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RUSSIAN CHURCH SCHISM OF THE 17TH CENTURY AS A SEMIOTIC PROBLEM

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Abstract

The paper presents the semiotic justification of hypothesis on the conflict of two sign systems as the prime cause of the Russian church schism on the basis of semanalysis by J. Kristeva. The polemics of Old Believers with the followers of Patriarch Nikon demonstrates that the latter ones understood a sign as the model of "semiotic triangle": 1) referent, 2) symbol, 3) thought of reference. The structure of a sign is composed of the second and third elements; its decoding is linear – from a symbol to a concept. The link between a material form of a sign and its conceptual content has conventional character. The carriers of medieval mentality heading the Old Belief movement considered a sign as a "semiotic square: 1) denotation-1 (referent), 2) signifier (symbol), 3) significatum (thought of reference), 4) denotation-2 (spiritual essence where the denotation-1 acts as a material conductor). Decoding of a sign represents a three-stage ascension to its spiritual pristine origin: from a symbol to denotation-1 and further – to denotation-2. Such "ladder of meaning" is based on the projection principle: a symbol is perceived as a reflection of denotation-1, which acts as a reflection of denotation-2. In such "mirror" structure the modification of any "reflecting surface" leads to semantic and spiritual reorientation of a sign, which begins to "project" false sequence of denotations outside. Therefore, absolutely innocent, from the point of view of reformers, formal ceremonial reforms were perceived by Old Believers as an attempt to substitute the essence of key Christian symbols.

1. Introduction

The second half of the 17th century is marked by intensive secularization of the Russian culture, its system reorganization and gradual rapprochement with cultures of the Western European countries. Not only esthetic standards, morals and manners, but also the system of thinking are changing.

The mental gap between the Middle Ages and the modern times is characterized by extremely complex "spatial" configuration: in some areas of cross-cultural interaction it is absent, in many respects it is surprisingly easily surmountable, however some insignificant, at first sight, details open such innermost gap of mutual misunderstanding, against the backdrop of which any hope to reach the consensus, which seemed achieved in many critical points, is impossible. But the most complex conflicts of two types of a worldview arise not in the field of ideas or moral values, but due to radically different understanding of the nature of a symbol.

2. Problem Statement

The reasons of the Russian church schism of the 17th century traditionally covered social and religious contradictions. Perhaps, S. Mathauserová was the first to emphasize the semiotic nature of this conflict. According to her, the opposition of the followers of Avvakum and Nikon only revealed the hidden opposition between the culture of the Russian Middle Ages and the emerging culture of modern times, which reached its climax in the second half of the 17th century.

Considering two opposite concepts of the text in the Russian literature of the 17th century – archaic and close to modern, S. Mathauserová associates them with the names of the archpriest Avvakum and Symeon Polotsky. Substantival understanding of the nature of a word is typical for "indigenous" medieval concept of a text presented in the heritage of the "rebellious archpriest": "A word in itself equals the designated substance; the word and the god are made of one matter and to read such text means to fall within a sphere of influence of the same matter" (Mathauserová, 1976a). The artistic world created according to this concept "is filled with ideal constants, motionless and invariable, which reached the highest limit" (Mathauserová, 1976a). The supporters of the archaic model were interested in "ideal beauty, which cannot be conceived through feelings". On the contrary, Symeon Polotsky and his followers perceived beauty "as harmony, a balance"; the artistic world is built in compliance with hierarchical laws; the text acts as the "object critically perceived by the subject" (Mathauserová, 1976a); the word is not connected with the essence of a signifier (Mathauserová, 1976a).

In 1999 O.N. Bakhtina published a monograph devoted to the problem of understanding of the nature of a word by Old Believers. The analysis of different genres of Old Believers texts allows the author to conclude that for the leaders of a schism "each word equals to the substance or subject, which it designates" and "there is a direct link between the name and the thin", "the text is something given, it is the revelation. It can exist in its initial form, finished and invariable. <...> correction of even one word, one letter destroys the text in general" (Bakhtina, 1999). Following S. Mathauserová, O.N. Bakhtina comes to a conclusion that the "era of the 17th century is characterized by the fight of ideas between supporters of former traditional medieval culture and creators of a new European culture. Various understanding of a word within once uniform orthodox culture became the basis of this fight. For Symeon Polotsky it was a literary word, by means of which it was possible to express and transmit the divine word of truth. For the leaders of Old

Belief, the word was the embodied Word of God <...>. The text was given from above, a scribe had to decipher its symbolic meaning" (Bakhtina, 1999).

S. Mathauserová and O.N. Bakhtina describe the medieval concept of a word from perspectives and to a certain extent in a language of the Old Russian scribe. However, to understand the mechanisms of semiotics being the cornerstone of the Russian religious schism there is a need to broadcast esthetic and theological concepts of ecclesiastical writers of the 17th century into the language of modern semiotics. In other words, it is necessary to consider not only a reflection of subjects of semiotics regarding the essence of a sign, but also the objective nature of sign structures used by them.

3.   Research Questions

The paper considers a structurally functional nature of a sign in the Russian Middle Ages culture in its conditionality of theological representations of the era. The problem formulated by us implies the need to answer the following interconnected questions: How exactly the ideas of Old Russian scribes on the substantival nature of a word are reflected in the functions of the sign and the structure of sign systems? How the specific nature of functioning of the sign in religious and near-religious discourse of the Ancient Russia defines its internal structure? Why is it impossible to change the fixed attitude to a sign and a word as to segments of "primary" (spiritual) reality for the carriers of medieval mentality?

4.   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to demonstrate that the conflict of two "theories of a word" in the polemics of Old Believers and supporters of the Patriarch Nikon, which made any compromise between the conflicting parties impossible due to strict adherence to principles, stems from significantly different understanding of the reference relations of a symbol with the reality objects. Thus, besides historical, literary and cultural justification given by S. Mathauserová and O.N. Bakhtina, the hypothesis on the conflict of two semiotic systems as to the prime cause of the Russian church schism will also receive its semiotic justification.

5.   Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study is the hypothesis of S. Mathauserová (Mathauserová, 1976a; Mathauserová, 1976b) and O.N. Bakhtina (Bakhtina, 1999) on the fact that the opposition of supporters of the "ancient piety" and the official church had not so much social or theological, but semiotic nature.

The interpretation of the structure of a sign is based on the concept of a floating signifier by J. Lacan subsequently developed by J. Kristeva, J. Baudrillard, et al., which became one of the cornerstones of post-structuralism philosophy.

Emphasizing the fact that a significatum and a signifier represent separate, isolated ranks, J. Lacan challenges the possibility of stable signification (Lacan, 1977): the meaning is not initially inherent to the sign and arises as a situational reaction of unconscious to the flow of signifiers constantly bombarding our sense organs. According to Lacan, the symbol always seeks to "kill" the material prototype, which it replaces (Lacan, 1977), i.e. it fixes the lack of the object it signifies, fills the emptiness caused by this absence and hence displaces its denotation making its existence superfluous (Lacan, 1977). Moreover, as

J. Baudrillard shows, the sign is able to generate a simulated denotation, which not existing in reality is strongly built into the system of social communications and in some cases is more convincing, than any material phenomena (Baudrillard, 1994).

Based on the postulates of J. Lacan, J. Kristeva criticizes the principles of classical structural and semiotic analysis: the denotation is perceived as the operation, "in relation to which the structure is only the postponed result" (Kristeva, 2013). The meaning is not derived by the addressee in the course of decoding of material structure of a sign as some reality premised from the outside; on the contrary, the structure of a sign is spontaneously created by the addressee in the course of meaning formation.

Three conclusions logically following from the statements by J. Lacan and J. Kristeva are significantly important for us. In its unconditional, extra subject expression the structure of a sign is completely limited to the structure of its material form. The structure of a sign as a whole, in the aggregate with significatum, signifier, connotative and denotative links, is a derivative of its function, therefore, the same sign unit can easily be restructured depending on operating conditions. The sign is simulative by nature: arising at the initial stage of language formation as the conditional substitute of a real object, during the post-archaic era and in the course of development and complication of semiotic systems, it strives more to "kill" the material denotation and fill the reality with its pseudodenotative projections having explicitly virtual nature.

Postulating the insolvency of traditional approaches to the study of sign objects, J. Kristeva opposes the familiar structural semiotic analysis to the method of semanalysis defined as the "theory of a text denotation, where the sign is considered as a speculative element ensuring the representation of generation – emergence process – which is internal for it, covering it entirely and which undertakes the definition of laws" (Kristeva, 2013).

The methodological opposition set by J. Kristeva is conditional to some extent. The structural and semiotic analysis and semanalysis imply the same methodology, but substantially different approach to the interpretation of obtained results: in the first case they are perceived as an explication objectively fixed structures and values in the text, in the second – as clarification of initial structural ambiguity of a text and a sign by imposing the mental matrix inherent to signifying "I", which to a certain extent may be objectified due to its "cultural footprint". Thus, the semanalysis may be considered as the structural and semiotic analysis not within structural and generative or functional aspect, the explorative sign not as a semantic structure detached from a subject, but as a process structure and meaning creation, in unity of a material form of the sign and the semiotic intension of an addressee having a certain social and cultural conditionality.

The symbol in different meanings may be treated as one of the kinds of a sign (in which the plan of content corresponds to the plan of expression following the principle of similarity, but surpasses it in scale and semantic depth), as well as its material cover (plan of expression). Further we will use this concept in both meanings without specifying it particularly every time.

6. Findings

As D.S. Likhachev fairly noted, "the Middle Ages penetrated the world with complex symbolics connecting everything in a uniform a priori system" (Likhachev, 1979). Such system is transparent: a set

of meanings of each symbol is accurately defined (discrepancies and even polar interpretations meet, but they are not numerous); in most cases the rules of cooccurrence of symbols are simple and intuitively clear. However, the architectonic simplicity at the level of single units turns to be extremely complex and ambiguous at the level of a text.

Since in the understanding of medieval consciousness the reality is totally symbolic, in the real world there are no unconditional and invariable borders between symbols and their denotations. A symbolic object (a ship, a plant, an animal, etc.) or a symbolic situation may contain a number of self-sufficient symbolic objects (a mast, an anchor, a stern, etc.) having their meanings, which are updated in different contexts and, as a result, resound differently with the meaning of an integrative symbol up to its transformation into the meaning opposite to the initial one.

Let us give some examples. The circle in medieval symbolics designated eternity, transcendence, divine (as self-closed ideal structures having neither beginning not end). Any deviation of a geometrical figure from correct shape of a circle indicates the degression on a vertical ladder of life, immersion into the sphere of material. A square is remote and distorted projection of a divine circle in terrestrial reality, the sign of the real and carnal world. Those beginnings, which as a part of a circle are reconciled and merged in the highest, incomprehensible synthesis, within the square represent the ineradicable ambivalence as a system of binary oppositions (East – West, North – South; winter – summer, spring – fall, etc.). The Good News (Evangelion) is a circle, but when getting into the material world it is realized in "tetrahedral" structure – Tetraevangelion, the creators of which will spread it in all four parts of the world. According to the same symbolic logic the Orthodox church in its vertical structure strives from angles (below) towards rotundities (above). If the right angle corresponds to the terrestrial (middle) world, then any point demonstrates further downward movement towards the backslide city. An absolutely sharp angle (a peak, an edge, a needle) represents the "anti-circle", a sign of complete fall from grace.

Considering these circumstances, it is easy to imagine that in the medieval Physiologus that symbolicly explains the appearance and habits of animals, where the hedgehog designates the sinner: "A hedgehog has sharp skin and it is impossible to catch him barehanded, no animal can eat it: similar to a person when he acquires wealth and sins: it is impossible to correct his mind as to catch a hedgehog". However, in the line below we find the opposite interpretation: "Besides, those who will acquire virtues may be eaten by devils" (Buslayev, 1990).

Taking the rule of medieval "symbolic arithmetic" into account, this imaginary contradiction may be easily solved. For this purpose, we will need to quote one more fragment of Physiologus. According to its author, a fox is an image of devilish cunning and insidiousness: "Loves hens very much; and if they sit high and she cannot devour them, then she sits below and looks at them alertly, and her eyes sparkle as fire. Then hens fall down with fear, and the fox grabs them by a throat so that they do not shout" (Buslayev, 1990). In this scene the fox is a devil, hens – sinners that get into the trap by their folly and spiritual spinelessness.

But if the fox (devil) tries to attack not a silly chicken but a hedgehog, the latter one, trying to escape from death, turns into a sphere (divine). In the resulting formula ("fox + hedgehog = circle") the "senior" symbols (a circle and a fox) prevail the "younger" (a needle) and the sinner-hedgehog magically turns into the righteous person, and the needles initially meaning a sin – into virtues. In the same way in a crown of

thorns, one of the key Christian symbols, the "senior" symbol (circle) subordinates the "younger" (thorns) and incorporates it into its semantic sphere.

Traditional understanding of a sign structure implies that it has three levels of realization in the relation to a material world: 1) denotation or referent (set of reality objects designated by it), 2) material form or signifier, 3) significatum (conceptual content) (Saussure, 1933; Ogden, Richards, 1927; Frege, 2000; Barthes, 1968; Vrijmoed, 2011; Głaz, 2017; Somov, 2008).

If a medieval scribe tried to formulate the intuitive understanding of the nature of a sign in the same manner, the final scheme would be slightly different. Let us demonstrate this with an example of another fundamental Christian symbol – a cross: 1) denotation-1 – a wooden cross set up on Golgotha, on which, according to the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ was crucified, 2) a material form of a sign – the image of a cross on the icon, a baptismal cross, mention of a cross in literature monuments, a sign of the cross, etc., 3) significatum – a complex set of theological ideas related to a cross concept, 4) denotation-2 – a transcendental essence, which the material sign form refers to (in this case – a divine grace to the world through sacrificial sufferings, death and the Resurrection). At the same time in most cases denotation-2 is not just a referent object, but at the same time one of the participants (subjects) of communicative process, which is rarely active (initiator), but whom eventually the final result of this process always depends on.

For medieval consciousness significatum is significant, but, undoubtedly, a secondary component of a symbol. The main objective of any symbolic structure is to establish a vertical correlation (not semantic, but material) between two denotative plans of reality. Denotation-1, being a material projection denotation-2, is connected with it by the strongest metaphysical clamps and directly represents it in reality. The more narrow the subject sphere of both denotations and the ontologically "stronger" the denotation-2, the more clearly expressed this communication. Denotation-1 in similar symbolic constructs acts as a "communication channel" between worlds: through it celestial, non-material entities manifest themselves in the distant world and through it the spiritual ascension from the distant world to celestial is possible.

The communicative channel "an olive – the righteous person" has quite low "capacity" since both denotations represent extensive sets of phenomena having a uniform nature (any olive, any righteous person), and denotation-2 as such is "quite weak". Unlike sanctity, righteousness is a projection of projection (as a Saint is the "projection" of Christ (Mineeva, 2000), so the wordly righteous person is the "projection" of the Saint). In this relation both the denotation-1 (an olive tree) and a material form of a sign (an image or a verbal description of an olive) only indicate the denotation-2, but cannot serve as a translator of its emanations; they remind us of righteousness, but are not able to spread it throughout the world. In signs of this kind (with "indistinct" generalized denotation-2) the significative component is domineering.

The relics is incomparably more "efficient" symbol, which is mainly caused by the original power of denotation-2. Second, the denotation-1 (Saint in his mortal life – a carnal person who found sanctity) and denotation-2 (Saint in his death – sanctity as purely spiritual instance) are extremely specific. It is important to understand that in this respect the relics act not as a material form of a sign, but as a material part of denotation-1. That is, in similar symbolic structures the denotation-1 is the primary point of a synapse with denotation-2, but not a signifier. The Holy Cross as denotation-1 is "stronger" than the relics of the Saint similar to the prototype (Christ) standing behind being more powerful than any of its likeness.

The material form of a sign (for example, an icon or an image of a cross), being at the same time a projection of denotation-1 and denotation-2, opens access to this communication channel from the outside, through a set of available entry points. But for this reason the "communicative efficiency" is significantly lower than for the direct link "denotation-1 – denotation-2", which is not mediated by additional constructive units.

According to medieval representations, the sacred relics, the Holy Cross (or even their tiny particles) possess a huge thaumaturgic power, unlike the icon of the Saint or a baptismal cross. For the signifier (simultaneously or permanently) to come up with denotation-1 in its intermediary effectiveness there is a need for some certain super-effort from one of communicants: let's say, the icon may take on thaumaturgic properties willed by God or due to a special spiritual gift of the icon painter, or the Lord can show a miracle through it in response to a sincere and wrestling prayer. In such circumstances there is a particular "denotatization" of a signifier: it becomes another additional denotation-1 in relation to denotation-2 and in turn gains the ability to generate own signs-projections (for example, copies of esteemed thaumaturgic icon).

The significative sign allows relatively free replacement of a signifier. The only requirement is that a new material form of a sign shall dementalise the significatum with not smaller degree of completeness and accuracy than the previous one. The denotative sign is particularly vulnerable concerning any formal modifications. Since its material cover does not express a certain abstract meaning, but serves as an "access code" to quite certain two-uniform denotative structure, the accidental or malicious damage of a form automatically "reassigns" a sign, changes its referential potential. In other words, instead of fully or partially becoming a semantic "shell", as a result of formal intervention it is simply reoriented towards another object, – perhaps, related to the initial, but not identical to it. The medieval culture does not know obviously "empty" colorable sign covers: if there is a sign, then it points to something by all means even if its meaning is unknown.

Any operations with formality of a sign seem to medieval authors as increased spiritual responsibility. Thus, criticizing the conformation of the Virgin Mary to a rose so popular among the Catholics, Maximus the Greek recognizes that at first sight the beauty and fragrance of a flower justify such rapprochement (it shall be added here that the red color is one of the Blessed Virgin Mary colors), however the rose has thorns, which designate a sin in Christian symbolics. Thus, the semantics of one of material components of a symbol conflicts to the semantics of a whole, and hence, the rose cannot be an emblem of the Virgin Mary. The scribe suggests the appropriate replacement free from internal semantic contradictions: a lily is white in color, which indicates the purity of the Virgin Mary, and has three petals thereby highlighting that through the Virgin Mary the God came to the world in the human body (Likhachev, 1979).

Especially dangerous case of intervention into the structure of a symbol is reorientation of its semantic vector towards the object opposite the initial one at preservation of the general architectonic signifier. A relatively primitive and easily recognizable example of such malicious influence is the upside-down restructuring of units within a material form of a sign. Thus, a witch saying a Jesus prayer "backwards", gives it a devilish meaning; holding a church candle a flame down, it thereby demonstrates its worship to the devil. However, quite often the structural "injection" has occasional character and may

be perceived by uneducated mind as an accidental failure not affecting the referential characteristics of a symbol. If not detected and neutralized in time, its spiritual consequences may be really devastating.

A classic example of such (unintentional, however) semantic "castling" is the history of a word "ангел" (angel). It is known that in Ancient Greek language the sound combination "ng" (with nasal "n") was designated by a double "gamma" (γγ). Thus, in Greek the word "ангел" was written as "ἄγγελος". During the translation of liturgical texts into Old Slavic language it was transliterated with the maximum approach to the original: "аг҃глъ". The number of spelling options of writing of this word (especially at the early stage of Slavic writing) was quite big. A titlo over a double letter "г" served a phonetic "index" making a reader understand that, on the one hand, a word has missing letters, and on the other – that in this case "гг̃" shall be pronounced as "ng".

However, in some manuscripts the titlo over the word "аг҃глъ" was omitted due to negligence of copyists. Thus, along with "ангел", the word "аггел" appeared in texts. Taking into account the similarity of these two words, nevertheless the differences were evident and shock the ear. A conclusion was obvious to the medieval scribe: the bearer dissimilation also testifies the internal one. But if the word "ангел" defines a heavenly being, the God's bearer, what does the word "аггел" define? For obvious reasons, it defines a being opposite to an angel opposite, i.e. a demon, a Satan's servant.

Clearly, our extremely simplified scheme does not reveal all delicate graphic-orthographic and even psycholinguistic nuances of this process. The general context played a huge role, therefore the word "аггел" without a titlo, however used in a reference meaning ("ангел"), can be met in different monuments including in Old Believer literature. In this case it is important to us to emphasize the fact that even purely mechanical mistakes leading to insignificant graphic "dissimilation" of two writing options of one and the same word during the Middle Ages could become the most serious basis for disputes on the meaning.

From the perspective of a significative model of a sign the intension of a communicant seems a priority: if a believer prays to God, his prayer, even being formally "wrong", shall reach its destination; as a last resort – if the failures are fatal, it will simply not reach the addressee, but without conscious participation of a "sender" it cannot be readdressed to any other instance (i.e. a prayer to God cannot turn, for example, into a prayer to Satan regardless of the will of a worshiper). In the denotative sign the link between the denotation-2 and the signifier is perceived not as conditional (depending on certain common language and common cultural conventional beliefs), but objectively predetermined by the nature of the significatum. Thus, the communicative orientation of a sign depends only on its structure, but not on the intension of a speaker. Therefore, if a believer addresses the God's angel, folly calling it an "аггел", his message will be objectively "delivered" to the "аггел" (i.e. to a demon).

In view of the above one understands the categorical, furious rejection of the schismatic of the Nikon church reforms, which, if fairly estimated, had particularly formal character and did not interfere with the essence of Christian doctrine. As is known, the most "blasphemous" assaults of the Nikon followers on "ancient piety" pursued a relatively rational objective – unification of liturgical practice of the Greek and Russian orthodox churches. This and notorious correction of prayer books, as well as the replacement of a sign of cross made with two fingers into the same sign with three fingers, and writing of the name "Иисус" (Jesus) with two letters "и" following a Greek pattern, but not with one as it was accepted earlier, etc.

For "significative" New Believers the refusal from writing "Исус" in favor of "Иисус" is a purely spelling reform; both options are semantically identical and hence the choice between them is only defined by practical expediency. The situation is also obvious for the supporters of the denotative approach and the only possible solution is also indisputable: here we see the literal repetition of the story about an "ангел" (angel) and "аггел" (demon). "Исус" (Jesus) – the name of the Son of God; it was long since written this way in all sacred books. Adding an extra letter, we break the link between a name and its carrier, we substitute the essence, and hence, the transformed name "Иисус" does not any more define Christ, but his infernal "twin" – Antichrist. Privately praying to "Иисус" or being present at a church service where this name is proclaimed, a person, even if all his thoughts are directed to the Son of God, de facto says a prayer to the Satan and thus gradually without noticing ruins his soul.

Even more evidently this especially semiotic conflict is revealed in the sign of cross made with two and three fingers (Uspensky, 1996). In fact, both ways of crossing the fingers could be equally called the sign of cross made with three fingers. In the first case the cross with three fingers is formed by thumb, index, and middle fingers; a little finger and a ring finger are placed separately being slightly bended and densely fixed to each other. In the second case a thumb, a ring finger and a little finger form a triad; a middle and index are straightened and put together (at the same time the middle finger is slightly bended – in commemoration of kenosis). In both cases the three fingers put together mean the Holy Trinity in the unity of its forms, two separately put fingers – divine and human nature of Christ.

For those who think inspired by modern times the cross with two or three fingers are semantically equivalent: they are based on the same principle, have similar structural units and dementalize a uniform set of meanings; the same functions are differently distributed between components of a symbol. For medieval consciousness this distinction only is important: reversion of formal units making a plan of a symbol expression (as well as in a case with a prayer said backwards) implies the replacement of its content into the opposite.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of semiotic prerequisites of the Russian church schism of the 17th century allows concluding that the concept of a sign of the Old Believers significantly differs from that, which is relevant for cultural consciousness of modern times.

The study of polemics of Old Believers with the followers of Patriarch Nikon demonstrates that the latter ones understood a sign as a three-element structure associated with the model of "semiotic triangle" by C. Ogden, I. Richards (Ogden, Richards, 1927): 1) denotation (referent), 2) material form (symbol), 3) significatum (thought of reference). At the same time the structure of a sign is composed of the second and third elements; the denotation is peripheral. The decoding of the sign is linear – from a plan of expression to the plan of content; from a symbol to a concept. Due to primacy of the significatum, the link between a material form of a sign and its conceptual content has conditional (conventional) character: the signifier can be modified without the loss of content provided that a new "convention on values" will be disseminated to all communicants.

The carriers of medieval mentality heading the Old Belief movement considered a sign as a "semiotic square: 1) denotation-1 (referent), 2) signifier (symbol), 3) significatum (thought of reference),

4) denotation-2 (spiritual essence where the denotation-1 acts as a material conductor). In this structure the third element is peripheral (significatum): it only performs the indicative function, focusing a subject towards denotation-2. Decoding of a sign represents a three-stage ascension to its spiritual pristine origin: from a symbol to denotation-1 and further – to denotation-2. Such "ladder of meaning" is based on the projection principle: a symbol is perceived as a reflection of denotation-1, which acts as a reflection of denotation-2. In such "mirror" structure the modification of any "reflecting surface" (in particular a signifier as a level of the most available for intervention) leads to semantic and spiritual reorientation of a sign, which begins to "project" false sequence of denotations outside.

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