**Jakobson, Roman (1896-1982)**

Roman Osipovich Jakobson (Роман Осипович Якобсон), one of the most renowned linguists of the twentieth century, is best known for his work as a semiotician. He is credited with being a major architect in the development of structuralism in the twentieth century. Born in Moscow, Jakobson was a member of the Russian Formalists and is one of the founding fathers of the Prague Linguistic Circle. He taught extensively between the wars in Europe; afterwards he carried out most of his work in the United States where he bridged political, linguistic and philosophical divides, thus allowing semiotics to develop into a modern science. Jakobson followed Swiss philologist Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) understanding of the dyadic composition of the sign. However, Jakobson’s particular foundation allowed him to see past some of the limitations of Saussure’s sign theories. Lead by John Locke’s (1632-1704) *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and deeply influenced by a lesser known American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), Jakobson conceived a modern construction of the sign enabling an innovative understanding of human communication. Jakobson taught in the United States where he founded the New York Linguistic Circle and collaborated with Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), influencing Noam Chomsky (1928--) and Thomas Sebeok (1920-2001). Through the intersections of a multitude of channels, methods, thinkers and disciplines, Jakobson established a modern communication theory, based on six functions of language. Jakobson’s legacy has marked the fields of linguistics, semiotics, anthropology, philosophy and philology, amongst others.

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