mental thought. A mental thought whereby I think about a certain object is designated by a certain sign. When this designating combination becomes fixed as a custom, the thought corresponding to the object appears simply with the sign being presented. And, these theorists continue, the sign and the object are indirectly related by the intermediary term, which is the same thought, serving as a mediator. From there, the function of referring to or standing for is established. However, the immediate function of the sign is to present the thought.

It is perhaps certain that the sign does not directly stand for the object given and that the sign presents an aspect of the speaker comprehending the given as this or that something, and signification is established by a conscious act of understanding of the listener. However, is a particular image (心象) in the form of a thought really the aspect presented by a sign that is comprehended or grasped, as these theoreticians think? Until some time ago, modern epistemology understood conscious grasping to be an event having a structure in which a mental internal image is formed, which I then perceive. Furthermore, among semiologists and linguists alike, this was a commonly established and orthodox idea. To me, however, what must be reexamined is the very orthodoxy of this understanding itself. Through such a reexamination, we can also begin to reconceive the actual condition of what these theoreticians call the “presented meaning.”

We know that, among the existing theories of meaning, there are also “following theories,” “response theories,” and the like. In this paper, these will be examined in the considerations below. However, for now, through a

1. The term “general idea” appears in English in the original text.

critical examination of the “meaning=thought” and the “meaning=object” theories, we will provisionally determine the nature of meaning.

In this context, speaking somewhat negatively, even if the “meaning” that the sign presents were simply the something that is comprehended or grasped by the speaker and listener, meaning as such would not be something subjective in the form of a mental image. Even less can meaning be the “objective existent” itself prior to being comprehended or understood. The “such and such a thing” that the sign presents is not the “objective existent” itself, but is definitely something that is being comprehended and grasped. *If we attempt to isolate meaning as such*, it is not at all a “subjective image.” When engaging in sign activity, there are certainly also cases in which a perceived image or symbolizing image of a thing appears, but this image is not the *meaning* as such.

2

What is the nature of the “meaning” that the sign presents? While expanding on the provisional and negative determinations in the previous section, we shall here determine the unique character of the being of “meaning.”

In order to advance the argument expeditiously, I will discuss the nature of “meaning” by means of the meaning presented by the linguistic sign “human” (人間) as an example.

Whether the actual human individual is a Caucasian, a Black, a male, a female, an elderly person, or an infant, “human” as a meaning is comprehended or grasped equally as the same. This “human” as such continues to maintain a *self-identity* even if the individual (that is, the “human” as an “objective existent” referred to or stood for by the sign “human”) grows or dies. In this sense, it is *unchanging*. And yet, a human as an image or an image of a human may immediately vanish and, hence, it is not at all unchanging. “Human” as a meaning that has once been presented is an unchanging self-identity even if the entity or image changes.² Thus, in contrast to the objective existent or subjective image that is changeable, “human” as a meaning is unchanging and possesses a unique character of being.

“Human” as a meaning is universal in the sense that all human individu-

2. If this is difficult to understand, consider the meaning of the word “Fire!” “Fire” as such remains identical even if the fire is extinguished or the image of the fire has faded.

als are equally the *same, that is, are “human.”* “Human” is not specific to any individual and yet, every individual is equally that. An actual human or a human as an image is particular, and is not at all universal.³ Thus, the actual and the image are both particular, whereas the “meaning” is universal and possesses the unique character of being that is not any particular one, but all of them can be it.

While a “human” as an actuality or an image is only present at a certain time and place, “human” as a meaning is itself not present at any particular time or place. Thus, to the extent that an actuality and an image are comprehended as “this,” the meaning can “reside” at any time and any place. In this sense, the meaning of “human,” since it surpasses time and place, is supra-spatiotemporal.

As we may immediately suppose based on this example, the presented “meaning” of the sign shows a unique character of being that is an unchanging, universal, and supra-spatiotemporal self-identity. Whether meaning is termed an objective reality or a subjective image, a real being is generally changeable, particular, and spatiotemporal, whereas the “meaning” itself presents a character of being (an unchangeable, universal, supra-spatiotemporal irreal=ideal character of being) that is diametrically opposite to that of a real being. Based on this unique character of being that the “meaning” presents, it is already clear that “meaning” as such can neither be an objective existent nor a subjective image.

However, we may find that it is not easy to discard the received idea that the “meaning,” as which a given is comprehended or grasped, is simply a type of an image-like (心像的) thought. In the context of sign expression and understanding, there are, of course, cases in which a certain image thought comes to mind. However, as explained previously, we must keep in mind that this image thought as such is not “meaning.” An image thought as such is simply a secondary presentational given.

To illustrate this, appealing to the following type of example may be con-

3. Some may think that human as an image can be universal. However, although a person may of course bring to mind an image of a standard “human” that does not have any individual characteristics, this is by no means a true “general idea.” Actually, it is doubtful whether a universal “human” that is Caucasian and Black, male and female, elderly and infantile... comes to mind in the form of an image. Even saying “standard image,” to the extent that it is an image, is not a true universal.

venient. Suppose I suddenly meet an old friend that I have not seen since our youth. In addition to the “thing” (a perceptual appearance) that appears before my eyes, a memory (remembered presentational image) of the time of our youth comes to mind. However, this memory is not the “meaning” of the friend. The “certain friend,” as which the given perceptual appearance before my eyes is comprehended as that, is never this image memory as such. This memory=imaged given that accompanies the perceptual appearance is also comprehended as “a certain friend.” This image can be an “image of a certain friend” in that the perceptually appearing given and the image-given in memory are both being comprehended *as the same that* (“a certain friend”). This image is at most a secondary presentation (*Nebenvorstellung*), and actually, there are also cases in which the “person” in front of me is directly known as “a certain friend” even if such an image memory does not come to mind at all. An image thought, even if it does come to mind, is itself also simply a given that will be meaningfully comprehended as “such and such,” but is not the “meaning” itself.

People may suppose that comprehending a given thing as such and such is a certain image thought coming to mind, but as the previous example illustrates, in the comprehension as such and such (to know as “a certain friend”), an image thought coming to mind is in no way a necessary condition, and even if the image thought does come to mind, this image thought itself is not “meaning” as such. The image thought itself is a given that is to be comprehended in the meaningfulness of a “such and such.” And yet, one might treat the “meaning” that is comprehended according to this image given and the image thought itself as duplicates. Thus, when comprehending an object, an image thought that accompanies the given as a secondary presentation is misconstrued to be the “meaning” as such. It is in this way that the established idea of the “meaning=thought” theories comes to be intransigently established.

In this sense, as we have seen previously, even if that which is “meaning” “resides” in and firmly “combines” with a perceptual appearance or a presentational image (表象の心像), and were we to attempt to isolate this meaning as such, we must acknowledge that it is a unique something that presents unreal=ideal characteristics of being. But does something such as an unchanging, universal, and supra-spatiotemporal “meaning” actually exist? An unchanging, universal, and supra-spatiotemporal thing must, after all,

be said to be analogous to the Platonic “Idea.” But does that which we call “meaning” exist as such a metaphysical being?

To answer by way of concluding our summary, it is not the case that a *thing* such as an ideal “meaning” and the like exists independently. To suppose that an ideal *thing* called “meaning” exists is simply a type of reificational illusion. This problem will gradually be clarified below.

However, to the extent that this is considered by means of a schema in which the identity that is the “meaning” presented by a sign actually exists as an object, and more fundamentally to the extent that conscious phenomena and sign phenomena are explained using the “subject-object” schema, we will always be haunted by the existence of the object identity in the strict sense, which is the “meaning,” and the ideal character of being thereof.

If we are to attempt to indicate the ideality of “meaning,” we must fundamentally reconceive the actual state of the “sign-meaning” relation in line with the confirmation that the “meaning” presented by a sign is neither an objective existent nor a subjective idea.

We may consider that, since the “meaning” is neither an objective existent nor a subjective idea, the “sign-meaning” relation can neither refer directly to a relation in which a “sign” refers to or stands for an existent (applying this condition is because there is room to revive this point of argument indirectly), nor to a relation in which a sign and an idea are associatively or apperceptionally combined. The “symbolic combination” of a real “sign” and an ideal “meaning” is one type of unique “combination” relation.

3

Now we are at the stage at which we should positively determine the relation between the “sign” and the “meaning,” which is a unique symbolic combination. However, the mechanism of such a symbolic combination is in no way unique to sign activity in the narrow sense because it pervades all conscious phenomena (or more precisely, in the subsistence mechanism of the “phenomenal world”). Thus, the “signifier-signified” relation in sign phenomena is simply one manifestation of the mechanism of symbolic combination. We will then start by confirming the following.

The phenomenal world fundamentally presents a structure of the congealed articulations of what is called a “figure” in psychology. However, this congealed emergence of the “figure” always presents a twofold structure in

which the phenomenal given is apprehended as “something more” than the simple given as such or as “something other” than what is given as such.

Here, we will not engage in a thorough discussion of the ubiquity and subsistence characteristics of the “given-cognized” structure in which a “phenomenal given” is comprehended as “something” more than or other than simply itself. For now, we will examine the phenomenal given according to the “something” that is cognized.

The phenomenally articulated “figure” generally has the potential to be re-cognized, and when re-cognized, it is comprehended as the *same* that even if slight changes are discerned in the given. Recall our previous example of how we recognize a certain friend. The same *that* that is comprehended here is not the perceptually given appearance *per se* or the given image in memory, it is rather the ideal something as that which these two givens, the friend and the image in memory, are comprehended as equivalent. The same mechanism can be seen when two fish or two birds are comparatively cognized (較認) as the same, and the comprehended same thing as such is neither of the givens, but is the “something” as which the givens are comprehended as something more or other than the givens themselves. Furthermore, even if a given has slightly changed, this does not mean that this “something” changes in parallel, but both of the givens are equally given as the same that. This something that “resides” in the given, in this sense, is similar to the notion of “meaning” seen previously, presenting an unchanging, universal, and supra-spatiotemporal character of being.

Generally, the segmentation of the phenomenal landscape is stereotypically viewed in a perspectival composition, and even if the direct given appearance of distant objects is small, they are comprehended as something more than and something other than this segmentation, each having a respective size. Thus, even if the direct appearance is flat, it is comprehended in a three-dimensional aspect that is separate from the perspectival appearance. The structure in which the “phenomenally given” is comprehended in the “cognized” aspect of something more than/something other than itself is ubiquitous. Therefore, one can easily see that what is “cognized” presents an ideal character of being.

On further reflection, although we talk about one and the same sign, this does not mean that it is completely identical as a direct phenomenal given. Whether a written sign or a spoken sign, the direct given aspect can

change over a wide range. In spite of the differences pointed out here, the identity referred to as “one and the same sign” is an ideal “cognized” identity (of course, the “cognized identity” in this context is only an identity as a sign formation, and is not presenting the identity of the “signified meaning”). Thus, in order for even one sign to exist, the structure of the “given-cognized” must already be assumed. (In the following discussion, however, in order to avoid unnecessary complications, we will disregard how the sign itself already has a “given-cognized” twofold formation, and we will consider instead the sign itself as if it were a pure given.)

I will again focus on the ideal “cognized.” Previously, because I have argued according to re-cognizing identification and comparative cognitive identification, I am concerned that the impression may have been given that a “cognized identity” is to a large extent unambiguously determined by the given. However, the cognized identity as which the given is comprehended is not unambiguously determined by the given. For example, a sparrow and a pigeon are similarly comprehended as “birds,” while the same givens will also be distinctively comprehended either as a “sparrow” or a “pigeon.” Furthermore, I determine the “what” by distinguishing between a “white pigeon,” a “black pigeon,” an “adult pigeon,” or a “juvenile pigeon.”

Even if the given is the “same individual,” depending on the context of interest, it can be comprehended as a “bird,” a “pigeon,” or a “white pigeon,” or can be comprehended as an “adult pigeon.” This “what” as which a given is comprehended is determined according to the particular context of interest of a reflexive and differential distinction for-the-other. Thus, the “cognized identity” does not refer to an absolute self-identity, but merely to an identity that is within the limit of a *non*-differential distinction in a reflexive relation for-the-other.

In relation to this, as a matter of praxis, the type of sign system in which we are enculturated regulates *how* the “what” (the cognized identity) is segmented. At the same time, the nature of our interests brings about the differentiating and integrating of the cognized “what” as that through which the given is grasped, and this regulates the differentiating and integrating of the sign system. Thus, the “signifying sign” and the “signified meaning” never exist independently from each other such that they contingently enter into a correspondence relation. Rather, they mutually influence each other and, as

a practical matter, are in a complementary relation in which we can say that, if one does not exist, then neither does the other.

Then how is the “cognized” *combined* with the “sign,” where the “cognized” is the phenomenal given being comprehended as a “something” more than or other than simply itself?⁴ At this stage, we should now discuss the basic steps that establish the “symbolic combination” between the “sign” formation and the ideal that is “cognized.” However, in order to do this, it is necessary to take into account the intersubjective for-the-other/for-the-self relation between the speaker and the listener (the transmitter and the receiver).

The twofold relation of the “given-cognized” in the phenomenal world articulation and the “as” structure therein are ubiquitous, and this twofold structure is the fundamental structure that enables a sign to function as a sign. However, even though the symbolic combination of the “signifying sign-signified meaning” can also be established based on this fundamental structure, signification cannot occur according to this fundamental structure alone, which already exists independently in each individual subject. (Obviously, there are also situations in which it appears as if the “signifying sign-signified meaning” combination could be accomplished by an independent subject, such as when a new sign is introduced. However, even this case presupposes an existing “sign-meaning” system, and thus, the symbolic combination of the “sign-meaning” is essentially an intersubjective human activity).

Thus, seen from this perspective, we will need to extend the scope of our argument in order to respond to this problem in what follows.

THE MECHANISM OF THE “EXPRESSION-UNDERSTANDING” RELATION

It can be easily understood that a sign formation is capable of being a signifying sign because a certain possible conscious subject apprehends this given as a “sign.” Thus, perceiving as a “sign” is correlative to a state in which this given is understood to express a certain “meaning.”

As trivial as this may be, we must attempt to reconfirm this obvious fact. This is because, to be specific, among our everyday established ideas, there is a

4. Whether this is an “object” or “event” in the perceptual landscape, or an internal “thought.”

tendency to suppose that there is an established thing that is the “sign-meaning” combination and that the sign expresses the meaning in-itself. Based on this view, the actual state of the “combination” relation between the sign and meaning (signifier and signified) is easily overlooked. Of course, even in our everyday thinking, we have now eliminated such things as the ancient *Kotodama*, the magical power of words. Thus, we do not believe that the sign and the meaning integrally combine by themselves. However, among commonly accepted views, it is not necessarily for-itself that the sign formation is produced or reproduced as a “sign-meaning” combination each time that a person who understands the meaning (who may be the same person as the speaker) comprehends a sign formation as having a certain meaningfulness, and that an in-itself combination of sign and meaning is one type of reificational illusion.

From our point of view, in this context, the actual status of the symbolic combination of the sign and meaning should be understood for-itself, and we will need to investigate this by returning to the intersubjective structure established between the speaker and listener of the sign.

I

The combination of a sign and a meaning is frequently asserted, in effect, to be a type of association.⁵ However, as indicated in the previous section, the “meaning” is not an image. Thus, an image that associatively comes to mind is not the “meaning” as such, and therefore, the combination of a sign and a meaning cannot be a mental association.

Basically, we do not reject the fact that there are cases in which, occasioned by the perception of a sign formation, a certain image may come to mind, or that there are cases in which, occasioned by the appearance of an image, a certain sign formation may associatively appear.⁶ Even if an associated image comes to mind, this is, in the end, simply a secondary presentation. However, it certainly appears that, in the formative stage of the

5. This is because the theorists understand meaning in terms of an image in which the meaning and sign formation are associatively combined.

6. However, there are also particular cases in which the understanding of meaning progresses smoothly without an image coming to mind, and it cannot be the case that being accompanied by an associated image is a necessary condition in the understanding of sign-meaning.

“combination” of a sign and a meaning, an associative mechanism does play an unexpectedly very important role.

Thus, although we strictly reject conflating the meaning and an image as well as conflating a symbolic combination and an associative combination, the mechanism of an “image association” must be considered in relation to the developmentally formative phase of the “sign-meaning” combination.

The word “association” could refer to a simple association, such as an association game, in which one image that is occasioned by another image comes to mind as a “separate existence,” or could be a fused association such that, for example, in the perceptual image of a flower, the shape, color, and smell are integrally combined.

On the one hand, the word “sign” refers to signals that induce what is almost completely a reflex action, such as a primitive signaling sign that is not accompanied by any self-conscious process (meaning decoding process), and on the other hand, “sign” can denote a sign that is accompanied by the conscious process of decoding meaning. We will discuss the latter type in the next section, and for the time being, we will devote our discussion to bearing in mind that there are both the signs that elicit a bodily action as a signal and the signs that are accompanied by a conscious cognitive process of the understanding of meaning.

In either the formative phase of the cognitive sign process or the combination of a meaning and a sign, the mechanism of the fused association appears to perform an important function. A fused association presents an associated unity in which the sense perceptions of shape, color, and fragrance are integrated, as in the perceptual segmentation of a flower seen up close. It also provides the case in which a perceptual image of the shape and color and a memory presentation of the fragrance and touch and the like are integrated, such as when the flower is seen from a distance. In psychology, this is known as the cross-modal matching of “differing sensory modalities.” For example, in the case of an alarm clock or a bell, the sound is (acoustically) located at the location at which the alarm clock or bell is seen.

In the formative phase in which an infant is acquiring language, would not the visual object (segmentation of shape and color) that the infant sees and the sound uttered by an adult fuse to first form a fused unity? In this context, more than the acoustic attribution to some adult when the adult speaks, at that moment, the point is that the visual object image seen by an

infant and the sound-as-sign are fused. This suggests that a sound repeatedly emitted and *heard* by the infant is also unified with an object image by means of a kind of fusion, and that this sound becomes what we can call the “componential” moment of a fused complex that is the object image.

Once such a fused association is formed and then later recalled, a presentational image of the shape and color (of a certain flower) comes to mind simply by smelling the fragrance (this becomes an “index”), and simply by hearing the sound, the presentational image of the shape, color, and touch (of this bell) comes to mind. Moreover, simply by seeing a shape, a certain smell or a certain sound will come to mind in the form of a presentational image. In such an association, there is a state in which, when the “componential” moment of an established fused association perceptually appears, this is supplemented with other presentations, and the “established fused associations” are apprehended as a whole. We will call this a feature (*Merkmal*) association.

The formative phase in which an infant learns signs probably operates similar to what we have called the mechanism of a “feature association.” When a certain sound is heard, a certain object image comes to mind, and when the certain object image appears, a state in which a supplementary sound emerges is realized.

As we have already noted, an object image as such (whether a perceptual image or a presentational image) associated with a sign image is not itself the same as the “meaning.” The “cognized” aspect in which I comprehend the object image given as “something” more than the given, namely, the “ideal something,” is the “meaning.”

Mediated by the mechanism of a “combination between images” that is the feature association, the “symbolic combination” between the sign formation and the “meaning” is established. So, even though the object image = image that is characteristically associated with the sign plays the role of a mediating term, this is, in the end, simply a secondary presentation. If a symbolic combination of the sign and the meaning has been established, the sign given has a “meaningful” cognized character as “something” more than the simple sign given.

To the extent that the “something” as which I comprehend the sign given and the “something” as which I comprehend the object image given now become *identical*, the “referential” relation between the “sign” and the rele-

vant “object given” group can also become established by means of the identity of this “meaningful” comprehension.

The relation of “reference,” however, is not a direct relation between a sign given and an object something, but is rather the “for the other-for the self” intersubjective relation.

2

The problem of the “other,” and therefore the problem of “intersubjective interaction,” are major problems for modern philosophy. Actually, insofar as the modern philosophical “subject-object” schema, which presupposes the “private character of conscious phenomena,” and the “interiority of conscious phenomena” are assumed, we cannot expect to resolve the problem of intersubjectivity=communality (*zusammensubjektiv* as *gemeinsubjekt*).

In this context, although we cannot thoroughly discuss the major problem of the “knowledge of the other,” this does allow us to analyze the subsistence structure of “relational behavior” (*Verhalten*) in sign activity between a “self” and an “other” that appears in the phenomenal landscape of the world.

In relation to the “other” that appears within the perceptual landscape, people can “read” the “line of sight” by means of an “intuitive” mechanism.⁷ (This mechanism also appears to be at work in higher animals, as monkeys, dogs, and the like respond by reading the line of sight of a human, who is another species of animal. Indeed, humans can even read the line of sight of mammals and maybe even birds.) The direction and orientation of the line of sight are directly understood and perceived just by looking at the eyes of another. In addition, when an other is directing his line of sight in a certain direction, one also directs one’s own line of sight without thinking in that direction. At that time, generally, a particular object steadily attracts attention, and we comprehend that the line of sight of a companion is concentrating on the object. (When the object at which a companion is looking is not clear, we compare the eyes, the facial expression of the companion,

7. A scene in which an other directs his line of sight in a certain direction is the performance of a type of signaling function, and for the self, the action of looking in this direction is triggered. Of course, this is not a process of self-conscious “signal-instruction” decoding, and at a formative level, is it simply an instinctive or reflex process.

and the direction of the line of sight one after another without thinking. Although sometimes what the companion is looking at may, in the end, be unclear, we generally “understand” the object on which the companion is concentrating his line of sight and the interaction becomes stable.) This is probably the result of unconscious “learning” due to such an experiential process, and simply by observing the line of sight of the companion, people can “understand” not only the direction, but also whether the location of the object is far or near and the approximate distance.

Due to this “instinctive” mechanism of “reading the line of sight,” which is acquired as early as infancy, people are triggered (*ausgelöst*) by the line of sight of others to gaze at a certain object. On this occasion, when this other emits an appropriate vocalization, due to the mechanism of the “fused association” described in the previous section, a composite of the object image and the vocalization is produced, and based on the memory thereof, the mechanism of the “feature association” is invoked. (Note that the triggering of a gaze toward a certain object by the line of sight can be supplemented by pointing to or pointing in a certain direction, but we will say that the basis is always being triggered by the line of sight.)

Thus, the establishment of the feature association between a certain vocal sign and a certain object image is possible only by the mediation of an other. We must keep in mind that comprehending that an other is directing his “line of sight” at a certain given object (we might say the comprehension that the other is “looking at” that object) subsists at a pre-linguistic phase, and that this is a precondition for a definite “fused association” between a sign vocalization and an object image in the learning process of what are termed “given names.”

Considering this, based on reflection from a certain philosophical standpoint, an other’s line of sight is simply a motivating occasion by which a certain response of mine is triggered, and my gazing at a certain location and thereby perceiving a certain object image are simply treated as a subjective event within myself. However, in my direct experience, the other is never simply a causal motivation. The other is not simply a being that motivates my gaze by his line of sight, but the other is someone who “looks” and “directs his line of sight” to this object at which I am caused to stare. Thus, I trust that this object also appears to “the other who is directing his line of sight.” This is a fundamental experiential fact, even if it is judged that the object is

simply “my simple imagining” from the viewpoint of a certain type of philosophical reflection, and we can establish the “learning of language” by means of this fundamental belief being made a foundation. (Indeed, the comprehension of the other as a subject and the self as a subject, as well as the alter ego and the ego being established also assumes this fundamental experience. Without the conjugate relation that is the gazing (凝向) at the “identical object” of “that bodily” other and “this bodily” self in the context of this fundamental belief, the consciousness of the “knowing self” could not have been originally established. The establishment of self-“consciousness” occurs through several paths, but in any one of these, the “ego” and the “alter ego” are complementarily and conjugately established.)

In this connection, even if we say that a certain object and a certain vocalization recur and become “fusion associated,” and furthermore, that a certain object image and a certain sign vocalization are repeated to become “feature associated,” neither the vocalization nor the object image are a strict identity, and they can differ subtly as givens depending on the occasion. If we can even speak about identity, it is only the identity in the “cognized,” as discussed above, and specifically, in the ideality (*Idealität*) of the “something” as which the given is comprehended, which is something more than the simple given itself.

We come to know through experience that even with respect to an object of which we are conscious as one and the same object, the “way of being seen” can differ depending on the distance, angle, and light conditions and the like by which something is seen. Thus, in the context in which one believes that the other and the self are directing the line of sight at the same object, it may be accompanied by the awareness that, between the self and the other, the directly given appearance differs according to the “perspective.” So, comprehending the object identity is not to grasp the identity of the object as it directly given, but is rather correlative to an identity of “the something more than that” = the “cognized.”

The identity of a sign vocalization is not an etic identity as a physical vocalization, but an emic identity as a cognized. This emic identity is defined by the identity of the “meaning” that is presented by the cognized, and thus, the cognized and differential “self-identity” of the “sign” vocalization is determined reflexively along with the identity of the “meaning.” Under these conditions, it must not be forgotten that even in this dimen-

sion, the “sign” and the “meaning” are mutually influencing and correlative. However, as we have noted previously, for convenience of discussion, the “sign” will be treated as if it were a single-layer self-identical given.

So, in the context in which the other, who appears in the perceptual landscape, and the self “see” one and the same object, even if the other vocalizes something, thereby producing a “fusion identity” between a phoneme and an object image, this itself does not mean that the sign that the other has uttered has been meaningfully decoded by the self. To be sure, to an outside observer, here, a structure of the uttered expression and a receptive understanding already subsists. Nevertheless, in this state, both the self-conscious reception and the self-conscious decoding do not yet subsist on the side of the “self” involved.

Thus, the question is what kind of self-conscious mechanism establishes signal reception and meaning understanding “for-the-other—for-the-self,” and consequentially, sign utterance and meaningful expression?

3

The mechanisms of sign reception and meaningful understanding have specific differing mechanisms according to the characteristics of the signaling sign, emotive sign, and symbolic sign, and therefore, according to the action producing meaning, the emotive meaning, and the cognitive meaning. Furthermore, these characteristics are not hierarchical steps, but are mutually interlaid. Of course, in developmental terms, even if we acknowledge the sequence of sign=action eliciting, expression=emotion embodiment, and symbol=cognitive description, in fully realized sign activity, there is a sense in which these form a “nested” structure that provides the sequence in reverse order. Thus, here, for the moment, we will pursue our discussion according to the symbolic sign and, moreover, according to receptive understanding, while the others will be discussed in the sections that follow.

In some contexts, the prototype of the symbolic sign is spoken language, and to the extent that written language and body language are also symbolic signs, signification can be studied according to spoken language. Thus, in this section, we wish to argue by using the model of spoken language as a model.

To the extent that a spoken word has actually been vocalized within the perceptual phenomenal landscape, the other (or the self), who is the source of the sound, receives the “sound source attribution” each time.

A sound, whether the sound of a bell or a drum, footsteps or the flapping of wings, the cry of a bird or an animal, is oriented and attributed within visual space to the sound origin from which it was emitted. This coordination of vision and sound, while formed on the basis of experience, is not the result of deliberate *conscious* learning, but is a basic function that is possessed by primates such as birds and mammals. We can advance our discussion with the presence of this “attribution as the sound source” function as a factual assumption.

As explained previously, when gazing at a certain object after being prompted by the “line of sight of the other,” when I hear a certain vocalization, and when an object image and a vocalization have been fusion associated, we are *generally* not totally aware of the source of the sound that is being attributed to an other. When the self repeats something that has been said as well, we are, in the end, objectively conscious of the composite of the object and sound, but we can say that *usually* we are not completely conscious of this self-attribution of what is vocalized. Indeed, in such a comprehension, a “fused association” is established in what can be termed a *pre*-personal attribution.

What follows is the establishment of a “feature association.” However, during the phase in which a “feature association” has been firmly established, when one hears the other utter a relevant spoken sign, for the moment, this utterance is normally apprehended as being attributed to the other as a sound source. The utterance accompanies this attribution as the sound source, while the “feature association” as a whole is comprehended in an aspect of attribution to the other. Naturally, comprehension of simple other-attribution to this extent is not very explicit, and as long as the utterance of the companion (and “meaning” understanding by the self) proceeds smoothly, the “sign-meaning” formation becomes, so to speak, a *depersonalized* attribution. Here the consciousness of personalized attribution is almost completely lost.

Of course, reflectively, even if I attribute the source of the sound, which can be comprehended on each occasion, to the other, this does not mean that such a reflective attribution always occurs. That is, becoming fully aware of the attribution of the feature condition to the other that accompanies the attribution as a sound source is rather limited to atypical situations. However, such an attribution to the other as sound source is not entirely

annihilated, and generally speaking, if a reflective occasion occurs, it does so in a situation in which coming to apprehend this attribution is possible on any occasion.

More fundamentally, when a situation actually occurs in which vocalized language has been emitted by an other and is attributed to the other as a sound source that is accompanied by a feature association, to repeat our previous point of argument, an object image that appears in association⁸ is not the “meaning” as such. The object image is, in the end, simply a “secondary presentation,” while the “meaning” is the “cognized” “something more” by means of which this given “secondary presentation” is comprehended. Furthermore, in effect, normally the “cognized meaning” is directly apprehended merely through the spoken sign-given appearing, that is, without being accompanied by a “secondary presentation.” This directly “combined” relation between the “sign” and the “meaning” will be called a “symbolic meaning combination” when sign-givens are comprehended as “cognized meanings” that directly depend on various object images even if, in terms of development, it is mediated by the mechanism of a feature association in which an object image intervenes.

A self-conscious mechanism of attribution of the sign expression to the other and understanding for-the-self are established assuming the mechanism of this “symbolic meaning combination” between the cognized as a “meaningful identity” and a “sign,” as suggested in the previous section.

The “for the other-for the self” attribution of the sign “expression-understanding” being directly and clearly comprehended without becoming *de*-personally attributed is probably, at the outset, within the following type of situation or structure.

Consider a context in which the other, who appears in the perceived phenomenal landscape, and the self each direct their lines of sight at one and the same object. Due to this action of “reading the line of sight,” I believe that this object (in reflection, the cognized) also appears and is attributed to (“is being seen” by) the companion. Moreover, assume further that the “symbolic meaning combination” of the “cognized” of this object and the spoken sign “A” has already been established. The companion, however,

8. Whether this is an “object” in the perceptual landscape or an “image” that comes to mind as a presentation

unexpectedly utters the spoken sign “B.” When confronted with such a situation, accompanying the attribution as the sound sources of the vocalization B and the vocalization A, the cognized “B” and the cognized “A” are initially attributed separately to the companion and the self. The conflicting difference between the attribution to the other and the attribution to the self is clearly understood. The apperception of the given object as “B” is then attributed to the companion and not attributed to this self. Upon reflection, however, the cognized B is apprehended to the extent that it is also attributed to this self, and while the self and the companion are separate attributive subjects, they are also subjects to whom the same cognized “B” is commonly attributed. The mechanism of what we can call a “unity of self-dividing dualization and duality” is established in which “A” is attributed to “the self as the self” and “B” is attributed to “the self as the companion.” To the extent that this happens in view of “the self as the companion” (the self to the extent that it enacts the standpoint of the companion), the cognized “B” that is attributed to the companion is also attributed to the self. From a different perspective, we are aware for-the-self that a situation for-the-other, in which the companion comprehends a certain *given* as “B,” which is the cognized *meaning* of the sign “B” (uttered by the companion), is being attributed to the self. The apprehension in which, correlative to the attribution of the sign of the given to the other, the entirety of the situation of the “meaning” that symbolically combines with this sign attributed to the other being attributed to the self is the structure referred to as the understanding of the meaning of the sign that has been uttered by the other.

When this attribution “to the other-to the self,” that is, this mechanism of the self-dividing unity of the companion and the self in the “self-as-companion” and the “self-as-self,” can become for-itself, even in the case in which the self and the other are not aware of an explicit opposition (such as the “A” and “B” described above), here the “for the other-for the self” mechanism can, at least reflectively, be for-itself. However, going beyond the area of the static-cognitive schema regarding this “attribution” described previously will allow us to discuss the mechanism of “expression-understanding” according to the actual situation of dynamic and praxis-based sign activity. But to do so, we must broaden the view of our discussion.

THE MECHANISM OF THE “RULE-FOLLOWING” RELATION

As an actual problem, bringing signification to completion generally presupposes a condition in which a “code” is shared by a speaker and a listener. To be sure, the contemporary conception of sign information transmission has been extended to mechanical automated control and biological genetic mechanisms and the like, but it can be said that “code-following transmission and reception” in such contexts is, in any case, based on a type of anthropomorphic analogy. Of course, even in the sign activity of humans, the person involved is not necessarily conscious of a “code,” and there are also cases in which “rule-following” subsists only in the observations made by an outside observer. To this extent, the rule-following character of sign activity can be proposed irrespective of whether or not the person concerned is aware of this. However, a situation in which the rule-following can be made at least reflectively for-itself should be treated as the full realization of sign activity.

Sometimes when sign activity is being self-consciously performed, to the direct consciousness of the person involved, it seems as if a thing called “code rules” is already present and the person follows the existing rules while controlling his activity in a self-constraining manner. According to the direct comprehension of the person involved, code rules are both “already existing” and an “external constraint.” Code rules, to be sure, are not newly created by the persons involved each instant by means of their creative ingenuity. However, it is an apparent fact that a *thing* called a “code rule” does not exist independently from the intersubjective human activity of the subjects involved. People intersubjectively fix the *manière de faire* of actions toward others as customs and “follow” these normative rules while comprehending this fixed *manière de faire* in a normalized aspect as something that has “constraining force.” What becomes code rules is simply the reified product of an intersubjective *manière de faire*.

In a detailed discussion, the mechanism of the reification of these “coded rules” should be examined along with the reification of the “sign-meaning” system, but we will omit entering into this in detail, and rather describe only the necessary minimum according the mechanism of following of a “pre-existing” code.

I

When viewed developmentally, infants can be seen to perform in-itself a type of sign transmission and reception in the context of bodily contact with the mother from an extremely early period. A reflex response to the mother's caress and the action of breast feeding, and expressions and vocalizations that express hunger and discomfort can be treated as sign activity in-itself. We can already speak of initial sign activity at a stage in which a certain objective is attained by using different crying voices (even if the infant itself is not aware of "different" and "objective," and at most, only the mother "understands"). In any case, in human sign activity, types of action eliciting signs and emotion expressing references seem to be present in at an early stage.

Even in action triggering and emotion expressing sign activities, after a certain phase, code-following in transmission and reception can be acknowledged (here going beyond acknowledging this simply from the viewpoint of an observer to the mechanism of half-conscious code-following by the subject himself). At this stage, even though the sign itself is rather complicated, in this context, the individual merely signals or produces a referential "sign" whereby a certain suitable action-based or emotion-based "meaning" is "combined." However, even if this "combination" is established by reflex or a conditioned reflex, the "sign" and the "meaning" are present within a system of reflexive distinctions (反照区別) for-the-other by what is termed a generalization and specialization mechanism.

In order to make the point of argument easier to understand, let us try to assume a system in which the sound "aa" is combined with "a running action" and "oo" is combined with a "stopping action." In this context, (1) even if there are several intonations, the vocalization "aa," the vocalization "oo," and meaningless vocalizations other than these (noise) are reflexively and differentially distinguished for-the-other; (2) even if there are various specific manners of action, the action of "running," the action of "stopping," and other neutral actions are reflexively and differentially distinguished for-the-other; and (3) the spoken sign "aa" is combined with the action meaning "run," and the spoken sign "oo" is combined with the action meaning "stop." Furthermore, the system of these double differential "distinctions" and corresponding "combinations" can be called a "code." Even when con-

sidering the views of Umberto Eco, the system of differential distinctions between the signs, the differential distinctions between meanings, and the corresponding combination system of the signs and meanings are nevertheless the three moments that are the structural foundation in a semiotic code being established as a code.

Among theoreticians, some will say, for example, that the vocalization “aa” and the action “run” are what they would refer to as simply being combined by a reflex, that is, they propose without hesitation a certain code, but without considering the moment of the for-the-other reflexive distinctions. One may say that this is a question of “definition,” but similarly, even speaking of the vocalization “aa” and the action “running,” a strict identity between the two is not required. And so, even these theoreticians must develop an argument concerning a reflexive distinction that is for-the-other. Provisionally, even if we assume the extreme case in which the only meaningful sign is “aa” (the case in which, as in the one stated above, not even the other meaningful sign “oo” exists), here, a mechanism in which the sign “aa” and other vocalizations, which are mere noise, are reflexively distinguished, and a mechanism is likely to exist in which “aa” is “systematically” associated with a certain action meaning that is reflexively distinguished for-the-other. Thus, we can confidently assert, as we did above, that this for-the-other distinction is a necessary condition for what becomes a semiotic code.

Accordingly, the subject of sign activity is not always aware of the code system, nor is he or she normally aware of the for-the-other reflexive distinctions of the signs. However, if the subject engages in sign activity while being reflectively aware of the code system that consists of the three moments, we refer to this as code-following for-itself; and we will speak of in-itself code-following when the subject himself is not aware of this even when an outside observer would be aware of sign activity that satisfies a code system.

Normally, we actually engage in sign activity in an aspect that we should call partially in-itself and partially for-itself code-following. However, signified-meaning understanding is first completely actualized in a state in which the “sign-meaning” is attributed to the speaker through a mechanism in which the receiving side understands the expressed sign as being code-following.

2

The following question must be asked, specifically, by what kind of mechanism is following a code, and fundamentally, a formation of the code, established? In the previous section, we only discussed a part of our argument about a code in which signs and meanings are combined. Furthermore, that discussion was limited to the action eliciting signaling sign. Starting from the indicative sign, we will proceed with our study by including the “syntactic” code that “grammatically” structures the “coded combination of signs and meanings” within our field of view, while also taking into account the dimension of the symbolic sign.

As a first step or formative stage of sign activity, presumably a reflex or conditioned reflex action and what is termed imitative action are present. Furthermore, due to an in-itself code-following system of conditioned ways of doing things and imitated ways of acting, actions based on reflex or conditioned reflex and actions based on imitation can quickly present in-itself a code-following character when viewed by an outside observer.

Seen in this light, whether a reflex action or an imitative action, in a for-the-other relation, this can be laden with significance as a “role action.” However, a code-following action becoming for-itself lies in a process that is correlative with the for-itself execution of a role action. Thus, it is reasonable to consider a for-itself code-following action according to a “role action” becoming for-itself.

What we refer to as “role action” is role action in an extremely broad sense, and means “a conjugate performance of interactive acts that is expected by an other in a given performative context.” In addition, this “role performance,” that is, “the interactive-conjugate performance of actions expected by an other,” is developmentally and formatively present within the in-itself steps of a sucking reflex in response to oral stimulation by a breast, the action of turning in the direction of a human voice, smiling in response to the smiling face of a mother, and feeling fear when confronted by intimidating acts of an other.

The transition process from unconscious or instinctive response action to conscious or volitional action is not clear, but it appears certain enough that, through sanctions (praise and punishment) in a broad sense given by the other (a companion himself and others who are living together in the same

place), the manner of actions for-the-other undergo what are called “conditioning” and “reinforcement” in conditioned reflex theory. (What are called “sanctions” vary greatly from the animal dimension of the pleasure given by a caress, such as a feeling of fear and pain brought by the anger and aggression of a companion, and the feeling of happiness due to the “infection” of happiness in a companion, to those unique to human beings. However, in the case of human beings, when confronting the occurrence of a phenomenon of behavior in which a strong expectation has been betrayed, similar to higher animals, even if anger or hopelessness has occurred, there is, on the one hand, a mechanism in which laughter occurs when confronting the phenomenon of suddenly diverging from expectation, while on the other hand, being enveloped by a feeling of shame when I feel that my manner toward the other triggers the laughter of another. The latter is probably a mechanism that is unique to humans. This mechanism of “laughter-embarrassment” is seen to present the function of an extremely important sanction. How this intersubjective mechanism can be established is itself a major problem, but here, we will stop while keeping this in mind as one fact.) In this sense, self-conscious role action does not appear to be unique to human beings. When considering what are termed grooming and mounting in a pack of apes, or when focusing on the organization of the social activity in higher apes, it is believed that, at least among the higher apes, self-conscious role action occurs.

In sufficiently self-conscious role action, it is necessary to go beyond a simple suitable response action being triggered by the expression or action of the companion, to an awareness of the role expectation of the other toward the self. In this situation, we could say that this is not simply anticipating the dispositional manner of this self from the viewpoint of the other, but that a self-dividing-unity must be realized in which the “expectation” of this anticipated aspect is attributed to the other. In this context, we also refer to the manner of the expected action, or in other words, the manner of the role performance, which is code-following both for-the-other and for-the-self.

Moreover, the code-following character of action can quickly subsist in-itself by a system in which “differentiation” of conditioned actions and the corresponding combinations of “signal-response” are organized in a code-following manner. However, during self-conscious code-following, the subject adjusts the actions of the self in accordance to the code. How this self-

conscious code-following adjustment is performed is the problem. We will consider this while keeping “syntactical” and “grammatical” codes in mind.

When speaking of the adjustment of code-following actions, developmentally, at first only “imitation” is performed, and at this stage, viewed by an outside observer, imitating simply results in the action becoming a form in which the action is controlled so as to be code-following. However, eventually this imitation itself comes to be performed self-consciously, and under some conditions, the action to be imitated itself is segmented and reintegrated as in a “complex molecule.” In this situation, although the adjustment of behavior for each step of the action as a whole is performed, here “acquired customs” act as a regulatory principle.

Based on the “imitating” action itself, we can understand that many are responses to “role expectations.” The manner of action becomes a custom while being regulated by constant sanctions, and in these customary manners of action, sanctions experienced up to then become, we can say, “internalized.” Thereby, even in volitional acts, each behavior, which is a step in actions that have become segmented like a complex molecule, is controlled through distress or deterrence in the form of an ought (*sollen*) due to the awareness of internalized sanctions. Thus, the manner of action at each step can be adjusted while being accompanied by the awareness of prohibition, permission, and ought. As a result, behavior remains within the framework of a manner of acting (having an ordered structure that is segmented in-itself following a code) that is customized and fixed, and this is why the code-following character appears (actions that do not violate provisions prohibited by rules and that remain within a range permitted by rules). Thereby, through the internalization of sanctioned controls (in relation to sign activity, experiences of achieving or failing to achieve a communication objective will function as an important part of positive and negative sanctions), any “deviating action” is internally self-controlled/regulated in the subject himself, and accordingly, one comprehends the manner of an act or the manner of role performance that is often controlled so as to have an externally constraining regulating force. Additionally, the subject consciously follows this “external constraint.” However, in what is here called the externally constrained manner of action being comprehended in a code-following order that is controlled by an ought, this “conscious following” acquires a self-conscious code-following character.

3

A more fundamental question is how that which is a code-following system for a manner of acting and, therefore, that which is a code itself, is originally formed. Moreover, what is the character of being that a code has in the intersubjective dynamic process that is sign activity? Our line of argument in the previous sub-section assumes that the mode of sign activity, in which individuals learn by means of “conditioning” and “imitation,” and the manner of expected role behavior accompanying sanctions, already exist through an in-itself code-following system. The prior problem of the mechanism of establishing a code remains. In the previous subsection, in the context of sensing the role expectation, the acceptance of sanctions, and the mechanisms related thereto, our line of argument actually took a form that begs the question of the structure of sign expression and understanding. We are now at the stage at which we should provide an overview of the structure of signification as a whole, while also answering as far as possible the requirements of sign expression and understanding that must first be resolved.

To begin, among what are termed sign codes, there are ones that are created and established by humans, but even these are formed by assuming as a basis a “natural language” or a socially learned “system of facial expressions and gestures” and the like. What we should then consider first is a “natural” (*naturwüchsig*) code as exemplified by a “natural language.”

In relation to a naturally created sign system and the establishment of the code thereof, difficult problems generally presented by a theory of origins intervene. That is, among our assumptions, infants and children, and generally people who newly enter into a sign community, learn a preexisting system. Thus, the sign system and code system exist before a given generation at any given time, and theoretically, they must be traced back to a first generation of a founding period. If this is the case, however, there arises the problem by whom and how the first generation was taught. In terms of empirical science, one could say that, to be sure, this is an inept question. However, in terms of its logical structure, it cannot be denied that in a certain context, this “inept question” will be in need of answering. It is not necessarily without reason that a “theory of divine origins” was once vigorously defended. Naturally, there is no need to think that the sign system and code system preexist in the present form from the beginning. Their specific aspects will

have changed historically. However, if the code is first formed anywhere at all, another logical structure different from simple passive learning must be in place. Even though this might be considered at first glance to be an inept problem, we must venture to clarify this problem.

The key to answering this question lies in what is termed the mechanism of sign learning and code acquisition. The learning in which one acquires sign activity refers simply to a process in which one acquires a type of role behavior. Furthermore, by this role behavior being “conditioned” and “reinforced” through sanctions, the manner thereof is fixed as a custom. To this extent, sign activity is a passive fixing of a preexisting system of forms, and it is thought that a sign system and code system were already fixed entities. (The sign and code systems having a considerable historical stability can certainly be acknowledged to depend on this mechanism.) However, we must first bear in mind that even in the context of learning, the learner is not strictly a simple passive receiver. A person certainly performs role actions in response to the role expectation of a companion (and this interactive action is accompanied by sanctions), but this interactive role action is not one-sidedly passive. In the first place, the manner of the role action of the companion toward the self is also determined by the manner of the self. As Hegel aptly explains in his “theory of force,”⁹ according to an old saying, a tempter is not a unilateral tempter, but must be tempted (by the tempter) into being tempted, whereby the specific manner of tempting is also tempted. Besides, the self has the “freedom” to not necessarily respond in accordance with the expectation of the companion. Thus, again, even though the role expectation of the companion and the sanctions of the companion are performed within the broad framework of a pre-existing code, there is an “permissible range” in which the code that one has acquired by learning is not limited strictly to conforming to an “existing system.”

Thus, the code moment that the learner shares with the companion acting as an “instructor” can deviate at any given time from the “existing code system” (this is, for now, the system that the companion shares with others). And yet, apart from an outside observer’s viewpoint, while the code that comes into existence and exists for the learner himself is limited to the code

9. See the section “Kraft und Verstand” in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952), 113.

that he has currently formed in common with his companions, that which is an “existing code system” does not actually exist. The actual situation is that the code that comes into existence for him is simply in a formation that is shared with companions upon each interaction. (it is easily seen that a novel agreement in the code also depends on this structure). Of course, the sharing of the code is not complete with only specific individual companions. Through a shared formation with a multiplicity of companions, the idiosyncrasies shared with a particular companion are, so to speak, worn away, such that a code system that is shared with many people is retained. In the direct consciousness of this person, this is comprehended in the passive form of receiving the code (to this extent, already existing) that the companion already shares with others. However, in principle, as explained above, this is not a “one-sided receiving of an existing code,” and the learner forms a code at each given instant so as to be shared with the companion acting as an “instructor.” Thus, a code does not preexist apart from this intersubjective shared formation.

Thus, a code being a preexisting *thing* and appearing to be “transmitted” from one generation to another is simply one type of reificational illusion. A *thing* that is a code then is simply the way that a manner of action, which has been intersubjectively and communally formed and fixed, is viewed as independently existing from an outside observer’s point of view. To be sure, the code appears immediately reified in the semi-reflective self-observations of the subject, and the code appears to be not only already existing, but also externally existing. Furthermore, one comprehends the code in an aspect of something having an externally constraining force. This also supports the comprehension of the code-following character. We do not deny this everyday conscious fact. However—and this applies generally to any rule having a normative character—comprehension here, as explained in the previous section, is due to a mechanism in which the sanctions by others are “internalized” in a de-personalized and customized manner of action. In the end, this is a reificational illusion. (Regarding this mechanism, please refer to the author’s book *The Intersubjective Being Structure of the World* (Keisō Publications), in particular, the chapters “The Ontological Foundation of Intersubjectivity” and “The Critical Inheritance of Durkheim’s Ethical Theories.”)

More fundamentally, when examining the “character of being” of a code from the point of view in which the code has been made independently exist-

ing, it is easy to acknowledge that a code or a sign system in a “*langue* dimension” presents an “ideal” character of being in the sense explained in the first section of this paper. (In the course of our discussion, we could not avoid speaking as if the action response triggered or elicited by signs was “sign-elicited active meaning” as such. However, the real existing response action and the mental image thereof are not the action “meaning” as such because what we call “action meaning” is also an ideal “cognized.” We believe that this will be understood with reference to the discussion in the first section. The same also applies to “emotive meaning.” “Meaning” is not a *thing* that exists independently. Likewise, the reflexive and differential distinctions for-the-other and “sign-meaning” combinations are also established correlatively with the organized whole of the coded system. This is the reason that there arises the “meaning=rule” theory, according to which meaning is taken to be the rules for coding. While we avoid the reificational illusion in which the “meaning” exists independently, we posit meaning as being a structural moment of what is termed a “rule” system, but we do not treat “rules” themselves as being the “meaning.” After the determination of the essence of “meaning,” in the concrete aspect of semiotics, we speak of “object meaning,” “image meaning,” “emotive meaning,” and “action meaning” and the like, which are, so to speak, embodied in the real. Concerning this, please refer to the chapter titled, “The Subsistence of Meaning and Cognitive Formation” in the author’s *Thing, Fact, Word*, published by Keiso Publications.)

However, whether the ideal subsistence is a “code” or “meaning,” when intersubjectively comprehending the “identity” of a given in a for-the-other reflexive or differential distinction, this “comprehension of identity” is treated as corresponding to an object-known of an objective identity. In this sense, it is “something” to the extent that some thing is posited as an object identity, and thus in principle, it is a reification of an intersubjective formation (*Gebilde*).

In principle, upon making for-itself the enigma of the reification of “meaning” and “code,” specific academic analyses and studies must be made, for example, about the concrete aspects of sign activity that subjects perform while being based on the reificational illusion, about the signification of which they are aware (in this context, following a code while performing creative syntactic sign use), and about the understanding of the other in the manner that they posit.

While people understand that a received sign is symbolically combined with “meaning” in a code-following manner, the “sign-meaning” formation is attributed to a speaker, the content of a gesture of the speaker is decoded in a code-following manner, and in actual sign activity, the “signifier-signified” relation, the “expression-understanding” relation, and the “rule-following” relation are all clearly unified. Furthermore, in my view, signification is supported by a “nested” structural formation of “reference,” “predication,” “expression,” and “elicitation.” Specific studies are necessary that analyze this entire structure according to the mutual reflexion and mutual mediation of each of these moments; in particular, the manner of the sign use that is performed according to the performative context while following the code rules. However, these issues cannot be handled here due to the limitations on the length of this paper and will be dealt with in separate publications.

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