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READER OF "NEW" MEDIA

08. CONTEXT AND CONTENT

IN THIS CLASS

- Today we will finish talking about the logic of the object based on what we talked about during our last class

- We will move on to understanding the third area of analysis, how we situate the object spatially

- Final paper and activities

IN OUR PREVIOUS CLASS

- We tried to develop a frame for our way of doing analysis, dividing it in three areas
- The interactive area, where we *grasp* an object
- The logical area, where the object has *internal coherence*
- The spatial area, where the object is *located*
- We distinguished levels of interaction—depending on how we perceive, interface and utilize objects
- Here we defined the *graspability* of an object as the property of an object to be used in some particular way
- Then we talked about the logic of the object
- In order to posit a thesis on what the logic of an object is, we use a methodology to define the object as a *world*
- We finally saw the connection between the graspability and logic of an object defined as an inverse relation on their symbolicity and its constitution

MAKING A THESIS ON LOGIC

- One thing we need to try and understand is the symbolic involvement of an object

- Let's trace back to the Peircean origin of this line of thinking

- Remember the concept of symbol

- *A symbol is a representamen which fulfills its function regardless of any similarity or analogy with its object and equally regardless of any factual connection therewith, but solely and simply because it will be interpreted to be a representamen. Such for example is any general word, sentence, or book.*

SYMBOLIC COMPLEXITY

- Peircean signs are not unambiguous, and so interpretation of qualities is left as a task of intuition to some degree

- Symbolic qualities are highly contextual, and some objects make these easier to access

- The *symbolic threshold* is, however, the golden standard for complexity

- *Indexicals* and *icons* do not seem to hold the same currency. Why?
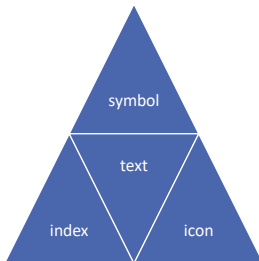
CONSTRUCTING LOGICAL RELATIONS

- Let's revisit our Wittgensteinian idea again

- If we try to conceptualize the internal construction of a cultural object as coherent and understandable as a *world*, we need to understand what we mean by *world* in this case

- We consider *entities* which have *qualities* and enter into *relations*—this picture is closer to Russell's logical atomism

- But we're one step removed from the logical picture of the world

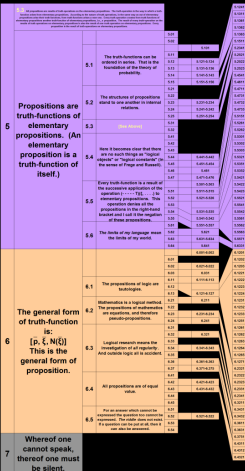- This is a way of modeling what we want to extract from the object

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LOGICAL ATOMISM

- Logical atomism is both a metaphysical and a methodological view of philosophy

- The idea is that you can map truth conditions to radical (basic) facts in the world

- This way of analyzing lends itself well enough to narrativity

- But how do we frame this *logic*?

AN EASY EXAMPLE

Magic: The Gathering provides us with a fully fleshed out example of at least one logical dimension of an object

RULES AS A LOGICAL SYSTEM

- MtG is a collectible/trading card game where two players duel against each other

- The basics of the game are: You have a 60 (or 40, or 100) card deck made up of spells, creatures and lands, start with 20 life and to win the game you have to make your opponent reach 0 life

- As the game's complexity increases with every new card and with every set, its actual rules are intricate

- 250 pages with 9 sections dealing with all sorts of general rules and corner cases derived from the existence of the rules

613.3. Within layers 2–6, apply effects from characteristic-defining abilities first (see rule 604.3), then all other effects in timestamp order (see rule 613.7). Note that dependency may alter the order in which effects are applied within a layer. (See rule 613.8.)

613.4. Within layer 7, apply effects in a series of sublayers in the order described below. Within each sublayer, apply effects in timestamp order. (See rule 613.7.) Note that dependency may alter the order in which effects are applied within a sublayer. (See rule 613.8.)

613.4a *Layer 7a*: Effects from characteristic-defining abilities that define power and/or toughness are applied. See rule 604.3.

613.4b *Layer 7b*: Effects that set power and/or toughness to a specific number or value are applied. Effects that refer to the base power and/or toughness of a creature apply in this layer.

613.4c *Layer 7c*: Effects and counters that modify power and/or toughness (but don't set power and/or toughness to a specific number or value) are applied.

613.4d *Layer 7d*: Effects that switch a creature's power and toughness are applied. Such effects take the value of power and apply it to the creature's toughness, and take the value of toughness and apply it to the creature's power.
   Example: *A 1/3 creature is given +0/+1 by an effect. Then another effect switches the creature's power and toughness. Its new power and toughness is 4/1. A new effect gives the creature +5/+0. Its "unswitched" power and toughness would be 6/4, so its actual power and toughness is 4/6.*
   Example: *A 1/3 creature is given +0/+1 by an effect. Then another effect switches the creature's power and toughness. Its new power and toughness is 4/1. If the +0/+1 effect ends before the switch effect ends, the creature becomes 3/1.*
   Example: *A 1/3 creature is given +0/+1 by an effect. Then another effect switches the creature's power and toughness. Then another effect switches its power and toughness again. The two switches essentially cancel each other, and the creature becomes 1/4.*

THE LOGIC OF A CLOSED SYSTEM

- Let's deal with a different example

- Take an online fps (CoD MW2 pictured)

- What we want to do is reduce the whole system into simpler chunks

- Movement, actions, reactions, limited placement, etc.

- All this things can be construed as both opening the logic of the object and limiting its reach

GREIMASIAN SEMIOTICS AS AN ALTERNATIVE

- Algirdas Greimas has a different take on how to understand a semiotic system

- Greimas, as a semiotician entrenched in the French tradition, tried to understand how there may be conceptual networks in a work of art

- These conceptual networks can be represented and give rise to understanding the semiotic logic of a certain work

- We chase the narrativity of a work by pushing the binary oppositions that emerge from understanding how the inner structure of the work actually looks like

GREIMAS SQUARE

- Greimas's square is a system for uncovering the relations between semiotic elements in a text

- We use evidenced concepts and derive implications and oppositions between them

- We apply these sets of relations to certain items within the object and extend it to multiple objects of one text, creating a layered, scaled analysis

- By doing this we uncovered conceptual relations that give us new syntactical and semantic info about the object
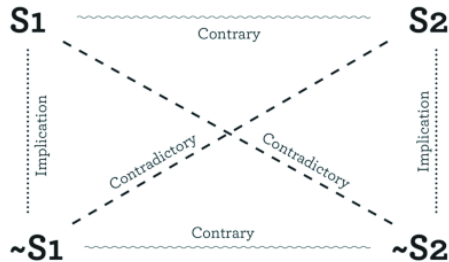
Blythe & Encinas
(2016)

EXAMPLE

3. APPLICATION : THE PASSION OF CHRIST

We shall adapt an example from Courtés (1991, 152-154) using the *Bible*. With respect to the opposition life/death, Christ goes through the following stages:

1. Not-life + not-death: the divine existential state, beyond life and death.
2. Life: At the Nativity, Jesus becomes human.
3. Not-life: the agony of crucifixion.
4. Death: He is pierced by the lance, confirming his death, and placed in the tomb.
5. Not-death: the process of resurrection. (Is it instantaneous or does it occur over time? In the latter case, there would be an ellipsis: why, and with what effect on the story?)
6. Life: emerging from the tomb. Other interpretations are possible: The resurrection brings Jesus back to not-life + not-death, even here on Earth, or it grants him boundless life, freed from death (life + not-death). To simplify things, we shall say that Jesus is in life, and that the Ascension is what brings him back to not-life + not-death.
7. Not-life + not-death: beginning with the Ascension.

You will notice that this syntactic description has the advantage of eliciting some much-debated theological positions and pinpointing them within a framework. These debates are interpreted in terms of "conflicts" over different classifications on the same semiotic square. For instance, some people maintain that when Jesus was placed in the tomb, he was not actually dead, but in a state of not-life. Changes in beliefs may be represented as syntactic movement on the square, insofar as we consequently apply veridictory categories (true/false) to each position that is taken. Thus, for Thomas, Jesus is in death, not life, which he mistakenly believes until he touches Jesus' wounds.

Hébert (2007)

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- The context in which we observe a cultural object is absolutely important

- The analytical point we're trying to make, however, situates the object in our theoretical landscape

- Let's remember the concept of the semiosphere

MAKING YOUR SEMIOSPHERE

- It's said that an individual can theoretically be their own semiosphere

- How do we construct a theoretical semiosphere though?

- We set rules for it, paradigmatic and syntagmatic ones

- The properties of the semiosphere are still the same regarding how texts move and what its structure looks like

DISPARATE ELEMENTS, ONE SEMIOSPHERE?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Interaction

Logic

Location

FINAL PAPER/ACTIVITIES

- Thoughts about final paper?

- Activities for the remainder of the semester