«The Enigma of Similarities: Discussing the Form/Content Relationship in Soviet Intellectual Circles in the 1920-30s»

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Abstract

This paper explores the semiotic quarrel which occupied an important space in the Soviet intellectual culture of the 1920-30s: is the relationship necessary or arbitrary between *form and content, sign and referent, words and things?* This parallel set of oppositions is in no way specific to Russian thought, as it has been at the heart of philosophical discussions in Europe since Plato's Cratylus and the Stoics in Greece. But what is peculiar for Soviet Russia of the time is that German Romanticism, Humboldt, Hegel, Marx are perceived through an underground Byzantine tradition, silent but over-present, of *denying the autonomy of the sign*.

Keywords: Comparison; Formalism; Orthodoxy; Semiotics; Similarity

It is a great misfortune that, unlike Russian literature, Russian scientific thought in social and human studies is little translated in Western European languages: *rossica non leguntur…* It could shed some light on a question which deserves a thorough examining: where is the Eastern limit of the so-called «Western thought» to be found, or, in other words, is Russia in the West or in the East?[1] in Europe or in Asia? or, if Russian thought has a specificity of its own, what does it consist in? If we consider that the hackneyed discourse on the Russian soul and on the *Sonderweg* of Russian culture brings no answer to this question, a huge collection of academic works is waiting to be explored.

The thesis I would like to present here is that the history of Soviet linguistics, and especially of the ideas on the relationship between sign

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1 On September 17th 2021, in a speech in Novgorod, V. Putin declared that «Russia is not just a country, it is really a separate civilization». Curiously, the Czech writer Milan Kundera agrees: «Prague is not in Eastern Europe, but in Mitteleuropa, Russia is not in Eastern Europe, but in Western Asia». The cardinal points are not only a geographical localization, they are also a point of view.

and reality in Russian intellectual life, can enlighten some aspects of this labyrinthic discussion.


I/ A general semiotic inquiry

In the Soviet intellectual culture of the 1920-30s a semiotic quarrel occupied an important place: is the relationship necessary or arbitrary between

> *form and content*
> *sign and referent*
> *words and things?*

This parallel set of oppositions deserves close scrutiny, but it is in no way specific to Russian thought, as it has been at the heart of philosophical discussions in Europe since Plato's Cratylus and the Stoics in Greece[2].

Couple or triad?

Since Ancient Greece, the philosophy of language has been based on three entities: thought, the world, and language; language itself remained for a long time no more than a wrapper for thought. Gradually, however, the thought/world pair was transformed into a triad, with a third term added: *language as such*. This triad can take various forms: thought/language/world, or concept/word/thing. It takes a canonical form with Peirce:

Interpretant

Sign ——————— Object
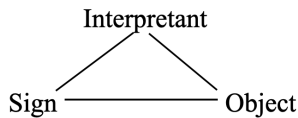
The dual conception has a long history, blurred by the fact that duality sometimes concerns the relationship between language and thought, and sometimes between language and the world, word and thing, or form and content, from Saint Augustine (for whom the definition of a sign is

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2   The place of Greece in Russian imaginary identity is an interesting topic. The Leningrad linguist V. Kolesov (1991: 219) presents the Russian grammatical tradition as the direct heir of the Greek tradition, which itself is supposed to be fundamentally *different* from the Latin tradition. But here classical Greece is seen through a Byzantine bias.

aliquid stat pro aliquo: something *stands for* something else) to Lenin's theory of reflection (see Sériot 2022). What remains to be determined in the dual conception is what is primary: language or thought, and this is what is at stake in the Romantic reversal against rationalism. Descartes had posited the existence of extralinguistic thought, and regarded natural language as "one of the causes of our errors", reproaching languages for having "confused meanings" (Descartes 1953: 915). With the universe divided into "things" and "ideas", language became a clutter, a useless and superfluous intermediary. The many attempts at universal philosophical languages in the 17th and 18th centuries bear witness to this mistrust of natural languages.

The dual conception of sign/thing or sign/idea assumes that content exists independently of form. Thus, in Port-Royal's *Logique*, the sign is a redoubling, a substitute "standing for" something else that pre-exists it:

> The sign encloses two ideas, one of the thing that represents, the other of the thing represented, and its nature consists in exciting the second by the first. (Arnault & Nicole: Logique de Port-Royal (I, IV)

$$\text{Words-Signs} - \begin{cases} \text{Things} \\ \text{Ideas} \end{cases}$$

For Descartes, language is a *faculty derived from the faculty of thought*: we are speaking beings only because we are thinking beings. The thinking subject conceives his objects directly, without having recourse to words; language plays no role in the elaboration of thought; it merely communicates the idea when it is clearly formed in the mind. Language is a tool we use: it is part of our toolkit, not part of our very being. This presupposes a precise motivation for speech: we speak to communicate ideas, because we have something to say[3]. Communication is a rational, utilitarian activity.

It is against this mechanistic dualism that a *third element* gradually creeps in, the dimension of *language as such*, which blurs the reassuring but hardly tenable order of both the theory of thought as reflection of the

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3   Fr. Engels, in *The Dialectics of Nature* (1883, online, n.p.), transposes this same idea to the moment of the appearance of language: "...men in formation came to the point where they had something reciprocally to say to each other".

world and that of language as dressing, or serving, thought. To the dual, instrumentalist conception of language as sign, which implies that the object of the semiotic relation exists independently of its sign, Humboldt opposes a triadic conception: the third element he introduces between words and things is language (in the meaning of "langue", and no longer in the meaning of "langage"?), and, more precisely, its internal form. For him, language is neither a sign of the world, nor of thought. What was merely a means becomes a necessary intermediary. This third element, or third dimension, is the basis of the "linguistic turn", which comes into being progressively, at various stages of the evolution of intellectual culture in Europe and in Russia.

> Arbitrary signs were not invented to satisfy an external necessity; but, moved by the inner necessity of being man, i.e. a being who contemplates and thinks, the concept was created in a word, which had never before been thought in all its purity. (Humboldt 1967, vol. VII: 596, quoted in Trabant, 1992: 67)
> The narrow-minded idea that language came into being by convention and that the word is nothing but the sign of something existing independently of it or of such a concept has exercised the most unfortunate influence on the interesting approach to any linguistic study. (Humboldt, conclusion to an 1806 fragment entitled *Latium et Hellas*, quoted by Trabant, *ibid*.)

Against "the idea that different languages merely designate the same mass of things and concepts existing independently of them with different words, and juxtapose them according to other laws which, apart from their influence on understanding, have no other importance", Humboldt states his fundamental position: "The real importance of the study of languages lies in the participation of language in the formation of representations" (1967, vol. VI: 119).

> The word falls completely out of the class of signs because [in the sign] what is designated exists independently of its sign, whereas [in language] the concept finds its completion only in the word, and the two cannot be separated from each other. (1967, vol. V: 428, quoted in Trabant, 1992: 70)
> The sum of all words, language, is a world situated in the middle, between that which appears outside us and that which acts within us. (1967, vol. III: 167)

This triad places language between thought and the "world", constituting the *Zwischenwelt* ['intermediate world' (or 'other world'?)] that forms the basis of the entire Humboldtian line in the philosophy of language. Languages are thus historically different ways of intellectually appropriating the world.

Note that thought has changed sides: it is no longer pre-existent to the sign that denotes it, as in the reasoned grammars of the 18th century, since it is now "indissolubly linked"[4] to the word:
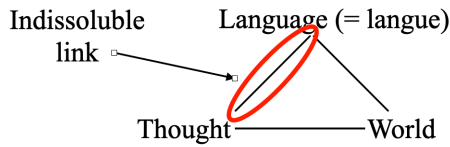
II/ The Soviet scene in the 1920-30s

The waning of abstract art and futurist poetry under the attacks of Marxist authorities in the 1930s has been thoroughly studied and analyzed. All the sociopolitical and ideological underpinnings have been carefully examined. I will focus here on the semiotic issue.

Just as Orthodoxy and Catholicism are two *different* variants of the *same* religion, Russian culture, unlike China or Japan, is a little the same and a little different from the Western European culture. The main components are common, but some aspects are emphasized in another way. German Romanticism, Humboldt, Hegel, Marx are perceived through an underground Byzantine tradition, silent but over-present, of *denying the autonomy of the sign*.

Let us consider some obvious features which strike the foreign scholar or traveler: in Russia *everything is a sign*. But the relationship between signs and things is not simple. Some examples should help support my argument.

The tourists admire the splendid architecture of Russian orthodox churches, on the top of which is a big cupola surrounded by four smaller cupolas. Why one and four? In arithmetic one and four are five, but not

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4   The phrase *nerazryvno svjazano* is a rhetoric procedure which is widely used in Russian humanities. It is a calque of the German *untrennbar verbunden*.

in theology: the big central cupola *represents* Christ, the four smaller ones represent the four evangelists. A cupola is a piece of architecture, but at the same time it is a *sign* of something else, just like in Saint Augustine's definition.

The Orthodox believers reproach the Catholics with crossing themselves with an open hand, which for them has *no meaning*. On the opposite, their hands are divided in two groups of fingers: the thumb, the index and the middle finger *represent* or are the *sign* of the Holy trinity, whereas the ring-finger and the little finger *represent* or are the *sign* of the double nature of Christ: both human and divine.

In all those examples the referent has its own existence, even if ideal, and the sign is something which *takes its place*.

The dispute between the Eastern and Western variants of the Christian religion is deeply rooted in a different attitude towards sign and meaning. In a Catholic church the statue of a saint is nothing but a portrait, an image made for the instruction of the faithful, but an Orthodox icon is not only the sign of divinity, it is his/her actual presence. A three-dimension Catholic statue is intolerable in the Eastern Church because it transgresses the prohibition of the third Commandment:

> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

From a semiotic point of view, this opposition fits perfectly in G. Frege's distinction between sense and reference (*Sinn und Bedeutung*): in those two pictures the reference is the same: the Holy Virgin, but their «sense» is different.

The Byzantine quarrel of iconoclasm in the 8th century separated those who believed that worshipping a painted piece of wood was idolatry from those whose semiotic attitude was more subtle: the faithful does not worship the thing itself, but the relationship to the divinity: the icon is not a pure *form*, it gives access to an invisible *content*.

This insistence on the "indissoluble", or "unbreakable" bond between the sign and its referent, or between a form and its content, explains some peculiarities of Soviet ideology. The disappearance of some political leaders from pictures in the Stalinist period is aptly explained by the principle that changing the sign allows to change if not the referent itself, at least its memory: N. Ežov vanished from the historical memory, just like in George Orwell's novel 1984 the past events are constantly modified in the newspapers' archives:

The idea that handling the sign allows to change the referent is an extremely old principle of witchcraft. If the wizard manages to get hold of a hair, or a piece of nail or even the trace of a step in the snow left by a

person he wants to cast a spell on, he will succeed. This is what J. Frazer (1854-1941) in *The Golden bough* names magic by contact.

But an even more astonishing kind of magic is magic by *similarity*, which does not need any contact: the resemblance of form, even approximative, is enough to create a real link. In Renaissance medicine Paracelsus advised to cure a headache by eating walnuts. The reason is simple: the form of a walnut is similar to the form of the brain, so the link is established, relying on the principle that *any similarity of form creates an identity of content*.

This principle is easily extended to the words of language. My students in Saint-Petersburg University explained to me, half seriously, that before an exam they put a five-kopeck coin under their heel in order to get a good mark. Why? Because in Russian a five-kopeck coin is *pjatak*, the heel is *pjata*, and the highest mark: five, is *pjatërka*. Here the sign is not a thing of reality, but a word. And so, we now move towards the dimension of language, this third dimension mentioned above.

III/ The puzzling pre-structuralism of Russian formalism

Roman Jakobson embodies the admitted transition between Formalism and Structuralism. He is widely known in Western Europe as "an American scholar". But a short epitaph on his grave at Harvard reads:

> ROMAN JAKOBSON
> RUSSKIJ FILOLOG

What did it mean for him to be a "Russian philologist"?

Jakobson had been a student of "philology" in Moscow University during the First World War. He participated extensively in the (re)-discovery of the linguistic dimension of poetry, in the opposition towards both symbolism and positivism, which was the main tenet of the new literary criticism of the revolutionary in Soviet Russia. This topic was the core of modernism in all of Europe in the 1920s. But there is something striking in Jakobson's works of that period: his emphasis on the *Russian aspect* of the new science in literary studies and in linguistics.

In 1929, Jakobson, being a very active member of the Prague linguistic circle, wrote an astonishing paper for the journal of the German university

in Prague *Slavische Rundschau*[5], in which he defined the specificity and difference of Russian linguistics and Russian thought in general. For Jakobson, there is no doubt about the Russian *Sonderweg*: "the Russian ideological tradition" is the same in the Soviet Union and in the emigration, Marxism is a political opinion which has no impact on the Russian (and Slavic) science of language. "Die Tradition der russischen Wissenschaft", "eine tief traditionelle Erscheinung der russischen Wissenschaft" (Jakobson 1929: 53) do exist. "Russian theoretical thought has always been characterized by a number of specific tendencies'" (*ib.*). These "tendencies" rely on a complete opposition to Western science:

"The general principles of research elaborated by Romano-Germanic scholarship cannot be mechanically transplanted to another soil" (*ib.*: 66). He affirms "the inapplicability of the starting points of Western science to the treatment of other types of materials" (*ib.*). He stands for "a revision of Russian folkloristics, renouncing uncontrolled transplantation of the practices of Western science", and Russian philological studies "can provide a certain fruitful corrective to the one-sided westernism of some Western Slavic scientific disciplines" (*ib.*).

My point is that this supposed originality of Russian science is based on the very old and general principle that the similarity of form is «indissolubly tied» to an identity of content, which, curiously enough, gave birth to some of the most interesting endeavors in human and social sciences in the 20th Century.

In the boat between Riga and Dantzig which took Jakobson towards Czechoslovakia in July 1922 he met a few Czechs, with whom he undertook to compare the prosodic systems of poetry in Czech and Russian. In his book *On the Czech verse, mainly in comparison with the Russian verse*, published in 1923, (page 47) he compares Puškin's verse

    Burja mgloju nebo kroet

with its Czech literal translation:

    Bouře mlhou nebe kryje.

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5   «Über die heutigen Voraussetzungen der russischen Slavistik" (1929): "On the Present Presuppositions of Russian Slavic Studies", cited here after the 1988 reprint by E. Holenstein. All translations from German are mine, *PS*.

The principle of this comparison is that the Russian segment is a regular iambic tetrameter, whereas the Czech translation, although using the apparently *same words*, is *not* poetry. The criterion here is regularity, which commands the reception of this sequence as poetry:

чеш. — ⏑ ⏑ — ⏑ ⏑ ⏑ ⏑

рус. — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑ — ⏑

which in fact should read as:

Czech —— ˘ ˘ —— ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘

Russian ´- ´- ´- ´-

My point, here, is that for the Formalist Jakobson «poetry is language with an emphasis on expression» (*jazyk s ustanovkoj na vyraženie*). Insisting on the role of the third dimension for him, as for the whole Formal school was the criterion of the difference between poetry and prose, or, more exactly, poetic language and ordinary language.

There is, however, a loophole. Is prosody enough a criterion of poetic language?

Russian everyday culture is saturated with prosodic regular pseudo-verses (in Russian: *stišata*), which are very far from poetry. Here the content lacks any link with the form. For instance, these school verses from the Soviet period:

> *Den' sed'mogo nojabrja*
> *Krasnyj den' kalendarja*
> *Posmotri v svoë okno*
> *Vse na ulice krasno.*

Or jokes and caricatures of the official propaganda :
(to be pronounced with a Ukrainian accent)

> *V pole traktor dyr-dyr-dyr*
> *A na straže bryhadyr.*

Or advertising for buying a new flat in present day Russia :

> *A iz našego okna*
> *Sportploščadka nam vidna!*

All those examples are regular iambic tetrameters, the prosody is respected, but what about the poetic content?

IV/ The history of terms

Slavophilism was not only a literary and cultural current, it promoted an important trend of ideas in linguistics, in the Romantic mood of rejecting universal philosophical grammars. In 1855 Konstantin Aksakov (1817-1869) wrote a grammar treatise: *O russkich glagolach* ('On Russian verbs'). The main tenets of this book were that in the Russian language
- there are no exceptions
- order and harmony reign
- the relation between form and meaning is unitary and unique
- a form without a meaning is no form

This discourse on the Russian language deserves attention, because it was intensively read and quoted by Jakobson. This moment in Russian intellectual culture should lead us towards the main question which is at stake here: *why do things which look like each other look like each other?* Futurist poetry and its analysis in Russian formalism are a key moment of this linguistic turn.

The *zaum* verses of Velimir Chlebnikov (1855-1922) fascinated Jakobson.

> Zakljatie *sme*chom
> O, ras*sme*jtes', *sme*chači !
> O, za*sme*jtes', *sme*chači !
> Čto *sme*jutsja *sme*chami, čto *sme*janstvujut *sme*jal'no…

Jakobson found in them a totally *new* approach to the art of language, which informed his own idea of the primacy of the linguistic material for poetic language.

In the dialogue *Učitel' i učenik* Chlebnikov explains his theory of "internal declension of words", using such examples as the approximate similarity between *bog / beg* (God / run) and *byk / bok* (bull / side). What is important here is his conclusion: those pairs of similar words are connected through a third member: *bojazn'* (fear), which justifies this similarity of form:

«Bog — to, k čemu obraščena bojazn'
a beg — to, čto vyzvano bojazn'ju»
(God is that to which fear is addressed,
and run is that which is caused by fear)
(Chlebnikov, 1986, p. 585).

In this rationalist explanation of similarity, the aim of the investigation is to give a common content to a (more or less) common form.

But this query is not so new, and it is familiar to those who deal with compared intellectual history.

The beginning of the 19th Century in Russia was notable for a discussion between the *archaisty* and *novatory* about the language which should be adopted for Russian literature. This well-known dispute gave rise to the problem of purism in language, a topic largely shared by most European nations in search of identity against the universalism of French Enlightenment.

Admiral A. Šiškov (1754-1841), President of the Russian Academy of sciences, was one of the leaders of the purist ("archaist") trend in the language debate. Relying on Lomonosov's etymological connection between *Bog* and *beg*, he extends this proximity to a series of similar words:

bog – buka – bukaška – azbuka – bukva – bujstvo – byk

pointing out that underlying all these names is "the feeling of fear expressed by the letter *У*" [= *U* in latin alphabet] (Šiškov, 1832: 4-7, quoted by Ivanov, 2006, p. 96). The historical line was not broken: Tynjanov himself paid attention to Šiškov's etymologies (Tynjanov 1965: p. 114, quoted by Ivanov, *ibidem*).

Nikolaj Marr (1864-1934) has an abysmal reputation. It is nonetheless important to situate him in the history of the linguist turn in Russia. His etymologies strikingly resemble those we have just commented. For him also any approximative similarity of form must be explained by an identity of content. A typical example is when he explains the German word *hundert* (hundred) as going back to the word *Hund* (dog). Once a similarity of form has been established, all that is left to do is finding (or inventing) a historical explanation: in primitive societies little by little the wolves were domesticated and became dogs, growing in numbers among the tribes. The semantic chain is *many → hundred* (Marr 1936, p. 391).

His close associate V. Aptekar' (1899-1937) follows the same line of thought:

> In addition to the Russian words *solnce* and *sol'*, which are close in form, let us note for example Latin *solus* (sun) and *sal* (salt), German *Sonne* and *Salz*, French *soleil* and *sel*, Greek *helios* and *hals* (Aptekar' 1934, p. 117).

The conclusion that he draws is the moto of this intellectual trend: " èto ne slučajno !" (It is not by chance).

Another well-known example is Marr's filiation *roš* (one of the four primordial «asemantic» elements) → *ètruski*. This connection has been the source of the popular idea in post-Soviet Russia that the Etruscans spoke Russian (or Slovene..., cf. Sériot 2017) because ÈTRUSKI can be deciphered as ÈTO RUSSKIE.[6]

Already in the 18th Century Catherine II was convinced that the French province *Rous*sillon has been inhabited by *Rus*sians.

True, all those fantastic etymologies sound so absurd that one can wonder if exposing them in a university journal is worth the trouble. Nonetheless what I want to show here is the internal logic of a discourse whose main principle is that no similarity of form can be due just to chance and that it necessarily reveals a hidden truth.

Now, let us go a little further.

J. W. Goethe (1748-1832) was both a poet and a scientist, a promoter of *idealistic morphology*, the main theses of which can be summarized as follows:

- two forms may be similar without any contact either in space or in time (*die Formenlehre*)
- no similarity of form can be due to *chance*
- everything fragmentary is blameworthy[7].

  The consequence of these principles is that there exists a *hidden plan* to be discovered and exposed; thus, deeper similarities are more important than superficial differences. These similarities can only be perceived if

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6 Andrej Zaliznjak (2010) devoted an entire book to dismantling the arguments of those pseudo-scientific connections between approximately similar words.

7 "Alles Vereinzelte ist verwerflich", Goethe (1887: 108), cited after Nisbet (1972: 68).

we constantly look for *analogies*, even between seemingly poorly related forms. The source of this form/content relationship is to be found in Greek philosophy: for Plato and Plotinus the invisible is more real and more perfect than the visible. German idealistic philosophy took up this postulate in its struggle against the universalism of the Enlightenment. For J. Herder (1744-1803), *Ein Volk hat keine Idee, zu der es kein Wort hat* (A people has no idea to which it has no word) (Herder 1784, n.p.) Also :

> Keine Sprache druckt Sachen aus, sondern nur Namen; auch keine menschliche Vernunft also erkennt Sachen, sondern sie hat nur Merkmale von ihnen, die sie mit Worten bezeichnet
> = No language expresses things, but only names them; neither does human reason recognize things, but has only characteristics of them, which it designates with words (*ibidem*).

Some features of Soviet intellectual life can be better explained by reference to this Romantic and Goethean trend than by Marxism. The Soviet biologist Aleksandr Ljubiščev (1890-1972), who during his whole life professed a very explicit Platonism without ever getting into political troubles, constantly maintained the opinion that no similarity of form can be due to chance: if frost flowers on a frozen window-pane look like tree leaves, if the form of a sea-shell resembles the form of a galaxy, all these phenomena can be summed up by a common reflection: *Ėto ne slučajno!* ["It is not by chance!"].[8]

The content of the form is a fascinating topic, which runs through the entire history of Russian culture.

The creativity of Russian scholars and artists in the 1920s has been rightly opposed to the stifling atmosphere of Stalinism. Nonetheless we can safely highlight some striking continuities.

In his booklet *Marxism and questions of linguistics* in 1950 J. Stalin sets out his ideas on the relationship between language and thought:

> "language is directly linked to thought" (46).
> "Only idealists can speak of thought outside its link with the 'natural matter' of language, of thought without language" (81).

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8   Ljubiščev's works were reprinted by Ju. Lotman in the Tartu semiotic journal *Trudy po znakovym sistemam* in 1977.

His principle is clear, it is parallel with Herder's and Humboldt's postulate: there can be no language without thought and no thought without language.

But in 1929 the explicitly Platonician philosopher Aleksej Losev (1893-1988) wrote in *The thing and the name* (the book was published only in 1953 in Paris):

> The separation between names and things is the distressing result of the appalling obscurity and spiritual emptiness of bourgeois Europe, which has created one of the most abstract and soulless types of culture.

Another important milestone in this obsession about the «indissoluble link» between form and content is *hesychasm* in Russian religious philosophy at the beginning of the 20th Century, whose act of faith is that

> the name of the thing is the thing itself.

Let us also remind that in Medieval Russia the children did not go to school, though some of them learned to read and write in monasteries. But this consisted only in learning the Psalter by heart. Language was equivalent to a closed corpus of canonic texts, and no new content was conceivable. This explains why grammar was considered as diabolic: grammar is a set of rules, a matrix which allows the creation of new sentences with new forms non existing in the canonic text. For instance, grammatical paradigms allow the building of a plural form for a singular. Now, who declared to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden «you will be like god*s*» (*budete jako bozi*)? This sentence belongs to the Devil, it cannot be pronounced in Russian. The plural of God is unthinkable for the official ideology, it has no place in the Russian language.

We can therefore point to a "mainstream" of intellectual thought in Russia, from the Slavophiles, Potebnja and Losev, through Marr to the Futurist poets and Stalin: a form without content is not a form, any form of similarity is meaningful. The immediate consequence is the impossibility of the arbitrary sign. We can find the same formula in V. Vološinov (1930), quoting Karl Vossler.

Conclusion

There is no element "radically different" in the discourse on language in Russia, but a strong emphasis on the "unbreakable link" between form and content.

Russian formalism is a specific version of the ancient discussion on the form/content relationship and the role of the third dimension in the theory of knowledge. But we have seen that the linguistic turn has something to do with magic semiotic.

Is this attitude towards the sign modern or archaic?

I have tried to figure out a certain archaic attitude towards the name, a nostalgia for a direct link between signs and things (if you have the name, you have a power on the thing).

My epistemological position is that only by differentiating between the real (empirical) object and the (hypothetical) object of knowledge can linguistics break the deadlock of confusing signs and things. But the beautiful discoveries of literary critic made by Russian formalists had a price to pay by renewing this magic semiotic.

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