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HISTORICAL THINKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE ASSUMPTIONS OF HISTORICAL SEMIOTICS. (IN THE MARGIN OF BORIS USPENSKIJ'S *EGO LOQUENS*)

Abstract

I assumed so far that the notion of historical thinking was a worthy and handy “sponsor” of meta-historical enquiry. Therefore, I left both thinking and, in particular, historical thinking without even a quasi-definition. In this paper I make an attempt to operationalize the notion of historical thinking using historical semiotics (semiotics of culture), a domain of humanities developed by the founding fathers of the Tartu–Moscow Semiotic School, Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspenskij. The association of cognition and communication not only enriches the study of language but also culture and historiography. Bearing in mind the meta-historical contexts I found interesting, I significantly reorganized the lecture contents found in Uspenskij’s *Ego Loquens*. This interpretation took the form of annotated diagrams, which represent and interpret key categories of Uspenskij’s philosophy resultant from the semiotic concept of language and culture. Underlying it, there is the act of communication as both the act of anthropogenesis and the genesis of the subject of cognition. We point out the qualities of historical thinking which already flow from the qualities of thinking tout court. Along the way we introduce the problem of the status of the so-called objective and virtual reality, typical of the philosophical aspects of historical semiotics and crucial for potential meta-historical analyses.

Key words: historical semiotics, historical thinking, deictic centre of communication space, autocommunication, meta-historical categories, Boris Uspenskij

The category of *historical thinking* used to be a handy and worthy binding factor for my speculations on historiography. I regarded it so far as general enough to lie beyond mundane dispute and widespread enough not to require further explanation. I adopted this notion as a suitable “sponsor” of my meta-historical inquiry. Thus, while I left both thinking and, in particular, historical thinking

without even a quasi-definition, I made an effort to harmonize it with other meta-categories.¹

Recently I have been making attempts to clearly place historical thinking within the present-day humanist discourse in order to further benefit the reflection on historical sciences. The below analyses indicate the sense it can be given within historical semiotics (semiotics of culture), the domain of humanities primarily developed by the founding fathers of the Tartu–Moscow School, Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspenskij. It attests to the trend in present-day humanities which, by associating cognition with communication, enriches not just the study of language but of culture as well. Uspenskij's exposition of this approach seems alluring enough to subject it to interpretation. Bearing in mind the meta-historical contexts I found interesting, I reorganized the lecture contents found in *Ego Loquens*.² This procedure took the form of annotated diagrams, which represent key categories of Uspenskij's philosophy resultant from the semiotic concept of speech and language. Underlying the Russian scholar's philosophy, we find the act of communication as both the act of anthropogenesis and the genesis of the subject of cognition.

My other aim is to imagine how a community worldview comes to be, or rather how we might reconstruct and compare the views of the world and man. I present a possibility for building a network of categories, essentially used for other purposes here in *Ego Loquens*, which might serve to compare the basic components of the views of the world and man. It will be crucial to address the question of what an imagination of the so-called culturally objective world may comprise. In Uspenskij's *Ego Loquens*, this world originates in deictic space. We shall not only try to characterize it but also attempt to make non-contingent conjectures about anthropogenesis and the genesis of historical thinking.³

¹ The theses presented further in the paper either were justified by or ensue as results from the findings put forth in my earlier works, particularly in: Wojciech Wrzosek, *O myśleniu historycznym* [On historical thinking] (Bydgoszcz: Oficyna Wydawnicza Epigram, 2009) and Wojciech Wrzosek, *Historia – Kultura – Metafora. Powstanie nieklasycznej historiografii* (Wrocław: Fundacja na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej Leopoldinum, 1995), 2nd ed. WNUWr, 2010; Wojciech Wrzosek, *History – Culture – Metaphor. The Facets of Non-Classical Historiography*, transl. Przemysław Znaniecki (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1997); Wojciech Wrzosek, *Kul'tura i istoricheskaya istina* [Культура и историческая истина; Culture and historical truth], transl. Konstantin Yu. Erusalimskiy (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Krug, 2012), 334 ((2nd ed., amended and supplemented, N. Novgorod: Mininskiy universitet, Flinta, 2009), 456).

² Boris Andreevich Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens. Jazyk i kommunikacionnoe prostranstvo* [Ego Loquens. Язык и коммуникационное пространство; Ego Loquens. Language and communication space] (Moscow: Rossijsk. Gos. Gumanit. un-t, 2007); Boris Andreevich Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens. Jazyk i komunikacionnoe prostranstvo*, 2nd ed. Amended and supplemented (Moscow: RGGU, Institut vysshikh gumanitarnykh issledovanij im. E. M. Meletinskogo, 2012); all quotations from this work are based on the 2nd edition in my own translation — W.W.

³ It is a fundamental task: to show which categories organize the historical variants of the view of the world and man would mean to indicate how to reconstruct them and how to compare them with others, their cultural and historical neighbours. Wojciech Wrzosek, "Tezy o względności historycznej. W poszukiwaniu fundamentów dla pokojowego kulturywania

More than fifty years ago, as a rather young researcher, Boris Uspenskij had the honor to contribute to a volume dedicated to Roman Jakobson.⁴ Referring to the ideas of the world-famous Slavist, he addressed a question which he had tackled a little earlier, also in works belonging to the output of the Tartu–Moscow Semiotic School.⁵ This question was the typologization of languages. It was in the circles of Moscow scholars—owing somewhat to the contacts of his older brother, a well-known mathematician—that the competency of the younger Uspenskij as a linguist took form.⁶ The problems of machine translation⁷ were the topics of the first publications by the 21-year-old adept of science.⁸

niewspółmiernych obrazów przeszłości” [Theses on historical relativity: In search of its foundations for peacefully cultivating incommensurable images of the past], *Nauka Polska. Jej Potrzeby Organizacja i Rozwój* 25 (50) (2016): 25–35.

⁴ Boris Andreevich Uspenskij, “Problemy lingvisticzeskoj tipologii v aspekte razlichenija «govoryashchego» (adresanta) i «slushajushchego» (adresata)” [Успенский Б. А., Проблемы лингвистической типологии в аспекте различения «говорящего» (адресанта) и «слушающего» (адресата); Problems of linguistic typology in the aspect of discriminating the «speaker» (addresser) and the «listener» (addressee)], in *To honor Roman Jakobson: Essays on the occasion of his seventieth birthday* (The Hague–Paris: De Gruyter Mouton, 1967), 2087–2108.

⁵ The names given to this world-famous scholarly community by its members include: Tartusko-moskovskaja shkola semiotyki [Tartusko-moskovskaja shkola semiotyki] (B. V. Иванов [V. V. Ivanov]), Tartusko-moskovskoe semioticheskoe dvizhenie [Tartusko-moskovskoje semioticheskoye dvizheniye] (Топоров В. М. [Toporov V. M.]), Tartuskaja shkola [Tartuskaja shkola] (Б. М. Гаспаров [B. M. Gasparov]), Московско-Тартуский семиотический круг [Moskovsko-Tartuskij semioticheskij krug] (А. М. Пятигорский [A. M. Pyatigorsky]), Тартуский семиотический круг [Tartuskij semioticheskij krug] (В. Н. Топоров [V. N. Toporov]), etc.

⁶ Boris Uspenskij’s older brother was Vladimir A. Uspenskij, an eminent mathematician (linguist) and well-known popularizer of mathematics, familiar to the Moscow linguists as the author of the term *secondary modelling systems*, significant for the history of the Tartu School.

⁷ The seminar on structural linguistics was called the “seminar on machine (automatic) translation” («семинаром по машинному переводу» [seminarom po mashinnomu perevodu]), though most participants did not work on machine translation “[...] no mashinnym perevodom kak takovym bol’shinstvo uchastnikov ne zanimalos” [no mashinnym perevodom kak takovym bol’shinstvo uchastnikov ne zanimalos’]. Boris Andreevich Uspenskij, “U menja stojala trojka po istorii KPSS: No v aspiranturu menja vse zhe vzjali” [У меня стояла тройка по истории КПСС. Но в аспирантуру меня все же взяли; I had a top three in the history of the CPSU. But they took me to graduate school], *Istoricheskaja Ekspertiza* 1(18) (2018): 347–359; interview with B.A. Uspenskij.

⁸ Boris Andreevich Uspenskij, “K probleme genezisa tartusko-moskovskoj semioticheskoi shkoly” [К проблеме генезиса тартуско-московской семиотической школы; To the problem of genesis of the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School], in *Yu. M. Lotman i tartusko-moskovskaja semioticheskaja shkola* [Ю.М. Лотман и тартуско-московская семиотическая школа; Yu. M. Lotman and the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School], ed. by Aleksej Dmitrievich Koshelev (Moscow: «Гнозис», 1994), 265–278. Uspenskij and many other co-founders of the School pointed out the Moscow origin, in fact, of the interest in “semiotics”, seeing the root of such interests in the post-Stalinist thaw, which revitalized contacts with

In this text, Boris Uspenskij follows the stream of semiotic reflection which refers to Jakobson's theory of communication as the basis for interpretation of language and speech.⁹

I shall present here selected theses from *Ego Loquens*.¹⁰ In it, I find the interpretation of practising speech and the concept of language as phenomena emerging along linguistic communication. In fact, it is a draft of a metaphysics ensuing from the semiotic understanding of culture. The very fact that this idea combines philosophical theses with the acts of communicating primary to them allows me to consider this approach as semiotic¹¹, and not only for the reasons declared by the Russian philologist.¹²

“bourgeois” thought. So did Vyacheslav Ivanov, legend of the Russian science and one of the spiritus movens of the Tartu School – e.g., Vjacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov, “O Romane Jakobsone. (Glava iz vospominanij)” [О Романе Яковсоне. (Глава из воспоминаний); About Roman Jakobson. (A chapter from memories)], *Звезда* 7 (1999): 139–164, and Vjacheslav Vsevolodovich Ivanov, “Iz sledujushchego veka” [Из следующего века; From the next century], in *Yu. M. Lotman i tartusko-moskovskaja semioticheskaja shkola*, ed. by Aleksej Dmitrievich Koshelev (Moscow: «Гнозис», 1994), 487 – as well as another great scholar, considered one of the School's top five, see Vladimir Todorov, “Vместo vospominanija” [Вместо воспоминания; Instead of a memory], in *Yu. M. Lotman i tartusko-moskovskaja semioticheskaja shkola*, ed. by Aleksej Dmitrievich Koshelev (Moscow: «Гнозис», 1994), 340–343. In Poland, Bogusław Żyłko has been writing about the School for years and translating its masters. A view of the School's foundation and development as an organizational and topical plan can be found in, e.g., Bogusław Żyłko, *Semiotyka kultury. Szkoła tartusko-moskiewska* [Semiotics of culture: The Tartu–Moscow School] (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2009); Bogusław Żyłko, *Kultura i znaki. Semiotyka stosowana w szkole kartusko-moskiewskiej* [Culture and signs: The semiotics used in the Tartu–Moscow School] (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2011); it also cites numerous sources for such considerations. Just recently, Bogusław Żyłko, “Semiotyka historii w pracach szkoły tartusko-moskiewskiej” [Semiotics of history in the works of the Tartu–Moscow School], *Rocznik Antropologii Historii* 1(6) (2014): 19–34; Bogusław Żyłko, “Szkoła tartusko-moskiewska po latach” [The Tartu–Moscow School years later], *Er(r)go* 31 (2015): 65–72; “Jurij Lotman: od poetyki strukturalnej do semiotycznej teorii kultury” [Yurij Lotman: From structural poetics to the semiotic theory of culture], *Konteksty. Polska Sztuka Ludowa* 3–4 (314–315) (2016): 143–147; Karolina Polasik-Wrzosek, “Próba elementarnej fenomenologii Aleksandra Pjatigorskiego. Filozof o ewolucji szkoły tartusko-moskiewskiej” [Attempt at Aleksandr Pjatigorski's elementary phenomenology: Philosopher on the evolution of the Tartu–Moscow School], *Rocznik Antropologii Historii* 1 (6) (2014): 35–40.

⁹ Roman Jakobson, “Linguistics and communication theory,” in *Structure of language and its mathematical aspects*, ed. by Roman Jakobson (Providence: American Mathematical Society, 1961), series: Proceedings of Symposia in Applied Mathematics 12.

¹⁰ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 7.

¹¹ This is what Uspenskij wrote in the foreword to the *Ego Loquens*: “[...] unlike other scholars, who approach language from the philosophical point of view, the author”—as Uspenskij refers to himself in the 3rd person—“strives to present philosophical problems from a linguistic perspective.” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 7. Own translations are used unless there is a published Polish version.

¹² In Russian literature, when discussing Uspenskij (or, indeed, Yuri Lotman, Vyacheslav Ivanov, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin...), philologist is used as the term of professional allegiance. In Polish, this term seems far too modest to match the competence and scope of works of these eminent scholars. A philologist in Poland means little more than a graduate of

ORIGIN AND STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATIVE SPACE

Language and communicating in Uspenskij—as further analysis shall reveal—stand at the brink of being human. They are a kind of anthropogenesis. Both of these processes, regardless of the order of appearance in *Ego Loquens*, remain mutually entangled, so that it is not possible to judge whether language or communicating is primary, or if either of these processes is earlier and has a greater impact on the other.¹³

The author of *Ego Loquens* puts language at the front of his thoughts from the very beginning. It is language that opens the circular reasoning about the key categories of his analysis. One might begin with language because *Ego Loquens* is devoted to *language in communicative space* (Язык и коммуникационное пространство <jazyk i kommunikatsionnoye prostranstvo>). Language is the “title character” of the monograph.¹⁴ Let us restate that none of the terms “axiomatic” for Uspenskij’s concept can be distinguished—at a glance—as primary.

This is the circle of Uspenskij’s “axiomatic” terms.

What are these terms? Three lie at the forefront: language, communication, exchange of information. “Language is a communication tool, necessary for the exchange of information.”¹⁵ Thus, one could say on Uspenskij’s behalf, that the goal of communication is the exchange of information. In turn, the tool used to attain this goal is language. This is the way in which these three were coordinated. While two of them, communication and language, serve a purpose, the exchange of information is not subjected by Uspenskij to any higher purpose, does not remain related to any other sensible quality lying beyond Uspenskij’s circle.¹⁶ He evidently considers this declaration as a set of obvious truths,

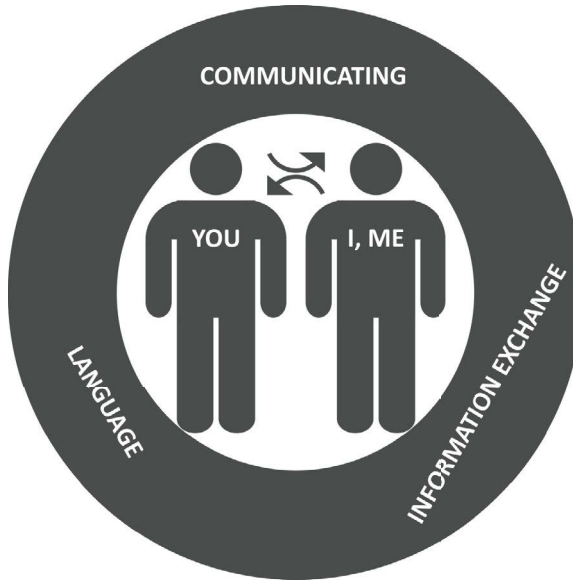
some branch of philology. Whereas in the Russian tradition it is much more, namely, if I may, a multidisciplinary student of language, literature, culture.

¹³ The terms used here critically decree the nature of the world emerging from communication in a spirit familiar to us; in the terminology we are used to, shaped in modern times. It can be no other way. What we essentially mean, however, when we reconstruct Uspenskij’s position, can be communicated without giving up a modest hope of understanding his semiotic view of culture.

¹⁴ Already in the first footnote (still, only in a footnote) Uspenskij reports that “further on, while speaking about the functioning of language, we shall take into account primarily speech” (Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 54). “Therefore the world, like the Cosmos according to the Upanishads, begins with communication (autocommunication in this case): it begins with speech, i.e., with a semiotic activity. The world appears as a personality who creates a semiotic description of its own existence...” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 43–44. In general, this work is a presentation of the wealth of incarnations of language. It abounds with multidisciplinary analyses of the presence of language in culture.

¹⁵ It is the first sentence of the book.

¹⁶ The pursuit of community life required—perhaps—coordinating activities through the exchange of information: for instance, “negotiating individual experiences” (including subjective perceptions) which make supra-individual community activities possible. Such a conjecture might supplement Uspenskij’s take in lieu of adopting the minimalist proposition that the purpose of communication is the exchange of information.



axiomatic theses, which may be commented on by the multitude of analyses found in *Ego Loquens*.

Communication is inconceivable without language, language without the act of speech. Such classics of the topic as Ferdinand de Saussure and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are here to help our analyses and give them a good start, explaining the initial enigmaticness of the author of *Ego Loquens* in the words of Roland Barthes:

To sum, a language is at the same time the product and the instrument of speech: their relationship is therefore a genuinely dialectical one. It will be noticed (an important fact when we come to semiological prospects) that there could not possibly be (at least according to Saussure) a linguistics of *speech*, since any speech, as soon as it is grasped as a process of communication, is already part of the language: the latter only can be the object of a science. [...] it is useless to wonder whether speech must be studied before the language: the opposite is impossible: one can only study speech straight away inasmuch as it reflects the language (inasmuch as it is ‘glottic’) [emphasis mine—W.W.]¹⁷

In this element, therefore, our diagram honours the tradition. The phenomena it represents remain locked together in a dialectic grip, mysterious in part. We can thus leave the case unsettled. So did Uspenskij. Staying in the framework of his concept, one might suggest ways to leave this vicious circle. To begin with, a sketch of an answer to the question of the nature of this peculiar dialectic circle.

¹⁷ Roland Barthes, *Elements of semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 16. It is the famous pair of langue/parole (language/speech) and, similarly to Uspenskij’s communicating/language (speech/language) take, the scholars reach for a peculiar alibi: they make the “genuine dialectics” responsible for the lack of resolution.

The above mentioned three are supported by the *socium*. Uspenskij recalls it for us.¹⁸ We understand then that this term is synonymous with the communication community. On the other hand, language is a social phenomenon, as it is a community construct, a social institution, as Durkheim (collective consciousness) and de Saussure (speaking mass, *masse parlante*) posit. We shall soon see Uspenskij shares this qualification of the classics. These elements are joined by *communicating* as a supra-individual act and the *exchange of information* as an interpersonal technique. Intersubjective relations are, as we shall see, supra-individual phenomena. They are coordinated with the *socium*, the language group, the communication community in which and through which the exchange of information takes place. Then the *socium*—as Uspenskij suggests—arises through the establishment of semiotic (linguistic) communication. The *socium* arises in the deictic space initiated—according to the author of *Ego Loquens*—around the deictic centre of “I, me”.

So, before we suggest an answer to the question of the reason of the exchange of information, for which the communication with language should occur, let us reconstruct the—complex, it turns out—idea of “I”. We shall collate the components, scattered as a result of the narrative strategy adopted by Uspenskij, into several diagrams showing the communicative space, which actually turns out to be a semiotic space.¹⁹

THE DEICTIC CENTRE OF COMMUNICATION SPACE

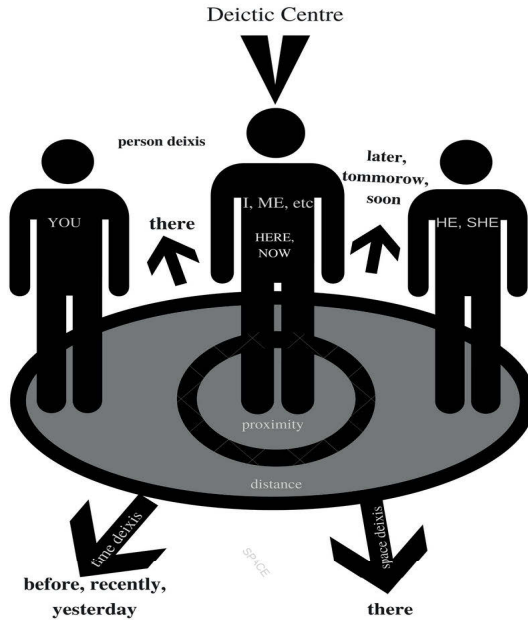
Let us have a look at the diagram below. It contains the concretizations, essential for the semiotic space, which illustrate how the dialectic circle (language, communication, and the exchange of information) is realized. The speaking subject (communicator) “I” constitutes the centre of the deictic space.

The “I” communicator is accompanied by the “you” addressee, without whom communicating is impossible. Uspenskij stresses that separate “I” and “you” communicators are inconceivable, since they co-constitute their meanings as participants of communicating. There is a “You” only when there is an “I”; “You”, for the potential ability to become “I” during communicating, is as yet exactly “You”. “I” presumes the existence of “You” as the addressee of its act of speech, without which it just does not exist as an “I”.²⁰ At the same time “I” normally takes into account, seemingly by reflex, that “You” can play the role of “I”, and then he—the current “I”—will be put in the role of “You”. It can also

¹⁸ Already in the first paragraph of the first chapter of *Ego Loquens* he assumes that the *socium* is the very subject which “disposes of the community meanings of signs.” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 9.

¹⁹ The presented diagrams are the result of extracting from categories differently ordered by the author. I encourage you to follow them, because this paper is to a large extent a commentary on these diagrams.

²⁰ We will tackle the issue if according to the Russian scholar, man is consistently homo semioticus.



witness playing the “He/She/It” role in the act of speech of a “new I”. The third-person pronouns “He/She/It” represent potential participants of communicating. In the further course of communicating, since the role of “I” has been adopted by the original “You”, they can play the role of “You” for it, when the current “You” speaks to them. These pronouns can, as “third-person”, occasionally be only or also the subject (topic) of the dialogue of “I” and “You”.²¹ It is

²¹ Uspenskij shows persuasively how the deictic expressions which are not personal pronouns, such as “here”, “there” etc., occasionally organize a speech situation together with verbs, which—for the purpose of the given situation—specify the communication space established by the dialoguing parties. Similarly in Émile Benveniste: “C’est dans et par le langage que l’homme se constitue comme *sujet*; parce que le langage seul fonde en réalité, dans *sa* réalité qui est celle de l’être, le concept d’*«ego»*. La «subjectivité» dont nous traitons ici est la capacité du locuteur à se poser comme «sujet». Elle se définit, non par le sentiment que chacun éprouve d’être lui-même (ce sentiment, dans la mesure où l’on peut en faire état, n’est qu’un reflet), mais comme l’unité psychique qui transcende la totalité des expériences vécues qu’elle assemble, et qui assure la permanence de la conscience. Or nous tenons que cette «subjectivité», qu’on la pose en phénoménologie ou en psychologie, comme on voudra, n’est qu’une émergence dans l’être d’une propriété fondamentale du langage. Est «ego» qui *dit «ego»*. Nous trouvons là le fondement de la «subjectivité», qui se détermine par le statut linguistique de la «personne», (Émile Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 259–260); “« Être » et « savoir » dans leurs fonctions linguistiques” (p. 187–207); “Structure des relations de personne dans le verbe” (p. 225–236); “La nature des pronoms” (p. 251–257); “De la subjectivité dans le langage” (p. 258–266); after Janusz Lalewicz, “Filozoficzne problemy językowej artykulacji podmiotowości” [Philosophical problems of linguistic articulation of subjectivity], *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli społecznej* 22 (1976): 296. Uspenskij refers to the French linguist’s findings in his *Ego Loquens*.

easy to imagine what happens to the communicating space with the growing number of participants. The roles taken up by subsequent community members migrate. The components of community experience and the common language—as we shall demonstrate below—propagate.

The “instinctive”—one is allowed to think—mutable roles of communication process participants attest to the nature of the act of communication as a community act. We may suppose so just because at least three parties, mutually entangled in the speaker/listener game, can be observed in this act. Proceeding with the game, which Uspenskij normally permits, allows a presumption that it may lead to the foundation of supra-individual bonds. The sign that the author of the discussed concept thought so is the subsequent collection of the conditions making up the minimum needed for communicating to come into being and persist. This thinking assumes, among others, that the participants are co-present in a specific communicative space. Even more so, they are in a peculiar space-time. It is worth considering whether or not the emergence of spatiality and temporality in the communicative space is a result of the inclusion of the potential third interlocutors into the dialogue of “I” and “You”. For, should one consider that “He/She/It” would be—in the minds of the dialoguing “I” and “You”—potential participants in the communication, absent from the current space, they would be taken into account as speaking in the future.²²

Such a possibility assumed by Uspenskij justifies a momentous circumstance: that not just spatiality is a primary component of communicating, but temporality as well. Communicating founds—apparently—the temporal and spatial coordinates of the act of communication and, consequently, the communication community. It is easy to see that a kind of a *socium chronotope* would be, or is, derived from the phenomenon of communicating. The above interpretation of Uspenskij’s concept shows that, at least for him, communicating would be the original condition for the establishment of the *socium*. The very communication range would determine the range of common language and, more importantly, community experience. The above diagram illustrates such a situation, where the communication space and time are present in the act of dialogue.

THE SUBJECTIVE (SUBJECT) EXPERIENCE

We shall make the network of Uspenskij’s categories more complex by introducing another diagram, in which we find the *subjective experience* (субъективный опыт, <sub>”ektivnyj opyt>). The subjective experience presented in *Ego Loquens* can be understood in ways other than we did using the contexts of meaning produced above. We can understand the subjective experience as the

²² Karolina Polasik-Wrzosek, Wojciech Wrzosek, “W poszukiwaniu czasu historycznego: Od metamorfozy magicznej do metafory genezy” [In search of historical time: From magical metamorphosis to metaphor of origin], in *Między nauką a sztuką. Wokół problemów współczesnej historiografii*, ed. by Ewa Solska, Piotr Witek and Marek Woźniak (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2017), 37–56.

subject experience or the experience of a subject. It is the other aspect of this category's meaning, the experience vested in the speaking subject, the communicator, as well as in the listener, the addressee of the message: the subjects of the communicating/dialogue. In turn, *индивидуальный опыт* <individual'nyu opyt> (individual experience) indicates an opposite meaning to *общий опыт* <obshchiy opyt>, which I translate as the *community experience*, a product of the experiences of individuals subjected to generalizing and abstracting.²³ Finally, I consider *личный опыт* <lichnyu opyt>, literally *personal experience*, as indicating the circumstance that everyone has their own experience. It seems, however, that Uspenskij usually means personal experience, subjective as opposed to the “objective”, community one. Irrespective of the polysemanticity of the analysed category of subjective experience, it should be recognized as crucial for his understanding of both the communicative space and its accompanying metaphysics, i.e. its justifying or accompanying philosophy.

Let us note once again that—as our author suggests—the set of philosophical assumptions which actually support his understanding of the world flows from his semiotic theory of linguistic communication. Thus we are seeking the philosophical presumptions in support of the adopted solutions within the communicative space constructed by the Russian linguist.

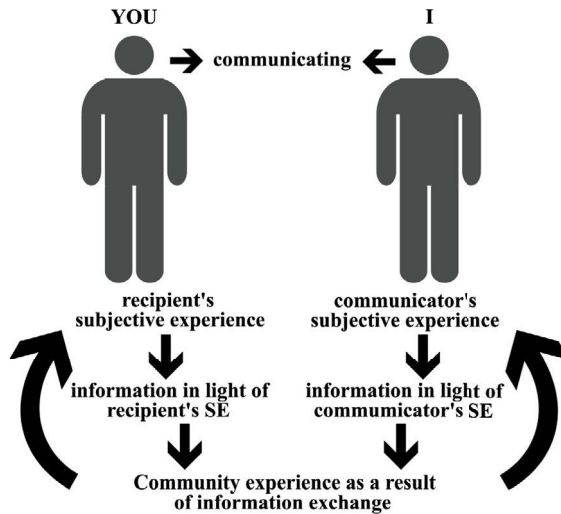
Uspenskij assumes that the foundation of communicating is the exchanging of the content of subjective experiences: “I” and “You”. They contain to some extent an individual subjective experience, yet are already framed in the categories of community experience. Subjective experience contains a subset (a kind of concretization) of community experience, and it is probably the latter which imprints itself in the way “subjective” contents are organized. It can be assumed that subjective experience is structurally moulded by the “grammar” of community experience. Without these portions of subjective experience which have been communitarized, intersubjective communication would be impossible.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Communicating is, therefore, according to the Russian semiotician, mobilizing the resources of subjective experience in the framework of respecting the “grammar” community experience in a language which accounts for the “common

²³ It might be convenient to think here that, on the way towards community experience, subjective individual experiences also undergo other treatments than just the above-mentioned logical and methodological ones. The question arises if it is not understood in an excessively idealized way. Whether it is not also internally contradictory—and so are subjective experiences too. Performing generalizations and abstractions on inconsistent stores of convictions (subjective experiences) would lead to an inconsistent community experience. Is such a result not prevented by the constraints of (linguistic) communication? Does not the rigour of “logical” communication flow from the natural language as a communicative tool? Just because it is practised for the purpose of efficient exchange of information?

Communication as Information Exchange



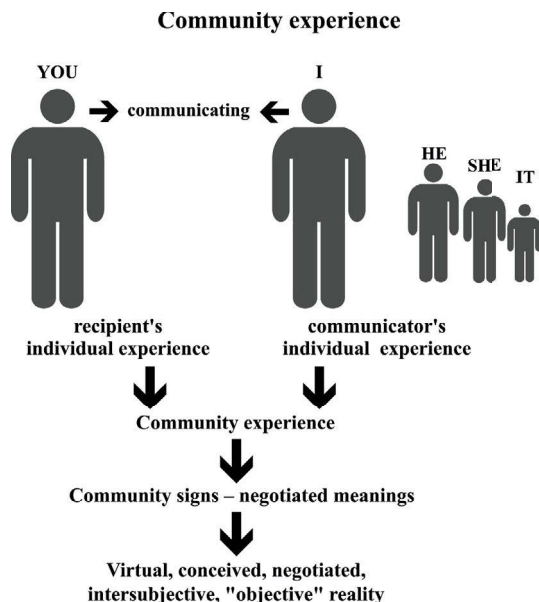
exchange of information as consolidation and modification of :
 (1) individual and community experience,
 (2) community language, (3) virtual reality

language” grammar. The negotiation of subjective experiences occurs during communicating, carried out by using the “individual” languages of the “I” communicator and “You” recipient, which are variants of the community language.²⁴ This subjectivity of experience and the procedure of exchanging it with an interlocutor (interlocutors) changes the resources of community experience and community language.²⁵ The context of community experience limits the dimensions of the “creativity of dialoguing parties” for the sake of the “inter-subjective communicability” of dialogue. Simultaneously due to, yet already during, the act of communicating between “I” and “You”, their own subjective experiences are modified.

As a result, the act of communicating somewhat spontaneously comprises exchanging information, i.e., exchanging the data contained in the parties’ subjective experiences. Yet only those which do not radically depart from the

²⁴ It is appropriate to note that, in this context, language is understood as a peculiar sign-based reality, used in a way analogous to natural language. In similar contexts of meaning, Uspenskij reminds his readers that he uses the notion of language in a broad sense by adding “semiotic”.

²⁵ This solution introduces change to the very core of the act of communication. A dialogue between parties which assumes the switching of roles between the speaker and the listener, with various dimensions of communication being so related, results in adding variability to its various dimensions. Language understood this way, not as a system of signals, but as a system of signs—language as something more than just natural language—becomes not only a “tool” in cultural communication, but a source of cultural change. It mobilizes the history of culture.



categories of community experience,²⁶ those which are intersubjectively communicable.

By coordinating their individual experiences—Uspenskij says—speakers produce/use signs (words), which relate to the common experience of the communication community. This way—namely by referring to a common experience—the aforementioned linguistic signs represent the result of generalizing and abstracting performed on the experience of various individuals. It is how meanings common to a given socium are formed. Meanings in turn are understood as something intermediate between signs and denotates. They allow signs to remain in a mutual context, which context then allows them to consider the world of meaning of the given community as mutually related. This way, Uspenskij claims, the entirety of those meanings builds a virtual reality, which is confined to itself and sufficient for the given—communication—community, which is able to communicate within the complex of meanings without using denotates. It is self-sufficient in this respect.²⁷

²⁶ If, however, just one of the parties articulates its individual experience “creatively/innovatively” enough to depart from the community experience (including perceptive, associative and interpretive community experience), the intersubjective communication may be broken (the subject, individual articulation of the “world” between the interlocutors may stop).

²⁷ Such a decision with regard to the status of virtual reality makes it possible to retain at least some of the analyses of language (or culture) at the level of syntax. This kind of approach is typical of semiotics derived from Peirce. The question arising is to what extent such an approach to language and virtual reality can survive without denotates/referents. I presume that staying at the level of syntax—as Roman Jakobson would prefer—became the foundation of the difference between the philologist and the Tartu–Moscow School which,

Consequently, virtual reality is a reference point for individual experience, whereas at the same time individual takes on reality are confronted and coordinated with this community reality.

Even though we are still far from having a full picture of how Uspenskij thought about the world, including the historical world, we can infer just from his declaration regarding communicative space that it is semiotic, since virtual reality and language are of semiotic nature. To determine that the virtual reality which takes part in communicating as its necessary reference horizon is available to us as semiotic and linguistic, is to opt strongly for the semioticity of the world.

The semioticity of the human world, according to the Russian scholar, is there at its origin. For the acts of speech and process of communicating are semiotic. Particularly when the communicating is born from shared meanings, which are the foundation and condition of communication. None of its components are primary or first. It is not possible to show the state of affairs preceding the speech situation described by Uspenskij. Uspenskij's communication space is existing and being fulfilled.²⁸

Yet the specific difficulty—let us repeat—is the initially least characterized stipulation of this system, namely the assumption of information exchange. We do not find in Uspenskij the answer to the question of why information exchange became a historical necessity: he puts us in a position where it is already taking place.²⁹

Still, we will try to find room for it in the communicative space. We ask therefore how information exchange begins. And by doing so, we most likely ask how the coordination of individual experience is initiated, how the elements of virtual reality are established, how the act of speech is initiated as communication, how the semiotic reality is constituted.

Let us organize Uspenskij's "axioms", bearing in mind we are also seeking a hierarchy in them. They are divided into two types, the first set of which are "implicit axioms": the categories used in commentaries to basic assumptions that combine into explicitly formulated theses establishing the considerations of language as communicative space. We acknowledge that subjective experience is a philosophically crucial category of Uspenskij's communicative space. It and the concept of "I" hide the vulnerabilities of our author's metaphysics.

Uspenskij called the subjective experience (*субъективный опыт*, <sub>"ективныj опыт">) a subjective perception of reality (*субъективная percepция*

thanks to their daring addition of broadly understood culture to classical semiotics, became—as in Lotman and Uspenskij—cultural (historical) semiotics.

²⁸ The failure to answer even the question why the exchange of information is essential, why communicating becomes a historical necessity, leads us to suspect that the semiotic approach to human (cultural) phenomena is doomed to commit the sin of structuralism, i.e., ahistoricity/synchronicity(?). We are not claiming yet that the concept of language and culture leans towards universalist takes. Still—

²⁹ To assume that information exchange is the purpose of communication is, it seems, to adopt an overly modernizing interpretation. Information exchange can be considered as a side effect of communicating; a result of negotiating community experience.

действительности, <sub>”ektivnaja percepcija dejstvitel’nosti>). Thanks to using this term as at least equivalent in meaning to subjective experience, we can examine another important issue from within the metaphysics of the author of *Ego Loquens*. It allows us to make at least two interpretative steps, which involve the questions of which reality is concerned when discussing its perception. Probably not the virtual realness—we presume—as the “reception” (e.g., апперцепция/самовосприятие, <appercepcija/samovosprijatie>) of the virtual reality/realness by the communicating subject would be the better term.

We assume it may be the contact of the communicating subject, like “I”, with the noumenal reality, understood traditionally, as the objective reality (without quotation marks).³⁰

“Our knowledge of the surrounding reality and ourselves is mediated by the signs we use during communication; in other words, our knowledge of the world is mediated by the signs we use to describe the world.”³¹

To support the thesis saying that the world itself exists, our author cites the theses of Buddhist philosopher Dignāga, Werner Heisenberg, and Clifford Geertz when, among other times, he argues that, being semiotic, this virtual reality allows us to consider it only as a representation of the noumenal one, the reality as it is, which we can at best postulate.³² Thus the objective reality exists but is obscured by signs and represented in our world of communicating by just the postulated reality, which is a component of community experience.

This resolution is highly restrictive and exposes Boris Uspenskij the semiotician to questions concerning the status of subjective experience. If it is meant to be a form of contact of the subject with the extralinguistic (so-called objective) reality, through an act of sensory perception, what is the status of the form? What is the status of senses and what are their relations to the objective reality (independent of any consciousness) and the reality of thought of individual experience?

We ask Uspenskij if the participants of the act of speech, act of communication through language maintain contact with the extralinguistic reality. We ask if and how it exists, and if so, what are the relations with it. We shall answer these questions using two perspectives. The first perspective is the problem of perception and apperception.

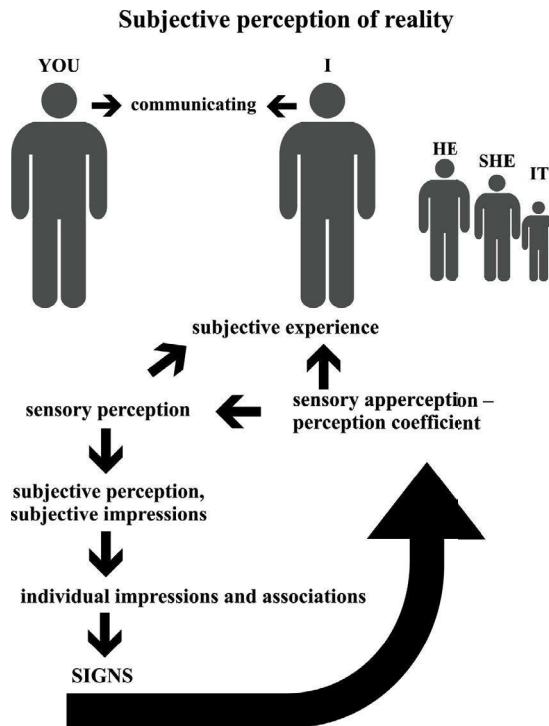
³⁰ Following Uspenskij, we described the virtual reality found in the diagram found above as “objective”, among other things, putting this epithet between quotation marks. “Objectivity” might reflect the agreement (hence the adjective negotiated) of the community—probably the usual silent agreement obtained through a compromise (another epithet of Uspenskij) reached by the virtue of community dialogue—on a conceived realness. Here, “objective realness” would be a counterpart to “subjective realness”, which follows from how Uspenskij understood the composition of subjective experience. Therefore, the individual experience of the communicator, and his addressee as well, certainly includes a representation of the objective reality, which is a “personal” variant of the image of the “objective” (virtual) reality “negotiated” by the community.

³¹ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 9–10.

³² Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 54.

Let us restate that we mean reality without quotation marks this time. We find it in a number of contexts in which Uspenskij cannot escape revealing his understanding of it.³³ On top of that, by building an ornate picture of communicative space he shows that it is not unanchored in the non-semiotic world and, moreover, that such a world exists.

In what contact with objective reality, therefore, are the members of the communication community? We already know they are immersed in the “objective” reality postulated by the negotiated model of the world. However, do they remain in direct contact with objective reality, without the mediation of signs? To answer this question one has to untangle one of the components of subjective experience most suspected of direct contact with the “world”, namely sensory perception and apperception.

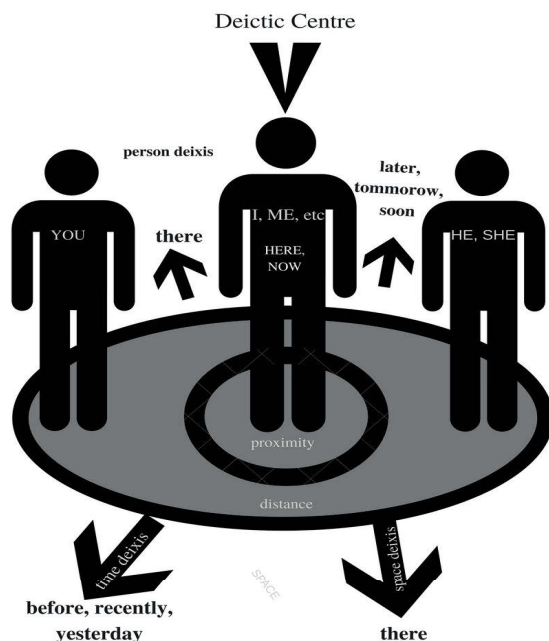


³³ Объективная реальность (сущесvующая независимо от индивидуального опыта) [ob’yektivnaya real’nost’ (sushchesvuyushchaya nezavisimo ot individual’nogo opyta)] (p. 40–41); действительность актуальна, мыслимая, реальная [deystvitel’nost’ aktual’na, myslimaya, real’naya] (p. 111–112); ноуменальная действительность [noumenal’naya deystvitel’nost’] (p. 10); объективная ноуменальная действительность [ob’yektivnaya noumenal’naya deystvitel’nost’] (p. 10); объективная, ноуменальная реальность (т.е. действительностью сущесvующей независимо от нас, нам внеположной, которую мы можем только постулировать) [ob’yektivnaya, noumenal’naya real’nost’ (t.e. deystvitel’nost’yu sushchestvuyushchey nezavisimo ot nas, nam vnepolozhnoy, kotoruyu my mozhem tol’ko postulirovat’)]; Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 10, 3–5, 54–55.

The silent axioms are *subjective impressions* (субъективные впечатления <sub”yektivnyye vpechatleniya>), *self-awareness*, *apperception* (апперцепция/самовосприятие <appertsepsiya/samovospriyatiye>), *reflection* (рефлексия <refleksiya>), *subjective sensations* (субъективные ощущения <sub”yektivnyye oshchushcheniya>) and, above all, *thinking* (the process of thinking). These terms are used to comment on other terms, even despite their unspecified meanings. Even more so, they receive a possible explication in the context of categories forming the set of basic concepts.

COMMUNICO ERGO SUM.

Uspenskij handles this essential issue for us by asking the question how deictic expressions establish the so-called objective realness. How, to be more exact, a special case of such expressions, personal pronouns with the “I” pronoun at the fore, lay the foundation of the communal sense of objective realness. We shall illustrate our presentation of Uspenskij’s reasoning with an already known diagram. Our further findings are de facto comments on it.



To show the role of occasional expressions in affirming the existence of subjectivity, the Russian scholar starts by outlining the role of personal pronouns in this historically pivotal act. He begins his reasoning by indicating the point in time when communication, an exchange of information between Communicator

A and Communicator B, takes place. For this to happen, it is necessary to fulfil the following known conditions. The individual experience of the world by both parties of the dialogue must converge, at least enough for the communal experience, which is the basis for the act of speech, to arise.

The use of the personal pronoun “I”, say, by Communicator A, is crucial for the communicating process. The personal and deictic pronoun “I” conveys—according to the Russian linguist—an absolute egocentric realness of the speaking subject. Here—through the pronoun “I”—objective reality is expressed in an unceremonious and direct way. The awareness of “I” is both the awareness of thinking “I” (at least about oneself) and—as Uspenskij claims—about one’s objective existence.

“What is ‘I’”, asks Uspenskij, and replies:

beyond the act of speech (i.e., the process of communicating) there is no object (denotate) which can be defined as “I”. “I” denotes the speaker: “I” is the one who speaks, i.e., the one who describes oneself in this exact way: it is the one who begets or is able to formulate text containing this particular personal pronoun. Therefore, the personal pronoun “I” denotes the one who says “I” (who defines oneself as “I” in the act of speech).³⁴

Before we get to the point, two more passages from *Ego Loquens*, which augment the commentary on the diagram: “The existential status of the persons who can be designated as “I” and “you” in dialogic speech is considered identical: indeed, under usual circumstances, they are in the same situation, share the same spatial and temporal coordinates defined by the very act of communication.”³⁵

And further,

The speaker is unconditionally convinced that he exists. If he talks to someone who answers him, his interlocutor is assigned the same existential status: it is presumed that they are both in the same chronotope (space and time). We can address God, as well as a mortal or our ancestors using the personal pronoun ‘you’. Even though we may not expect a reply, we have a supposition that, in the case of a reply (e.g., in a dream or a vision) it may be expressed using the first person (using the personal pronoun “I”).³⁶

Looking at the diagram, let us notice, as does our author, that:

[...] personal pronouns “I” and “You” acquire the same existential status (belonging to the same situation, and thus, owing to the obvious existence of “I”, to one and the same reality). Similarly the pronouns “You” and “He” (“She”, “It”), if the third person pronoun refers to

³⁴ “This definition,” our author argues, “looks like a vicious circle, yet this kind of closed circle is inevitable, because this personal pronoun is the starting point—the point of reference—to build a virtual realness (indispensable in the process of communicating).” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 14.

³⁵ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 32.

³⁶ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 32.

a human, assume an identical existential status: the status of a potential participant of communication; in this case the possibility of belonging to the same situation is assumed.³⁷

The formulation of a shared objective reality, such as presented by Boris Uspenskij, is a situation in which the communication community and supra-subjective reality arise simultaneously. One without the other is—in this approach—inconceivable. Neither of these states precedes the other; they determine each other instead. Therefore, on the one hand, it would not be possible to initiate and continue the dialogue, the process of communicating, without a minimum of common social experience, while, on the other, this common experience does not occur without communicating. Thus the role of “I”, i.e., the act of speech which consumes the already established/being established communication community becomes crucial.

Let us observe that, for Uspenskij, time (and space) lie in the background of his considerations; the communicative space-time, however, the peculiar *chronotope*, as he says following Bachtin, co-establishes the objective realness. This virtual communicative reality needs to include a specific spatio-temporal order for the exchangeable “I” and “You” as well as for “He” (“She”, “It”), which can be non-personal objects. “I” expands the scope of objective reality with “He”, “She” etc. founding the subject/object relation, while the latter deictically indicated objects can remain outside of time and space for the current “I” and “You”.

To quote the scholar,

This is why we can speak about the existence of what now is not: assume that, between me and an Egyptian pharaoh who, I suppose, existed thousands of years ago, there is a sequence of people who could communicate their perceptions with one another. Similarly we can speak about the existence of the world in which humans have not yet existed, while allowing that, had they been there, they could watch that about which we speak.³⁸

Let us note that the deictic diagram simultaneously shows the foundation of temporality and spatiality. Time and space, like the other components of objective realness, have the status of virtual reality here. They are a construct

³⁷ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 34. The measure taken in Stanisław Leśniewski’s ontology seems similarly primitive: a definitional starting point, like an axiom. Only the development by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, founding the meaning of empirical, elementary sentences about existence, was a move towards empirical theses. Stanisław Leśniewski, “Über die Grundlagen der Ontologie,” *Comptes rendus des Séances de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Varsovie, Classe III* 23 (1930): 111–132; Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, “On the Notion of Existence,” *Studia Philosophica* 4 (1949/50; 1951): 7–22; Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz, “W sprawie pojęcia istnienia. Kilka uwag w związku z zagadnieniem idealizmu” [On the notion of existence: Several remarks related to the question of idealism], in *Język i Poznanie, II, wybór pism z lat 1945–1963* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985), 143–154.

³⁸ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 35; here we find an intriguing thread in Uspenskij’s reflection on the past and history, to which we shall return at the right time.

implicitly present in the acts of speech, and thus in the language in which the act of communicating takes place.

We end with the conclusion of this concept of the Russian semiotician of culture.

In the process of linguistic communication, an idea about a common realness is formed, which is objective, rather than subjective, to the extent it connects different speakers. Thus the communication process turns out to be the starting point—a milestone, one could say—in the emergence of an image of objective realness, which exists independently of individual experience (is external to individual consciousness).³⁹

This passage is decisive for the shape of the objective reality in both senses, with and without quotation marks. Uspenskij's analyses lead to a number of observations with regard to the temporal structure posited within the so-called objective realness. The relations between "I" and "You" postulate existing at the same time, the time of the dialogue (communicating) between its parties. Whereas the people and objects described as "He"/"She"/"It" can be separated in time and space from "I", co-establishing the past and the future. All these components of the world, time, space, the past, the future, and even the present, are understood in two ways. On the one hand, they are the components of the denoted world, they indicate per se who is "I" and who is "You" in the act of speech; on the other hand, the consciousness is shared that they are in a spatio-temporal situation where "I" can become "You" in a moment. Moreover, they are speaking about a personal or impersonal "He", "She", "It" in this or a past space-time.⁴⁰

In the subject view of the communicating process, the concept of subjective rational thinking is formed, an act of speech undertaken in view of the subjective and subjective-social experience of "I" and "You". "You", who will de facto be "I" in a moment, when the dialogue is continued, shares with "I" the experience which precedes the acts of speech. At the same time, the acts of speech make it possible to found this social-subjective experience, based on which, as Uspenskij puts it, through generalization and abstraction, semiotic systems emerge, which enable the acts of speech, and thus linguistic communication, to be effective.⁴¹

There is a coordination, a compromise of sorts between the communicators of subjective experience. This compromise would include recognizing a minimum of the propositions/existential sentences which are the basic components of the posited realness. The key role in this compromise—as we shall under-

³⁹ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 39.

⁴⁰ The temporal and spatial dimension of the objective world, ensuing from the obviousness of the existence of "I" and expanded, as Uspenskij shows, both to the other participants of the dialogue and to objects to which acts of speech refer, founds the subjective sense of the world's existence as independent from the existence of "I" etc., even though it originates from this subjective/subject sense of the obviousness of existence. Only a meta-reflection on this communication and cognitive "situation" can lead to the view of the status of objective reality, which is essentially constructivist.

⁴¹ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 10–11.

stand Uspenskij's concept—would be played by the phenomenal circumstance that, in dialogue, the perspectives are exchanged between “I” and “You”, which allows the deictic realness of a specific act of speech, even a dialogue, to be reconciled into social-subjective community experience. Its consolidation attests to the formation of language, which then stabilizes the communication within a community, stores the fundamentals of objective realness shared by its believers. The social-subjective linguistic competence being formed this way contains the instinctive and conscious sense and understanding of the temporal dimension, inherent to the so-called objective realness.

As we can see, in the historical formation process of the temporality of the world, progressing from the deictic realness of acts of speech to the objective realness posited in community language, the personal pronouns “I” and “You” play the key role as necessary components of an act of speech. “You”, the alter ego of “I”, exists implicitly within “I”; likewise, “You” is inconceivable without “I”. This approach is congruent with the understanding of thinking in terms of autocommunication. As in 1969⁴², Uspenskij considers the autocommunication process.

It will be noted that Uspenskij's reasoning, which ties the act of speech with the bringing into existence of objects defined by the pronouns “He”, “She”, “It”, leads to instituting the subject as a component of the dualizing way of speaking (and thinking) of the thinking trend predominant, according to Josef Mitterer, in the culture of antiquity and Western Europe.⁴³ The emergence of the subject as a side effect of the meta-linguistic reflection of “I” upon “myself” strengthens the position of “I”, transforms the personal and deictic pronoun into a subject.⁴⁴ Regardless of it, thanks to other deictic expressions, i.e., personal verb forms—exponents, united with personal pronouns, of current states of things and activities performed by “causative entities”, including those described by occasional expressions, or personal pronouns—the “deictic communication realness” founds the “this here” and “that there” object reality, as well as “the former” and “the one to be”. The latter temporal indication distinguishes, beginning from the act of speech indicating “He”/“She”/“It”, the other side of the realness dualizing into a subject realness and an object realness. The object reality can have a different realness with regard to time and space than the subject's situation.⁴⁵

⁴² “[...] the speaker himself can play the role of a listener (i.e., a listener to himself) during speaking, that is, he can control his speech by himself, trying to decode his own message (however, if he fails to do so or does not fully succeed, he corrects himself, speaks differently). In this case, the corrective act emerges within the speaker himself (in other words, the process of communicating emerges within the same man, who becomes simultaneously the speaker and the listener);” Uspenskij, *Problemy lingvisticheskoy tipologii*, 9.

⁴³ Josef Mitterer, *Tamta strona filozofii. Przeciwno dualistycznej zasadzie poznania* [The beyond of philosophy], transl. Małgorzata Łukasiewicz (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa Terminus, 1996).

⁴⁴ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 41–42.

⁴⁵ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 120–122. Thinking, understood as autocommunication, is according to Uspenskij crucial for cognitive science.

Moreover, the consciousness of the “switch” between “You” and “I”, and between “I” and “He”/“She”/“It” establishes the accompanying objective reality.⁴⁶

It is the cornerstone of the sense of objective reality’s existence: objects (constituted by “He”/“She”/“It”, also as impersonal objects), persons/subjects, and the situations taking place between them are transformed during a developing act of communication into objectively existing beings/subjects/situations.⁴⁷

The situation shown in the diagram of the deictic act is also the founding act of thinking and speaking about the past, or historical thinking and speaking. Let us note that it is the beginning of the subjective-rational bond for us too, as a kind of genetic thinking, a view of human acting based on the original perception of human acting (including the act of speech) as an activity caused by thinking.⁴⁸

Without deciding which is primary, the deictic experience of communication or the temporality of occasional expressions with “I” at the fore, one should maintain the belief that historical time is an essential component of historical thinking, emerging with the latter and changing with it.

“I” AS THE DEICTIC CENTRE

Uspenskij’s declaration that he would present an epistemology starting from—I’ll venture adding an adjective—a deictic theory of communication puts aside the semiotic aspect of his idea for a time. Nominally, at least. The attempt to reconstruct our author’s approach challenges us to present the systemic approach. This task involves, instead of submitting to the persuasiveness of Uspenskij’s lecture, following the questions which may put him in an embarrassing position. It will give us a better understanding of his strategy for humanities.

At the centre of Uspenskij’s argumentation in his *Loquor ergo sum* lecture, his concept of language in communicative space, there is the essence and role of “I” in founding the communicative space. Uspenskij constructed this distin-

⁴⁶ This way the notion of individual (personal) existence, which passes as a starting point for references, is transformed into a notion of equal existence of different people, which allows their perceptions to be coordinated; it leads to the emergence of a notion of objective reality, which includes the perceiving subject and the object of its perception.

⁴⁷ “Descartes’s eminent aphorism, *cogito ergo sum*, can be paraphrased as *communico ergo sum* (or *loquor ergo sum*). If we consider thinking as autocommunication [...], this paraphrase appears as expanding the words of Descartes.” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 42.

⁴⁸ It shall be noted that Uspenskij’s approach is associated with the questions of subjective-rational action, a concept of individual action derived from Max Weber and developed within the idea of humanistic interpretation, which originated in the so-called Poznań School of Methodology. This issue of tremendous importance for humanities cannot be further developed here. See Wojciech Wrzosek, “Interpretation of the Human Acts: Humanistic Interpretation,” in *Interpretation in the Humanities*, ed. by Tadeusz Buksiński (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 1990); Wojciech Wrzosek, “Les concepts historiographiques de F. Braudel. L’homme dans le système social” [F. Braudel’s historiographic concepts: Man in a social system], *Studia Historiae Economicae* 20 (1993): 23–38.

guished place of “I” on its two identities; first, on the testimonies of the fundamental texts of culture, which in his opinion attest to a common epistemological intention of the Old Testament, Plato, the Upanishads, etc. According to the Russian semiotician, many thinkers exploring the concepts of *I*, from religious to psychological ones, exemplify the thesis that the religious exclamations of “I” are evidence of the origin of reflection about the world, and thus the origin of the human world. If the deictic centre diagram convincingly illustrates Uspenskij’s vision of communicative space, the centre of which is “I”, the reference to the metaphysics of “I” supplements it. It is seconded by an argumentative strategy referring to the formation of linguistic and cultural competence of a child, which is analogous to the historical process of starting communication, as well as religious descriptions of world creation, apparently through acts of communication. Uspenskij does not decide if these monumental acts of linguistic articulation attest to the mental construction of the world, and/or just to the emergence of the world prior to and outside of language.

The concept of the deictic core of the communication process assumes that the condition of the dialogue between “I” and “You” is the admission of each other, that they are mutually inseparable and inalienable. Thus, the idea of the absolute existence of “I” (or the existence of absolute “I”) that Uspenskij finds in the Old Testament and other fundamental religious, metaphysical, philosophical, and humanistic texts, does not consolidate or strengthen the role of “I” in communicating. To restate, the absolute “I” does not enter into Uspenskij’s semiotic communication space. The absolute “I” can exist only in a monumental reality; thus, under the doctrine of the author of *Ego Loquens*, only as a postulated being. However, for God to exist among the postulated beings of the “objective cosmos”, he must come to existence as a subject of an act of speech; as the one who, at least, answers Moses’s question who he is. In other words, God as a postulated being will otherwise belong to the metaphysical world lying before and above the communicative space. To refer to the canonical texts of culture in order to supply a metaphysical justification for the existence of the deictic center is to go beyond the communicative space towards the “transcendental space”.

Next, invoking the masterpieces of culture as the “literary” testimony showing the role of deictic pronouns in the origin and functioning of communicative space would be attempting to reconstruct a cultural communicative space. Here the reader can make a worldview choice: to decide that Uspenskij seeks, in metaphysical (theological) doctrine, either source attestations for the shape of communication, or a theological genesis for the semiotic world.

For the concept of historical semiotics sought by Uspenskij, it is not of particular importance to decide if the deictic centre comes into being sponsored by God, or if the religious testimonies are evidence of the rise of man as a semiotic being, i.e., man with his ability to communicate, to create and use language, to build a communicative community, a conscious subject and himself as the “I” distinct from the world outside, or even from the existence of God in the “metaphysical space-time”— it is not important whether the deictic “I”

emerges from the pre-communication reality or appears in the “earthly vale” due to a divine act of calling man to be as a semiotic being. For metaphysics, however, it is crucial.

In any case, along with a self-conscious “I”, there arises in the communication community a “You” which can alternate being “I”, so there is a “He”/“She”/“It”, which can become a “You” for the “You” in the role of “I” and, for the original “I”, achieve the same certainty of its existence as “I” has. As Uspenskij stresses, a sense of real reality arises around the deictic “I”; “He”/“She”/“It” inherits from “I” its status of real existence.⁴⁹ It can be said that if, in the dialogue of “I” and “You”, “He”/“She”/“It” is present in the same chronotope, that is, all three parties can participate in the dialogue, and “He”/“She”/“It” can assume the role of “You” or “I”, then all parties are convinced that they constitute objective reality. It also gives rise, as underlined by our researcher, to a dualizing approach to communication and cognition, a distinction between the subject of communication (cognition) and its object—including the object being spoken of—says Uspenskij.

Our classic diagram perfectly illustrates both the intersubjectivity of communication and the intersubjectivity of cognition. As Wittgenstein would say, virtually all parties are present in the language game: the dualizing structure of speaking and thinking, subjects and objects of communication, subjects and objects of cognition.

THINKING AS AUTOCOMMUNICATION

Thinking has the leading position in the arsenal of metaphysical philosophical categories. Nonetheless, can it be explained in Uspenskij’s deictic space, in his network of systemically organized categories? Does the category of thinking hold a sovereign place? The strength of Uspenskij’s categories does not allow it. Thinking gets quickly ensnared by communication and stays there. Our author decrees he is working with cognitive thinking, and so the assimilation of thinking into the network of notions simply flows from this decision.⁵⁰

In *Ego Loquens*, thinking is understood as a kind of autocommunication.⁵¹ The phenomenon of autocommunication is—of course—a form of communication, its special case. Henceforth, thinking and autocommunication are entitled to the properties given to communication.

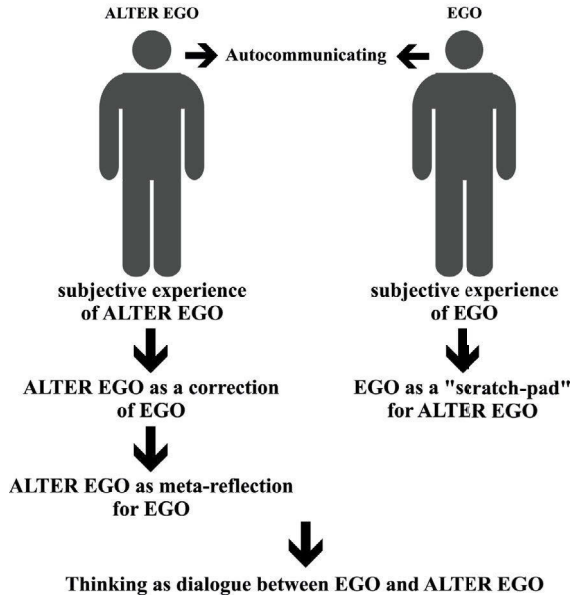
Autocommunication is the case of communication where Ego stays in communication with Alter Ego. Ego holds a dialogue with an implicit interlocutor, with

⁴⁹ Just like “I” is convinced of his existence, “You” is of his. Both are convinced of the existence of “You” as well as “He”, “She” etc., a world furnished through community.

⁵⁰ “The basis of cognitive thinking is, obviously, autocommunication, when the signs which enable the objectivization of subjective impressions come into being.” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 10.

⁵¹ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 10, 42.

Communication as Information Exchange



itself. The communication is carried out through an “internal dialogue”. The act of speech of Alter Ego is also understood as not just dialoguing with Ego but as an act of “Ego’s self-understanding”. It is a reflection of its own message, consequently its own text, kind of like “working with a scratch-pad”.⁵² Thinking is an act of self-correcting.⁵³

According to the Russian linguist, “I” initiates the act of communication; the “I” conscious of its status of the subject in the act. It seems natural that each act of speech is to some extent an act of self-consciousness, a situation where, whether the addressee is in a live dialogue with the addresser or not, the consciousness of “I” is linked to the consciousness of one’s own act of speech, the consciousness of communicating, of the addressee, and the content and form of the message.

Self-correcting is thus a witness of the act of the metalinguistic reflection of “I” on the articulation of his thoughts, and also a step to correct the subjective experience made through a subjective experience of the Alter Ego which, as can be supposed, represents community experience: it is a form of “objective experience”. Thinking is therefore one’s own work on the store of personal experience. Hence, because thinking is self-communicating, it is by its cognitive nature self-reflexive. It plays on the object level, runs as self-correction and, for

⁵² “This kind of process is clearly illustrated by a scratch-pad, where corrections made when proofreading the text are well visible: we write the text, strike out some words, overwrite them with others, which makes it necessary to correct other words (sometimes we have to change the syntax structure of a phrase as a result), etc.” Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 136.

⁵³ This issue is multifaceted and complex. I shall leave it for later.

the latter reason, runs on the meta level where the primary-level thinking becomes the object of thinking. This level ensures the status of Alter Ego. Alter Ego, as the equivalent of “You”, has to consider the message of “I” as interpreted text, in the understanding of which stores of community experience are tapped, not actualized so far in Ego’s acts of speech. So, Alter Ego speaks not so much about what Ego discussed as about Ego’s Speaking. Alter Ego’s discourse must thus take Ego from the meta-thought position, as without the meta perspective procedures could not have the status of self-correcting or working in a scratchpad, as Uspenskij wanted.

It seems that thinking cannot be described otherwise than as an act also containing the understanding of own text, which is the object of the dialoguer’s reflection from the meta perspective. Furthermore, to understand the text, the addressee (here: Alter Ego — W.W.) should imagine a situation in which he could enounce an identical or analogous—from his perspective—text. Hence the addressee (message recipient) actually imagines himself as the addresser (message sender).⁵⁴

It can be seen that both thinking and dialogue, by the very nature of binding two subjects, carriers of different subjective experiences, produces speech situations which need negotiating. They involve agreeing on the languages of dialoguing parties. By the nature of this situation, dialoguing is an act of agreement, understanding, and translation. It is—according to Uspenskij—a heuristic, interpretative situation.

In the act of autocommunication, the addresser is accompanied by an implied addressee as well as an instinctive consciousness of the necessity to perform this act within the “negotiated”, “occasional” community experience. Uspenskij thinks that autocommunication—as merely a special case of communication—takes place within the context of community experience anyway. The subject of autocommunication, in spite of the intimacy of auto-meta-reflection, remains shackled by the common language. It is so because, due to Uspenskij’s decision, self-reflection is semiotic in nature. It is with signs (language) that the subjective experience is articulated, which—as we already know—is a combination of many “subjective” parameters of the noumenal world, as the Russian scholar describes them. Consequently, it refers to the latter and “is formatted” at the same time by the intersubjective virtual reality.

In Uspenskij’s approach, thinking (or just articulated thinking) is communicative by nature, and thus semiotic. It is being structuralized by language in the sense that subjective experience, which supports the act of speech, is defined (co-defined) by the common language shared by the dialoguers. This language includes only these elements of perceptive experience which can be clothed in a subjective experience, which has to be communicable in the communication community. It just means that, from the communicator’s perspective, there is an addressee able to give sense to the message in a way that generally suits even an

⁵⁴ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 125.

occasional linguistic community composed of at least the addresser and the addressee. According to Uspenskij, a thinker thinks so that an addressee thought by him should be able to insert himself into the circumstances of intersubjective communicability. The Russian linguist leads us to the conclusion that we should understand what we think when we reflect critically upon our thoughts. Since our thinking is a form of autocommunication, it should be ready to communicate not only to Alter Ego, but also to any chosen “You”, to “God”, “deceased relative”, “imagined authority in any conceived field”, etc. In short, Uspenskij decides that thinking should be “formatted” according to the addressee’s discourse.

The above approach of some of Uspenskij’s theses shows that interpreting his concept of communicating can begin with the category of thinking, because it is defined as autocommunication. One can, it seems, begin with the thinking of “I” about itself.

We do not know if, remaining within the field of Uspenskij’s concept, one can speak about thinking when it remains at the unarticulated level. Not likely: our author does not provide such a situation. We meet thinking already embraced by communicating. Its form is already mature; mature enough to be shared with an interlocutor. Even when it takes the form of “inner speech”, it bears the intent of communicating. It arranges itself in the form provided by language: becomes instrumentalized in language. Thus it is unclear if thinking has a pre-articulated form at all. If it does, it lies beyond our scholar’s scope of interest.

Is thinking thinkable if it is not well padded in language, can one say anything at all about it before “I” starts to speak, that is, before the subject conscious of its “I” is established? The approach of the Russian linguist contains the argument that thinking is not possible even as “thinking for one’s own use” unless it is thinking prepared to be communicated. It is so because this subjective thought experience assumes not only “I”, but also “You”, for a number of reasons. The first, doctrinal reason is, according to Uspenskij, because “I” cannot be thought to exist without recognizing that “You” exists as well. “I” must pronounce its existence to someone, even to a conceived “You”. In the variant of thinking as autocommunication, Ego takes the form of Alter Ego. Thinking (internal speech) is then a kind of thinking in the name of You, a self-correction of the thinking of “I” by “I” itself.⁵⁵ It must be so, because autocommunication has the qualities of communication anyway.

Should someone claim that there is thinking in the pre-articulative phase, it would not deserve the name of thinking in the fullest sense of Uspenskij, as it would not be instrumentalized in language.

This leads to the conclusion that, for Uspenskij, thinking has a *sui generis* semiotic quality. Even when it occurs in the absence of a physical *You*, it assumes the presence of an addressee, who can be God, any silent partner in the dialogue (implied addressee) or in the dialogue of Ego/Alter Ego.⁵⁶

Translated from Polish by Andrzej Pietkiewicz

⁵⁵ Here Uspenskij seeks an analogy with the act of correcting a draft, or rather autocorrection.

⁵⁶ Uspenskij, *Ego Loquens*, 112.

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