

René Thom's archetypal morphologies of human language and his semiophysics applied to visual art and music

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René Thom made his major contributions to linguistics and semiotics, first, in his book “Stabilité Structurelle et Morphogenèse”, in the chapter “L'homo loquens”(The Speaking Man) in 1972, and second, in his book “Esquisse d'une sémiophysique”, 1988, chapter 2, “Le Langage” (Language). In the first, he presented a list of 16 “morphologies archétypes” (Archetypal Morphologies); in the second, he proposed to bridge the gap between the sciences of culture and communication and the natural sciences. The present contribution describes how Thom's linguistic conjectures and his program of “sémiophysique” have been further developed and modified in ongoing research until today. The last section exemplifies the application of his topological and dynamic view to visual art and music.

Although a final evaluation of Thom's journey into linguistics and semiotics cannot be given, its impact on contemporary and future thought in linguistics and semiotics can be estimated.

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