

## 2. REPERTÓRIUMOK

### 2.1. HANDBOOK OF SEMIOTICS

Winfried NÖTH  
Bloomington and Indianapolis  
Indiana University Press  
1990.

When the German-language edition of this book was published in 1985, Thomas Sebeok, reviewing it in the *Times Literary Supplement*, called it “a bravura solo performance by a young German academic who has reduced into the compass of a one-volume manual a vast mass of information about contemporary semiotics. He is obviously abreast of most developments and well organized, has no evident partisan axes to grind, and writes with economy, precision, and lucidity.”

Winfried Nöth has now reworked his book into English, expanding it considerably and refining many of his definitions and concepts. The English *Handbook of Semiotics* is destined to become the most important handy reference for the discipline of semiotics, which Sebeok has called “an evolving theory of mind.”

Nöth’s ambitious work covers the field from Aesthetics to Zoosemiotics. Organized in eight parts, it contains sixty-five encyclopedic articles, a consolidated bibliography of almost 3,000 titles, an index of names, and an index of terms.

The approach Nöth has adopted is both descriptive and pluralistic. He sees current trends in semiotics as heterogeneous, and his *Handbook* includes the great variety of approaches to the study of signs. Differences are emphasized, as are the common foundations to the various points of view and the interconnections among them.

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## 2.2. LANGUAGES OF ART

### AN APPROACH TO A THEORY OF SYMBOLS

Nelson GOODMAN  
The Bobbs — Merrill Company, Inc.  
Publishers Indianapolis, New York  
1968.

Though this book deals with some problems pertaining to the arts, its scope does not coincide very closely with what is ordinarily taken to be the field of aesthetics. On the one hand, I touch only incidentally on questions of value, and offer no canons of criticism. No mandatory judgments are implied concerning any work I cite as an example, and the reader is invited to substitute his own illustrations. On the other hand, my study ranges beyond the arts into matters pertaining to the sciences, technology, perception, and practice. Problems concerning the arts are points of departure rather than of convergence. The objective is an approach to a general theory of symbols.

“Symbol” is used here as a very general and colorless term. It covers letters, words, texts, pictures, diagrams, maps, models, and more, but carries no implication of the oblique or the occult. The most literal portrait and the most prosaic passage are as much symbols, and as ‘highly symbolic’, as the most fanciful and figurative.

Systematic inquiry into the varieties and functions of symbols has seldom been undertaken. Expanding investigation in structural linguistics in recent years needs to be supplemented by and integrated with intensive examination of nonverbal symbol systems, from pictorial representation on the one hand to musical notation on the other, if we are to achieve any comprehensive grasp of the modes and means of reference and of their varied and pervasive use in the operations of the understanding. "Languages" in my title should, strictly, be replaced by "symbol systems". But the title, since always read before the book, has been kept in the vernacular. The nonreader will not mind, and the reader will understand—as the reader of my first book understands that the more accurate title would be "Structures of Appearance".

The six chapters, from their titles and their origin in lectures, might seem to be a collection of essays on loosely related topics. Actually, the structure of the book is rather intricate; two routes of investigation, one beginning in the first chapter and the other in the third, merge only in the last. No such simple warning, however, will overcome another difficulty some readers may face: while a layman should have little trouble with most of the book, he will encounter terms, paragraphs, and sections that assume some background in technical philosophy; and much of Chapter IV will be hard going for any stranger to elementary logic. Nevertheless, by reading around the technical passages, almost anyone can gather enough of what is under way to decide whether to make the effort needed to understand what he has skipped.

Layman or not, the reader must be prepared to find his convictions and his common sense—that repository of ancient error—often outraged by what he finds here. I have repeatedly had to assail authoritative current doctrine and fond prevailing faith. Yet I claim no outstanding novelty for my conclusions. I am by no means unaware of contributions to symbol theory by such philosophers as Peirce, Cassirer, Morris, and Langer; and while I reject one after another of the views common to much of the literature of aesthetics, most of my arguments and results may well have been anticipated by other writers. Yet since any attempt to trace the complex pattern of my agreement and disagreement with each or even any of these writers would give a purely historical matter disproportionate and distracting prominence, I can only make this blanket apology to those who may in effect already have written what they read here. However, where I have consulted specific works by psychologists and by writers on the several arts, I have tried always to give detailed references.

Frequently some result of my own earlier philosophical work has been brought to bear here, but I have tried not to regrind old axes. For instance, if some of the following pages violate the principles of nominalism, that is only because it seems unnecessary for me to show, for present purposes, how a nominalistic version may be formulated.

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## 2.1. DIE SCHRIFT

Hat Schreiben Zukunft?  
Vilém FLUSSER  
Frankfurt am Main  
Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag  
1992.

Viel ist die Rede vom bevorstehenden Ende der Schriftkultur, doch allzu oft erschöpft sich die Untersuchung dieses Phänomens in wohlfeilen Appellen zur Rettung von kostbarem »Kulturgut«. Einen völlig anderen Weg schlägt Vilém Flusser ein. Er vermag zu zeigen, daß die Struktur der abendländischen Schrift — z. B. Alphabet und Linearität — unlösbar mit Denkformen verbunden ist, die sich angesichts dramatisch veränderter Realitäten durchaus als geistige Fesseln erweisen könnten. Andererseits umkreist Flusser die gleichsam lebensweltlichen Erscheinungen der Schriftkultur: den Umgang mit Schreibmaterialien, das Ritual des Zeitunglesens, die imaginären Ordnungen der Bücherwände und Schreibtische, das festliche Auftreten des Briefträgers zu vorgegebener Stunde... Dieser ironischdistanzierte Blick auf das Selbstverständliche läßt erkennen, daß weit mehr auf dem Spiel steht als die Traditionen einer kulturellen Elite. Deutlich wird aber auch, daß die Durchdringung des Lebens durch die Schrift tiefle-

gende Bedürfnisse ausdrückt und befriedigt, und diese werden nicht einfach verschwinden, wenn Disketten und Piktogramme ihre Herrschaft antreten.

Vilém Flussers ebenso geistreicher wie witziger Essay ist der bisher überzeugendste Versuch, die Schriftkultur aus der Perspektive ihres möglichen Endes neu zu überdenken.

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## **2.4. BILD, DARSTELLUNG, ZEICHEN**

Philosophische Theorien bildhafter Darstellung

Olivier R. SCHOLZ  
München  
Verlag Karl Alber Feiburg  
1991.

Das Buch gibt einen kritischen Überblick über philosophische Bildtheorien vor dem Hintergrund gegenwärtiger Bemühungen um eine allgemeine Theorie der Darstellung und des Zeichens. In den kritischen Teilen wird gezeigt: ob ein Gegenstand als Bild fungiert, und was er gegebenenfalls darstellt, liegt weder allein in Ähnlichkeitsbeziehungen noch allein in der kausalen oder intentionalen Entstehungsgeschichte. Konstruktiv ergibt sich: Etwas ist nur dann ein Bild, wenn es als Element eines analogen Symbolsystems im Rahmen gewisser Handlungsmuster verwendet und verstanden wird. Die Einsicht in die System — und Gebrauchs — abhängigkeit des Bildbegriffs hat Folgen für die allgemeine Zeichentheorie, die Ästhetik und philosophische Psychologie.

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## **2.5. CHOREUTIK. GRUNDLAGEN DER RAUMHARMONIELEHRE DES TANZES**

Rudolf von LABAN

Aus dem Englischen übertragen von Claude Perrottet

Wilhelmshaven

Florian Noetzel Verlag

1991.

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