

Biosemiotics as a Possible Bridge Between Embodiment in Cognitive Semantics and the Motivation Concept of Animal Cognition in Ethology

Søren Brier¹

Abstract: In the context of the question of the emergence of mind in evolution the present paper argues that the concept of linguistic motivation, through the theory of embodiment in cognitive semantics, can be connected with the concept of motivation in ethology. This connection is established through Lakoff and Johnson's embodied cognitive semantics on the one hand and on the other hand through the theory of biosemiotics. The biosemiotics used is based on C.S. Peirce's semiotics and the work of J. von Uexküll. Motivation will in this context be understood as a decisive factor in determining which kind of interpretant a living system constructs when perturbed by a significant disturbance in its signification sphere. From this basis the concept of sign stimuli in Ethology, based on the concept of innate release response mechanism (IRM,) is paralleled with the concept of embodied metaphorical categorization based on the concept of idealized cognitive models (ICM). It is realized that we are dealing with motivation on two different levels, that of the linguistic and that of the perceptual-behavioral level. The connection is made through pragmatic language and sign theory viewing language as getting its meaning through language games integrated in cultural life forms and animals signs to get their meaning through sign games and natural life forms. Further connection is made through the common insight of the significant role of embodiment to create signification through the construction of a signification sphere. The later concept is a Peircian biosemiotic conceptualization of von Uexküll's original Umwelt concept.

[1] Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen, sbr@kvl.dk