Peeters, G. (1989). Person and non-person as basic concepts underlying alternative discourses about reality. An analysis based on the social-psychological relation-pattern model and Greimas' semiotic square. *Ultimate Reality and Meaning. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding*, 12, 113-132.

SUMMARY: See last page

Ultimate Reality and Meaning. Interdisciplinary Studies in the Philosophy of Understanding, 1989, vol. 12, 113-132.

4.5

Person and Non-Person as Basic Concepts Underlying Alternative Discourses About Reality. An Analysis Based on the Social-Psychological Relation-Pattern Model and Greimas' Semiotic Square.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A few billions of years ago the great cosmic adventure started in which we are still participating today. We do not know whether it is an aberrance from which we have to return back to the home of nothingness from which it seems to have departed, or whether it is an exodus from the nothing in search for a 'Promised Land' of being. The answer should be looked for in the light of experience and thought that illuminates the pathway. However, does it shine far enough to allow for a reasonable answer? This is a problem dealt with by the philosopher concerned with ultimate reality. Therefore he/she should proceed from the circle of light that constitutes the immediate reality in which he/she lives and of which he/she is a part of himself. Here he/she can get help from the scientist who may reveal articulations of immediate reality that presumably extend beyond the circle of light in the darkness where the philosopher, in search for the ultimate, wants to penetrate. Similar articulations are not only localized in the emergent physical world, that is the object of our knowledge, but in the structure of this knowledge itself. Thus examining how our knowledge about immediate reality is organized, we may get insight about how our knowledge about ultimate reality is or could be organized (Peeters, 1986). On the basis of a structural analysis of knowledge, founded on social-psychological and semiotic research, we shall attempt to provide a grid that is suitable to map concepts regarding ultimate reality and to shed light on relationships between these concepts and the philosophical and theological doctrines that are connected with them.

2. THE RELATION-PATTERN MODEL (RPM) AND ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSES ABOUT REALITY

2.1 *Brief Outline of the Model*

The Relation-Pattern Model (Peeters, 1983), henceforth abbreviated RPM, stems originally from cognitive social-psychology where it was designed in order to account for some of the ways in which perceivers form impressions of the personalities of other people on the basis of information about how those people relate to each other and to

themselves. It proceeds from an observation ascribed by Bever (1970) to Chomsky according to whom the linguistic categories of noun and verb would reflect a cognitive universal. More especially, our brains would be set for processing information about reality in terms of entities and relations between entities. A simple noun-verb-noun sentence such as 'A likes B' reflects a cognitive representation involving a relation (liking) between two entities (A and B).

Social-psychological research has demonstrated that perceivers go beyond the mere relational information given. For instance, given the relational information item 'A helps B,' a perceiver who gets that information may infer further attributes of A and B such as 'A seems altruistic and B seems helpless' or 'A seems naive and B seems shrewd.' In order to account for these inferential cognitive processes, cognitive psychologists assume that perceivers complete the information given making use of presuppositional 'implicit knowledge' that in a previous article was referred to as 'softwares of the brain' (Peeters, 1986). For instance, inferences may be underlain by presuppositions as 'Altruistic people are disposed to help helpless people; shrewd people succeed in making naive people help them, etc.' The economy of science, however, requires the scientist to assume no more implicit knowledge within the perceiver than is strictly necessary in order to account for the inferences made by the perceiver. Information that is directly implied by the perceptual input should not be put on the credit of implicit knowledge such as the observation that John is taller than Mary should not be accounted for by the observer holding the presupposition that men are taller than women if John is really taller than Mary. Only if John is really not taller than Mary, the cognitive psychologist may conclude that the observer goes beyond the information given in a way as if he/she would hold the presupposition that men are taller than women.

In the given example it is evident which information belongs to the input given and which to the perceiver's implicit knowledge. However, this is less evident when the given input involves certain relational information. For instance, consider the information item: 'A and B like each other.' When this item is presented to informants with the request to describe their impressions about A and B, then it turns out that they perceive A and B as very alike (Peeters, 1976 and 1983). At a first glance one might argue that this is because the information conveyed about A is the same as that conveyed about B. However, is this so? Should it not be considered that the information that is conveyed about A is only that (s)he likes B while about B only that (s)he likes A, and that 'liking B' may not be the same as 'liking A'? On the basis of this consideration we might conclude that the input information conveyed about A is not the same as that conveyed about B and thus cannot account for the similarity ascribed to A and B. This ascribed similarity then might have to be accounted for by presuppositional knowledge held by the informants. For instance, they may assign similarity to A and B because they presuppose that 'birds of the same feather flock together' rather than that 'opposites attract.'

One could wonder, however, whether this is the most economical solution. Perhaps a simpler assumption about the implicit knowledge of the informants might account for the data as well. A similar simple assumption may be that rather than presupposing that people who like each other are alike, which is contradicted by 'opposites attract,' the informants may just presuppose that people like themselves. The given information

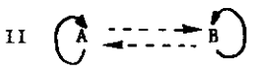
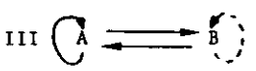
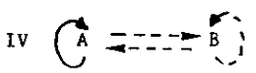
input 'A and B like each other' then is implicitly completed with '... and themselves.' If this is the case the information conveyed about A is indubitably the same as that conveyed about B: both are alike in that both like A and both like B. The economy of science requires us to accept the latter, more simple, solution rather than the more complex one that was initially proposed. However, given the information that A and B like each other and themselves, there are still other similarities between them that are directly implied by the information given. Actually, there are no less than eight ways to define the similarity between A and B. Indeed, A and B are alike in that:

1. (a) both like the other
   (b) both are liked by the other
2. (a) both like oneself
   (b) both are liked by oneself
3. (a) both like A
   (b) both are liked by A
4. (a) both like B
   (b) both are liked by B.

Notice that we have reduced the eight ways of defining similarity to four, each way comprising two variants marked by the letters a and b. This was done because for the present purposes we need to distinguish only between ways 1, 2, 3, and 4, while the distinctions between the variants a and b are irrelevant to the issues we shall deal with. Readers interested in implications of the ab-distinctions are referred to Peeters (1983 and 1987).

The RPM is an analytic tool allowing one to map the various ways in which patterns of relations between entities imply (dis)similarities between those entities and to establish how those various ways are formally related to each other. In terms of the RPM, verbs such as liking and disliking are dealt with as realizations of respectively positive and negative relations. Positive and negative relations can be combined in various configurations which are referred to as *relational patterns*. They can be represented by diagrams in which positive relations are rendered by full arrows and negative relations by dotted arrows such as the diagrams I to IV displayed in Schema 1, where I may correspond to the situation where A and B like each other and themselves as well, II to a situation where they dislike each other but like themselves, etc. To each relational pattern corresponds an informational pattern that displays the (dis)similarities obtained by the various ways of defining similarity described higher. It was decided to consider in this study only four of the ways and the (dis)similarities associated with them are also presented in Schema 1 where similarities are represented by 1's while dissimilarities by 0's. Thus, the higher described series of similarities implied by A and B liking each other and themselves is rendered by the informational pattern associated with relational pattern I consisting exclusively of 1's and no 0's. Pattern II, which may represent A and B disliking each other but liking themselves, implies A and B being alike following ways 1 and 2, while being dissimilar following ways 3 and 4, etc.

So far we were reading Schema 1 by rows pointing to information patterns of

ways of inference:	way 1	way 2	way 3	way 4
cognitive anchors:	O	S	A	B
I 	1	1	1	1
II 	1	1	0	0
III 	1	0	1	0
IV 	1	0	0	1
	SO-Program		3P-Program	
Relational Patterns	Informational Patterns			

Schema 1. Relational and informational patterns.

Legend: ——→ : positive relation

- - - -→ : negative relation

1 : similarity between A and B

0 : difference between A and B

(dis)similarities implied by relational patterns. However, it is also possible to read the schema columnwise pointing to the configuration of (dis)similarities over relational patterns that is associated with each of the four ways. For instance, following way 1, the four relational patterns imply similarity. Following way 2, only I and II imply similarity, while III and IV dissimilarity, etc. When we compare the configurations of 1's and 0's then we find that each column shows 50% agreement and 50% disagreement with each other column. For instance, the column of way 2 is in agreement with the column of way 3 for patterns I and IV, while it is in disagreement for patterns II and III. Thus the range of agreements is outbalanced by the range of disagreements, and it can be shown (Peeters 1983, 1987) that this peculiarity is preserved when the number of relational patterns is extended to the complete range of 16 configurations of positive and/or negative relations that are possible. It means that as a whole the four ways to define (dis)similarities are formally unrelated: they are like four independent views on the same situations.

It follows from what precedes that a perceiver can infer (dis)similarities between A and B in four ways corresponding to the four columns of 1's and 0's in Schema 1. In that these ways are formally unrelated, the perceiver may use two or more of these ways simultaneously. For instance, combining ways 2 and 3 together, he may infer high

similarity between A and B from relation-pattern I, medium similarity from II and III, while low similarity from IV. Combining the four ways of inference, he may infer high AB-similarity from I, while equal medium degrees of AB-similarity from II, III, and IV. Finally, it is not necessary to combine the four ways in order to infer (dis)similarities making use of the entire set of four relations that constitute the relational pattern. Indeed, in order to cover all four relations it suffices to combine either ways 1 and 2, or ways 3 and 4. Both combinations constitute two programs of the brain-computer. The former is referred to as the *SO-program* in that it involves the use of the constructs *Self* and *Other* as cognitive anchors. Way 1, which defines the similarity between A and B in their relations with the other, constitutes the *O-part* of the SO-program, while way 2, which defines the similarity between A and B in their relations with the self, constitutes the *S-part*. In an analogous way, ways 3 and 4 constitute respectively the *A-part* and the *B-part* of a cognitive program referred to as the *3P-program* because it involves the use of cognitive anchors that belong to the third pronominal person (3P) such as the terms '*him or her called A*' and '*him or her called B*.'

2.2 *Alternative Discourses about Reality Underlain by the SO- and 3P-Programs*

The distinction between SO- and 3P-program is not merely academic but underlies two distinct discourses about reality. This is illustrated by the following example:

> *Example 1.* A and B meet each other for the first time. They shake hands and ... start blushing. The blushing reveals so far hidden dispositions in A and B. The question is whether it reveals the same dispositions in A as in B. Thinking along the lines of the SO-program one may infer that A and B share a disposition to blush when contacting an other and not to blush when contacting the self. This disposition is readily conceived of as a personality attribute A and B being perceived as shy, lacking self-confidence, etc. However, thinking along the lines of the 3P-program one may infer that A has a disposition to blush in contact with B while not in contact with A, and that B has exactly the opposite disposition which is: to blush in contact with A and not in contact with B. These opposite dispositions in A and B are readily conceived of in terms of A and B having different biochemical constitutions that make them blushing by allergic reaction.

The point of the example is not so much that the SO-program leads to similarity and the 3P-program to dissimilarity. This follows simply from the fact that the situation depicted corresponds formally to pattern II in Schema 1 where the SO-program implies only similarity while the 3P-program only dissimilarity. The point is rather that the SO-program leads to an interpretation involving concepts such as 'personality' which seems to belong to a personalized discourse, while the 3P-program debouches on concepts such as 'biochemical constitution' which seems to belong to a depersonalized discourse as is usual in the natural sciences.

The example given is suggestive but not conclusive. For that reason we should examine whether the onsets of personalized and depersonalized discourses can be traced back up to the very formal definitions of the SO- and 3P-programs established in the previous section. There the *SO-program* was said to involve the use of the constructs *Self* and *Other* as cognitive anchors. On the very abstract level of the RPM the definitions of *Self* and *Other* are purely relational. An entity functions as *Self* if it is connected with a reflexive relation. This means that the arrow that represents the relation forms a loop, the

entity being at the same time source and target, origin and terminal, subject and object, actor and patiens. E.g., given 'A likes A,' A can be defined as a *Self*. An entity then functions as *Other* if it is connected with a non-reflexive relation. E.g., given 'A likes B,' both A and B function as *Other*.

The present formal definitions of *Self* and *Other* seem far away from the rich conceptual contents displayed by a personalized discourse. However, it can be argued that they set the stage for such a discourse. Indeed, the purely relational *Self* and *Other* are slots that match the concepts *I* and *thou* as fillers and these concepts have been connected with the concept of 'person' by philosophers (Buber, 1970) as well as linguists (Benviste, 1966). The SO-program then may be argued to generate a personalized discourse when *Self* and *Other* are dealt with as *I* and *thou* which means: as pronominal categories of the first and second person. That this is not necessarily the case may be evident from the following example.

> *Example 2*. A and B are medical doctors who are so highly specialized that they can cure only a single disease. One day they find themselves ill and notice that they can cure each other but not themselves. Are A and B doctors with the same specialization who are suffering from the same disease, or do they have different specializations and, consequently, different diseases? Applying the 3P-program one may infer the latter alternative as the most plausible. For instance, A may be a heart specialist with a stomach disease and B a stomach specialist with a heart disease. However, applying the SO-program both may be viewed as, for instance, heart surgeons suffering from a heart disease that requires heart surgery, being understood that a heart surgeon can operate on an *other* but not on him/her *self* (Peeters 1983).

If the SO-program debouches necessarily on a personalized discourse, then we should conclude that surgeons are more personalized than heart and stomach specialists. This seems not to make sense, and the reason is that in the above example the slots of *Self* and *Other* have not been filled with the personalized *I* and *thou* but with two physical bodies that are unequally accessible for surgery because of different spatial constraints. The SO-program sets the stage for a personalized discourse, indeed, but the actors can play a different piece.

Turning now to the *3P-program*, an entity is, in the context of the RPM, dealt with as a 'third person' when it is disregarded whether the relation in which the entity is involved is reflexive or not. 'A likes A' is simply dealt with as a relation 'from one entity to one entity' just as is 'A likes B.' Being devoid of 'selfness' and 'otherness,' the 3P-defined entity is no longer suitable to function as a slot for the personalized contents *I* and *thou*. However it fits other fillers. The simplest filler may be an identification label allowing one to distinguish one entity from the other such as the entity '*he/she or it labelled A*' from '*he/she or it labelled B*.' However, the filler may be extended to every possible set of attributes that can be used to define the entity and/or to compare it with other entities. This means that, while the SO-program tends to deal with entities as persons, the 3P-program deals with them as sets of attributes. For instance, in the former example 1, the 'blushing by shame' derived by the SO-program was viewed as a reaction of a person 'I' to an other person 'thou.' However, the 3P-rationale by which the 'blushing by allergic reaction' was derived, disregarded the personal character of A and B dealing with them as mere sets of biochemical attributes some attributes of the one set interacting with some attributes of the other set in a way as to produce blushing.

It could be observed that in example 1 the application of the SO-program debouched on the attribution of dispositions in A and B that were conceivable as personality attributes of A and B such as shyness, lack of confidence, etc. It follows that the personalities of A and B can be dealt with as sets of personality attributes in the same way as their biochemical constitutions are dealt with as sets of biochemical attributes. Actually this is what psychologists do when making personality inventories and describing the personality of an individual as a set of personality traits. This means that a concept such as 'personality' that at first glance belongs to the personalized discourse of reality can be handled, not only by the SO-program, which belongs to this discourse, but also by the 3P-program which is associated with a depersonalized discourse. The possibility to process information about personality not only following the SO-program but also following the 3P-program is illustrated by the following example.

> *Example 3.* A and B dislike each other and like themselves. Are their personalities alike or different? This situation corresponds in Schema 1 to the relational pattern II. Hence applying the SO-program one may infer that the personalities of A and B are alike and considering that both seem to dislike others but like themselves, one may presume that they are quite tough characters. However, applying the 3P-program one may infer that they have different personalities. Indeed, A seems to have a personality that is liked by people that dislike B's personality, while B's personality seems to be liked by people that dislike A's personality. For instance, A may be a tough character who likes toughness and dislikes tenderness, while B may be a tender character who likes tenderness and dislikes toughness.

One could wonder whether this example does not invalidate example 1 as an argument to connect the SO-program with a personalized and the 3P-program with a depersonalized discourse. Indeed, the argument relied on the observation that in example 1 only the SO-program debouched on personality, while in example 3, the 3P-program seems to deal with personality as well. The answer to this objection may be that, although it is possible to process personality following the 3P-program, the more natural way to do it may be following the SO-program. Evidence has been provided by an extensive questionnaire study involving several hundred of students as informants (Peeters, 1983). The students were confronted with relational patterns consisting of liking and/or disliking relations of A and B with each other and with themselves among which the one depicted in example 3. For each pattern the students were invited to write short paragraphs about the sort of people they thought A and B might be and then to describe the presumable personalities of A and B by selecting the appropriate personality traits from a checklist provided by the investigator.

The results showed overwhelming evidence for the view that the natural way to process information about personality is by the SO-program. Indeed, the 3P-program was remarkably absent in the data. The traits were assigned to A and B in a way as to establish (dis)similarities between A and B that were in high agreement with those associated with ways 1 and 2 in Schema 1, which represent the SO-program, while they did not show any systematic relationship with those associated with ways 3 and 4, which represent the 3P-program. Thus in the situation depicted in Example 3, A and B were predominantly viewed as two tough people rather than a tough and a tender one.

An additional finding was that the personality traits assigned following way 1 (the O-part of the SO-program) differed systematically from those assigned following way 2 (the S-part of the SO-program). For instance, the traits assigned following way 1

concerned generosity, tolerance, honesty, etc.; those assigned following way 2: power, ambition, self-confidence, activity, etc. They constituted two dimensions of implicit knowledge people apply spontaneously when forming impressions about personality. These dimensions were labelled respectively *other-profitability* (way 1) and *self-profitability* (way 2) and advanced as fundamental categories underlying concepts of good and evil (Peeters, 1986). *Self-profitable attributes* were defined as attributes that are primarily good (or bad) for the self, i.e. the individual that has the attributes. Going beyond the mere context of good and evil, they may point to that which constitutes an entity as a being in itself, its power, autonomy, creativity, etc. *Other-profitable attributes* then were defined as attributes that are primarily good (or bad) for the other, i.e. the socius of the individual that has the attributes. Indeed, attributes such as generosity and tolerance have a direct impact on the well-being of the socius (while only an indirect impact on the individual's own well-being in that the socius may reciprocate the generosity and tolerance). Going beyond the mere context of good and evil they may point to the relatedness of the being to other beings, a being not merely subsisting in itself but also through its relationships with others.

The concepts of self- and other-profitability extend beyond the strict area of human personality to the subjective experience of objects in general and match universal semantic categories that have been established by cross-cultural semantic research. This suggests that the SO-bound personalized discourse may approach man's primary experience of the world. The depersonalized 3P-bound discourses about the world such as those of Western natural sciences have not generated spontaneously all over the world but are achievements of particular cultures and need to be taught in order to spread to other cultures. However, even when animism seems outrivalled by natural sciences, the person may continue to function as a metaphor of reality and the scientist after his working hours may experience his environment as replete with objects each of which appears as a being in itself with a certain degree of power and activity, having a friendly or hostile character.

In that they touch on a fundamental aspect of human experience, the concepts of self- and other-profitability have, not surprisingly, analogous concepts in philosophy. For instance, the dichotomy of *being in itself* and *relatedness to the other* is reflected by the concepts of *internal* and *external horizon* in *Husserlian phenomenology*, and by Whitehead's concept of *creativity* as the basis of reality which implies the notions of *self-creation* as well as *creation by integration with the other*. Beyond philosophy, we find them back in the human and social sciences, for instance in taxonomies concerning *personality* (Wiggins, 1979) and *social motivation* (McClintock & Van Avermaet, 1982) that involve basic distinctions between human tendencies directed to the self and human tendencies directed to the *other*. In this context we should mention also J.R. Nuttin's *relational theory* of *behavior, motivation* and *personality* (Nuttin, 1962 and 1984) that stress *self-preservation* (and *realization*) and *interaction with the environment* (the other) as two basic dynamics that constitute the psychophysiological organism as a functional unit involving biochemical (homeostatic), interpersonal (social) and existential (cognitive-reflexive) levels of functioning. Finally, analogous concepts are recently showing up in systems theory developments in the natural sciences where the

'*self-organizing power*' of systems and the '*interaction with other systems*' bear an affinity with the concepts of *self-* and *other-profitability* that may explain why Prigogine and Stengers (1984) feel that this development brings the natural sciences closer to the human sciences.

In brief SO-program sets the stage for personalization, nevertheless, the actors may play a different role. But from the present discussion, and the research data mentioned, it may be evident that the latter case is rather exceptional. Apparently, it makes sense to distinguish between a personalized discourse underlain by the SO-program and a depersonalized one underlain by the 3P-program. For that reason, we shall go deeper on into the key-concepts involved in the RPM. Thereby we shall make use of the semiotic square which is a tool to map semantic categories established by the French structuralist school, especially Greimas and his co-workers.

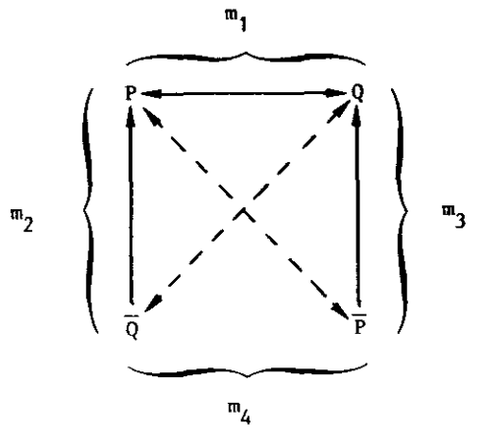
3. PERSON AND NON-PERSON: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

3.1 *The Semiotic Square*

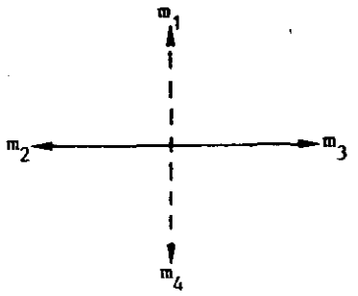
According to Greimas and his co-workers (see Greimas and Courtés, 1982) a semantic category is not something like a homogeneous continuum. Instead it is like an articulated field of interrelated meanings marked by categorical terms that define a structure of significance. This structure is not arbitrary but has a well-defined form that is visually represented by the semiotic square shown, in abstracto, in Schema 2a and explained in the following paragraphs.

According to Greimas, a full-fledged semantic category implies at least two primitive categorical terms. They are represented in Schema 2a as P and Q. They are opposites, but the opposition between them is rather qualitative than privative. This means that they are not mutually exclusive, but can be present together. Greimas and Courtés (1982) offer as an example the opposition between *being* and *seeming* (cf. Schema 2c). Indeed, an object can be as well as not be that which it seems: if it seems like a gun, then it can be a cigar-lighter but a real gun as well. Further, the semiotic square implies the contradictories of P and Q being respectively $\bar{P}$ and $\bar{Q}$. The latter can be generated by carrying out the operation of negation upon P and Q. However, the semiotic square is not simply a replica of the logical square. The structure of signification that it represents belongs to a prelogical cognitive order that is governed by psychological rules of which the rules of pure logic constitute a borderline case in the same way as Euclidean geometry is a borderline case of non-Euclidean geometry and Newtonian mechanics constitute a borderline case of relativity theory. Hence, in the context of the semiotic square, the meaning of the term *negation* is not restricted to its pure logical sense but involves the connotations of *denial*, *absence*, and *disregard*. Thus $\bar{P}$ cannot only mean: 'that in which P is absent' or 'Not-P' but as well 'that in which P is denied' and 'that in which P is disregarded.'

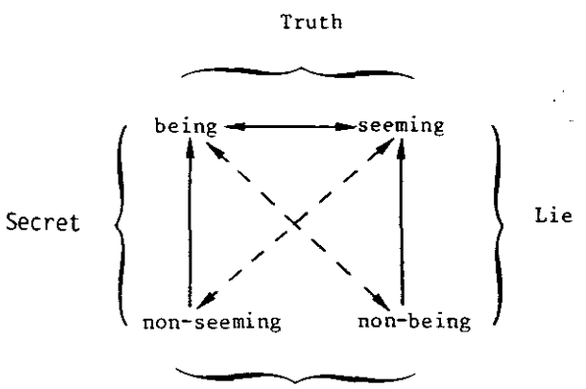
The terms P, Q, $\bar{P}$, and $\bar{Q}$ are called the *first generation* of categorical terms. They are ordered in a square within which diagonals represent relations of contradiction as illustrated in Schema's 2a and 2c. The crucial point made by the semiotic square now is that P and Q are qualified as categorical terms of one and the same semantic category if



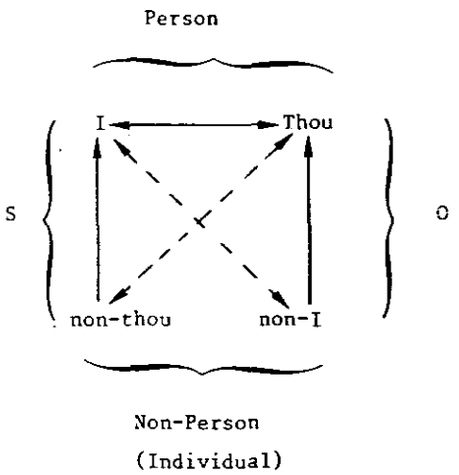
(a) In the abstract



(b) Relations between metaterms



(c) Example from
Greimas & Courtés (1982)



(d) Application to RPM

Schema 2. The semiotic square.

Legend:

P, Q	: primitive terms
$m_1 \ldots m_4$	: metaterms
⟶	: complementarity ("implies")
⟷	: contrariety ("presuppose each other")
⟷ (dashed)	: contradiction ("contradict each other")

and only if it is assumed that $\bar{Q}$ implies P and $\bar{P}$ implies Q. These implications are referred to as *relations of complementarity* represented by vertical arrows in Schema's 2a and 2c. In the latter schema they indicate that *being* and *seeming* can be considered as categorical terms belonging to one and the same semantic category only to the extent that *not seeming* is assumed to imply *being* and *not being* is assumed to imply *seeming*. Without these assumptions, *being* and *seeming* are handled as isolated terms that do not constitute together one single semantic category.

Assuming the given relations of complementarity, a relation of *reciprocal presupposition* or *contrariety* is established between the primitives P and Q. Thus defining *being* and *seeming* as terms belonging to the same semantic category means that *being* is conceived of as presupposing *seeming*, and *seeming* as presupposing *being*.

At this point the basic plan of the semiotic square is established. However, the whole operation can be repeated starting with $\bar{P}$ and $\bar{Q}$ as primitives and ending with a relation of reciprocal presuppositions between $\bar{P}$ and $\bar{Q}$. In this way the model becomes a closed square the four sides representing four relations each of which involves two categorical terms of the first generation. At the same time, however, each relation constitutes in turn a categorical term called '*of the second generation*' also referred to as *metaterm* and represented in Schema 2 by the symbol m. For instance, as shown in Schema 2c '*being* and *seeming* with reciprocal presupposition' combine into *truth*, '*not seeming* implying *being*' holds *secret*, etc.

The model of the semiotic square further implies a relation of *contradiction* between the metaterms m_1 and m_4 while a relation of *contrariety* or *reciprocal presupposition* between m_2 and m_3. These relations are represented separately in Schema 2b. Applied to the example in Schema 2c, they indicate that *truth* and *falseness* should be contradictory while *secret* and *lie* would be qualitatively distinct but at the same time presuppose each other. Only as far as these assumptions are made, the metaterms can be defined as further unfoldings of the single semantic category that was originally established proceeding from the primitives *being* and *seeming*. It is evident that the unfolding of the semantic category can be continued generating categorical terms of the third generation, etc. The study of these further unfoldings, however, has not yet sufficiently progressed to be dealt with in the present article.

A final point we should call attention to is that the semiotic square maps *semantic deep structures*. This means that there is no necessary one-to-one correspondence between the meanings of the categorical terms within the semiotic square and current linguistic terms on the surface level. Of course, meanings of current terms can be elucidated by plotting them against a semiotic square, but it may happen that their meanings overlap with several categorical terms from different semiotic squares or that certain categorical terms are not covered by current linguistic terms. Hence, when scientific or philosophical discourse borrows terms from everyday language use, then it may be recommendable to remove the ambiguity in them by redefining them relative to a semiotic square. This is exactly what will be attempted in the subsequent section for the key-terms involved in the RPM.

3.2 *Application to Key-terms of the RPM*

Schema 2d represents a semiotic square of the key-concepts of the RPM. As primitives we took the terms *I* and *thou* that philosophers such as Buber (1970) have connected with the concept of person. Primarily the terms refer to a fundamental human experience that is the experience of encounter. By putting them in a semiotic square a clear-cut structure of signification is imposed on this conceptually vague experience. The kernel of this structure is the relation of reciprocal presupposition that is established between I and thou. This means that 'I' and 'thou' are dealt with as correlatives, the one making no

conceptual sense without the other. The corresponding metaterm we have called *person* which is in agreement with Buber who also connected the concept of person with a correlative relationship between 'I' and 'thou,' two entities being said to relate to each other as persons if they are relating as 'I' to 'thou.'

At this point the question may arise how exactly the meanings of I and thou combine into the meaning of *person*. At a first glance it may look like the person being the union of 'I' and 'thou.' However, a simple union of I and thou may result in the term *we* which is not equivalent to *person*. Indeed '*we*' applies to a set of at least two entities, while the concept of person, although it implies the presence of two entities (I and thou), applies fully to each separate entity. Hence, the *person* can be defined as a *conjunction* of *I and thou*, being understood that the meanings of 'I' and 'thou' coincide in one and the same entity.

So far we saw how the primitives 'I' and 'thou' define the metaterm *person* represented in the top of the semiotic square. In an analogous way the contradictories or 'denials' of 'I' and 'thou' define a metaterm that stands in a relation of contradiction with the person and hence can be called the *non-person*. Given the psychological rather than strictly logical nature of the incompatibility between contradictory terms within the semiotic square, an entity that is a person can also function as a non-person. This is the case when the status of 'I' and 'thou' is disregarded in the entity such as when a human being is dealt with as a physical or chemical object.

Buber used the term *individual* to designate the *non-person*. A person is reduced to an individual when it is related to as a functional object. This means that it is not dealt with as a goal of its own but as a means towards an other end: an instrument or simply an object of knowledge. If this is the case, Buber says, the relationship is no longer conceived of as between 'I' and 'thou' – the first and second pronominal person – but as with *him*, *her* or *it* – the third pronominal person.

At a first glance, the association of the non-person with the so-called third pronominal person may surprise. The reason may not be so much that the word 'person' is used to designate the non-person, which can be taken as a terminological convention, as that it seems inconsistent with the apparent symmetry between 'I', 'thou', and '(s)he' as three parallel linguistic forms. Indeed, isolating the third person as the non-person, a dichotomous structure is established contrasting a non-personal category (he, she, it) with a personal category (I, thou) while the structure of language, with the three pronominal persons, suggests rather a trichotomy. However, the French linguist Emile Benviste (1966, chapters 18 and 20) has demonstrated that the structural symmetry between pronominal categories of the first, second and third person is an Indo-European anomaly. In other families of languages, linguistic form marks a contrast between the so-called third person at the one side and the two first persons at the other side. Moreover, even in Indo-European languages traces of the same dichotomization have been uncovered suggesting that it represents a universal articulation of the deep-structural level of signification that underlies the surface-structural level of linguistic form.

It is significant that Benviste's further elaboration of the meaning of this articulation seems in full agreement with the present semiotic analysis. In this way, also Benviste points out that only the first and second pronominal person deserve the qualification of

'person,' the third person being literally qualified as 'non-person' (Benviste, 1966, p. 228). The personal character of 'I' and 'thou' derives from their reference to the speaker and the addressee. For instance, given the utterance 'I saw you yesterday' the terms 'I' and 'you' denote specific persons who are respectively the speaker and the addressee of the utterance being understood that each person can function as both speaker (I) and addressee (thou) of utterances.

One could argue that if the above sentence is addressed by John to Peter, then it may be reformulated 'He named John saw him named Peter yesterday' or simply: 'John saw Peter yesterday,' which is a formulation in the third person. Is this reformulation less personalized than the original one in the first and second person? The answer is yes. Indeed, John telling to Peter: 'I saw you yesterday' is not equivalent to 'John saw Peter yesterday.' In the first sentence, the subject and the object refer to the speaker and the addressee who are necessarily persons or, at least, are viewed as such. In the second sentence, sender and receiver are not predicated. It just tells that entity 1 saw entity 2 yesterday, John and Peter only being terms in apposition with respectively entity 1 and entity 2. Thus while 'I' and 'thou' are specified by the identity of the persons who function as speaker and addressee, the so-called third person or non-person has to be specified by additional information. This information may tell that the referent of the initially impersonal 'third person' is an individual acting as a person.

The personal character assigned in this way to the referent, however, is not a primary datum but has the status of an attribute that is accorded to an impersonally conceived entity. In this way the pronouns *he* and *she* have endorsed an apparently personal character in that they are pronominalizations of the non-person, indeed, but with respectively 'male human' and 'female human' in apposition.The mere third person, however, reduces to a vague *something* or, in Benviste's terms: 'no matter who or no matter what' (Benviste, 1966, p. 255–256). It is only by additional specification that this 'something' can carry a rich and diversifed meaning content. This 'specification' can be conceived of as an assignment of attributes. Hence the third person can be dealt with as a set of attributes as was done in the context of the RPM presented in section 2. Example 3 there shows that even a highly personalized concept such as personality can be readily depersonalized when the constitutive I-thou relationship is disregarded leaving only a set of attributes such as personality traits.

There are two metaterms left in Schema 2d which are the S and O of the SO-program. One may remember that S and O stand for *self* and *other*. In common parlance, the meanings of *self* and *other* may be rather vague considering that we could have started the construction of the semiotic square with *self* versus *other* as the primitives P versus Q, taking *I* and *thou* as the metaterms m_2 and m_3. Doing so we might have realized the same categorical structure of signification. However, the labels I, thou, self, and other, would have been used to mark different categorical terms. The reason why we have preferred the present setting, labelling the primitives *I* and *thou* while the metaterms *self* and *other*, and not vice versa, is that in this way the meaning accorded to *self* and *other* is in agreement with the one implied by the RPM. Indeed, in the RPM, the effects of using *self* as anchor are unrelated to those of using *other* as anchor. This was demonstrated in section 2.1 by showing that the ways of inference 1 and 2 are unrelated. This means that

if the *self* and the *other* of the RPM are defined respectively as an *I* and a *thou*, then it should be understood that in the *I* the status of *thou* is disregarded, and in the *thou* the status of *I* is disregarded. This is exactly the meaning that is accorded to *self* and *other* by matching them with the metaterms m_2 and m_3. Because of this specification of their meaning, we prefer to represent them by the symbols S and O rather than the full words 'self' and 'other.'

3.3 *Further Confrontation of the RPM with the Semiotic Square*

In the previous section it was demonstrated that the terms S and O, that serve as cognitive anchors when information is processed following the SO-program, can be matched with the metaterms m_2 and m_3. In an analogous way terms associated with the third pronominal person, that serve as cognitive anchors in the 3P-program, can be matched with the metaterm m_4. In this section we shall examine whether the relationships between metaterms stressed by the semiotic square hold also between the corresponding cognitive (sub)programs and related discourses stressed by the RPM.

As indicated in Schema 2b, the semiotic square implies a relation of contrariety (or mutual presupposition) between m_2 and m_3. Transposing this relation to the RPM we may expect a relation of contrariety (or mutual presupposition) between the O- and S-parts of the SO-program that are represented as ways 1 and 2 in Schema 1. In section 2 was shown that ways 1 and 2 are formally independent in that they do neither overlap nor contradict each other in a systematic way. This formal independence may fit the concept of contrariety. However, as illustrated in Schema 1, the formal model does not imply the mutual presupposition that, according to the semiotic square, should exist between way 1 (O) and way 2 (S). Apparently, the mutual presupposition is something added to the RPM by the semiotic square analysis.

One could argue that the mutual presupposition between the S- and O-parts of the SO-program resides in that a perceiver who wants to use all four of the relations given in a relational pattern and starts with making inferences following, let us say, the S-part of the SO-program (way 2) should in addition also apply the O-part of the SO-program (way 1) in order to achieve his goal in the simplest way possible. However, the RPM does not impose that perceivers must use all the relations given in the simplest way possible. The latter is a psychological additive to the logical RPM. The fact that this psychological additive derives from the semiotic square shows that the latter is not merely a logical but a prelogical 'psychological' or 'cognitive' model. Evidence that this additive makes a valid extension of the original RPM may be found in the psychological affinity between the S- and O-parts of the SO-program explained in section 2.2 and resulting in the generation of a personalized discourse about reality. It could be objected that in the questionnaire study, referred to in section 2.2, the affinity between the S- and O-parts of the SO-program could only be demonstrated by aggregating data over many informants, each informant being confronted with only one single relational pattern, which was not sufficient to uncover whether the given affinity was present in the implicit knowledge-structures of single informants. However, subsequent empirical research (Peeters, 1984 and 1987) has shown that this is effectively the case. Informants who used *self* as cognitive anchor were often found to use also *other* and vice versa. Referring to

Schema 1, this means that in making inferences from relations, ways 1 and 2 were readily combined together. However, taking *self* or *other* as cognitive anchor together with, for instance, *him or her called A* was exceptional. Ways 1 and 2 were not combined with ways 3 and 4. The informants stayed either within the SO-program or within the 3P-program but did not combine both programs.

Considering that the SO- and 3P-programs underlie respectively a personalized and depersonalized discourse about reality, the latter finding may validate another psychological additive to the RPM implied by the semiotic square. Indeed, the relation of contradiction between metaterms m_1 and m_4 (cf. Schema 2b) or between the concepts of *person* and *non-person* (Schema 2d) suggests a psychological incompatibility between the personalized and depersonalized discourses. It should be stressed that the psychological nature of this incompatibility implies no logical necessity. The logically conceived RPM displayed in Schema 1 does not show incompatibility between the SO-bound ways of inference 1 and 2 at the one side and the 3P-bound ways 3 and 4 at the other side. In the same way, there is no logical incompatibility between the personalized and depersonalized interpretations of A and B's blushing in example 1 (section 2.2). Indeed, A and B are perfectly conceivable as two shy allergics whose blushing is produced simultaneously by shame and by biochemical reaction. The incompatibility exists only in the propensity of perceivers to stick to one of these interpretations while disregarding the other.

The main conclusion from the confrontation of the RPM with the semiotic square may be that there are personalized and depersonalized discourses about reality that are logically unrelated and thus not incompatible with each other but are nevertheless psychologically experienced as incompatible. This psychological incompatibility would reside in the relation of contradiction between the metaterms m_1 and m_4 within the semiotic square representing respectively the person and the non-person.

At this point the objection could be made that the cognitive anchors that underlie the depersonalized discourse coincide indeed with the non-person (m_4) but that the cognitive anchors underlying the personalized discourse do not coincide with the opposite term 'person' (m_1). Instead the personalized discourse is anchored on S and O being the metaterms m_2 and m_3 that seem intermediary between the person and non-person. This suggests that the personalized discourse that is anchored on S and O may fail to grasp the plenitude of the existential experience of the person as a being in itself in relationship with other beings. As a matter of fact, S and O are abstractions from the original person – the one disregarding the person's status as *thou*, the other its status as *I* – and as such they are like attributes: selfness (without otherness) and otherness (without selfness). In this respect they may fit the depersonalized discourse that deals with individuals as sets of attributes. Their personalized character then may not belong to their essence but just reside in that like slots in which essential aspects of the phenomenological experience of the person fit although without allowing for an exhaustive account of this experience. In section 2.2 these essential aspects were identified as the experienes of I and thou which may be universally human and in this way may account for the apparently universal character of certain semantic categories that are underlain by the SO-program.

It may not surprise that analogous universal categories are not generated by the

3P-program. Indeed, if the non-person on which such categories are anchored can be realized by any possible set of attributes, then one can expect a variety of concepts and discourses generated by the 3P-program.

4. SYNTHESIS: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONALIZED SO-BOUND AND DEPERSONALIZED 3P-BOUND DISCOURSES ABOUT REALITY

As we have already mentioned, Buber (1970) has stressed that it suffices to take the person as an object of cognition to have it depersonalized. If this is true, and if a 'discourse' is a matter of knowledge, how then can a personalized discourse be possible? The answer may indeed be that no conceptual discourse can grasp the plenitude of the experienced I-thou relationship. Nevertheless, in the previous sections it was demonstrated that a discourse anchored on the concepts *self* and *other* may deserve the qualification '*personalized*' in that it is appropriate to approach this experience in this way. The reason is that the self-other distinction is congruent with the distinction between 'I' and 'thou' that articulates the experience of the person. In this way it sets the stage for a personalized discourse that, because of the presumably universal character of the concepts 'I' and 'thou,' may imply a universal character itself. For instance, in section 2.2 it was explained that it involves the concepts of self- and other-profitability that reflect universal semantic categories touching on fundamental aspects of human experience. In that this experience is part of human nature, attempts to grasp it always lead to the same outcomes.

Apparently the basic outlines of the experience of our existence are set by the human condition. In order to expand this experience beyond its actual limits we may need another series of biological mutations transforming the 'homo sapiens sapiens' into a 'homo sapiens sapiens sapiens.' Nevertheless, there seems to be a way to acquire knowledge that reaches beyond these limits. We have to sacrifice that part of our experience that is probably the richest and most fundamental. Indeed we have to depersonalize the content of this experience by disregarding the aspects of selfness and otherness which reduces the beings that constitute the world of our experience to mere sets of attributes.

The number of attributes that can be abstracted from and/or assigned to a being is in principle infinite. It follows that the corresponding depersonalized discourses do not have the universal character of the personalized ones but are more bound to specific cultures and even individuals. For instance, returning to section 2.2, we can point to the biochemical explanation presented in example 1 in order to account for A and B's blushing. This explanation involves the assignment of specific biochemical attributes to A and B that belong to the discourse of the Western natural sciences that has not developed spontaneously in non-Western cultures.

Another consequence of the quasi-arbitrary way in which sets of attributes can be substituted for beings is that the resulting representations of reality may deviate considerably from the immediate experience of reality. For instance the world of quantum physics seems at a first glance incompatible with the emergent reality of our

everyday experience. It seems as if we are really penetrating into a completely different world that exists behind the immediate phenomenal world and underpins it.

Many thinkers, especially scientists, have claimed that this different world revealed by the depersonalized discourse is the real world, the phenomenal world of the personalized discourse being an epiphenomenal illusion. Others, however, such as certain phenomenologists, have claimed the primacy of the immediately given phenomenal world. A serious argument in favor of the latter position is that the reality revealed by immediate experience has an unconditional character. Indeed, even a hallucination is real as an immediate emergent phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the depersonalized world revealed by science also has reality value. Its reality status, however, is founded in reason rather than direct experience, and it has a conditional character. For instance, reason reveals that one aspect of reality is that in an Euclidean space the sum of the angles of a triangle measures 180°. This statement has an irrefutable character. However its reality status is conditional in that it depends on the real existence of an Euclidean space: only if real space is Euclidean, then the sum of the angles of a real triangle measures 180°. In order to become unconditionally real, the model of the world established by reason should be matched with the world of experience. Actually, this is what scientists try to realize by means of experiments and systematic observations. It seems, however, impossible to achieve a perfect match. The models of the world established by science always have a preliminary character. Nevertheless, in spite of their preliminary character, these models seem to be coordinated with reality fairly well to the extent that they enable us to put people in the moon.

The depersonalized discourse that reduces beings to sets of attributes is, of course, not limited to Western science. It has originated as soon as humans started to use instruments, assigning to objects specific functions, and to organize society, assigning to individuals specific roles. Assigning a function or role to an entity means that it is no longer dealt with for its own sake as a being in itself but as a set of attributes that fit certain purposes. The knife is primarily sharpness that makes it fit the purpose of cutting; the baker is primarily ability to make bread that fits the purpose of feeding the consumer. Yet as it has been noticed by Buber, depersonalization is not an anomaly but something fundamentally human that can turn into good as well as into bad, as the personal I-thou relationship can turn into good and into bad as well. In this respect it is worthwhile that a fundamental concept such as justice may derive from the depersonalized discourse anchored on the third pronominal person. For instance, justice may imply that resources are allocated to 'him or her who deserves them' or to 'him or her who needs them.' Informants who are asked to formulate predictions about how they think an agreement about the distribution of a reward will end, derive their predictions following the depersonalized 3P-program if hints are given telling who might deserve or need the reward. If these hints are not given, or if they are dubious, the informants derive their predictions following the personalized SO-program: they relate the distribution of the reward to the selfishness and generosity of the people involved in the bargain (Peeters, 1987).

5. APPLICATION TO CONCEPTS REGARDING ULTIMATE REALITY

It may be evident from the previous sections that the distinction between person and non-person, and the related personalized and depersonalized discourses, touch on some fundamental aspects of how we experience and think reality. This holds for the immediate reality of everyday life – such as the impressions we form of the personalities of other people – but may extend to ultimate reality as well. Hence a good number of concepts regarding ultimate reality may be elucidated by plotting them against the semiotic square discussed in section 3.

Starting with the top of the semiotic square, we can point to personalized views of ultimate reality. They are probably the oldest and most widespread views and are typical of mythical and religious thought. Generalizing from the social-psychological research on person perception (section 2.2) we can propose that the personalized deity should be characterized by the dimensions of self- and other-profitability. The concept of a mighty and merciful god fits this requirement. Specific developments in the history of religion may have led to a unilateral stress on either the self-profitable or the other-profitable aspect of the deity. For instance, the Old Testament shows a rather self-profitable god, jealous and eager to establish his power, demanding obedience and worship in turn for his benefits. The New Testament redeemer accentuates rather the other-profitable dimension. Mythological pantheons offer a variety of divine personalities showing all possible combinations of high versus low power (self-profitability) and high versus low bene- or male-volence (other-profitability). A remarkable synthesis of both dimensions has been realized by the Thomistic concept of God identifying God with being (that which is in itself, the self-profitable aspect) and love (that which is for the other, the other-profitable aspect).

At the bottom of the square we have the depersonalized discourse of which it was argued in section 4 that it is fundamentally human and thus can be expected to be transformed into those views about ultimate reality that, at a first glance, seem to belong to the personalized discourse. Indeed, even the personal deities are invested with functions or roles of which in section 4 it was said that they belong to the depersonalized discourse. Some of these functions may be viewed as direct emanations of the person. For instance the function of creator may directly reflect the ideas of divine power (self-profitability) and other-directedness (other-profitability). However, the roles of the deity can become very specific ranging from the supplier of rain to the ultimate judge of human conduct. To the extent that a deity is addressed in one of these functions, it may become depersonalized. One of the functions of rituals may be to address an at least partly depersonalized divine power acting in a specific role. In the same way that the appropriate forms have to be filled out in order to get funds from the science foundation, the appropriate rituals have to be performed in order to obtain a shower from the god of rain.

In the previous sections we have seen that there is no logical but a psychological incompatibility between the personalized and depersonalized discourses. Hence, theologians who proceed by rational thought may have no problem to integrate specific depersonalized roles in a personalized conception of God. The less rationally oriented

faithful, however, may experience difficulties in reconciling, for instance, the idea of a merciful God, which belongs to the personalized discourse, with the idea of God as a righteous judge, which belongs rather to the depersonalized discourse. This conflict has been noticed by philosophers (Smullyan, 1977) and psychologists (Vergote and Tamayo, 1980) and traces of it are found in folk tales about sinners who are not condemned to the punishment they deserve because the divine judge is softened by the personal word put in for them by one or another saint or a simple pious soul.

So far, we have been dealing with depersonalized views on ultimate reality that are intertwined with personalized ones. However, there are also depersonalized views from which the personalized aspect has been eliminated as far as possible. Ultimate reality is then conceived of as one or another abstract principle. This principle may be abstracted from the primary experience to which the personalized discourse belongs. The analysis in the previous sections may reveal two privileged avenues to establish ultimate principles that primarily derive from the person but have been depersonalized in that some essential aspect of the person is disregarded. These avenues are the terms S and O being the metaterms m_2 m_3 in the semiotic square analysis (Schema 2) and the cognitive anchors of the SO-program within the RPM. As was explained, S and O stand for 'self' and 'other' which refer to 'I' and 'thou' being the constituents of the person. However, while 'I' as person implies the quality of 'thou' and vice versa, S and O represent respectively 'I' in which thou is disregarded' and 'thou in which I is disregarded.' An 'other' that does not function at the same time as a 'self' becomes a dead object. Hence, raising mere O to ultimate principle means that everything is assumed to derive from the opaque instance that is mere otherness. The corresponding philosophical doctrine may be *materialism*. *Idealism* or *mentalism* may have generated from an analogous unilateral stress of S being mere selfness without otherness. In its extreme form, idealism results in *solipsism* the entire reality being reduced to a unique 'I' that is no longer the correlative of an equivalent thou.

It is worthwhile that the semiotic square analysis in section 2 reveals a relation of mutual presupposition between S and O. This means that they fit psychologically well together. At first glance this may surprise but it is confirmed by the history of philosophy where the *dualism of mind and matter* has been a prominent theme. The power of this dualism in philosophy may reside in doing some justice to the depersonalized discourse and at the same time approaching the person by combining the concepts of self and other. However, it cannot do full justice to the person since in the self from which it proceeds, the other is disregarded, while in the other, the self is disregarded. Hence the mind-matter dualism may be a prolific attempt to reconcile personalized and depersonalized discourses about reality, with an inherent impossibility to realise a reconciliation effectively. Rather than being an integration, it looks like a compromise. It detracts from the plenitude of the person in order to make room for the non-person, but at the same time, taking the person-bound terms S and O as a basis, it fails to draw the full consequences of depersonalization.

The present rationale suggests that the traditional dualism of mind and matter is an artificial one: it splits up into distinct essences that which is primarily experienced as a double aspect of the same essence, viz. the I-aspect and the thou-aspect of the

personalized reality. In this respect we are in agreement with the phenomenological philosophy. However at the same time we stress that the artificial mind-matter dualism is underlain by a more fundamental real dualism which is the dualism of the person and the non-person prompting personalized and depersonalized discourses about reality.

The opposition between person and non-person may ultimately reflect the opposition between being and nothing. The highest form of 'being' known to us may indeed be the personal being. Apparently, the nothing is that where we come from, while the person is that level which we have reached. It points into a direction of development which may lead to higher forms of being than that realized in the actual person. In this perspective, the non-person and the person appear respectively as the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem of a process of *transition from no-thing to being* or *becoming*. With this interpretation we join with the process philosophy introduced by Whitehead which might provide an alternative for the mind-matter dualism as a way to deal with the more fundamental opposition between being and nothing.

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PRESENTING THIS ISSUE

The interpretation of other person's ideas of ultimate reality and meaning is always conditioned by our own idea of ultimate reality and meaning. The Bible's teaching about ultimate reality and meaning presented by different biblical scholars of various denominations provides us with a classical example. Being aware of this, Dr. Markus Barth, – minister of the Evangelical-Reformed Church in Bubendorf,Switzerland from 1940–1953, from 1953 guest-professor of New Testament in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1956 associate professor on the Federated Theological Faculty at the University of Chicago, in 1962 professor of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh and from 1973 until his retirement in 1985 professor of the University of Basel, Switzerland – gave as title to his essay 'Ultimate Reality and Meaning in the Light of John's Gospel' instead of 'The Idea of Ultimate Reality and Meaning of the Author of John's Gospel.' In place of the method of form criticism he is using what is known as *Wirkungsgeschichte*, the study of the impact a text can make on its reader. Consequently he dismisses sacramental symbolism, considered by Catholic exegetes as John's gospel's specialty as well as the question what does ultimate reality(ies), for example, God, logos, spirit, eternal life, glory, etc. mean to the author of the fourth gospel, because that, in his view, would contradict the spirit and intention of John's Gospel to give, and to work with, definitions of nouns. The 'meaning' of those terms is revealed only in narrative form. He rather scrutinizes the ultimate in search of non-ultimates and its destructive and constructive impact on non-ultimates, and ends up with a defense by saying that the Gospel of John cannot be considered as a specimen of anti-Judaistic literature.

Since URAM research is interested in knowing not only what authors say, but also why they say what they say, we invite exegetes of Catholic and other non-Catholic traditions to address the question of URAM in John's Gospel. Only by means of an ecumenical dialogue would we be able to study the impact one's tradition and personal experience has on his/her interpretation of John's Gospel as well as that of the other books of the Bible and thus grasp the real message of the Bible's writers. It seems that the differences among Christian denominations point to deeper roots than just to liturgical or dogmatic ones of second order. They reflect differences in their concepts of ultimate reality and meaning, 'differences in their images of God' (*URAM* 1:8).

The question of 'why do they say what they say' among the botanists is widened by the question by 'why do they do what they do.' Dr. Josef Svoboda, Professor of Botany at the University of Toronto in Mississauga, sent a short letter to several of his colleagues inquiring about the value of being a plant scientist. His paper on 'The Reality of the Phytosphere and (Ultimate) Values Involved' is concerned with a very specific reality and asks the question how does the world of vegetables fit into the overall reality and what are the values of the prolific plant world for our concept of values? Would our concept of ultimate reality and meaning be different without knowing plants and without having a science called botany?

Prof. Svoboda together with the editors wishes to acknowledge the valuable feedback of his departmental colleagues, Professors J. Anderson, S. Barrett, W.R. Cummins and J. Dainty by replying to the inquiry, and to Professors F. Szeicz, G.H.G. Henry, G.W. Moser, to Ms. Jo Calvert for critical reading and commenting on the manuscript and to Karen Younger for typing the manuscript.

Dr. Guido Peeters, National Fund for Scientific Research and Catholic University of Leuven, employs the method of Social Psychology to account for the cognitive processes by which people form subjective impressions about other people. His empirical work based on the social-psychological relation-pattern model, further elaborated by using Greimas' semiotic square as an analytic tool, revealed that, on a deep-structural level, the same information could be processed in a personalized and in a depersonalized discourse about reality. The resulting conceptual framework is then applied to various concepts of ultimate reality and meaning found in philosophical doctrines, such as materialism, idealism, mind-matter dualism, and process philosophy. It seems that the antagonism between idealist and materialist doctrines in philosophy may be due to the fact that the distinction between mind and matter is not only associated with the distinction between *selfness* and *otherness*, but is, in addition, confounded with the distinction between *person* and *non-person* which implies psychological incompatibility and generalizes the opposition between *being* and *nothing*. If the latter opposition is conceived as psychological rather than logical, it is possible to design logically a coherent system like, for example, process philosophy which tries to integrate both opposites by combining *nothing* and *being* into *becoming*. In regard to mythical and religious thoughts one can expect formal compatibility together with psychological incompatibility not only in terms of a personal God versus an impersonal abstract principle, but also between the idea of a 'good and mighty God' belonging to a personalized discourse and the conception of God in terms of a particular role such as the 'supreme judge,' which belongs to a depersonalized discourse.

Dr. Peeters, a social psychologist, is indebted to his colleagues of the interdisciplinary workgroup 'Group Lambda' at the University of Leuven for having introduced him into the field of semiotics, for many constructive discussions on the semiotic square and for comments on a former draft of the present essay.

Richard T. Webster of Rome, Italy, member of the Società Filosofica Italiana and the Academia Archeologica Italiana, grapples with some of the thorny problems in the