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ENGLISH PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE SEMIOSPHERE: PHILOSOPER AS A SIGN

The article deals with the analysis and characterization of PHILOSOPHER as a sign and a concept in the semiosphere of the English-speaking philosophical discourse. This phenomenon has been considered in frames of semiotic and cognitive paradigms the expediency of which has been analyzed and justified. At the backdrop of typical communicative situations pertaining to philosophy, outlined have been semantic, sign and symbolic characteristic of PHILOSOPHER in the academic and lay philosophical discourses which brought to better understanding of the place of PHILOSOPER in the code of the Anglo-American culture. The results help to reconsider a number of traditional views on philosopher as a professional and public figure in the present-day societies belonging to Anglosphere.

Key words: *semiosphere, sign, symbol, concept, stereotype, cultural code, semiotic, semiotic code, communication situation, discourse, philosophical discourse, English-speaking philosophical discourse, category of agency, archetype.*

У даній статті з позицій семіотики інтерпретується знак "філософ" у семіосфері англомовного філософського дискурсу. Також розглядається поняття "філософ" у рамках семантико-когнітивного підходу. Доцільність застосування семіотичної і когнітивної парадигм проаналізована і обґрунтована. Феномен філософа як знака розглядається в типових для філософського спілкування комунікативних ситуаціях. Описано його семантичні та семіотичні характеристики як знака і символу в професійному і тематично релевантному буденному дискурсі. Проведений аналіз сприяє кращому розумінню місця поняття "філософ" у коді англо-американської культури. Результати дослідження дозволяють переглянути низку традиційних уявлень про філософа як професіонала і публічної фігури в сучасних англомовних спільнотах.

Ключові слова: *семіосфера, знак, символ, концепт, стереотип, культурний код, семіотика, семіотичний код, комунікативна ситуації, дискурс, філософський дискурс, англомовний філософський дискурс, категорія агентності дискурсу, архетип.*

В данной статье семиотической интерпретации подвергнут знак "философ" в семиосфере англоязычного философского дискурса. Также рассматривается понятие "философ" в рамках семантико-когнитивного подхода. Целесообразность применения семиотической и когнитивной парадигм проанализирована и обоснована. Феномен философа как знака рассматривается в типичных для философского общения коммуникативных ситуациях. Описаны его семантические и семиотические характеристики как знака и символа в профессиональном и тематически релевантном обыденном дискурсе. Проведенный анализ способствует лучшему пониманию места понятия "философ" в коде англо-американской культуры. Результаты исследования позволяют пересмотреть ряд традиционных представлений о философе как профессионале и публичной фигуре в современных англоязычных сообществах.

Ключевые слова: *семиосфера, знак, символ, концепт, стереотип, культурный код, семиотика, семиотический код, коммуникативная ситуации, дискурс, философский дискурс, англоязычный философский дискурс, категория агентности дискурса, архетип.*

> *– What does your husband do?*
> *– It's not an easy question, he is a philosopher.*
> *– So?*
> *– Mostly, he is busy with thinking…*
> *– What? Thinking? Does it bring any money?*
> **From a dialogue at the Women' club**

Philosophical discourse is the oldest intellectual discourse in the history of mankind [11]. However, it remains one of the least studied linguistic phenomena,

while its counterpart – political discourse – has been given broad and all-round elucidation.

For more than half a century both fundamental and particular case studies of political discourse have been multiplying year over year. The language of power attracted attention of many outstanding philosophers and important linguists, to mention but J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus, H. Marcuse, W. H. Riker, N. Fairclough, T. A. van Dijk, P. Seriot, R. Wodak, A. Wierzbicka, R. M. Blakar, J. Lakoff, D. W. Johnson, G. M. Kosicki. These multidisciplinary efforts are justified by the fateful role Policy plays in our society and its impact on everyday life of an individual; its language can be metaphorically referred to as "a word in action" and is very aggressively manifested in the semiosphere of any culture.

Social value of the philosophical discourse – "the language of mind" – is no less important than that of the language of power. It is philosophy that develops ideologies to underlie politics and ideas to indirectly shape public consciousness, national cultures, historical and even geographical maps of the world. This value is highly recognized by a philosophical community within which there has been an on-going debate on the language of philosophy as a tool of thinking and a source of knowledge, first and foremost in terms of Analytical (or Linguistic) philosophy and its criticism. Nevertheless, as against political discourse, philosophical one up to now has remained unobtrusive if not invisible for linguists, with its linguistic and philological bibliography hardly numbering dozen works [inter alia, 1; 3] which are mostly dealing with lexicological and idialectical matters at the backdrop of the Russian and Ukrainian languages. Substantial theoretical linguistic consideration of the discourse of philosophy is still waiting for its authors. All the above mentioned proves that research into the discourse of philosophy is **relevant and timely** both for linguistics and arts in general.

In-depth analysis of the English speaking philosophical discourse (further – EPD) is a broad and long-term project. This assay is focused on an important fragment of the semiosphere of philosophy, which is PHILOSOPHER as a concept and sign. To my knowledge, there are no exploratory papers devoted to this issue.

This research **is aimed at** getting some insight in the specific nature of a philosophical semiosphere, its signs and concepts and to interpret the place of PHILOSOPER as a sign and concept in the code of the Anglo-American culture.

To the end of this research I addressed the semiotic and cognitive approaches for, by far, they appeared to be most profound as precedents in highlighting political discourse per se as well as in relation to various languages.

A brief review of semiotic ideas, approaches of semiotics and its methods is necessary to understand the advantages and limits of its applicability to such complex multidimensional phenomenon which is the English-speaking (Anglo-American) philosophical discourse. With long-standing traditions developed by F. de Saussure and L. Hjemslev, the term "semiotics" still lacks a uniform and generally recognized definition. Its understanding is inferred rather from a broad discussion on semiotics as an object of knowledge, as it appears during its description and instruments enabling scholars to make knowledge about this object.

For the purposes of this research we need to clarify, what kind of semiotic unit is the English philosophical discourse with its agency, and what are the ways to study it. Understanding semiotics as an object, usually offers its definition as a system of signs or a system of significations. Since my study is a descriptive project which is not intended at metatheorizing, I will be based on a tentative definition developed within the Tartu Semiotic School by A. Greimas, which reads that a given semiotics is "a signifying set that we suspect, at least hypothetically, possesses an organization, i. e., an autonomous internal articulation" [11]. Such signifying set becomes an object-semiotics when it is submitted to analysis, so, in our case, the study deals with the English-speaking philosophical discourse as an object-semiotics.

With respect to philosophical discourse, another important conclusion is worth accepting in this research: the opposition natural/constructed semiotic system should be substituted for by the opposition scientific semiotic systems/non-scientific semiotic system. "Under scientific semiotic systems – in the broad sense of "scientific" – we understand an object-semiotics treated within the framework of a semiotic theory, explicit or implicit (the construction of a documentary language, for example, is built on a theory, even if the latter is only barely scientific)" [Ibid]. Firstly, it is because there is still no agreement between philosophers on the issue whether philosophical language is natural or constructed artificial professional or common language; secondly, – because, in a limited scope analysis it is impossible to take all intertextual and cross-textual weavings making up philosophical discourse into consideration.

The next important position in which some clarification is need, is how to understand the concept of discourse.

D. Crystal provides the following definition to discourse: it is "a continuous stretch of (especially spoken) language larger than a sentence…a discourse is a behavioral unit which has a pre-theoretical status in linguistics…" [10, p. 106]. This definition of discourse doesn't suffice for this project as it is limited to parole, a spoken language. More profound is understanding of discourse as a social act, with written discourse being a representation of this social act. This social act implies that communication takes place and thus, it performs the communicative function. In his numerous studies of discourse, Teun A. van Dijk formulated a number of complementary and clarifying definitions of this concept which could be summarized in this way: discourse is a communicative event between addressor and addressee in the process of a communicative action a number of contexts (of time, place, culture, profession, social strata, etc.). Such act could be effected in a oral or a written format and may have verbal and nonverbal constituents. N. Fairclough focused on one more important Under communicative act we understand an act of interaction between two actors or social systems in which sign systems are used as a major tool of. Communicative act is usually accompanied with information, energetic and emotional exchange and ruled by a common rhythm (for more detailed information and review of literature see: [12]).

In the core of a discourse system is text as a product of communicative activity a thesaurus of texts of different nature, both natural and artificial, making up a broad

context area and a background for this discourse. They are a part of its cognitive bases. Here we refer to a long- standing semiotic tradition in the world philosophy and linguistics from M. Foucault to J. Derridda and from M. Lotman to B. Gasparov.

The interconnection between semiosis and discourse is concisely formulated by E. Sheygal: "In reality, language as an abstract system of signs exists in the form of a discourse or discourses" [8, p. 15].

In this study, philosophical discourse is understood as both an institutional discourse which is developed in a sphere of professional communication, and laymen discourse of philosophy which may be produced by anyone talking on ultimate issues, such as Truth, Equality, the Good, Virtue, Life, Death etc. Personalized philosophical discourse is close to narration in fiction, though its academic version is rather standardized today and suffers from limited expressive means. and common language. So, philosophical discourse is made of both sublanguages (of different philosophical doctrines) and common language, including slang.

Semiosphere of philosophical discourse is a verbalized system of knowledge and ideas oriented at serving philosophical communication. Semantically, this field reflects the reality of the world of philosophy which is interpreted by a certain tradition of thought or a lingua-cultural society in general, though by itself, philosophy strives to universality.

The results of such interpretation are the categorization of this sphere understood as rubricating of the analyzed phenomenon. It should be emphasized, such categorization differs depending who are its agents. Professional philosophers categorize it on ontological and functional basis while the language community do it according to their experience in dealing with representatives of this profession and segment their exterior and interior world according to basic characteristics of their performance and lives [8, p. 97].

Here I have to address the basic foundations of categorization of knowledge about the world of philosophy in signs of philosophical discourse, as well as typology of these signs.

Building up a philosophical semiosphere is based on such parameters: opposition in the sphere of expression, expression by connotative markers, referential opposition and functional opposition.

The first opposition embraces verbal and non verbal signs such as terms, phrases, aphorisms, texts. PHILOSOPHER as a sign belongs to the latter, functional opposition. It includes signification of his/her deeds, behavior, way of life and symbolic artifacts together with graphic symbols – symbolic images (like a *torch* for the idea of seeking TRUTH, or *slippers* – for a philosopher, who prefers comfortable life, or a *sofa* – for the idea of philosophizing without knowing the real life).

Proceeding from these assumptions, I will apply the principles of discourse and cognitive analyses to the language of philosophy and semiosphere of its discourse. Philosophical discourse consists of diverse languages (codes): scholarly metalanguage, common language, poetics, ethical code of philosophy, default language. In philosophical discourse a figure of philosopher makes a special importance and is vested in a sign draping, frequently becoming a symbol.

In order to understand in what way PHILOSOPHER is seen and categorized by the professional and lay English language community, I analyzed its lexicalization in dictionaries and texts belonging to different genres: philosophical writings, professional websites and blogs, chats, university advertising items, jokes, etc. [11; 12; 15; 16; 19–25] Data from two Corpora were also included [17; 18].

The analysis of definitions in dictionaries and encyclopedias allows presenting a structure of the frame PHILOSOPHER with a set of slots to objectivize a number of typical attributes:

MAN
1. – of a certain gender
2. – of a certain age
3. – of a certain origin
4. – of a certain educational/theoretical background
5. – *doing philosophy*
6. – *busy with thinking*
7. – *able of analyzing facts of life*
8. – *producing ideas and theories*
9. – belonging to a certain philosophical tradition
10. – belonging to a certain philosophical institution
11. – performing some academic functions
12. – having certain qualities:
    12.1. – professional:
        – creative
        – analytical
        – of abstract thinking
        – of teaching
    12.2. – moral:
        – generosity
        – loyalty
        – humanism
        – virtue
        – dignity
        – unity of word and deed
        – beliefs
        – sincerity
        – integrity
        – dedication
        – modesty
        – selflessness
    12.3. – psychological:
        – top intellect
        – independence
        – courage (to follow his/her way)

In these frame, slots 5–8 are central, for they designate the constitutive attributes of the phenomenon in question. They are verbalized with emotionally and expressively neutral lexical units. Philosopher, according to dictionaries, (5) *does philosophy, is busy with research,, writes on philosophical issues, gives lectures in philosophy, takes part in philosophical debates; (6) thinks over, reflects on, theorizes on, deals with abstract matters, studies a problem; (7) considers ideas, evaluate pros and contras, investigates the matter of, figures out positive and negative sides, scrutinizes ideas, studies the ultimate things, looks into the nature of things; (8) formulates the principles of…, offers an idea of…, generates ideas, founds the school of…, puts forward the hypothesis, etc.*

Other slots in this frame are constituted mostly by emotionally and expressively neutral nominations which are on the periphery of this concept when it operates in the professional philosophical discourse and are of no less use, if not come to fore, when it functions in a lay philosophical or common discourses.

According to bloggers [20; 22; 23; 25], a philosopher (whether professional or lay) is a man "*over a combat field*", a kind of a *freak*, *ascetic* or *hermit* living a very special life. He is or is believed to be totally *disinterested in material Goods* and *prefers solitude to socializing.*

All these characteristics constitute the image of a unique style of behavior. The stance of *guru* or a *nihilist* is no less important than a position of a philosopher as an author and also contributes to a special philosophical style.

The semiotic character of PHILOSOPHER is also embodied in the following: a philosopher can be represented as a metonymic sign which substitutes a group. In this case he personalizes a philosophical doctrine, school or a way of life. For example, *Foucaults' triangle* means a semiotic theory of signs, *Hegel's dialectics* – the method of knowledge based on the principal of universal development. The name of *Diogenos* calls to mind identification with a hermit way of life, while the phrase *Freudian Slippers*, on the contrary, symbolizes love to comfort. and has become a symbols of philosophical views, concepts and behavior.

Social stereotype of philosopher is reflected in the meanings of a set of either high-flown or comic expressive units to name him/her, testifying to the existence a grading scale in the verbalization of this phenomenon (from *Saint Wise Man, sage, Solomon,Plato of our time, prophet, guru, Teacher – to eccentric, weirdo, crank, nut, freak, oddfish, oddball*). We can see two prototypes of philosopher: first is an ideal philosopher – it represents the category of thought as an abstract ideal model which practically cannot be drawn from real experience and is usually based on some personality (Plato). Rather we infer this model from the opposition – ABOVE THE NORM/BELOW THE NORM (the latter is represented mostly by expressions of mockery or sarcasm). Another prototype is a model which is a congregation, a collection of knowledge of individual images which either coincide with a model or is in opposition to it (*ideal analyst – typical idler*).

John Lakoff developed the idea of a prototype as a representation of politician. According to him, there are four such prototypes: typical representatives, social

stereotypes, ideals and models. Social stereotypes are used in advertizing, mass-media etc.

The concept PHILISOPHER embraces all there prototypes, which are verbalized in a different way. Thus, the prototype of a typical example and model are verbalized through philosophical anthroponyms. Social stereotype of an ideal man are verbalized through expressive descriptions (either exalted or comic nominations) of philosophers:

Excellent thinker/sofa philosopher, best of men/ least of wretches; Teacher of mankind/escapist; great humanist/egocentric.

Such nominations usually circulate in a particular communicative situation depending on the image philosophers have in each. Further, I will consider the participants of philosophical communication interacting under communicative situations of different types which roughly and in the most general way could be classified in the following table:

Communicative situation with its linguistic tools	Addressor	Fucntion/Image/Symbol	Addressee
(a) philosophizing on a problem of personal interest (metalanguage; common language)	philosopher	thinker/thinker/–	philosopher himself (alter ego)
(metalanguage; common language)		thinker/thinker; layman/search for Truth; empty business	the Other (other philosopher/ philosophers
(b) philosophizing on a debatable problem/ participating in a professional debate (metalanguage)	philosopher	Thinker/professional/ search for Truth; honor; empty business	the Other1 (other philosopher/ philosophers)
(metalanguage)		thinker/professional; layman/ search for Truth; empty business	the Other 2 (professional philosophical community)
(language for special purposes, language of science)		thinker/professional; methodologist; layman/ indispensability; uselessness	the Other 3 (professionals in arts or sciences)
(c) philosophizing on a topical social problem/participating in a public debate	philosopher	thinker/thinker; layman/ search for Truth; empty business; pragmatism; compromise	the Other 1 (professional philosophical community)
(political philosophy language, common language)		thinker/professional/profession alism; ideology;	the Other 2 (professionals in arts or sciences)

Communicative situation with its linguistic tools	Addressor	Fucntion/Image/Symbol	Addressee
(common language, language of politics)	philosopher	layman/teacher; leader; panacea; guru; prophet; weirdo; freak	the Other 3 (society)
(political philosophy language, language of politics)		thinker/ideologist/professionalism; usefulness	the Other 4 (power)
(d) philosophizing on a topical social problem in answer to the appeal from the power to substantiate or support its political course (political philosophy language)	philosopher	thinker; political scientist/ ideologist; image-maker/professionalism, ideology	The Other1 (power)
(common language, language of politics)		thinker; public figure/ guru, prophet/ideology;, compromise; flunky	The Other 2 (society)
(e) philosophizing on an acute problem of crucial importance for humankind (common language, language of philosophy)	philosopher	Thinker; public figure/ guru; prophet, weirdo/wisdom, truth; panacea; oddity; head in the clouds; comicality	The Other (humanity)

Despite of a positive and even an indispensable, in social terms, image, and philosopher is sadly a dying profession. It was postulated at the end of a broad international discussion in the Internet in 2010 and is supported to-day with some linguistic data.

Let's consider two screenshots from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) [17]. In the first see that this word is in use in all available contexts, though figure are not very impressive: 3051 usages per one mln. words from 1990 to 2012:

	CONTEXT	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2012
1	PHILOSOPHER	3051	215	427	629	316	1464	738	820	713	569	211

Screenshot 1

In the next picture we come across a negative tendency in the usage of the word *philosopher* followed by a quick and dramatic decline since 2005 up to now: from 6.93 to 4.06 per one mln. words. This is how the English language discourse answered to the loss by philosopher a formerly high social status.

SECTION	ALL	SPOKEN	FICTION	MAGAZINE	NEWSPAPER	ACADEMIC	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2012	SECTION **ACADEMIC**
FREQ	3051	215	427	629	316	1464	738	820	713	569	211	
PER MIL	6.57	2.25	4.72	6.58	3.45	16.08	7.10	7.93	6.93	5.58	4.06	# TOKENS **1464**

SEE ALL SUB-SECTIONS AT ONCE

SIZE **91,066,191**
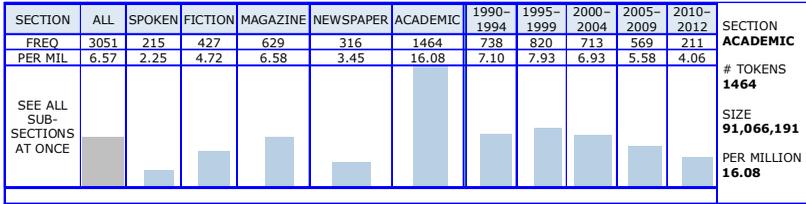
PER MILLION **16.08**

Screenshot 2

Another bright example is offered by the addressor-oriented website of the Kentucky University, College of Arts and Sciences, Philosophy Department [23]. Analyzing this educational advertising item under the title **"*Where Can Philosophy Take Me?"***, we see, that its authors avoid direct mentioning the profession of philosopher, for they understand: it is out of the public focus. In order to attract would-be students, they emphasize the development of intellectual abilities and skill enabling graduates to take their rightful place among the sought-after professions:

What skills does studying philosophy develop?
- *generate ideas on a variety of problems;*
- *formulate and solve problems;*
- *uncover assumptions and suggest alternatives;*
- *ability to distinguish subtle differences without overlooking similarities;*
- *analyze, develop and formulate logical arguments;*
- *capability to make knowledgeable decisions, examining thoroughly the consequences of various actions;*
- *aptitude to examine various angles of topics;*
- *ability to write and speak clearly and effectively;*
- *interpret and assess various thoughts and theories.*

In outlining career opportunities for students due to obtaining "*transferable work skill*", the authors mention 8 occupational fields, among which philosophy itself is absent:

Career Opportunities
Philosophy majors successfully work in, but are not limited to the following occupational fields:
- *lawyer;*
- *banker;*
- *public relations director;*
- *publisher;*
- *journalist;*
- *retail management;*
- *librarian;*
- *counselor;*

- *marketing;*
- *consulting;*
- *research;*
- *accountant;*
- *social worker;*
- *professor;*
- *self-employed;*
- *labor relations;*
- *foreign service officer;*
- *public policy;*
- *non-profit work;*
- *minister;*
- *teacher.*

It can be seen, that positions are presented according to their social weight, not in an alphabetic order. On the top there are lawyer, banker and public relations director; at the bottom – minister and teacher. Professor is among less wanted occupations, though it precedes the self-employed position.

And finally, the add attempts to create a positive image of philosophical education referring to a long list of successful individuals with such background, among which are important businessmen, judges, lawyers, film-makers and even a Prime-Minister and a Pope:

What can you do with a philosophy degree? You can become...
- *President of Morgan Stanley (Robert Greenhill);*
- *Founder and Manager of a Hedge-fund (Don Brownstein);*
- *Investor (George Soros);*
- *CEO of Overstock. com (Patrick Byrne);*
- *Supreme Court Justice (Stephen Breyer AND David Souter);*
- *Mayor of Los Angeles (Richard Riordan);*
- *US Secretary of Education (William Bennett);*
- *Prime Minister of Canada (Paul Martin, Jr.);*
- *Network Television Journalist (Stone Phillips);*
- *Pulitzer-Prize Winning Author (Studs Terkel);*
- *Host of an Iconic Game Show (Alex Trebek);*
- *Co-founder of Wikipedia (Larry Sanger);*
- *Comedian/Actor/Producer (Ricky Gervais);*
- *Academy-Award Winning Filmmaker (Ethan Coen);*
- *Four-star General in the US Army (Jack Keane);*
- *Fighter in the French Resistance in WWII (Stephane Hessel);*
- *Co-author of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (P. C. Chang AND Charles Malik);*
- *Martyr to German Opposition to Nazism in WWII (Sophie Scholl);*
- *Pope (John Paul II AND Benedict XVI);*
- *Seminal Anthropologist (Claude Levi-Strauss)ю*

A fragment of a dialogue cited as an epigraph.

Conclusion: the analysis of the written texts, websites, blogs, dictionaries and Corpora data provided in this article draws to a conclusion, that in the English language the concept PHILOSOPHER is rather richly lexicalized with nouns, adjectives, verbs and phrases (up to 50 units in dictionaries), the nuclear slots being represented by neutral lexemes, peripheral – by expressive ones.

In the Anglosphere, PHILOSOPHER is a sign of an ambiguous, at least, ambivalent image. On the one hand, society coded him/her as an extraordinary personality, whether positive of negative, the gradation being represented mostly in contexts, though by means of direct lexicalization as well. On the other hand, there is a widespread conviction in the British and American societies that due to their unique intellectual abilities and ultimate skills, philosophers are able to realize in full outside of the field of philosophy itself. In public view, philosopher remains to be a key agent (actor) in communication of ideas, political and cultural and public communication, though his/her message can easily be neglected and discarded by many. Social outcomes of such attitude can be justified by many language facts nominating and describing philosopher as a profession. The paradox can be formulated like that: as top intellectuals, philosophers are highly wanted, while they are unwanted as professional philosophers.

Thus, in the sphere of philosophy, the English language as a system, is still oriented at fixating ontological facts of mind and material life, while language in use testifies to a substantial cognitive shift in public consciousness reflected in the Anglosphere. Such situation in the language correlates with the latest tendencies of the cultural evolution in the English-speaking world to be directed by the ideas of pragmatism. The analysis of PHILOSOPER as a concept and a sign is a new proof for it.

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