

Izydora Dąmbska
ON SEMIOTIC FUNCTIONS OF BEING SILENT

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Language, in all its pragmatic functions, is an important tool by means of which one can fulfill different intentions and desires, especially those which arise on the grounds of man's interaction with other live beings. And thus, language can be analyzed as a tool for objectifying the results of cognition, as a tool for generating information, communicating and manipulating other people, as a tool for expressing own emotional states, and also as a means for creating certain cultural objects equipped with meaning (works of art, science, law, forms of cult, etc.). By operating linguistic signs in a proper way, that is the way determined by linguistic directives and situations we face, we can reach various objectives within the range of the mentioned activities. However, indeed, it is possible — and sometimes needed — to put this operational aspect of language aside in order to examine its formal and structural properties, that is its logical syntax, or to consider exclusively its references to the subject domain it maps, that is examine its semantic properties. However, in the case of the question of what the semiotic functions of being silent are, being silent needs to be considered as a certain phenomenon of human existence in the world that is connected — though it seems paradoxical — to the speech and language in its numerous instrumental functions. It does not mean that being silent is only non-speaking. Supposedly, it is one of the senses of the word "silence." In this sense, a guard who is alone in a tower, a student on a lecture, somebody who is asleep and a deaf-mute are all silent. Being silent thus understood is a certain negative state — a lack of external speech, or more broadly a certain form of silence. But it is possible to discuss silence in the cases when the lack of external speech results from refraining from speaking. This refraining from speaking can

be intended as a means of action (remaining silent on a certain matter in order to keep it secret) or can result from certain external conditions (e.g. refraining from speaking when this is enforced by regulations) or can be dictated secondarily by a certain internal state (when somebody falls silent because of timidity or anger) etc. However, such non-speaking always differs not only from unconscious non-speaking, but also from conscious speaking which is not accompanied by the characteristic moment of restraint which is crucial in the narrower sense of being silent.¹ This being silent as refraining from speaking has two aspects: the content aspect and the functional aspect. In the former, being silent is refraining from talking about certain subjects, in the latter it is refraining from talking as a certain function consisting in communication with others or communicating anything through being silent. What needs to be differentiated in the first case is refraining from talking about certain matters and leaving certain matters unsaid while talking about other things in order to disguise what we do not want to talk about.

Refraining from speaking is sometimes so far-reaching that it leads to the dying out of something which could be called an internal speech, that is to the dying out of discursive thinking by means of words and concepts. This border case of being silent sometimes seems to be postulated by intuitionists and mystics who believe that all conceptual (verbal) cognition distorts the object given in a direct experience. In *Enneads* Plotinus, describing the process of uniting the human soul with the absolute being, writes that the soul is joined "to God present in silence" (*θεοῦ ἀψοφήτι παρόντος* — V, 8, 11) and it looks at him "free of any discourse" (*πάντα λόγον ἀφείζ* — VI, 8, 10).

"Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches" — Wittgenstein will repeat — "Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische." An attempt to transfer these kinds of expressions or intuitions to the language of conceptual elucidations leads to a distortion of the object. For — Wittgenstein adds — "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen" (Wittgenstein 1922, 6.522; 7).

This kind of being silent as the dying out of internal speech — provided it

¹I proposed such an understanding of *being silent* in the draft "Milczenie jako wyraz i jako wartość" [Being silent as an expression and as a value] in 1952, however the article was published eleven years later (Dąbska 1963). The present study is an attempt to elaborate and show more insight into the semiotic part of the draft. Also, Max Scheler comments about the active character of being silent: "Personen können eben schweigen und ihre Gedanken verschweigen. Und das ist ein ganz anderes als bloß nichtreden. Es ist ein aktives Verhalten, durch das sie ihr Sosein (...) verbergen können" (1926: 259). Let's add that refraining from speaking is not understood as refraining from willing to speak; it may result from the need and willingness of non-speaking.

may happen — belongs itself to the category of matters of internal experience which is difficult to communicate, and in any case does not have a sign-character (in the intersubjective understanding) which is characteristic of being silent understood as refraining from speaking and whose semiotic functions I intend to analyze.

Speech theoreticians have written relatively little about being silent. Noteworthy, among the texts devoted to the subject I am familiar with, are F. Kainz's remarks in the third volume of his monumental "Psychologie der Sprache" (1954-1956). It seems, however, that Kainz narrows the concept of being silent too much when he writes: "Innerhalb des Gesprächs gibt es ein sinnvolles Schweigen, ausserhalb des Gesprächs gibt es überhaupt kein Schweigen, sondern nur ein Nicht-Reden." While being silent — as he claims — "ist (...) etwas vom Nicht-Reden total Verschiedenes." Completely agreeing with the statement that being silent is a significant component of conversation,² I do not think that being silent, different from non-speaking, does not occur outside a conversation at all. For not all speaking is a conversation (also in Kainz's understanding), but each activity of speaking can be assigned with being silent. Also, I do not understand being silent as something totally different ("total Verschiedenes") from non-speaking, but only — as stated above — in the understanding adopted in this analysis, it is non-speaking determined by the activity of refraining from speaking, or more precisely — a result or product of this activity. Of course every researcher may propose one way or another of defining a term and determining the class of objects intended for analysis. It seems, however, that the convention proposed by Kainz is not efficient enough in language theory, and narrows the scope of the studied area too much. For it is not difficult to show that not only within a conversation but also in other situations in which language is used, refraining from speaking occurs and should be called being silent, also because of properties Kainz assigned to this refraining. Thus it is not surprising that some examples given by Kainz go beyond being silent in a conversation, which in turn, if not inconsistent, broadens the concept of conversation too much.

If we distinguish, in situations we want to examine, a certain state of consciousness of the subject able to speak, a certain activity (this active

²Moreover — it is agreeable (as La Rochefoucauld noticed a long time ago) that there is no conversation or sensible exchange of arguments between two people who cannot be silent in appropriate moments. That's why, summarizing his elucidations on the art of conversation he states: "écouter beaucoup, parler peu, et ne rien dire dont on puisse avoir sujet de se repentir" (2013, V).

refraining from speaking) and the product of this activity (being silent in the sense adopted here), then, from the point of view of semiotics, being silent as a sign of conscious inhibition of speech where the situation expects and even demands speaking is especially interesting. This being silent can be called signifying or signitive in a narrower sense.

For the sake of clarity, I shall add that also being silent understood as non-speaking can have a sign-character. And thus non-speaking resulting from certain damages to the nervous system is a symptom, that is a certain sign, of disease for a doctor. Non-speaking about certain events by an author of a chronicle or a diary who should have known about the events if they had occurred, and who should record them if the events were known, is sometimes regarded by historians as a default indicate that the events in the given time did not occur and is called *argumentum ex silentio*.

The border between refraining from speaking and conscious non-speaking is sometimes vague. For example, it is clearly visible in the case of the so called *aphasia voluntaria*, which occurs in children who persist in being silent and refuse to answer any questions. It is sometimes difficult to judge in such cases whether the child refrains from speaking or if it does not speak — even though it would like to — as a result of certain neuropathic disorders.

Even more clearly such as an inability to speak, which is not conditioned by damages to the centers of the nervous system but results from the so called permanent dislike or inability to interact, is visible in pathological forms characteristic of states of depression and often e.g. in various types of schizophrenia is accompanied by autistic behavior and dying out of other non-verbal means of communication. However, also non-speaking in the narrower understanding, that is conscious and even intended refraining from speaking, can be divided into two types: that is a certain way of communicating with others, a means of expression, information or disinformation, and a breakdown of communication. In the former case, being silent is a result of a certain activity of a sign-character, a certain way of "speaking without words," or at least signaling something, in the latter case, a result of refusal to interact, negation in relation to the function of signaling or informing. It could be objected that the presented differentiations, which refer to the internal conditions of being silent, unnecessarily introduce certain unverifiable assumptions of a psychological nature to the semiotic considerations. I do not think it is so. Agreeing that in particular psychological or psychiatric research is sometimes difficult to establish whether we are dealing with the case of intended refraining from speaking of the signifying character, or with a symptom, an internal compulsion of a forced muteness, or lastly, with a form

of negation of interacting, I do not think it is possible — when distinguishing being silent as a subject of semiotic considerations — to put aside its pragmatic sign functions, which reveal the instrumental aspect of being silent in the linguistic system and by their nature can only be understood if we realize what instrumental use being silent may have in general. (Another issue is that the phenomenon of being silent should be analyzed within individual and social psychology, characterology and personality typology. But it is not the focus of our considerations which deal with the semiotic functions of being silent.)

And in semiotics, being silent as a result of refraining from speaking should be analyzed in two sign categories: 1) as an indicate and 2) as a signifying element of language.

The notion of indicate, defined and understood in numerous ways,³ can be introduced to semiotics through reduction of the concept of ordered set U such that $U_{def} F\{(a \rightarrow b) \text{ for } S\}$, where S is a conscious subject, a is a certain state of things which is available for perception, such that can be regarded by S as an indicator of another state of things b ; a indicates b for S if and only if S perceiving a can accept b because of that there is a characteristic assignment relation between a and b .⁴ It seems that a similar concept of indicate was shared by Stoics who defined an indicate as a content of antecedent in a true conditional proposition, in which both clauses are true and in which between the antecedent and the consequent there is such a relation that the content of antecedent contains the content of consequent (Sextus Empiricus 1979, II: 244ff; Dąmbska 1970). However, this approach, which shifts the relation of indicating between the indicate and what is signified to the syntactic level (the relation between clauses of conditional proposition), disregards two important moments of the relation of "indicating to." Firstly, it does not highlight the dual reference of elements of U , that

³A review of various conceptions of indicate is presented in e.g. J. Kotarbińska 1957.

⁴This "indicating to" differs significantly from the function of designating or denoting, which speech words have in relation to their assigned denotata. The name *dog* designates a certain species of pet animals as a result of the meaning it has in the English language. However, it does not indicate anything as such, because it is not a state of things which given to subject S in perception would allow the subject to realize on the basis of the relation of the name *dog* and its designate that there is another specified state of things. Only in a certain particular sign and situational context, a name can secondarily become an element of indicate, frequently loosening its proper linguistic meaning. For example, John's shouting at Peter: *You rabid dog* can become an indicate of a row to Paul who witnessed the situation.

a is an indicate of b only for S , for whom it can indicate this b ; secondly, it reduces the concept of indicate — against the common understanding — to the concept of linguistic meaning. An indicate — in the understanding proposed here — is not the logical meaning of an antecedent of conditional proposition, but a certain state of things which can be assumed in the antecedent of implication. And the state of things is such that when perceived can be regarded as an indicator of another state of things. In the concept of indicate proposed here, indicates are both natural, spontaneously occurring phenomena or states of things, and are also ones that occur as a result of intended actions, e.g. by installing an appropriate apparatus, in order to be used to indicate something to somebody. Let's call the first kind of indicate — symptoms, the latter — signals. In this understanding, an indicate is: the appearance of a rash which is for a doctor a symptom of a contagious disease, the low flight of the swallow as an indicate of approaching wet weather, the sound of the bell of the fire brigade signaling the outbreak of a fire, a deflection of the manometer pointer indicating a rise in gas pressure. Examples of signals, that is indicates produced intentionally, divide into two possible kinds. Either, as in the example with the manometer, a signal — though established conventionally — as — similarly to a symptom of a disease — a state of things really connected with the state it indicates, or the relationship between the elements of the relation is established on the principle of convention, as in the case of the sound of a bell in the role of an indicate of fire. Also, it is worth noting that signals are very often not only indicates which reveal something to the conscious subject, thus allowing the subject to acquire a certain cognition, but simultaneously have the postulating or order-giving function, which regulates somebody's behavior, order or prohibits something. The bell of the fire brigade indicates that a fire has broken out, but simultaneously calls the fire brigade to put down the fire. The red light on a railway track signals that the track is busy, and simultaneously prohibits crossing the track. Surely it can be noticed that not only signals, but also symptoms have sometimes the postulating function in the sense that interpreting them in a certain way determines the interpreter's behavior. A doctor observes the indicates of a disease in order to prescribe appropriate treatment. But this postulating is only something secondary or intermediate in relation to the symptom, resulting from making it an aim of somebody's action. The same symptom of a disease will induce one person to undergo treatment, another — to avoid contact with the sick (e.g. in the case of fear of infection), another — to stay indifferent. A symptom *sensu stricto*, that is a certain natural state of things regarded as an indicator of another

state of things, neither postulates nor orders, but does it intermediately when the appearance of the symptom is accompanied by certain directives for behavior in the consciousness of the interpreter. Signals, however, are often originally designed as signs postulating certain ways of behavior and action. But not all signals and not always. Functioning of measurement apparatus, similarly to a symptom, is most often meant to only reveal and register what manifests itself through this indicate, though in certain cases the functioning of measurement apparatus is originally designed as an order-giving signal (e.g. the apparatus in the pilot's cockpit). The postulating and order-giving functions are most often characteristic of arbitrary signals. But not all of them. Displaying a black flag on a building of an institution is an indicate for a passer-by that somebody who worked for the institution has died. However, this indicate does not always call for a particular behavior, for example when the intentions behind displaying the flag were to show mourning of bereaved employees. These examples and remarks are intended to show that a sign which is an indicate, except for its characteristic function of indicating, can, but does not have to, have other semiotic functions. It can be a sign with order-giving functions, but also an expressive sign. Frequently among symptoms, such expressive signs are certain indicates of psychological states (as long as they are consciously used to express the state). If the function is missing, such signs remain only indications.

Being silent, analyzed as an indicate, is either a symptom (e.g. for a doctor or psychologist who carries out clinical observations), or a signal. Even being silent in a narrower understanding (that is conscious refraining from speaking) is a symptom, and only a symptom-indication as long as it is not intended to express anything. However, being silent can also be a signal, even an arbitrary signal, if it occurs as an element of a certain code. For example if a religious ceremonial requires silence after specific words of prayer and indicates that the central moment of the mass has come. It can also have the order-giving function — if it simultaneously regulates the behavior of members of the service.

Being silent can also be a means of communicating information, not only as a signal, but also as a communicative component of natural language. It can also be a means of expression, a way of expressing certain psychological states. The latter function can occur in isolation from speech (e.g. when somebody is silent to express the grief after losing someone dear), but may also be used to manipulate others in the context of a language game. And being silent in the context of speech is what I would like to have a closer look at.

When speaking of being silent as a component of speech, I do not mean that every verbal or written context is created from vocal or spaced graphical signs. These "silent" pauses which separate some signs from others establish certain sensible wholes, e.g. sentences and their parts, lines of dialog, etc. Hence they have important semiotic functions, namely within syntax, as they establish the right order connections between words. Without the pauses, there would be no speech, only a constant and incoherent mumbling. What corresponds to silent pauses in speech are spaces between words in writing, and when it comes to separating certain significant wholes and bringing out their syntactic relations, the so called pause (punctuation) marks are used. I shall not, however, call pauses of this kind as being silent. For as a pianist does not stop playing a melody while separating musical phrases and chords, likewise somebody who separates sentences and words does not stop speaking. Only when they make a significant pause, that is to fall silent and refrain from saying certain words or further speaking, or from speaking for a while in order to signal or express a certain content, then this being silent is a significant element of speech or a kind of speech. Also, when I refer to being silent as an element of speech, I do not think of leaving something unsaid in the sense Norwid presented in his essay *Milczenie* ("Being silent"), which, though rather vague in its historiosophical part, assumes that the man is driven to action only by certain "przybliżenia" (approximations) — as Norwid put it — that is an intuitive sensing of truth, and not theorems clearly formulated in language. As a result our speech is full of what is left unsaid. It is always — according to Norwid — "dramatyczna" (dramatic), "i nie ma w niej zdania tak abstrakcyjnego, które nie kryłoby przemilczenia" (and there is no utterance in speech so abstract that it is not underlain by what is left unsaid) (Norwid 1922: 41).

What is left unsaid, "będąc żywotną częścią mowy, daje się naprzód w każdym zdaniu wyczytać, a potem jest logicznym następnego zdania powodem i wątkiem. Tak iż to, co drugie w porządku zdanie głosi i wypowiada, było tylko co pierwszego zdania nie wygłoszonym przemilczeniem, a to, co trzecie mówi zdanie, leży w drugiego przemilczeniu, a co czwarte, w trzeciego... i tak aż do dna treści, która tym dopiero sposobem jest rzeczywiście wyczerpana na mocy logiki w takowym procesie dotykalnie objawiającej się" (being a vital part of speech, first allows itself to be read in each utterance, and then is a logical cause and content of the following utterance. So that what the following utterance concerns was only what the initial utterance left unsaid, and what the third utterance is about, lies in what the previous sentence left unsaid, and what the fourth utterance is about, lies in what

the third utterance left unsaid... and so on until reaching the bottom of the content which only in this way is actually exhausted on the strength of logics revealing itself palpably in such a process) ((Norwid 1922: 41). Norwid transfers his thesis on what is left unsaid in each utterance into literary works — or "umysłowe wyroby wieku" (intellectual products of the century), as he calls them, and states that "to, co było przemilczeniem całego umysłowego ogółu jednej epoki, stawa się wygłosem literatury epoki drugiej, następnego wieku, a co ta przemilcza, wygłosi trzeci, swoje znowu dla następnej przemilczenie ze sobą wnosząc" (what was left unsaid by the whole intellectual entirety of one period, becomes the undertone of the literature of the following period, and what this period leaves unsaid will be said by the next period which will again raise what is left unsaid for the next period) (Norwid 1922: 78). On this basis Norwid attempts to establish the order of appearing literary forms: a "poetical invocation," an epic, a novel, a historiography. Not elaborating on this rather arbitrary historiosophy of literature, let's ask what sense Norwid attributes to the thesis that being silent, which he reduces to what is left unsaid, is a part of speech, that being silent is contained in every utterance. It seems that this thesis may mean that the content of an utterance formulated in words is only a certain limited choice in relation to the contents of consciousness not yet formulated in words which are, so to speak, silently or *implicite* assumed by this explicated content. When meeting a friend and uttering the words: "How are you, my dear?" — Norwid argues — I am silent about many other thoughts such as: "I haven't seen you for a very long time," "I feel that I would like to contact you more frequently," etc. These thoughts left unsaid in the question may become the content of a later utterance (Norwid 1922: 42ff). It seems that Norwid aims at what Marty calls "die innere Sprachform der Rede" (Marty 1940) — language contents which are not uttered but deducible from what the sentence contains *explicite*. If I understand Norwid's elucidations correctly, being silent in his sense does not need to be active refraining from speaking and it is not a sign of something but it itself is something that the uttered words signal and *implicite* express what is left unsaid. Moreover — most often Norwid does not differentiate between what is left unsaid and the content of what is left unsaid without realizing the ambiguity. Here, however, being silent is analyzed as a result of refraining from speaking which has a simultaneous "language" function of communicating something to somebody; the being silent which is said to be more meaningful than words or can even replace words. "Il y a une éloquence qui pénètre plus que la langue ne saurait faire" — reads *Discours sur les passions de l'amour* which is attributed to

Pascal, while an old Latin aphorism states this in a more cautious way:

Saépe tácens vocém, vérbaque vúltus habét

Being silent may be "more meaningful than words" especially for somebody who makes use of it as a word. For the addressee of this word, or a contingent observer of this sign, however, it is less legible and more ambiguous. Somebody who has been asked a question — is silent. Is it a sign of ignorance, hesitation or disrespect for the asker? Being silent as a sign of compassion may be interpreted as a sign of indifference, being silent as a sign of disapproval or disdain — as a sign of fear. It may be said that being silent is not a self-explanatory but indexical expression, that is such that only together with other words and in a specific situation, in a particular "language game" — in Wittgenstein's terms — does it express or communicate something in an unambiguous way. Sometimes its sense depends on a convention. For example when a custom or code of behavior accepted in a certain community considers being silent in certain situations as a sign of a certain content, e.g. "a minute of silence" as a sign of reverence for the dead. Not only as a conventional but also as an indexical expression with a conventionally unspecified meaning, being silent may become an insincere expression — it may be used to suggest contents which do not exist and to hide contents we do not wish to express. Then, similarly to speech, being silent may be a means of disguise and disinformation and happens to be an important tool of human activity in competition or cooperation with others. In this aspect, being silent is also an interesting subject of moral axiology.⁵

If being silent is such an ambiguous expression, how can this property be shared with its so frequently highlighted merits as a means of communication, together with the being silent which is more meaningful than words, or the mutual being silent of people in love, etc. How can this paradox — that by refraining from speaking we do what language in fact is for — be explained? Actually, the paradox that being silent is an element of speech disappears when we realize a few things which anyhow have been signaled over the

⁵But not only in the aspect in which being silent is itself either a positive or a negative moral value. Also being silent as an indication of a certain spiritual attitude on account of its meaning for the inner development of man and for deepening his self-consciousness. "Wahre Ethik — A. Schweitzer once said — fängt an, wo der Gebrauch der Worte aufhört" (quoted after Gauger 1937: 11). I undertook the issue of being silent as a form of action and being in the world in the ethical sense in the above mentioned paper "Milczenie jako wyraz i jako wartość" [Being silent as an expression and as a value].

course of considerations. Firstly, it needs to be remembered that language is a tool of multiple use. Analyzed in its pragmatic functions it turns out to be a very efficient tool for communicating information which concerns states of things available to intersubjective cognition. The word "information" is used here broadly and encompasses contents of questions, descriptive assertions, or even various types of performative utterances. However, language is an inefficient tool when it is meant to convey information which concerns subjective states: sense experiences, feelings, moods, thoughts, etc. Any attempts to communicate them to other people often turn out to be fallible in the speaker's opinion. ("The tongue lies to the voice, the voice lies to the thought" — Mickiewicz 1956.) Language also turns out to be an inefficient tool when it is used to express these numerous inner states. INFORMING about one's subjective states (either in the form of attempts to describe them or assess them, etc.) needs to be clearly distinguished from EXPRESSING them by means of language. In the former case, similarly to events of conveying information about any other states of things, we use language by adopting an objectifying attitude towards our subjective states and by taking into consideration the addressee of the message. In the latter case, we make subjective use of language, we express ourselves by means of language; language is then an element of our present mode of being in the world. A consideration of the addressee may but need not accompany it; what is important is not the meaning of words, but their tone and emotional load. A shout of anger, fear, or despair (for example, "Bloody hell!" — "woe betide me!" — or "woe!"), which comes out of the mouth of a lonely man, insults he hurls in rage express his state — and even when they communicate the state to somebody, they do so not in the form of conveying a verbal message. When this expressive function of language is analyzed, it turns out that meanings of words play an insignificant role here, words lose their normal linguistic sense, and often become even asemantic, they function only as a certain component of the subject's complex living situation. Somebody with a certain level of good manners who wants to control themselves in such situations, suppresses and limits the external indicators of their states and falls silent. Their being silent, in a certain sense, enriches their inner state and becomes for them (and with time, for an intended or contingent addressee) an expression even more meaningful than words.

Similarly in the case of conveying information about subjective states of things, in the face of inadequacy of verbal messages, we sometimes refrain from speaking about them, and it is precisely being silent or leaving something unsaid in an appropriate situational context that can communicate

them to others even more efficiently than words.

When, however, it comes to inter-subjectively available states of things, conveying information concerning them may take place by means of being silent on the basis of convention; moreover, leaving something unsaid about certain statements, refraining from uttering certain words, either inadequate, or imprecise, or unclear, or redundant, is an important factor of proper and sensible speaking. A surplus of words makes the information less clear and efficient and a lot needs to be left unsaid, many words need to be rejected in order to say explicitly what is intended. In this sense, leaving something unsaid that improves the accurate and economic use of speech also has a significant meaning when it comes to semantic functions of language. It is known by the masters of concise style — those who use the laconic style.

Being silent as a means of communication of certain contents and as a means of expression is an important element of art. It used to be and still is regarded as a certain aesthetic quality of a piece of art. Rhetoric, literature, theater all operate with being silent, in the strict sense of the expression, as such areas of artistic creation whose raw material is language. But, in the metaphorical sense, other kinds of art operate within the category of being silent.

Sometimes the speaker operates with being silent, or pauses — which are only apparently silent — in order to highlight the importance of what has already been said, or to prepare the audience to what is going to be said. The speaker falls silent to express real or intended feelings, sometimes leaves unsaid something that is meant to be implied to the audience. Sometimes the speaker states that this or that is left unsaid. In ancient rhetoric, *αποσιώπησις* (leaving unsaid) is constantly enumerated among rhetorical figures.⁶ But also contemporary theoreticians of rhetoric pay much attention to it.⁷ In a work of literary art, the author either speaks of being silent and highlights its role in the imaginative world of the work, or, by the skilful signaling of leaving something unsaid, makes refraining from words a direct means of own expression or the expression of a character. Lyrical poetry, and especially the art of drama operate with being silent as a phrase. Silent scenes in theater, the actor's silent acting are sometimes more meaningful than long tirades. It would be interesting to analyze to what extent silent art and silent films use in their artistic effects the expressive merits of being silent.

⁶Cf. Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, *Institutiones oratoriae*, IX, 2, 54.

⁷For example, M. Dessoir in "Rede als Kunst", which is mentioned by Kainz (1954-1956, III: 525).

What has been highlighted in the present paper devoted to considerations about the semiotic functions of being silent is its role as a means of information and expression. Thereby I do not wish to ignore that refraining from speaking may be sometimes a sign of rejection to convey information and an attempt to reduce all, not only verbal, expression; that it is a tool of disinformation, a means of keeping a secret and withdrawing into oneself. Being silent of the oppressed, being silent from members of the underground, being silent of the initiated, being silent in concentration and contemplation — all are also signitive phenomena, signs and sometimes even symbols of human destinies and human presence in the world.

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