

1. Semiology, Linguistics, Cinema: Interview with Christian Metz

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Abstract

In this interview, conducted in 1970 for the journal *Cinéthique*, Christian Metz discusses his film semiology from the 1960s (including his *grande syntagmatique*), as well as the work of Sergei Eisenstein, *cinéma-vérité*, the concept of verisimilitude, and the film *Méditerranée* (Jean-Daniel Pollet, Volker Schlöndorff, 1963).

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‘Sémiologie, linguistique, cinéma. entretien avec Christian Metz’. René Fouqué, Éliane Le Grivès, et Simon Luciani. Published in *Cinéthique* 6 (January–February) 1970, pp. 21–26. Translated by Daniel Fairfax.

Cinéthique: Can you situate your work on the *grande syntagmatique* and its history within your general semiological project?

Christian Metz: Insofar as my general project is indeed a contribution to a semiology of the cinema, a contribution to overcoming the state of most writing on film (which is, for the most part, journalistic in nature), in favor of a more theoretical approach, which, for me, is a semiological approach, I have encountered a code operative within each film – that is, one code among many others. It is this code that I dubbed, at the time, the *grande syntagmatique of narrative film*. I conceive this *grande syntagmatique* as

something partial: firstly, because it can only be applied to a certain historical phase in the development of the cinema. It is applicable, let us say, to classical narrative cinema, from roughly 1935 onwards (that is, with the stabilization of sound film), up until around 1955, with the appearance of the tendencies known as 'modern cinema' or 'new cinema'. Thus, I believe that the code of the *grande syntagmatique* is *diachronically* partial. It is also partial in a second way, because, even in films from the period in question, it was not the only code. It is a code that simply offers a breakdown of the major units of filmic narration, and that puts to one side the organization of all the other motifs and themes in a film. I already believed at the time that this attempt was doubly partial, but I believe this even more today. Simply put, it seems to me that we must have a point of attack in order to study the problems of film. The problems of the *grande syntagmatique* and of film narrativity were particularly ripe at this point in time (it was three years ago now). Perhaps this is why I chose to attack it from this angle. Today, what I find more striking is the multiplicity of codes at work in a film, of which only some – for example, the *grande syntagmatique* – are specifically cinematic, while others appear inside the film in much the same way that they appear outside of the film. In other words, they are not specifically cinematic – which does not prevent them from being filmic.

Cinéthique: Could you try to define the different codes operative within a film, and, more particularly, those that are specific to the cinema?

Metz: It seems to me that research has not reached the point where it could give an exact enumeration of specific codes – or of any other codes, by the way. But initially, one can think that the specifically cinematic codes consist of all those codes that relate to the work of the *moving photographic image organized sequentially*, and of *sound*, of their reciprocal relations, as well as of the relations between the image, the sound and the spoken word.

Aside from this, there are codes that are not specifically cinematic. For example, in certain cases (though not always), the social systems that organize the content of film are not systems proper to the cinema. I find it more and more striking to see that the content of films – or what we call the content of films, because there is a real problem with this notion – is organized by systems, by codes that are, I would say, ideological; that is to say, they are susceptible to appearing in the cinema, but without a major change in their structure, for they can appear just as well in languages other than the language of film: in a novel, for example, or on a poster, or on TV, etc. Another example of a non-specific code that nonetheless plays a very

important role in the cinema is, quite simply, the language code [*langue*] that the film uses: there are films that speak English, German, etc. Now, this code, obviously, is not cinematic, and yet this does not prevent the *use* of this language (which must be distinguished from the language itself), once it is in the film, from being susceptible to becoming specifically cinematic.

I am not saying that it is always cinematic, but it is susceptible to becoming so. At the time of the *Manifesto for Orchestral Counterpoint* [*A Statement on Sound*], there were many things that were very advanced in what the three signatories, Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov stated. They said, for example, that intertitles may be used, that is, that written language (but this is also transposable to spoken language) may be used in a specifically filmic manner, a manner that would be different from the code of ordinary writing, different from *written language outside of the cinema*. And they had in view specific kinds of systems concerning what we could call a *typography of the intertitle* (titles increasing in size, for instance). Moreover, they actually used these techniques in their films. I was sensitive to the fact that Solanas, in *Hour of the Furnaces* [1968], totally resurrects this kind of approach. In this film, there is an absolutely (or at least proximally) Eisensteinian usage of the intertitle, which plays around with the size of the writing. By contrast, the language code [*langue*] – the language-system itself, the language-system of Saussure, the phonological system for instance – is reiterated as such by films.

Cinéthique: Is it possible to think of the ideology of film practice and to define the code of this ideology?

Metz: In your journal, I have noticed that you make a distinction, with which I am fundamentally in agreement – between those ideologies that are conveyed by the film and those that the film develops by dint of the fact that it is a film. I have also noticed that among this latter category of ideologies, you accord the greatest importance to the impression of reality. I do too, by the way; but I am not sure if we are in agreement on its definition. Nonetheless, there is a point of contact between us here.

One thing first: you often insist, in various articles in your journal, on the fact that the camera is *regulated* [*réglée*]: initially on the level of its construction, and then on the level of its operational settings in the strict sense of the term (its buttons, and so on), since, even with the instruments manufactured today, there are still regulatory forms that are not used. So, on this double level, the instrument is regulated in order to reconstitute a monocular perspective, which is, roughly speaking, the non-disorienting

perspective of the Quattrocento. This is also how I see things. This properly optical 'castration' of the camera is something that had already been studied, in particular (and in spite of major divergences between you and him) by Jean Mitry, who showed that, by constructing camera instruments differently, by regulating them differently, and so on, one could obtain very surprising perspectives, and that these were expressly refused due to the desire to attain the impression of reality. There is indeed a kind of under-employment of the optical possibilities of the camera, because one sought, in general, to use it to attain the perspectival space of the Renaissance, by wagering on the possibilities offered by the monocular factors of the impression of three-dimensionality.

But I am less optimistic than you. It seems to me to be more difficult than you believe (I even ask myself whether it is at all possible, in the current historical situation to which we are ourselves limited) to draw a distinction between what is ideological, within the very optical possibilities of the camera, or between what is a kind of 'castration' of these possibilities (a factor that certainly intervenes), and what pertains more radically to the camera itself, which has limitations that are, I would say, not simply technical, but scientific in nature. It is an apparatus that, like any other, is not quite capable of doing anything and everything. I have written a study, 'On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema', in which, by the way, I make no mention of this aspect you are so insistent about (that is: the properly ideological limitation of the possibilities of the camera), and where I put greater emphasis on the limitations that I considered to be inherent to its nature. I am a little less certain of this today. I must revisit the text from this perspective. On the other hand, I have the impression that your journal has just reactivated a debate that had been, in a way, *terminated* before your intervention. I am thinking of the quarrel that took place in Bazin's day between his ideology of the sequence-shot, of 'non-montage', etc., and the theories of the likes of Eisenstein, Kuleshov, and Vertov – who offered rather extremist theories of montage. Even after your intervention, this debate does not appear completely clear to me, and it seems to me that there is ideology on both sides.

In certain passages in Bazin's writings, there is indisputably something like a shift to metaphysics (a metaphysics which, in this case, is called phenomenology), a sort of cosmophanic myth according to which the function of the cinema would be to render the real more eloquent than it is – it is, as it were, as if the real itself spoke through the means of the cinema. We can also, by the way, find this mythology in certain attempts at *cinéma-vérité*, which proceed from a truly magic belief in the innate purity [*adamisme*]

of the image, with the idea that everything that is uttered [*énoncé*] by words is guilty, loaded with heavy connotations, and that suddenly, through the passage of the word to the image, we could accede to an absolutely innocent rendering of the real. I am thinking, for example, of dialogues that are deliberately garbled in order to 'seem real' – or rather, to create reality-effects, as Barthes puts it. I can clearly see where the part of ideology is situated in Bazin's thinking (and it is a considerable part): it lies in the idea that the world is unveiled, in all its innocence, by the image, whereas what is actually revealed is only ever the real as seen by someone in particular.

Robbe-Grillet and others have insisted on the fact that the image is never innocent, even if this is only due to the necessary choice of camera angles, that is, to the most immediate constraint of a filmmaker's work. God does not take the photograph; the camera angle cannot be the doing of God, or of nature (which amounts to the same thing in this ideology). Rather, it has been chosen by a filmmaker who had his reasons, whether conscious or unconscious. Robbe-Grillet, at the time of his 'turning-point' – that is, when he himself reinterpreted objectivity [*l'objectal*] in a more subjectivist sense – insisted on this point in a text called, if I remember correctly, 'Note on the Localization and Displacement of the Viewpoint of the Camera in Novelistic Description'.

In contrast, however, I find that the montage theories developed in the 1920s among the great classics of the Soviet school are themselves not exactly bereft of ideology.

Firstly, in his theoretical writings (but much less so in his films), Eisenstein willingly assumes the mantle of what I would call the 'artistic type'. He speaks about montage in an ambiguous fashion: at times, he claims that it must be at the service of the ideological point of view of the working class, but at other moments he states that it should be at the service of film art, or a sort of genesis in the mind of the spectator (reproducing what has gone through the mind of the filmmaker). He does so with a very forceful insistence on things in which we believe less and less today – such as expression, creation, etc. In short, with Eisenstein we find an entire romantic ideology of pure creation, in such a way that he often mingles problems of montage with his claims to being a creative artist (which are fatally overdetermined and opaque to themselves). There is another problem, that you also present in your journal, when you say that the *work of the film* (the economic conditions of its production on the one hand, and on the other hand the directorial [*cinéastique*] texture in the midst of being made) must be legible in the film itself. Now, Eisenstein, in his theories on montage, at certain moments, almost arrives at the same conclusions that

you do. At times, he seems to say that rapid editing is necessary so that *it becomes visible*, whereas at other times he presents montage as a kind of *agogia*, a technique for training, or even conditioning, the spectator – this is montage as an effect that, he states, mobilizes people, in a sense of the term that is occasionally close to deception. It almost amounts to forcing people, without them realizing it, to adopt the same point of view as the creative filmmaker. Conversely, in his texts on *The Best Years of Our Lives* [William Wyler, 1946], and the films of Welles and Renoir (*La Règle du jeu* [*The Rules of the Game* (Renoir, 1939)] for example), Bazin affirms that ‘non-montage’ leaves the spectator with the freedom to choose, to create his own montage within a complete action, through the use of extended takes in deep-focus long-shot. The only problem with this is that ‘non-montage’ does not exist. That said, however, I am not so sure that there is not an element of truth in this aspect of Bazin’s thinking. This is why I would say that, fundamentally, nothing is very clear in this polemic.

Cinéthique: In a way, montage can lead Eisenstein to speak of mobilizing the people, intending to partly deceive them, or using his mobilizing effects to create rupture effects with respect to an expected model. In fact, if you take a commercial film, which is made for a particular public, you are certain of the model that will be supplied, in terms both of its content and of its editing principles. It nonetheless remains to be known whether there are not codes which have dual effects, which at a certain moment, within apparently traditional forms of editing, create rupture effects. Likewise, Sade’s writing, for example, which very often obeys the model of the eighteenth-century novel, with an entire tradition born of the Gothic novel, creates a rupture effect, precisely at the level of what we currently call the ‘reality effect’. But what, precisely, is this reality effect, and how is it constituted at the level of editing? Can we see it on the level of the constitution of a model that would be an ideological vehicle, not on the level of the content, but on the level of the filmic work in the strict sense of the term?

Metz: I can perceive what I call a ‘reality effect’ more on the side of ‘non-edited’ films, those *cinéma-vérité* films that I spoke of earlier. Films that, through the absence of montage, shooting in continuity, or through *deliberately disordered montage*, seek to ‘appear real’. To simplify matters, I see it more on the side of films in the Bazinian tendency.

Cinéthique: In effect, *cinéma-vérité* does indeed make ample use of non-montage, with garbled discussions, shaky close-ups, bad framing, etc. And

yet, these do not belong to the order of the real, but to that of the camera. And through their very means of expression, there is an effort to create a truth effect rather than a reality effect. The reality effect is more due to the complete synthesis of something that has been broken into pieces, presented as a single tableau. In *cinéma-vérité*, there is an emphasis on surface appearance that seeks to confer truth on every element it represents, but which does not actually yield a reality effect on the broader level.

Metz: Perhaps there is a difference between us in vocabulary. I tend to call 'truth' something constructed and quite theoretical, and I consider the reality effect to be a sort of pretense that protects itself from 'raw material'. *Cinéma-vérité* strives to give us an impression of the real captured unawares; or, alternatively (and here you are correct), it introduces, through specifically filmic means, a type of disorder in the traditional ordering of the narrative. Something that struck me in *cinéma-vérité* films is that, for example, one can take a social situation (I am thinking of films that are more or less based on the techniques of the psychological drama) and disrupt it in some way, and we are supposed to believe that one has raised by this disruption some kind of hidden content, when in fact nothing comes out but pure and simple artifacts.

Cinéthique: Exactly. In *cinéma-vérité* films there is no reality effect at the level of the image, because all the images that are shown to us are shown through a gaze that seeks to be true, that does not seek to determine a real, but a series of true points: the camera suddenly captures an awkward facial expression, or a meaningful look, or a hand trembling, etc. That is to say, it tries to create what is held to be, not so much a psychoanalysis, but a psychomorphology, or the psychoanalysis of gestures. The reality effect would be something much more elaborate, but in a contrary sense, in order to constitute a recognition model for the individual who is looking at it. In all films, there are attempts at reality effects: people recognize themselves, and it is possibly here that we should look for rupture effects. We should find out where, precisely – when one shows people things in which they could recognize themselves – is the moment that they no longer recognize themselves.

Metz: All this returns us to a problem that greatly interests me, and on which I have written: namely, the problem of verisimilitude. It seems to me that the cinema, perhaps even more than other modes of expression (due, I suppose, to the fact that, through the sheer magnitude of the material

means it requires, it is more closely controlled), is pervaded by verisimilitude. And this takes place insofar as, I would not even say in a film, but, in general, in a tiny fragment of a film, a rupture is produced, where something unexpected happens, and where, for a single moment, on a single point, filmic verisimilitude gives way. This is a dialectical problem because, in the history of the cinema, it often happens that these moments of 'true truth' themselves become the basis for a new verisimilitude, which feeds off them. This is typically what has happened to what we could call the Czech New Wave, the school of intimist cinema derived from Forman, Passer and their ilk, which has very quickly become a type of system, in the bad sense of the term, a new verisimilitude, a verisimilitude such as Aristotle defined it, as that which conforms to common opinion or to the rules of a genre.

Cinéthique: But how has it come about that people recognize themselves in an episode of *Knowledge of the World* on Palmyra, for example, but that they no longer recognize themselves in *Méditerranée* [Jean-Daniel Pollet, Volker Schlöndorff, 1963], which shows an entire series of images of Palmyra? All the same (it would be necessary to see what cultural and social level one is placed on), in *Méditerranée* there is a whole series of cultural commonplaces that can be found in any documentary on the same geographic area. Here, it would perhaps be necessary to interrogate the film's technique, its use of the camera, editing, etc.

Metz: People no longer recognize themselves in *Méditerranée* because the cinema is not only the image, it is also the work done on the image, and in *Méditerranée* this work is evidently very different from what it is in a classical documentary. In this way, we could equally return to the problem of the *iconic analogy* between the moving photographic image and that of which it is the effigy. Personally, I think that analogy itself is already coded: under the cover of this analogy, the different social codes that function in the deciphering of reality are intended to function to the film's benefit, in the deciphering of photographic spectacles. I no longer have the same ideas as five years ago when I wrote 'Cinema: Language or Language System?' In this text, my point of departure was the word 'analogy', taken in opposition to the *arbitrary* (in the Saussurian sense). From the fact of this point of departure, I was led to posit antagonistic relations between analogy and codification. And yet analogy can very much be coded without, however, ceasing to function for the user on a psychological level, as analogy. The basis of the problem is possibly that this resemblance is not so much between the

photograph and its model, as it is between the structuring activities of the viewer [*récepteur*] placed respectively before these two instances.

Cinéthique: So, in *Méditerranée*, where we see the sea, and in a documentary where we also see the sea, people should be equally capable of recognizing themselves, in the sense that, as you say, it is no longer the model and its effigy that are placed face to face, but the effigy and a viewer [*récepteur*] who carries out work, which he likely would have done if he had been on the beach in the position of the camera. It is through the intervention of the camera that people cease to recognize themselves.

Metz: In the case of *Méditerranée*, I don't think so. I feel that if it happens to the spectators that they cease to recognize themselves, when confronted, for example, with the image of the sea, this is not due to the image itself, but to the ordering of images. In other words, there has been a disruption to spectatorial habits on the level of editing to such an extent that the spectator becomes inhibited, in his decoding activity, on the level of the image itself.

Cinéthique: I even think that there has been a disruption on the level of the camera, because, in the documentary, the camera is seen as an archetypal spectator – that is, the spectator is the deferred camera and the camera is the deferred spectator, whereas in *Méditerranée* there is a specific role for the camera, which is precisely not this role of *différance*, to subsequently provide the spectator with something to see. There is another function of the camera, with, as you said earlier, in spite of everything, a series of implications that we cannot overcome.

Metz: Yes, but what I find striking is that, all the same, there are images in *Méditerranée* that, if you took them one by one, if the film was left unedited, would allow the spectator to recognize himself. In other words, I wonder if it is not the work of montage that prevents spectatorial recognition in these images.

Cinéthique: Exactly. I wanted to ask you about knowing how we can define those units that are not as great as those defined by the *grande syntagmatique*, and how far we can go with this. Because, obviously, if you extracted static images from *Méditerranée*, and if you chose well, everybody would be able to recognize themselves in them. But as soon as there is not simply a static image, but a series of images in motion, at a given speed, forming lexical units of varying size, then perhaps people will recognize themselves,

but it is far from certain. There is, perhaps, work to be done on this matter. If people recognize themselves, then this may be because the film has not gone far enough, has not sufficiently broken with norms.

Metz: I am not so sure, because we could admit (and, roughly speaking, this is my opinion), that the conscious or unconscious purpose of *Méditerranée* was to carry out a deconstructive activity on the assemblage of images, and not at the level of the image itself. There is the problem of the relative autonomy of each level: the *image* and the *succession of images*.

Cinéthique: This remains to be proven. Take certain shots from *Méditerranée* where the camera moves in a lateral tracking shot on a background that remains monocular, on a completely flat perspective. We see row upon row of columns, and I am practically certain that the images, taken one by one, are all identical, which would, perhaps, deconstruct the very notion of images which are generally supposed to reproduce movement. Here, unlike, for example, an image of a man walking, they do not reproduce a segment of motion.

Metz: Yes, if you like, but I retain the impression that the essence of the film's deconstructive purpose is at the level of editing. Nonetheless, this does not exclude there also existing a deconstruction at the level of a given image.

There is something else that complicates the problems we have spoken about, and this is the notion of *cinematic specificity*. Personally, I think that there is a cinematic specificity, which I would define as a set of codes that appear nowhere else but in the cinema. In your journal, I have noticed that you believe that the principal object of a theoretical practice, when it is concerned with the cinema, is to focus on what is specifically cinematic and not, for example, to use film to disseminate the results of a theoretical praxis of a more general, non-cinematic nature.

Cinéthique: Yes, in order to pass to another level, we must first resolve the problem of the specificity of the cinema.

Metz: Well, it may be that we do not exactly understand the same thing by this term. But in the end, there remains the fact that we believe in it. Now, in 1968, in Italy, a book by a Marxist semiologist called Emilio Garroni was published with the title *Semiotica ed estetica*. Garroni completely refuses the notion of cinematic specificity. He considers it to be a sort of confusionist myth, and he critiques me, among others, for having spoken about it. He relies on texts by Eisenstein (which does not make our conversation any

simpler) in order to insist precisely on the fact that Eisenstein always conceived of the notion of montage as not being particular to the cinema, and that it can be found everywhere. Garroni thinks that a language [*langage*], like cinematic language for example, is only specific by the combination of codes it uses, but that there are no codes that are specific to a language. I wrote a response to his book, in which I said that, in my opinion, certain codes are specific to the cinema. But, even though I disagree with him, I do not think that his idea is entirely false. According to Garroni, we must make a careful distinction between language and code. He operates a complete break [*coupure*] between this material of expression and its form (in the sense in which Hjelmslev uses these terms). In other words, the technico-material or technico-sensorial specificity of the cinema absolutely does not lead, for him, to even a mere probability that there are specific codes. I agree with him on one point: namely, when you have the technico-sensorial specificity of the cinema, you do not yet have its structural specificity.

Cinéthique: Yes, but you can push this technico-sensorial specificity further. I do not understand why we should stop there. Montage, such as it is practiced in the cinema, is fundamentally specific to the cinema, and the same thing is not done in literature or painting. And, beyond montage, we should see how far we can push this specificity. Perhaps Garroni has not done this work, but if it is done, we would perhaps perceive that, simply at the technico-sensorial level, specificity goes very far indeed.

Metz: Yes, that is your opinion, and to a large degree it is also my own. But the crux of the problem is that Garroni rejects the fact that montage is specific to the cinema, because it is also manifest elsewhere. In contrast, I have personally been puzzled by the inexact notion of 'pre-cinema' (configurations pre-existing the cinema that anticipate cinematic procedures). In general, you can look very far back indeed, and see tracking shots in Livy, or shot/reverse shots in Tacitus...

Cinéthique: Barthes has done so, but not to show that there is a 'pre-cinema'. Rather, it was simply to show that, in history, we proceed as we do in the cinema, because we have the means to do so, by, for example, depicting an overarching tableau of a battle, then focusing suddenly on a detail of the general commanding his troops, then a detail of the battalion attacking, etc. Of course, this is true, but in history it only serves to write history, while in the cinema, it only serves to make a film. So there is still, at least, a specificity of the final product.

Metz: I agree with your conclusion, but you should not be so dismissive of Garroni's objections. I think that the specific codes of the cinema could appear, once they have been established (which would be the most urgent thing to do), as not being radically specific *from within*, in the same way that an analogy can be coded without ceasing to be an analogy. The units figuring in the *grande syntagmatique* owe a lot to a rhetorical culture. Figures such as alternating montage or parallel montage are only possible in a civilization profoundly impregnated by forms such as antithesis or parallelism. My current work, and, for example, the book that I am presently writing [*Language and Cinema*], corresponds to a double movement. I would be inclined to express the first movement as a distinction between the *filmic* and the *cinematic*, by baptizing the filmic as everything that appears in the film (a nomination that appears quite logical to me), and cinematic as being only a part of the filmic, that which is linked to the film itself. The second movement would involve showing that, within these properly cinematic constructions, there is a kernel of non-specificity. In sum, it is something of a self-critical movement.

Cinéthique: Do you not have the impression that Garroni may be speaking of a cinema already made and a cinema to be made? That is to say, at bottom everything we say about cinematic codes relates to a cinema already made, and what Garroni says relates to films to be made – that is, a cinema that would once again examine what it believes to be specific to its own function. The *syntagmatique*, which is close to rhetoric, undeniably exists, but maybe it needs to be interrogated in order to see how it conveys an entire series of ideologies (not only in the film, but on the film and on the cinema in general), and to know if it ought to continue to exist. What Garroni says seems interesting to me at the predictive level: namely, can we make films without utilizing what we believe is a code specific to the cinema? If there are no specific codes, then all codes are generalized. It remains to be seen if there is not some kind of barrier that ensures that we continue to consider montage in the way it is currently practiced as being indispensable to making a film.

Metz: I do not agree with your interpretation of Garroni. I believe that he places himself in, let's say, a traditional conception (which is also mine) of semiology as non-interventionist, analyzing films already made. Consequently, he does not pose the problem of films to be made, which is one of the differences with your journal, for example, since you resolutely place yourselves within an interventionist perspective.

Cinéthique: Yes, of course, Garroni should not explicitly come out and say: this is what is done, and this is what should be done. But it seems to me that, from the semiological study of what is made, we should draw out what is not acceptable at a certain level – above all at the level of the product. Perhaps the element of confusion in this conversation is the role played by semiology. Semiology makes no illusions about its role in a comprehensive theory of the cinema, that is, a complete reading of films, which would not only be semiological in nature, but which could also incorporate politics, economics and psychoanalysis.

Metz: I would respond to you that this depends on the semiologists. My conception of semiology is relatively modest, in the sense that, for example, I do not think that, in the present state of things, semiology can seriously claim that it will decode a film in its entirety. That said, however, I am obliged to mention a historical fact, which is that, quite often, semiology implicitly presents itself as a total science, as a type of general science of culture which, ideally, could subsume psychology, sociology, etc. In a way, this is a dream that we already find in C.S. Peirce, which personally I do not adhere to, but which I do not completely reject, at the level of ambition. To a certain extent, semiology can be a kind of epistemology of the social sciences. But I think that, as long as we do not possess the sufficient scientific tools for realizing such a program, arrogant declarations of exclusivism and totality do a great disservice to semiology.

It simply seems to me that semiology can provide a contribution that, on its own level, is rigorous. This is what I consider my *profession* to be: undertaking this contribution inspired by linguistic methodologies (whether generative or structuralist). From that point on, people should do with it what they want! By the way, even if this contribution is rigorous (given that semiological work, like every activity, is susceptible to being poorly done), I do not believe that absolutely anything can be done with it. But I believe semiology *qua* semiology must make an extremely precise analysis of codes, and demonstrate these codes – and that is all. As a result, I have never been bothered about being in a rather partial position; that is, lending my semiological contribution to enterprises that could well be, in their center of gravity, very out of step with respect to my own project. I am referring to encounters such as our own one today, but also to encounters between semiologists and psychologists, pedagogues, etc., where the ultimate endpoints are very different. If a semiological contribution is rigorous on its own level, it represents progress in our knowledge of the cinema, and a more general theory, of whatever kind, can then utilize or criticize this contribution.

