tween the objectively acceptable proof of arguments and the skill of the lawyer in making convincing use of even the weakest signs.

Of course, from the general semiotic point of view, there is no objection whatsoever to considering "all inferences from a fact" as signs. The properties recorded in the encyclopedia with respect to a certain object or fact are all perfectly valid signs of that object or fact. It is circumstantial or contextual relationships which bring about the differences in probatory force. For example, a gun can be the sign of a crime, but things are put under a very different light if it is found in the home of a suspected terrorist, or a police officer, or a gunsmith (cf. Eco, 1984a, pp.37-38).

This last point seems to have been, perhaps unconsciously, understood by the ancient practitioners of rhetoric—to some extent by Aristotle, but even more so by Quintilian. While making a clear-cut distinction between "scientific certainty" and "certainty according to the socio-cultural codes", Quintilian nonetheless admitted and used both, but recommended (in the second case) that one gather as many mutually enhancing pieces of evidence as possible.

TEN

Augustine

10.0 UNIFICATION OF THE THEORY OF SIGNS AND THE THEORY OF LANGUAGE

With Augustine we reach for the first time an explicit fusion of the theory of the sign with the theory of language. Such a rigorous and important theoretical development remains unmatched for at least the following fifteen centuries, until Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* is written.

The central importance of semio-linguistic matters in Augustine's works derives principally from his reading of the Stoics, as his early work *De Dialectica* (387 A.D.) clearly demonstrates. This work summarizes many of the main Stoic semiotic themes, including the principle that knowledge is, on a simple level, knowledge gained by means of signs (cf. Simone, 1969, p.95).

However, there are certain elements which differentiate Augustine's treatment of semiotic material from that of the Stoics. The Stoics collected and formalized a long tradition rooted principally in medicine and divination; they considered to be truly signs (*sēmeîa*) only non-verbal signs, such as the smoke which reveals a fire or the scar which refers to a previous wound. Augustine—in his most important departure from the Stoics—is the first in the ancient world to include in the category of *signa* not only non-verbal signs such as gestures, military insignia, fanfares, mime, etc., but also the expressions of spoken language ("We call sign in general everything that means something, and among these we may include words too" [*De Magistro*, 4.9]).

The second important point of divergence between Augustine and the Stoics is that the Stoics had identified the utterance as the point of conjunction between the signifier (*sēmaînon*) and the signified (*sēmainómenon*), an element which did not coincide with the sign (*sēmeîon*). In contrast, Augustine identifies the individual linguistic expression, that is the *verbum* ("word") as the element in which signifier and signified are united, and considers this unification to be a sign of something else ("Thus, after having sufficiently demonstrated that words [*verba*] are nothing else but signs [*signa*] and that something which does not mean something cannot be a sign, you have proposed a verse in which I have struggled to show what the individual words might mean" [*De Magistro*, 7.19]).

In a third important area of difference, the Stoics had formulated a theory of language characterized by the features of being formal (the *lektón* corre-

sponded to no actual substance) and centered on signification; Augustine proposes instead a theory of the linguistic sign which has a psychological (signifieds are to be found in the mind) and communicative (signifieds pass into the mind of the hearer) nature (cf. Todorov, 1977, Eng. tr., pp.36-37; Markus, 1957, p.72).

10.1 THE SEMIOTIC TRIANGLE AND TERMINOLOGICAL STRATIFICATION

De Dialectica begins with an analysis of the very concept of "word" (*verbum simplex*), and starting from here Augustine makes a series of very interesting terminological distinctions.

In Chapter V of this work, Augustine makes a three-fold distinction which may be compared to the modern concepts of signifiers, signified and referent. First of all he identifies the *vox articulata* (or *sonus*) of the word, which is what is heard by the ear when the word is pronounced. He then identifies the *dicibile*[1] (which corresponds, even from the point of view of the linguistic transposition, to the Stoic *lektón*), which he defines as what is apprehended by and contained in the mind. The third element is the *res*, which is defined as any object which either (i) can be perceived by the senses or by the intellect, or (ii) is not accessible to the senses (*De Dialectica*, Chapter V) (cf. Figure 10.1.).

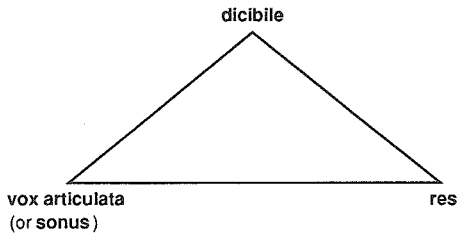

Figure 10.1

However, Augustine does not consider signs merely from the point of view of signification, but also from that of their powers of designation. This consideration prompts him to operate a further terminological subdivision according to the two possible aspects of the referent of a word: (i) the word can refer back to itself as its own referent (as happens with quotations, or metalinguistic designations), in which case it takes the name *verbum*;[2] (ii) the word, understood as the combination of signifier and signified, which has something other than itself as referent (as happens in the denotative use of language) in which case it takes the name of *dictio*.[3]

It is precisely this concept of *dictio* which, as Baratin (cf. 1981) has noted, constitutes the element of conjunction between the theory of language and the theory of the sign. This occurs because the Stoic concept of *léxis* (articulated signifier, but not necessarily a carrier of meaning) had undergone a shift

in meaning in the course of investigations of language in the intervening centuries. *Dictio* is the translation of *léxis*, but it does not have the same meaning as the Stoics gave to *léxis*. Here it carries meaning it was given by the grammarians of Alexandria, in particular Dionysius Thrax, who defined *léxis* as "the smallest part of the elaborated utterance" (*Grammatici Graeci*, I, 22, 4). Thus it is halfway between letters and syllables on the one side and the utterance on the other. In this position, *léxis* becomes a carrier of meaning (in contrast to letters and syllables, which do not have meaning), but of only partial meaning (whereas the utterance has complete meaning).

Since the Alexandria grammarians had moved the individual word into the position of central importance (whereas the Stoics had held the utterance to be centrally important), the word now takes on the functions which were formally attributed only to the utterance. Most importantly, the word can now be a sign.[4]

Augustine defines the word definitely as a sign in Chapter V of *De Dialectica*: "A word is a sign (*signum*) of any sort of thing. It is uttered by a speaker and can be understood by a hearer". A sign is defined as "something which is itself sensed and which indicates to the mind (*animus*) something beyond the sign itself." (ibid.).

10.2 THE RELATION OF EQUIVALENCE AND THE RELATION OF IMPLICATION

As a result of focusing attention on the word rather than on the utterance, Augustine invokes the Platonic opposition between word and thing. There is nothing fortuitous in this parallel as Plato is the only thinker prior to Augustine who had a semiotic conception of language. For Plato, a name was *dḗlōma*, a discovery of something not directly accessible to sense perception, or the essence of a thing. While in *Cratylus* the issue was whether or not the relationship between name and thing was an iconic relationship (with the solution which we have already encountered in Chapt. 4), for Augustine, the relationship is immediately conceived of as a relation of signification: a name "signifies" a thing (an idea which is equivalent to "being a sign of a thing").

Once Augustine has proposed his conception of words as signs, this change of perspective results in a series of inevitable modifications. In earlier theories of language, the relationship between linguistic expressions and their contents was conceived of as a *relation of equivalence*. As we have seen, the motivation for this was epistemological and concerned the possibility of working directly on language, rather than on objects of reality, since language was understood to be a system for the representation of reality (even though inevitably mediated through the mind). In contrast, the relationship between a sign and the thing it referred to was understood to be a *relation of implication*, thanks to which the first term, by the mere fact of existing, enabled the passage to knowledge of the second term. Umberto Eco (cf. 1984a, pp.33-34) has sug-

gested that within the Stoic utterance the relations between the signic and the linguistic relationships can be illustrated by a scheme in which the implicational level is based on the level of equivalence. The relationships can be illustrated as shown in Figure 10.2. Here E indicates expression, C context,

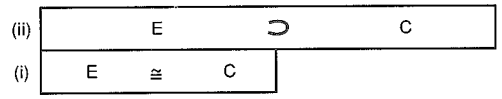

Figure 10.2

⊃ stands for "implies" and ≅ indicates "is equivalent to". In Augustine, the unification of the two perspectives is achieved at the level of the individual word without any need to resort to equivalence relations. At most, *dictio*, represented by level i, is made up of the union (or logical product) of a *vox* (signifier) and a *dicibile* (signified), and the resulting unit becomes a sign of something else (level ii).

10.3 CONSEQUENCES OF THE UNIFICATION OF PERSPECTIVES

The first consequence of Augustine's process of unification is, as Umberto Eco has pointed out (cf. 1984a, p.33), that the position of language within the implicative context is no longer altogether comfortable or convincing. Language is too strong and too highly structured a system to bend itself to a theory of signs which had been developed to describe very elusive, generic relationships such as those found, for example, in the classifications of Greek and Roman rhetoric. Semiotic implication was conceived of as being broad enough to encompass the entire range of the necessary and non-necessary relations.

Language, as Augustine makes clear in *De Magistro*, has a special characteristic not shared by other sign systems; language is a "primary modeling system",[5] that is, a system into which any other semiotic system can be translated. The strength and importance of language mean that relations with other sign systems are inverted, and that language, rather than being a species, becomes a genus. Slowly but surely the model of the linguistic sign will end up as the semiotic model *par excellence*.

However, by the time this process of evolution reaches its apex in Saussure, the implicative nature of language has been lost along the way, and the linguistic sign has crystallized in the degraded form of the dictionary model, in which the relationship between a word and its content is understood as a relationship of synonymy or essential definition.

The second important consequence of Augustine's unification of the two theories concerns the problem of the foundation of dialectic and of science (cf. Baratin, 1981, pp.266 ff.). While the relationship between language and real objects was understood in terms of equivalence, the former did not seem to be responsible for knowledge of the latter. However, once the word has been granted the nature of being a sign, the knowledge of a word seems to imply, in itself and *a priori*, the knowledge of the thing it signifies. The whole semiotic tradition, after all, agreed in considering the sign as a means of access, without further mediation, to knowledge of the object to which it referred.

Augustine thus has to deal with the problem of taking a firm position on the question of whether or not language provides, in itself and by its very nature, information about the things it signifies.

10.4 LANGUAGE AND INFORMATION

Augustine faces the problem of the informative nature of linguistic signs in his *De Magistro* (389 A.D.). This work is in the form of a dialogue with his son Adeodatus and begins by establishing two basic functions of language: (i) teaching (*docere*) and (ii) recalling to memory (*commemorare*), either to one's own, or other people's memory. These functions are simultaneously informative and communicative as they centrally involve the presence of an addressee at the moment of providing information.

The first portion of the dialogue demonstrates that these two functions, particularly the informative function, are carried out by language in that it is a system of signs. It is words, in the quality of signs, which give information about things, and nothing else can achieve this function.

In the second part of the dialogue, however, Augustine returns to the argument again and approaches it from a completely different point of view. Using the fact that language is a system of signs as basis, he shows that there can be two types of circumstances for these signs. The first set of circumstances is that in which a speaker produces a sign which refers to something unknown to the addressee. In such a situation, the sign is not able, in itself, to give information. Augustine gives the example of the word *saraballae*, which, unless previously known, cannot lead the addressee to understand the reference to "headdress" which it contains. The second set of circumstances is that in which the speaker produces a sign which refers to something which is already known to the addressee. Yet even here, Augustine claims, it is not really appropriate to speak of a true process of acquiring knowledge (*De Magistro*, 10.33).

Augustine concludes the argument by inverting the cognitive relationship between sign and object and states that one must first have knowledge of the object of reference to be able to say that a word is a sign of this object. It is the knowledge of the thing which is responsible for the presence of the sign rather than *vice versa*. This solution has clear Platonic overtones, and to this may be linked the equally Platonic-inspired statement

that knowledge of things is more important than knowledge of signs because "whenever a thing stands for something else, it must needs be worth less than the thing for which it stands" (*De Magistro*, 9.25).

However, even though for things accessible to sense perception (*sensibilia*) it is external objects which enable us to reach knowledge, this is not the case for things which are accessible only to the intellect (*intelligibilia*). For these, Augustine identifies a "theological" solution, whereby knowledge of such things derives from revelations which conscience—which stems from God—grants within the human mind, the conscience being a guarantee both of information and of truth (*De Magistro*, 12.39).

Even within this "theological" solution of the language problem, language in some ways still coincides with the function of the commemorative sign, but in other ways it extends beyond commemorative sign: when we already know the object of reference, words recall information, but when we have no prior knowledge of the object, words prompt us to seek out such knowledge (*De Magistro*, 12.36).

10.5 EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION OF THE INNER WORD

The theological solution is by no means merely a convenient way out of a theoretical impasse for Augustine. On the contrary, it introduces a whole new series of theoretical concerns. *De Trinitate* (415) deals with the idea of the expression of the inner word after it has been conceived of in the recesses of the mind. In order to communicate with others, human beings must use words or some kind of sign which is accessible to the senses in order to stimulate within the mind of the person being spoken to a word which matches the word which lies in the speaker's mind while he or she is speaking (*De Trinitate*, IX, VII, 12).

Augustine emphasizes the pre-linguistic nature of the inner word. This word does not belong to any natural language but has to be encoded by means of a sign if it is to be expressed and presented to the comprehension of intended addressees.

The inner word has a two-fold origin. On the one hand it represents immanent knowledge, the source of which is God, while on the other it is determined by the impressions made on the mind by the objects of knowledge. Even in this case, however, the inner word stems from God, in that the world is the language through which God expresses himself. We find here the seeds of the universal symbolism which was so important in medieval thought and culture.

It may thus be seen that Augustine's semiology is primarily communicative in nature, as the overall scheme proposed by Todorov (cf. 1977, Eng. tr., p.44) shows (Figure 10.3).

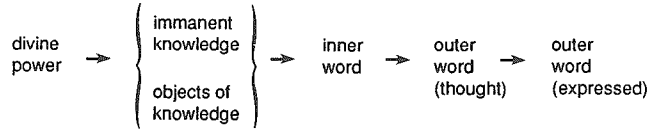

Figure 10.3

10.6 CLASSIFICATIONS

While it is undeniable, as Simone (1969, p.96, note 2) points out, that Augustine's semiology has a strong theological tendency (linked to the problem of the divine word), it nonetheless also has a clear-cut and well-defined secular aspect which may be seen when Augustine turns his attention to the inherent specific characteristics of the sign. Included in this aspect are the various classifications of signs which appear most notably in *De Doctrina Christiana* (397 A.D., with later additions), but which also feature in other works.

Todorov (1977, Eng. tr., p.44 ff.) has identified and analyzed five types of classification which Augustine imposes on the sign:

(1) According to the mode of transmission: visual/aural
(2) According to origin and use: natural signs/intentional signs
(3) According to social function: natural signs/conventional signs
(4) According to the nature of the symbolic relation: proper/transposed (*translata*)
(5) According to the nature of the designatum: sign/thing

Todorov is disappointed that Augustine juxtaposes what he could in fact have put in relation, for such oppositions are generally not interrelated. However, this complaint is not entirely justified since (especially in *De Magistro*) Augustine does make an attempt to give a combined classification of certain aspects of the sign.

It is possible to reconstruct this classification according to a tree diagram (cf. Bernardelli, 1987), following the model of the Porphyrian tree (cf. Eco, 1984a, pp.91 ff.) (Figure 10.4).

Augustine's classification does not in fact totally follow logical inclusion, as the Porphyrian-tree version tends to do. As may be noted, if the collateral branches were to be developed, by developing the side branches, some of the categories on the principal branch would appear again. However, Augustine himself points us towards an inclusive classification from genus to species when he defines the relationship between noun and word as "the same as that between horse and animal" and when he includes the category of words in the wider category of signs (*De Magistro*, 4.9).

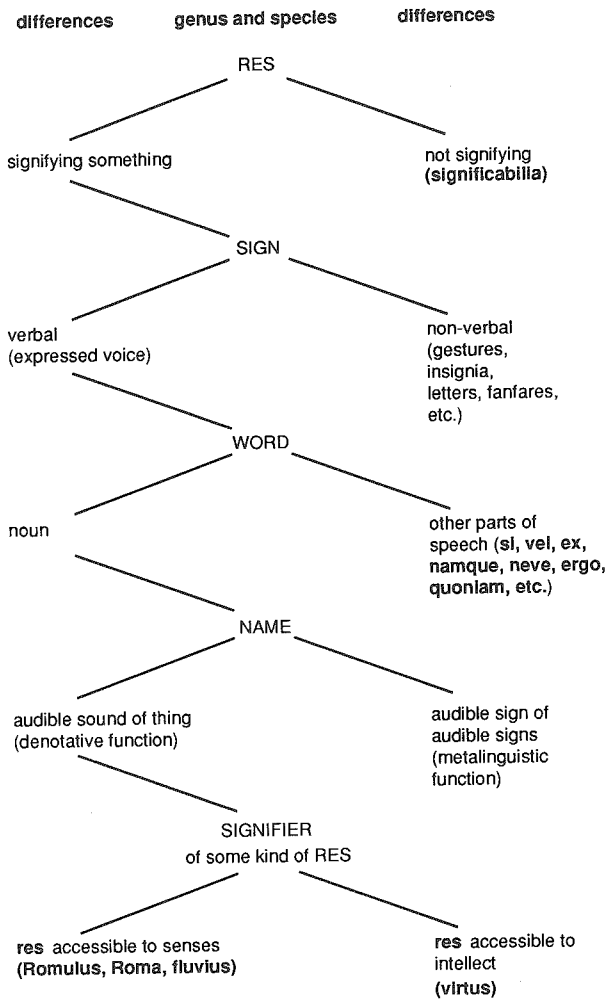

Figure 10.4

10.6.1 "Res" and "signa"

The first interesting relationship in Augustine's classification is that between *res* and *signa*. Although the world is basically thus divided into things and signs, Augustine sees this distinction as functional and relative rather than ontological.

Signs are also types of *res*, and it is quite possible to take as a sign a *res* which had previously not been endowed with this status. The idea of *res* is defined in thoroughly semiological terms (cf. Simone, 1969, p.105): "Strictly speaking I have called things (*res*) those objects which are not used as signs of something: for example, wood, stone, farm animals" (*De Doctrina Christiana*, I, II, 2). However, realizing that the processes of semiosis are extremely pervasive, Augustine immediately qualifies this statement: "But not that wood which, as we read, Moses threw into the bitter waters to dissipate their bitterness (*Exodus*, 15:25), nor that stone on which Jacob rested his head (*Genesis*, 28:11); nor that sheep which Abraham burnt instead of his son (ibid., 22:13)".

The relationship which exists between signs and things is analogous to that of the two essential processes "use" (*uti*) and "enjoy", "take benefit from" (*frui*) (*De Doctrina Christiana*, I, IV, 4). Things which are used are transitive, like signs, which are instruments through which something else may be reached; things which are enjoyed are intransitive, that is, they are considered simply for themselves (cf. Todorov, 1977, p.39).

In *De Magistro* (4.8), Augustine proposes a name for things which are not used as signs, but which are signified by means of signs: *significabilia*. However, there is nothing to prevent these from being given a signifying function at a future date.

Having established the relationship between signs and things in this manner, in *De Doctrina Christiana* (II, I, 1), Augustine offers the following definition of a sign: "The sign is a thing (*res*) which above and beyond the impression it produces on the senses on its own account, makes something else come to mind (*in cogitationem*)".

10.6.2 Verbal and non-verbal signs

In constructing the Porphyrian tree for Augustine's classification of signs, I decided to express Augustine's principal division of signs according to the dichotomy *verbal/non-verbal*, even though other possibilities, equally evident in the texts, could have been used. I would justify my choice by quoting a passage from *De Doctrina Christiana* (II, III, 4), in which, at the end of an analysis of various types of sign, Augustine states "I could express the meaning of all signs of the type here touched upon in words, but I would not be able at all to make the meanings of words clear by these signs."

This statement makes explicit reference to a special characteristic that verbal language possesses, that of being a primary modeling system, and this characteristic is taken as the criterion for the basic division of signs.

10.6.3 Classifying signs according to channels of perception

An intersecting classification in comparison with the previous one is that which is made according to the channel of perception employed. Augustine states "among the signs which people use in order to communicate what they feel to each other, some pertain to the sense of sight, more to the sense of hearing and very few to the other senses" (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, III, 4).

Signs perceived through the sense of hearing include the basically aesthetic signs produced by musical instruments such as the flute or the lyre, and the essentially communicative signs produced by military fanfares and soundings of the trumpet. Of course, words form part, and indeed a dominant part, of signs which are perceived through hearing: "Words, indeed, have obtained the most important position among human beings for the expression of thoughts of all kinds which anyone wants to convey" (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, III, 4).

Augustine lists the following as signs which are perceived through sight: nodding and shaking the head, gestures, bodily movements of actors, flags, military insignia and letters.

Augustine also turns his attention to signs which concern the other senses, such as smell (for example, the perfume of the ointment applied to Christ's feet), taste (for example, the sacrament of the Eucharist) and touch (the gesture of the woman who touched Christ's robe and was healed).

10.6.4 "Signa naturalia" and "signa data"

Even though it cannot be directly integrated with the inclusive tree we have constructed out of Augustine's classification of signs, the classification which he suggests based on the opposition of *signa naturalia* with *signa data* is of fundamental importance to Augustine's conception of the sign. *Signa naturalia* include "(signs which) without any intention or desire of signifying, make us aware of something beyond themselves, as for example, smoke which signifies fire" (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, I, 2). Other examples of this type of sign are animal tracks and facial expressions which reveal, unintentionally, irritation or pleasure. Having defined this type of sign, Augustine then says that he has no wish to deal any further with them.

Augustine is much more interested in the *signa data*, for this category includes Scriptural signs. This type of sign is defined as "(signs which) all living creatures make, one to another, to show, as much as they can, the motions of their spirits, that is, everything that they feel and think" (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, II, 3). The prime examples of this type of sign are human linguistic signs, that is, words.

Somewhat curiously, Augustine also includes animal sounds in this category, as, for example, the sounds the cock uses to inform the hen that he has found food (ibid.). In this respect there is a very marked difference between Augustine and Aristotle, who placed animal noises among natural signs (*De Interpretatione*, 16 a).

Aristotle made a binary distinction between "natural" and "conventional" signs; however, Augustine's *signa data* are not "conventional signs", as Markus has suggested (cf. Markus, 1957, p.75) (and indeed as the French translation of Augustine by G. Combès and J. Farges suggests). *Signa data* are rather "intentional signs" (cf. Engels, 1962, p.367; Darrel

Jackson, 1969, p.14) and correspond to a very clear communicative intention (*De Doctrina Christiana*, II, III, 4). It is indeed the intentional nature of animal noises which causes Augustine to include them among *signa data*, even though he does not make any precise comments on the nature of animal intentionality (cf. Eco, 1987, p.78).

Indeed, as Todorov has pointed out (1977, Eng. tr., p.47), focusing attention on the idea of intention corresponds exactly to Augustine's general semiological system, which is based on communication. Intentional signs—or rather, signs created expressly with a view to communication—can be placed in correspondence with Aristotle's *sýmbolon* and with the Stoic combination of a signifier with a signified. Natural signs, that is, signs which already exist as things, would correspond rather to the *sēmeîa* proposed by both Aristotle and the Stoics.

10.7 UNLIMITED SEMIOSIS AND "INSTRUCTIONAL" MODELS

One of the fundamental points of Augustine's semiology is the search for methods by which the meaning of signs can be established. This search appears particularly in *De Magistro*, where a semantic conception very similar to Peirce's "unlimited semiosis" can be seen at work. As Markus points out (cf. Markus, 1957, p.66), for Augustine the meaning of a sign can be established or expressed by means of other signs, such as by using synonyms, by pointing at something with the index finger, by using gestures, or by means of demonstration (*De Magistro*, 2; 7).

This conception of meaning is possible only once the *equational* model of the symbol has been abandoned in favor of the *implicational* model of the sign which Augustine uses. Augustine's semiological theory, as Eco demonstrates (cf. Eco, 1984, pp.34 ff.), thus moves towards an "instructional" model of semantic description. An example of this model is given in the analysis which Augustine makes, in collaboration with Adeodatus, of the line from Vergil's *Aeneid* "si nihil ex tanta superis placet urbe relinqui" (cf. *De Magistro*, 3.3). Augustine states that this line is made up of eight signs, for which the meaning is then sought.

The inquiry begins with |si|, which is recognized as expressing a quality of "doubt", after we have been shown that no other term could be substituted to express the same concept. Next |nihil| is considered, and its meaning is identified as the "affection of the soul" which occurs when, on not seeing something, its absence is noted.

Augustine then asks Adeodatus what the meaning of |ex| is, and he replies by offering a synonymous definition, that is, |ex| is the same as |de|. However, this definition does not satisfy Augustine, who argues that while the latter term *is* an interpretation of the former, it nonetheless requires in its turn an interpretation. The final solution offered is that |ex| means "a

separation" from an object. Augustine then adds an *instruction* for the contextual decodification of this solution. |*Ex*| can mean a separation from something which no longer exists, as in the line from Vergil under consideration, where the city of Troy to which it refers no longer exists. However, the term can also mean a separation from something which is still in existence, as, for example, when it is said that there are some traders in Africa who come from (*ex*) Rome.

The meaning of a term, then, is "a set (a series, a system) of instructions for its possible contextual insertions and for its different semantic outputs in different contexts (all registered by the code)" (Eco, 1984a, p.35).

The implicative structure allows rules of the type "*If* A appears in the contexts x, y, *then* it means B; but *if* B, *then* C; etc.". These are rules which the instructional model and unlimited semiosis share.

It may thus be seen that it is precisely due to the generalized adoption of the implicational model that Augustine's semiology can be considered to be both a synthesis of the semio-linguistic developments of the ancient world (theory of the word as sign) and a striking anticipation of some of the most recent semantic research tendencies (instructional model) in the contemporary world.

Notes

Unless otherwise stated, translations of texts are taken from current versions, with occasional modifications on the part of the author.

ONE. MESOPOTAMIAN DIVINATION

1. It is not yet possible to establish precisely how much Greek culture owes to Mesopotamian culture with respect to the idea of the sign; however, with respect to the implicative scheme in general, it is possible to distinguish a historically documented connection between the two cultures in certain areas of sign use. For example, in medicine, the implicative sign scheme ("If . . . , then . . . ") is used in the presentation of aetiological situations both in Mesopotamian treatises and in Greek treatises. Medicine was an area in which it is known that there were positive contacts between the two cultures. Cf. Di Benedetto and Lami, 1983: 11.

2. Barthes and Marty (1980, p.71) place the earliest traces of writing in Mesopotamia around 3500 B.C. Other scholars, such as Cardona (1981, p.70), claim that the invention of the cuneiform characters themselves may be dated to 3500 B.C. Bottero (1974) thinks that this occurred much later and claims that cuneiform writing was invented in lower Mesopotamia around 2850 B.C. Cf. also Barthes and Mauriès (1981, p.602).

3. Cf. sumerogram no. 73 in Labat's manual (1948, p.69). It is interesting to note here a similarity to the homographic play in Greek between *bíos* ("life") and *biós* ("bow"): as the fragment from Heraclitus puts it (Diels-Kranz, 1951, 48): "The bow (*biós*) has life (*bíos*) as its name and death as its work". (In subsequent references, Diels-Kranz, 1951, will be abbreviated as D-K.)

4. In each example, the protasis is divided from the apodosis by means of a dash (—), in order to show the distinction between them more clearly. These examples, like most of the Mesopotamian texts quoted or referred to in this chapter, come from the extremely full and well-researched essay by Bottero (1974). The reader is referred here and throughout the present chapter to Bottero's essay for details of primary sources and critical editions. I acknowledge the debt to this essay for much of the information contained in this chapter.

5. Each tablet contains over a hundred oracles, and some collections contain around twenty tablets.

TWO. GREEK DIVINATION

1. Crahay (1974), in an analysis of the words used with respect to oracles, has demonstrated that certain words present the text of the revelation as a sign, often as a sign in advance, since they direct action towards the future. Among these words, the two verbs *sēmaínō* and *prosēmaíanō* (that is, "to inform in advance through signs") and the verbal adjective *próphanton* (which expresses the idea of information before the event) stand out in particular.

2. This is shown very clearly through a comparison with the role played by divination, for example, in the Mesopotamian civilization, where the central position held by divination meant that its formal model extended also into other spheres of public and cultural life, such as medicine and justice.

3. Cf. also *Iliad*, III, 277. Translation by Richmond Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951.