

New deadline for abstracts: June 15, 2017

From Theory to Methodology

Special issue of *Punctum. International Journal of Semiotics*

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A scientific field incorporates four levels of operations, hierarchically related and leading from the more abstract to the more concrete. The first level is that of *epistemology*, the integration, explicit and conscious or implicit and empirical, of a theory into one of the larger paradigms marking a historical period. On the second level, the *theory* thus founded on the paradigm defines the key concepts and axes of investigation. From theory follows *methodology*, the third level, specifying the procedures that allow the researcher to perform concrete operations on the basis of the framework installed by theory. Finally, from methodology follow the *techniques* that give their final form to the above operations and allow us to arrive at the formulation of concrete results. The value of a theory is demonstrated only by the results obtained by concrete analysis following this process. Debates, of course, are possible on the level of theory and their outcome may be more or less convincing, but this is only intellectually reassuring. The final determination of the value of a theory are its empirical results and their alignment with the available data.

The semiotic explosion of the 1960s and 1970s had wide repercussions over the whole spectrum of the social sciences, the humanities and the arts. It was accompanied, however, with certain negative side-effects for semiotics itself. Frequently, while semiotics revitalised the many fields with which it came into contact, it was at the same time absorbed by their traditional habits. Semiotic terminology became part of their everyday vocabulary, but in a rather imprecise and unsystematic manner. Zoosemiotics, biosemiotics and cognitive semiotics extended the field further, linking semiotics to the biological sciences.

Thus, the domain of semiotics is today an evolving, fragmented and conflicting kaleidoscopic domain. These different and heterogeneous tendencies rarely communicate with each other. Many researchers make eclectic choices, combining methods from irreconcilable approaches.

The present issue of *Punctum* does not aspire to any kind of synthesis, which does not seem possible under current conditions. But its editors feel that the explicit formulation of the manner in which different semiotic approaches deal with the basic requirements of theory-building can represent a step towards a better mutual understanding of both differences and possible bridges. Epistemological and theoretical arguments are welcome and inevitable, but authors are invited to focus particularly on questions of methodology and technique: how do we get from theory to specific, systematic, verifiable results?

Certain matters are of particular interest in the above context:

(a) Papers based on any of the four levels of theory-making are of interest for this issue, but the main emphasis should be on *methodology* and *techniques*, while clearly defining the theoretical and technical concepts used.

(b) Closely connected to the aims of the volume is the issue of the general and specific *objects* of semiotic enquiry and how they affect the approach adopted.

(c) Two other important questions are the results that the use of a particular methodology has led to so far, and the results that may be expected in the future.

(d) We welcome in addition comparisons between different methodological approaches which throw light on their differences and/or similarities.

Prospective authors should submit an abstract of approximately 300 words by mail to Karin Boklund-Lagopoulou (boklund@enl.auth.gr) and Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos (phaidon@arch.auth.gr), including their affiliation and contact information. Acceptance of the abstract does not guarantee publication, given that all research articles will be put through the journal's peer review process.

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Revised timeline:

New deadline for abstracts: June 15, 2017

Notification of acceptance of the abstract: **July 10, 2017**

Deadline for submission of full papers (6.000-8.000): October 1, 2017

Reviewers' report: November 1, 2017

Final revised papers due: December 1, 2017

Publication: **Volume 3, Number 2 (December 31, 2017)**

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Punctum (www.punctum.gr) is a blind peer-reviewed, on-line journal dedicated to the semiotic study of contemporary cultural texts, practices and processes, published under the auspices of the Hellenic Semiotic Society. Aspiring to provide a venue for the advancement of international semiotic scholarship, the journal is published twice a year (July & December) in English, although submissions in French and German will be accepted as well. *Punctum's* Editorial Board reflects both its international scope and the diversity of contemporary semiotic research and theory. *Punctum* invites submissions (original papers, review articles, book reviews) across this wide range of semiotic fields and methodologies on an on-going basis, and regularly puts out calls for special issues with guest editors.