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# 16

## Conclusion

### Hardened Similarity

#### 1. Intro

So what is the yield of my passage through the field of similarity? First of all, it is clear that only certain aspects came into view at all, because the perspective I chose is a very specific one.

The starting point of my project was the fact that similarity plays a prominent role within media, culture, and cultural techniques. Whoever engages theoretically or analytically with media is confronted with such an overwhelming amount and with so many different kinds of similarity that it seems inevitable to explore similarity as a category of media theory.

Surprisingly, however, this hardly happens. Looking for the reason, we learn that renowned authors of philosophy and cultural theory reject similarity as a theoretical category with a kind of horror. Similarity – as I have discussed – appears as too ‘soft,’ as unfathomable, as too widely distributed, as excess: Everything can resemble everything, everything seems to depend on the context or the perspective, whereby contexts and perspectives again appear to be incalculably manifold and unfathomable. On such terrain, theory has nothing to gain. But what if it does not have a choice, because similarity cannot be ignored? This contradiction was the starting point of my project.

The second point was the fact that horror goes hand in hand with a *fascination with similarity*. Researching similarity, one will come across an exuberantly diverse, yet tremendously interesting field of materials, examples, and aspects. The visual material that I have included in my book may give an impression of this; similarity, in any case, is not something that media exclusively ‘suffer’ from.

And finally, as a third point, there was the difficulty with semiotics. I also briefly outlined this at the beginning: As obviously as the media are closely related to the sphere of the symbolic, the concepts that classical semiotics provides as instruments appear just as obviously inadequate. If the concept of the ‘sign’ simply fails on the terrain of photography and film, or if formal languages, form, and formalization cannot be plausibly grasped in semiotic terms, media studies must look for alternatives. What presents itself is schema theory.

And it is precisely here that similarity turns from a difficulty into a hope: If schema formation relies on similarity as its basis, then similarity seems to take on a describable *function*. And it does so with all its peculiarities, which only a moment ago appeared to be a defect: For the ‘fuzziness’ is potentially not a weakness but a certain form of *organization*; and the question arises by what kind of rule similarity and schema formation are connected.

In schema theory, semiotics could find a new basis. A basis that is much more robust than any concept of signs; and this particularly because the schema concept effortlessly encompasses all media. *In the interplay of similarity and schema formation* – that would be my thesis – *the outlines of a recast semiotics are on the horizon*. So let us see what tesserae my reflection can contribute to this project.

## 2. Schema, Perception, Media

The first result, and an immediate output of schema theory, is the bridging between perception and media. Within schema theory, it is commonly accepted to apply the concept of schema to both sides: (1) to perceptual schemata and ‘mental representations’<sup>1</sup> (phenomena that one would attribute to the interior of the subjects, to psychology), and likewise (2) to image stereotypes, the words of language or problems of ‘form,’ i.e. media phenomena in the external space.

In media studies, this bridging is by no means a given. The justified interest in understanding the media primarily from their material side<sup>2</sup> and in avoiding a rash ‘psychologization’<sup>3</sup> has led to the consensus of a somewhat superficial materialism. One favors cultural techniques, ‘actors,’ practices, technology, and signifiers – everything that is considered materially observable – and sneers at ‘soft’ things like people,<sup>4</sup> ‘meaning,’ or the signified. With the rediscovered media anthropology and affect research, however, there have always been alternative approaches as well.

The concept of schema poses the question anew. In my eyes, media studies must have an interest in grasping both spaces – the material outside space and the inner space in the minds and bodies of people – in compatible terms. There are no media that are independent of people, and the concept of schema seems to me to make the interrelation between the two more transparent.

The second interesting aspect of the concept of schema is that, following the path of perception, we have to problematize the role of media in understanding the world and in knowledge acquisition. This, as I said, is opposed to the self-evident orientation towards ‘communication,’ which still (explicitly or implicitly) determines many media theories;<sup>5</sup> and the fact that media – similar to perception, integrated into perception and in interrelation with it – open up the world and essentially co-determine our access to reality, also means a reorientation for the field of media studies. The fervor for ANT and the increasing interest in philosophy of science and epistemology heralds this reorientation; but perhaps the question is a more general one; and perhaps media studies needs its own set of terms to model the medial access to the world. The notion of schema, I think, could be one of them.

And thirdly, there is (of course) similarity. In the concept of schema – unlike in that of the sign, for example – similarity is always already taken into account, and with it the question of what productive-functional role it may assume. The fact that schema formation reduces complexity and wrests structure from the overwhelmingly complex world that needs to be comprehended is suitable for shifting the focus of our understanding of media. No one would probably deny complexity reduction and the building of structure; but up to now they have not been the focus of a more general understanding of media.

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<sup>1</sup> Schlicht, Tobias; Smortchkova, Joulia (eds.): *Mentale Repräsentationen. Grundlagentexte*. Berlin: Suhrkamp 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Cf.: Gumbrecht, Hans Ulrich; Pfeiffer, K. Ludwig (eds.): *Materialität der Kommunikation*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1988.

<sup>3</sup> ...the accusation of psychologization has already been made against de Saussure’s concept of ‘associative axes.’

<sup>4</sup> ...which, for example, Kittler, in the gesture of the anti-humanist, liked to call ‘so-called’...

<sup>5</sup> Explicitly, for example, in the communication sciences, which carry the reference in their name; the many forms of implicit reference are shown, for example, in: - Peters, John Durham: *Speaking into the Air. A History of the Idea of Communication*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press 2000 [1999]; - Czitrom, Daniel J.: *Media and the American Mind. From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1984, p. 91ff. [1982]; - Mattelart, Armand: *The Invention of Communication*. Minneapolis/London 1996 [1994].

If one argues with patterns and schemata, it becomes clear that perception is not a process only of the present, but always already includes memory and past experience. This, too, can modify our media concept. As soon as one understands media as a *biotope for schema formation*, one is forced to include the time axis and to consider the process in which the schemata gain their boundaries, their ‘identity,’ their contour, and their relations. This means that we are dealing with longer running media *processes*.

And perhaps the connection between perception and material media techniques is even more direct: Quite obviously, as I have written in the fourth chapter, the mechanisms that Mother Nature first inscribed in our perceptual apparatus are similar to those that human history then installed as ‘media’ in the realm of culture. Or possibly media *imitate* and prolong what is preformed in the mechanisms of our perception.

Schema formation and similarity seem to be dominant forces in both spheres. They establish a cycle that involves subjects and material media at the same time. Our perception, our access to the world is – at least in one of its dimensions – media-based; perception and media operate in parallel and intertwined, and gain access to the world via schema formation (the establishment and fixation of similarity).

### 3. Identity and Difference

The realm of the similar, as I said, is located between identity and difference; only that which is neither completely identical nor completely different can be similar. So let me turn to these two categories once again.

The issue was how schemata and patterns can emerge at all. If similarity is ‘soft’ and ‘fuzzy’ and if schema formation has its basis in similarity, one will have to explain how schemata nevertheless gain boundaries, ‘identity,’ and contour.

The ‘identity’ of schemata, as has certainly become clear in my reflection, can only be a pragmatically reduced one, which must be imagined – also procedurally – as dependent on the play of similarity, identity, and difference. When Deleuze implies that the tradition of philosophical ontology has always given priority to identity, in order to then push it off the throne with a heroic gesture,<sup>6</sup> then this is – quite obviously – not the identity that is of interest here.<sup>7</sup>

And the same, I think, is true of difference. When Deleuze writes about the program of his book, “difference and repetition have taken the place of the identical and the negative, of

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<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, Gilles: *Difference and Repetition*. NY: Columbia UP 1993, pp. 15f., 33ff., 51f.... [1968].

<sup>7</sup> As I said, I am far more concerned with ‘recognition,’ which Deleuze also clearly rejects: “The form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised, form will never inspire anything but conformities. Moreover, while philosophy refers to a common sense as its implicit presupposition, what need has common sense of philosophy? Common sense shows every day – unfortunately – that it is capable of producing philosophy in its own way. Therein lies a costly double danger for philosophy. On the one hand, it is apparent that acts of recognition exist and occupy a large part of our daily life: this is a table, this is an apple, this the piece of wax [...]. But who can believe that the destiny of thought is at stake in these acts, and that when we recognise, we are thinking? [...] We said above that the image of thought must be judged on the basis of what it claims in principle, not on the basis of empirical objections. However, the criticism that must be addressed to this image of thought is precisely that it has based its supposed principle upon extrapolation from certain facts, particularly insignificant facts such as recognition, everyday banality in person; as though thought should not seek its models among stranger and more compromising adventures.” (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, op. cit., p. 135). But if acts of recognition “exist and occupy a large part of our daily life,” would this not be reason enough to be interested in recognition, and in its role in cognition? Recognition may be part of our everyday experience. But as far as the theory of media is concerned, its role is unclear. As is, therefore, ‘identity.’

identity and contradiction,”<sup>8</sup> then I would say – admittedly from the vantage point of a non-philosopher – why should that be? Why should difference take precedence in this way? Are not all five – difference, repetition, identity, negativity, and contradiction – in equal need of explanation? And in need of explanation not on the heights of philosophy, but first functionally, in the attempt to describe their interplay by observing media processes? This was the reason for focusing my considerations precisely on the recognition that Deleuze calls an “extrapolation from certain [...] particularly insignificant facts [...], everyday banality in person.”<sup>9</sup>

The result of my consideration was that in the process of schema formation, similarity does not remain what it is. I described schema formation as dependent on repetition, as a *cycle* that decides in each run anew about similarity and dissimilarity, ‘identity’ and difference. With the outcome that at the pole of ‘identity’ the most similar cases accumulate (or those that are considered as similar as possible), so that from the aggregation of these similar cases a schema is formed.

What is less similar or dissimilar – that was the second crucial point – is sorted out and sent off to another schema. Less similar or dissimilar means *different*; what is less similar or dissimilar is *distinguished*. And difference, too, will have to be conceptualized – apart from a philosophical consideration – as being a pragmatically reduced one.

‘Identity’ and difference, attraction and repulsion interact; their interplay allows the schemata to gain stability, to strengthen their boundaries and identity with each new case, each run through the cycle. The schemata emerge in a process of *hardening*. And along with the schemata, the semantic space emerges in which these schemata – positioned relationally – have their respective ‘places.’<sup>10</sup>

Somewhat riskily, one might call this a *second-order articulation*; second-order because one would speak of ‘articulation’ first at the level of individual material utterances, and risky insofar as it is certainly sensible to limit the term to that level...

The schemata harden, but they resemble similarity in that they also remain – at least relatively – ‘soft.’ None of the individual cases falling under a schema completely fulfill it. Thus, for the concept of schema – just as for that of similarity – a certain ‘vagueness’ remains constitutive.

#### 4. Signs

At this point the *signs* finally come into play. If my consideration is a semiotic one, or at least claims to contribute tesseræ to a reconditioned semiotics, then it will have to make a proposal also to the central concept of the sign.

And the key points have already been mentioned. Schema formation is a process of typification and hardening. The assessment of similarity not only accentuates certain aspects and excludes the dissimilar, but also creates a new entity – namely the schema itself – that enters the world and begins a life of its own.

*And when typification and hardening are well advanced, one would speak of a ‘sign.’* Signs retain and immobilize – now in actual tangible form – what were once judgments and hypotheses about similarities.

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<sup>8</sup> Deleuze, *ibid.*, p. XIX.

<sup>9</sup> I quoted the passage in footnote 7...

<sup>10</sup> ...in my eleventh chapter, I warned against conceiving semantic relations straightforwardly (or metaphorically) in topological terms...

This makes it possible to play these special things – the signs – back into the discourse and to operate with them in the discourse. As placeholders, as conventionalized-hardened-preconceived judgments about similarity, they function like a ready-made part: all judgments about similarity which are incorporated in the sign no longer have to be made live in the discourse. And at the same time, this is the dialectic, the hypotheses about similarity that the sign contains are retested with each new usage.

My proposal, then, is to take the notion of schema more seriously than the concept of sign, and to view signs as a form of schema that is particularly hardened.

Such a determination not only builds bridges between perception, technical images (photography and film), and explicit sign systems, such as writing and language, but it also allows us to grasp the difference between these media: because the technical images, photography and film, possibly exist only because they are precisely less hardened than linguistic signs. By presenting – that was the point in my fourth chapter – *concreta*, they show schema formation in actu; and they make visible the process which is petrified and hidden in concepts and signs.

### **5. Once Again, More Precisely...**

Possibly, however, it may be good to look at the thesis again in a little more detail. Signs, like schemata, emerge in the process of hardening. Only when schemata reach a certain degree of stability, when their identity is firmly consolidated and they are sufficiently differentiated and set apart from each other, schemata can become signs. Signs, then, are schemata that are highly typified and stably conventionalized. And signs are characterized by the fact that the schema carries a label. One has chosen a material signifier that now stands for the schema.

While the schema had its precarious place in the minds of many, the sign appears as an independent thing. As a material signifier, it enters – thing among things – into social circulation; and once reified, the schema, which is now a sign, can claim all the properties of things: a material existence in external space, operability/manipulability, material persistence (duration), intersubjective accessibility, and several other qualities.

In the sphere of signs (and that means the media), what has been said for schemata continues: The same dialectic between identifying and differentiating reigns; now it is the singular sign on which the meanings accumulate and which distances itself from the other signs via differentiation.

The same rules apply: Signs are also dependent on repetition, integrated in cycles that connect single event (actualization/utterance) and schema/sign; here, too, we find accumulation and ‘condensation.’ Now, however, the play of identifying and differentiating unfolds in the discourse; and it is the discourses that feed the sign as a product of accumulation (in the case of the schema, these were perception, event, or ‘experience’). The material that enters into the accumulation of signs is already symbolically pre-structured.

And at the same time, the decisive feature that separates the signs from the schemata becomes clear here: I described it in my ninth chapter: In the case of the sign, the separation from the other signs always already seems to be guaranteed. The spatial distance, the white space, which, for example, separates letters and words from each other, seems – together with the high degree of typification – to secure the ‘identity’ of the signs; the basis for how we take for granted that writing consists of ‘signs.’

In photography and film such white empty spaces do not exist; the image cannot be dismantled into material ‘elements,’ and it remains up to the recipient to isolate ‘objects,’ for example. Accordingly, the intuition resists speaking of ‘signs’ here; and accordingly, the semiotics of the

1960s shipwrecked in the project of nevertheless asserting such signs. Hence my proposal to use the more general concept of the schema instead of that of the sign. And, starting from there, to describe what the systematic preconditions are for recipients to nonetheless dissect images in the process of understanding.

At the same time, one will have to realize that also in the case of writing, the seemingly clear organization is less evident than one should think. For *although* it is true that in the structure of the signifying material (in the empty spaces between the individual signs) an organization is always already guaranteed, and *although* it is true that the signs are highly typified and seem to be able to assert ‘identity’ unproblematically – all this, however, obscures the fact that ultimately the signs also remain dependent on the time axis, are a product of history and hardening.

And this in several respects. Media-historically, insofar as schema formation reaches much further back – ultimately into natural history – and historically forms the basis of the formation of signs; by definition, insofar as – if one follows my thesis – schemata ‘harden’ into signs. And principally, insofar as signs preserve all the peculiarities of schema formation: For signs, too, despite the appearance of material stability, can claim only a very relative firmness or identity for themselves; since they remain dependent on discourse, and discourse writes back into the sign with each actualization (with each run of the cycle), they can counter the threat of displacement only with the weight they have gained in past cycles, in accumulation and condensation.

It is, I think, a decisive gain of the outlined schema concept that it also ties the concept of the sign back to the time axis, dynamizing and liquifying it. Here, above all, it becomes clear that the alleged ‘identity’ is by no means an eternal one.

## 6. Mimesis

Considerations about mimesis have only played a marginal role in my text, although they suggest themselves in the context of similarity. Now, however, I shall venture at least a single thesis on this almost intimidatingly difficult question.

Mimesis was already a classical category of ancient Greek aesthetics and is often understood – abbreviated – as ‘imitation.’ Derived from the *μῖμος*, the performer in the theater, art as a whole was regarded as mimetic, although the term has many facets of meaning and in antiquity also included representations without an antetype, i.e. without ‘imitation.’

Whenever it really is a matter of imitation, similarity – needless to say – comes into play. The portrait is measured by whether it ‘resembles’ the person portrayed, and a TV thriller is demanded to be ‘realistic,’ i.e. to take up certain aspects of everyday experience and to incorporate them into the space of fiction. Mimesis is always linked to the question of how art and the media relate to the world.

Thus mimesis stands for a very precarious type of resemblance, because imitation crosses the boundary between the non-symbolic and the symbolic. And in modernity, almost all elements that play a role here have been discarded: With abstraction, art seemed to leave the terrain of ‘imitation;’ art theory turned away from notions such as ‘mirroring;’<sup>11</sup> in semiotics, signified and reference were dismantled, and the question of how signs relate to the world was first declared naïve and finally taboo. Media studies adopted the cliché that signs only refer to other signs and no longer to things of the world, or, supported by a (misunderstood?) discourse

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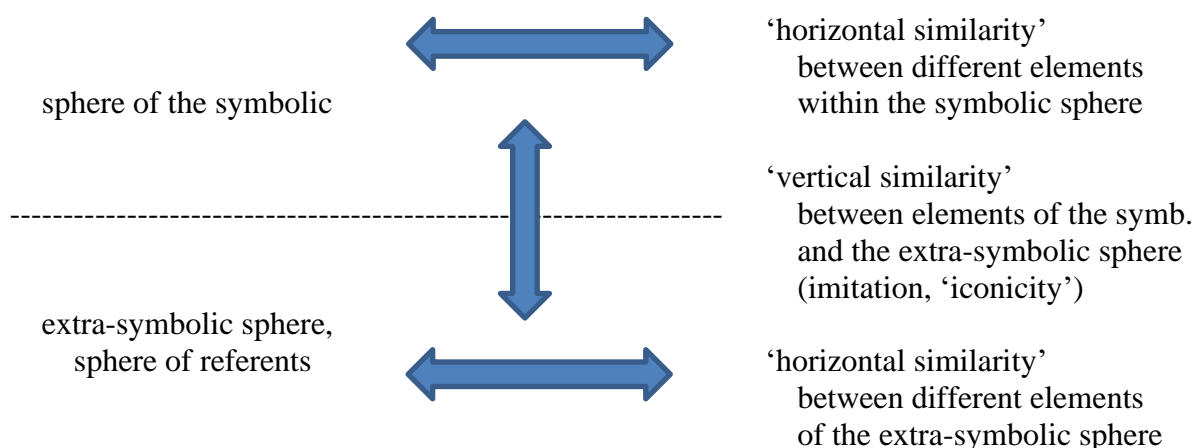
<sup>11</sup> The thesis of ‘reflection’/‘mirroring’ (*Widerspiegelung*) was advocated by Lukacs, for example (L., Georg: *Ästhetik*. In: *Werke* Bd. 11 und 12, Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand 1963), and incurred the wrath of literally hundreds of authors (only some of whom had even read the book).

analysis and theories of performativity, denied that one should distinguish between the symbolic and the extra-symbolic at all.

As valuable the arguments are as *critical ones*, I do not think that the *problem* of reference is settled by them. The difficult question of what kind of relation the signs maintain to the world proves to be stubbornly vital and does not care whether the theory has valid answers.

Simplified answers, however, are indeed unacceptable. While it seemed plausible for a long time, for instance, to distinguish arbitrary from iconic signs, and to define the former as ‘social agreement’ and the latter by the fact that – for instance in photography – the image *resembles* the depicted, this certainly cannot be maintained.<sup>12</sup> If it is a matter of resemblance, and if I have insisted on a ‘mimetic’ dimension in my text, then certainly not in this sense. It must be about a less direct resemblance. So what can be said about it?

When I have spoken of ‘similarity,’ I have done so initially in avoidance of the boundary in question, i.e., with regard to elements that are either *all* symbolic or all extra-symbolic. I would like to call this similarity ‘horizontal,’ as opposed to a ‘vertical’ similarity that crosses the boundary. (To maintain the boundary itself in a definitional sense, however, I consider inevitable).

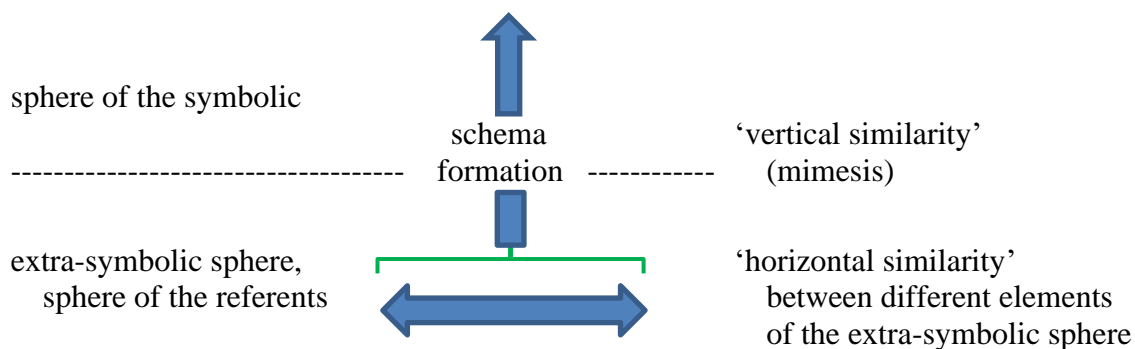


Mimesis and imitation would belong to the ‘vertical’ type. But what is then gained by my restriction? Don’t mimesis and world reference then simply fall out of my consideration?

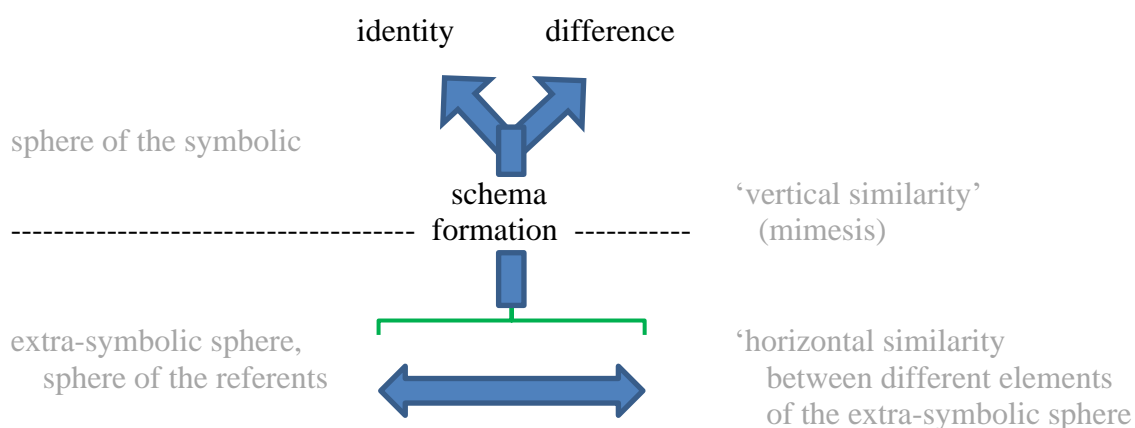
Indeed, I think that only an indirect path leads from horizontal to vertical similarity and to mimesis. If perception detects similarity between two elements it finds in the perceptual field, then this similarity remains ‘horizontal.’ But if this perception repeats itself and solidifies step by step into a *schema*, it will cross the boundary at some point, simply because schemata in general are symbolic. Horizontal similarity, that would be my thesis, turns into vertical similarity.

Accordingly, the sketch attempted above would have to be modified:

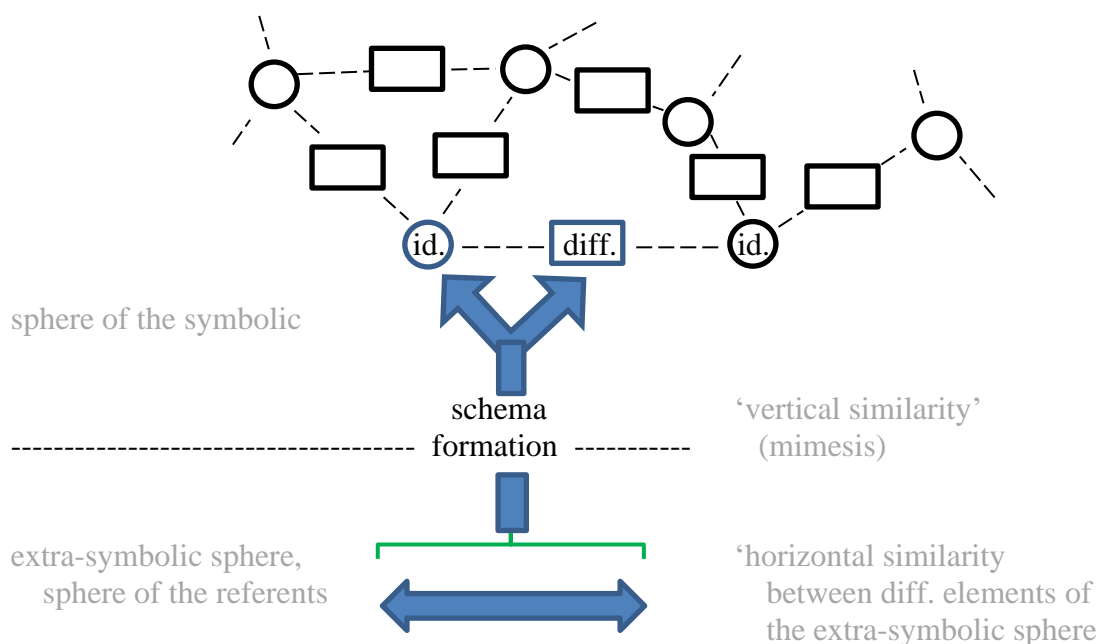
<sup>12</sup> “The natural resemblance of an image to the reality it represents is theoretically expressed by the term ‘iconic sign.’ Now this concept is repeatedly subjected to *revision* [...]. [...] The conviction that the iconic sign seemed to be unassailable in contrast to the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign collapses, leaving us with the suspicion that the iconic sign, too, is entirely arbitrary, conventional, and unfounded.” (Eco, Umberto: *Die Gliederung des filmischen Code*. In: Knilli, Friedrich (ed.): *Semiotik des Films*. München: Fischer Athenäum 1971, pp. 70-93, here p. 73f. (transl. and emph. H. W.)).



In this sense, vertical similarity is in no way dependent on the fact that the signifiers and the signified actually ‘resemble’ each other (and certainly not individual things and individual signs, as ‘iconicity’ assumes). *Rather, the assertion of ‘similarity’ is a matter of structure: signs and schemata are related to reality because they record similarity. Schema formation reworks similarity into schemata. What emerges is a system of differential schemata that records similarity at the pole of ‘identity’ and distinction at the pole of ‘difference.’*



Identity and difference harden in repetition; and it is in the interplay between identities and differences that the network of symbolic representations is articulated, which – taken as a whole – contains a very large number of identities and differences:





Only this network can claim to represent reality (the sphere of the extra-symbolic) and to be ‘mimetic.’ And this also only because an infinite number of perceptions, observations, acts of thinking, and distinctions – in condensed form – have been laid down in its structure.

Whether the net represents the reality adequately or inadequately is another matter. But in any case: Since it takes its path via schema formation, vertical similarity can be only a “*nonsensical*” one.

## 8. The Process of Semiosis

The semiotic, the world of signs, is not based on the world as it is, but on perceptual schemata, and more generally: on schematization processes. Signs benefit from the fact that the world is always already a structured and schematized one; and they carry this structuring and schematization further by reifying the schemata themselves. The material signifiers provide the schemata with tangible labels in order to stabilize them and to fix their ‘identity.’

And because signs are dependent on the use of signs (and thus again on iterations), the double movement also continues in the semiotic sphere: Every single iteration fosters the identity and stability of the individual sign and its differentiation from other signs.

And finally, the abstract character of signs also goes back to schematization: If it is possible to make accessible a very complex world with the help of a relatively small number of signs, it is only because the signs are highly typified, more schematic and more abstract than what is signified. Abstraction, too, is the result of the process of conventionalization and typification outlined here; and thus it seems possible to discuss even problems of *form* and specifically ‘abstract’ systems like formal languages or even music<sup>13</sup> in compatible terms.

This is – in my eyes – the basic mechanism of semiosis,<sup>14</sup> the rule on which everything that has to do with signs has its foundation.

## 9. Similarity

So what does this mean – vice versa, so to speak – for similarity? I think that also here an answer is now possible. *Semiosis is a machine that splits up the similar and decomposes it into identity and difference.*

If theory rejects similarity and favors identity and difference,<sup>15</sup> then it only reenacts what takes place within the media themselves, which – ever since media have existed – is their main process, their characteristic, the actual work that they do: *the media constantly rework similarity into identity and difference.*

If similarity is threatening, buzzingly ambiguous and hardly capable of being theorized, identity and difference must appear as a secure bulwark. Schema formation, sign processes, and sign systems, which, as I have shown, depend on similarity for their functioning, therefore simultaneously stand for the overcoming of similarity; for its transformation into something solid that is no longer threatening or not quite so threatening.

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<sup>13</sup> ...clarifying this would certainly be a more than interesting task in its own right...

<sup>14</sup> Once again: ‘Mechanism,’ as I have said several times, is a metaphor, because the matter – of course – is not a mechanical one; it is meant to draw attention to the fact that it is about regularities; about an interplay of many factors that are functionally interconnected and that itself has a stably conventionalized character. (In the same sense, Freud, for instance, spoke of a ‘psychic apparatus’...).

<sup>15</sup> ...difference more than identity; that was the thesis in my third chapter.

And at the same time this solution is illusory because the similarity – having barely been banished – returns like something repressed. Firstly, insofar as there is no actual ‘identity,’ because identity is nothing but an extreme in the spectrum of similarity, and in the process of identifying there is always something left that remains dissimilar after all and undermines any ‘identity’; secondly, because – even if this is more controversial – the same ultimately holds true for difference; and finally, insofar as the iterations by no means only stabilize the signs; because each new iteration, this was Derrida’s argument, exposes the sign to the challenges of a new context, which opens up the game of identity and difference anew.

If there is any truth in this, *signs emerge from the material of similarity, which they simultaneously leave behind and make forgotten*. Identity and difference are the result of over-accentuation; ‘identity’ exaggerates the aspect of similarity until – at least seemingly – every trace of difference evaporates; ‘difference’ over-accentuates the differences that separate things, even if they are similar in other respects.<sup>16</sup>

As an exaggeration/over-accentuation, identity and difference are less stable than thought. Similarity haunts them. In this respect, too, similarity proves to be surprisingly vital...

## 10. Media

Schema and sign – and one will have to emphasize this again, because it is by no means a consensus or standard in media studies – thus move into the center of the media definition. Not communication or technology, not the individual media, which in their diversity always draw attention to themselves, not ‘information’ or ‘the digital,’ but alone the common/comprehensive property of operating with schematization is what constitutes media.

Media, that would be my concluding thesis, organize similarity. Or more precisely:

1. *Media are social machines that reduce complexity by observing similarity, that schematize/typify it, and make it available to the discourse in typified form as a set of signs.*
2. *Media banish the uncanny inherent in similarity by splitting it into identity and difference, through the creation of signs as quasi-objects, through conventionalization and reification.*
3. *And at the same time, every new text, every new image, every algorithm raises the problem anew and constantly restarts the game between similar and dissimilar, identity and difference – testing the already established signs again and again.*

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<sup>16</sup> “Rosch et al. (1976) argue that *the distribution of features among concepts results in natural clusters that maximize within-category similarity and minimize between-category similarity*. ” (Ramscar, Michael; Port, Robert: Categorization (without categories). In: Dabrowska, E.; Divjak, D. (eds.): Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter Mouton, pp. 75-99, p. 81 (emphasis H. W.)). The passage has already been quoted in the chapter ‘Identity.’