

Julia Kristeva and a Collective Semiotic in a Social Body

Abstract

Julia Kristeva distinguishes between the semiotic and the symbolic as they apply to the individual human body. This essay argues that there is a similar application to the social, political, economic, and cultural body. This “social body” possesses its own collective semiotic, which could be seen as bringing about social change in a Lotmanian semiosphere, the space of meaning generation without which language cannot exist. In the semiosphere, strategic communication can lead to either hegemony or counter-hegemony, where organic intellectuals, charismatic authority, and meta-signs emerge and in which system and lifeworld fuse in a postmodern hyperreal. Such a hyperreal is the result of a collective semiotic playing at multiple levels. This has similarities to Kristeva’s fourfold signifying practices in a collectivity: the collective and the individualistic dimensions of sociology interpenetrate her work.

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Keywords

Julia Kristeva, semiotic, collective semiotic, semiosphere, change

1. Introduction

Humanity possesses both individualist and collectivist dimensions. Individuals have individual bodies and individual minds and act and cogitate individually. Not that they do not interact with and relate to others, but very often individuality predominates. Max Weber and his *Verstehen* are individualist to the extent that they are methodologically individualist. On the other hand, certain facets of a human predicament, like class and caste, have a collective existence, which floats above individual human existence. Structuralist theorists like Karl Marx and Émile Durkheim look at the collectivist dimension

of humanity. While she is primarily an individualist poststructural theorist, Julia Kristeva also addresses the collectivist dimension.

Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* is a landmark text of poststructuralism. She makes psychological drives enter the world of languages, decentering their structuralism. She says that "language has 'deep structures' that articulate *categories*" (Kristeva 1984, 23; emphasis in original). Kristeva's language can be split into two categories, semiotic and symbolic, which hover between the individualist and collectivist dimensions.

The semiotic consists of drives operating in language, associated with rhythm and tone, which do not signify. The symbolic is the element of meaning; it signifies. The semiotic, for Kristeva, exists in the individual mind and not in collective consciousness. Kelly Oliver explains: "Instead of lamenting what is lost, absent or impossible in language, Kristeva marvels at this other realm [bodily experience] that makes its way into language" (Oliver 1997, xx). The realm of bodily experience is relatively simpler, much too pure, and more direct than the symbolic. The semiotic and the symbolic are a part of the signifying process, which happens in and through the body.

The semiotic is "apprehended through difficult reasoning; though it is lost as soon as it is posited, it is nonexistent without this positing" (Kristeva 1984, 32). Kristeva further says: "Signification [is] the utterance of a posited (thetic) subject with regard to an object. [...] The semiotic can thus be understood as pre-thetic, preceding the positing of the subject". And, more elaborately:

Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body—always already involved in a semiotic process—by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. (Kristeva 1984, 25)

The social structures the semiotic.

“The regulation of the semiotic in the symbolic [happens] through the thetic break. [...] [This thetic break] of the symbolic order is represented by murder—the killing of a man, a slave, a prisoner, an animal” (Kristeva 1984, 70). Freud calls this a founding break. There is the emergence of the genotext and the phenotext, the two types of a text’s functioning.

What we shall call a *genotext* will include semiotic processes but also the advent of the symbolic. The former includes drives, their disposition, and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social system surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oedipal relations with parents. The latter encompasses the emergence of object and subject, and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields. [...] [The genotext is] a *process*, which tends to articulate structures that are ephemeral [...] and nonsignifying. (Kristeva 1984, 86; emphasis in original)

We shall use the term *phenotext* to denote language that serves to communicate, which linguistics describes in terms of “competence” and “performance.” The phenotext is constantly split up and divided, and is irreducible to the semiotic process that works through the genotext. The phenotext is a structure (which can be generated, in generative grammar’s sense); it obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee. (Kristeva 1984, 87; emphasis in original)

The genotext and the phenotext cannot be viewed in isolation. The phenotext is inscribed with “the plural, heterogeneous, and contradictory process of signification encompassing the flow of drives, material discontinuity, political struggle, and the pulverization of language” (Kristeva 1984, 88). The semiotic can enter the phenotext and destabilize it.

Kristeva presents an exciting role for semiotic drives. “Since the violence of drive charges is not halted, blocked, or repressed, what takes the place of the bodily, natural, or social objects these charges pass through is not just a representation, a memory, or a sign. The instinctual *chora*, in its very displacement, transgresses representation, memory, the sign” (Kristeva 1984, 102). Corporeal, natural and social

territories are invested with drives. The dynamism of drives “bursts, pierces, deforms, reforms and transforms the boundaries the subject and society set for themselves” (Kristeva 1984, 103).

Kristeva’s semiotic-symbolic distinction centers on the individual body. This essay extends her argument to describe a social, political, economic, and cultural body, primarily focusing on collective semiotic belonging to a “social body.” We will examine how a collective semiotic in and through the social body brings social change. We will discuss the relationship between Lotman’s semiosphere with the collective semiotic. Finally, the paper looks at how the collective semiotic, through strategic communication, establishes hegemony and the role of organic intellectuals, the sign, charismatic authority and mythological leaders in the broader contemporary reality.

2. The collective semiotic and social change

Kristeva’s semiotic is a key player in change and revolutionary practice. Sociology looks at social change as a three-step process: 1. the object that is changed (for instance, the electoral fortunes of a political party); 2. the period in which change happens (an actual state, in the onward movement of time, becomes the goal state); and 3. The difference that occurs (for instance, the number of legislators in a political party before and after a specific election).

Kristeva’s semiotic is “lost as soon as it is posited.” It is always unconscious. The collective semiotic is not *sui generis*, like Durkheim’s collective consciousness. The collective semiotic originates in individual conscious existence, and is transmitted consciously and unconsciously to one or more individuals. At some point, this transmission and the transmitted semiotic form a collective semiotic, independent of individuals, which can consciously and unconsciously impact individuals and groups. Thus, according to this theory, social change is a two-way process, from the individual to the collective and vice versa. The collective semiotic originates in an individual consciousness and in its interaction with other individuals, becoming a power of its own.

The consciousness of man is the consciousness of humanity. There is an interchange between individual consciousness and the common consciousness. The changes in the individual consciousness affect

the common consciousness and vice-versa. The collective semiotic is a part of our common consciousness that impacts the individual consciousness.

Durkheim says that collective consciousness is the “totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average members of a society”; it “forms a determinate system with a life of its own” (Durkheim 1984, 63). Collective representations consist of collective beliefs and sentiments that exist “independent of the particular conditions in which individuals find themselves. Individuals pass on, but it abides” (Durkheim 1984, 64). Collective consciousness or representations are an essential part of the “collective semiotic,” which is part of the social body.

Although I draw upon the Durkheimian notion of collective consciousness, I disagree that the individual is epiphenomenal. Rather, much more in Kristeva’s tradition, I recognize a potent individual consciousness. As evident from the above, the collective semiotic originates in the conscious individual mind; thus, it would be correct to say that individuals form the basis of a collective semiotic.

3. A social body and lifeworld

Kristeva’s analysis is limited to the individual body and its semiotic urges, which condition and are conditioned by society and history. However, Kristeva’s analysis can be extended to include the social body. Society can be seen as itself a body. As conceived here, the body is a social, economic, political, and cultural body that appears in language.

A complete ontology of society is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet the social body is a network of interpersonal relationships. It is a network of interpersonal relationships. A social group is located where relations are concentrated in the network. If relations are reified, structures and institutions arise as part and parcel of the social relationship. These have the capacity to become one of the bases of a collective semiotic.

This collective semiotic of a social body is navigated by meaning-making individuals. People’s minds process the collective semiotic and give their representations and interpretations of it. They communicate the collective semiotic intrapersonally and interpersonally. New

signs, codes, discourses, languages and narratives are born in communication.

However, neither a common narrative or relationship exists independently of individual drives. They exist as memory traces in an individual brain. This is proved by the fact that only some are familiar with a shared narrative and common relationship. They differ from individual to individual, from one social group to another. Nevertheless, they are shared by the individuals in which they are present as a memory trace. A community of minds is formed. Individuals form the basis of a collective semiotic; they compose the drives of a collective semiotic.

A social body can also create a collective semiotic. For instance, the discourses and narratives that emanate from the collective in mass media and social media can compose a collective semiotic. In addition, concerted efforts to create, change or abolish certain feelings, emotions, and attitudes can create a collective semiotic. For instance, political campaigns aim to provoke or demolish emotions and the like during elections, and these influence and are influenced by a collective semiotic.

4. A living semiosphere

A collective semiotic can change the signs and language of a society, politics and culture, as well as the sphere of meaning generation. The semiosphere is here considered as a sphere possessing signs assigned to an enclosed space. The semiosphere is the semiotic space outside of which the semiotic cannot exist. A boundary exists between the semiosphere and the non-semiotic space surrounding it (Lotman 2005).

There is a collective semiotic in a semiosphere, which can be reflected in the language of the semiosphere. But this collective semiotic operates within a particular boundary, outside of which you have a non-semiotic space or another semiosphere. Where one collective semiotic in the semiosphere ends and another begins depends on an individual's position in the semiosphere. Perhaps a collective semiotic can belong to more than one semiosphere, without necessarily being translated. An individual at the border of two semiospheres acts as an interpreter.

A semiosphere becomes a *living* semiosphere when it is rooted in a particular social, political, economic and cultural milieu. For example, Anand Raja says:

India's electoral semiosphere is a space where textual meanings and languages are created and contested in the presence of multiple social, economic, political and cultural structures. Several ideologies are at play, making texts and languages, signs and symbols of the secular and the divisive, caste and casteless, regional aspirations and nationalists, most in binary opposition. (Raja 2022a, 359)

What applies to the Indian electoral semiosphere in particular belongs to semiospheres in general. As explained above, various groups and structures induce a collective semiotic in the semiosphere. These groups and structures achieve control of the semiosphere, at which point the semiosphere's language and logic become a power of their own, entirely separate and independent of the collective semiotic that produced it.

A "collective semiotic" can influence a public, though not necessarily a private, language. As a result, the semiosphere will have a new semiotic personality, a new boundary, and a new language. The collective semiotic, by changing the semiosphere, can bring about sociopolitical change, either intentionally or unintentionally. This sociopolitical change will, in turn, produce its own collective semiotic, and so on *ad infinitum*.

A collective semiotic can also impact language. Indeed, a new language may even be created. For instance, India is undergoing a phase of domination by *Hindutva*, a relatively recent, violent and aggressive variant of the Hindu religion. *Hindutva* is vocal as a social, political and cultural force. This has all created a collective semiotic in whose absence *Hindutva's* language cannot be understood.

Polarized languages and symbols have the power to encourage their own semiotic. For instance, mass media and social media aid and abet "drives" that are discharged in language. The language of communal polarization creates a closed circle in which languages and individuals get caught, polarizing groups in the semiosphere and giving rise to semiospheres that are opposed to each other.

5. The power of strategic communication

Strategic communication used deliberately can bring about desired changes in a semiosphere. For instance, during election campaigns political parties and their leaders create a collective semiotic. Rick Schell provides six pointers of strategic communication: a target audience, in which a collective semiotic and languages are initiated; a context, or the social, political and economic milieu in which a collective semiotic and semiosphere are located; an intended outcome, which could be winning an election, gaining popularity, etc.; key messages, as expressed in newspapers, speeches, and on social media; an appropriate medium, usually multimodal; and preferred messengers, including both political leaders and ordinary people (Schell 2017).

Using strategic communication, new, living semiospheres are continuously built, controlling the space of meaning generation, paraphrasing all the texts, languages and structures of the lifeworld. The whole of the semiosphere defines its parts and the parts continue to define and shape the whole in a never-ending cycle. Such semiosphere processes could also shape a totalitarian order.

Kristeva says that the drives behind languages can bring about radical change in social structures. Languages in a living semiosphere could be either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. When, during elections, for instance, a political semiosphere is surcharged in a particular way, it can either propel the hegemonic bloc to power or destroy it. Maintaining or destroying political hegemony, a Gramscian concern, is made possible by a surcharged semiosphere.

6. A new semiosphere and hegemony

A changing semiosphere and the collective semiotic that underpins it influence social change and define hegemony and counter-hegemony. The Gramscian notion of hegemony is defined as

the ability of the state and the ruling class to regulate beliefs within civil society. Hegemonic beliefs are dominant cultural motifs which reinforce inequality and which short-circuit attempts at critical thinking. They allow dominant groups to rule more efficiently as

they permit a reduction in the level of force required to maintain social order. (Smith and Riley 2008, 36)

A collective semiotic and the living semiosphere regulate hegemonic beliefs. Language and the sociopsychological drives associated with language are in a position to create new ideas and shatter old ones. Control of the texts and languages of the semiosphere means that civil society and its opinions can be turned in a particular direction. For instance, the state and the market indulge in large-scale advertising and brand management to create new beliefs by occasionally saturating the semiosphere.

When a semiosphere's language and collective semiotic are turned in a particular direction, inequality in the semiosphere is reinforced. The people able to control the collective semiotic of a social body in a semiosphere emerge as authorities in the semiosphere. According to Raja, "[t]he electoral semiosphere mirrors the hegemon and the ghosts of the electoral arena" (Raja 2022a, 359). The hegemon of an electoral arena often appears as such owing to its sway over the semiosphere. This sway also leads to a decline in critical thinking.

Critical thinking inevitably involves rationality taking precedence over collective feelings and emotions. Control over the semiosphere often entails the sway of a collective semiotic. What Raja says about India's electoral arena broadly applies to many semiospheres:

National elections could be fought in a primitive state of mind, where illusory and transient symbols will be presented to the public, where emotions and passions rise to a feverish pitch. Those who reason would need more space in the electioneering. The blind faith in the great god and its religion may now control people's behaviour. (Raja 2022b, 203–4)

On some occasions, the state or other groups can use force against those who challenge the hegemonic bloc in the semiosphere. The hegemonic bloc can attack unfriendly journalists, intellectuals, and members of civil society. News channels, radio, newspapers and magazines can be brought under state control or that of friendly corporations. On the other hand, the media, without selling out or being muzzled, can manufacture consent for the hegemonic bloc (Herman & Chomsky 2008).

7. Organic intellectuals and the social body

“Organic Intellectuals [are] central to the propagation of hegemonic beliefs. These are people like priests and journalists who translate complex philosophical and political issues into everyday language and guide the masses on how to act” (Smith and Riley 2009, 36).

Gramsci’s notion of “organic intellectuals” is central to a collective semiotic and the living semiosphere. Occasionally, political leaders can come across as organic intellectuals. For example, many right-wing strongman politicians go on about nationalism *ad nauseam*. They value an “us-versus-them” scenario, important because everyone on their side is a true nationalist while everyone opposed to them is against the nation or anti-national. Creating such a binary is pivotal to the political sociology of organic intellectuals. Giovanna Cosenza indicates two tendencies in Western political communication: “1) a tendency to construct *binary oppositions* and 2) the *storytelling fashion*” (Cosenza 2020).

Marxist intellectuals and politicians also relied on creating an “us-versus-them” scenario. When Marx and Engels wrote the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* for the Communist League, they compressed the highly complicated theory Marx developed into a binary opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They famously said: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight” (Marx & Engels 2012, 74).

Marxist and non-Marxist politicians have used storytelling to communicate their points of view, like the quotation above from the manifesto. The story is dialectical. The tale of dialectical materialism and historical materialism. That story is told as the story of all of mankind since the advent of human society.

The social body mentioned earlier is instantiated in the quote, which says that a body of haves and have-nots is locked in a contest. This translates profound logic and thought into a simple binary opposition. A Marxian statement like “Workers of the World, Unite!” offers guidance to the masses on how to act. Marx, otherwise an academic philosopher in many respects, donned the hat of an organic intellectual when he asked the workers of the world to unite.

The establishment, also known as the hegemonic bloc, can have its own organic intellectuals. Leaders who speak in nationalist and populist ways can simplify things for the population and guide them to righteousness. Prominent political leaders can act as bilingual translating filters at the borders of the semiospheres of the state and the public sphere. Complex economic, political and geopolitical truths and falsehoods are told in binary oppositions and in a storytelling fashion.

The relationship between the collective semiotic, the living semiosphere, and the social body can be profound. The collective semiotic can be rather non-linguistic, more a part of the lifeworld (Husserl 1970), but will be reflected in the collective symbolic, which can be envisaged on the order of Kristeva's individual symbolic. This collective symbolic, in the form of the totality of texts and languages, will shape the living semiosphere.

Viktor Zotov speaks of social psychology, which is "the sum total of views, habits, feelings, inducements, and strivings formed under the direct impact of the existence of people. [...] [It involves] the coupling of consciousness and feeling, of feeling and consciousness" (Zotov 1985, 233). The "existence of people" refers to existence vis-à-vis production. On the other hand, this essay argues that control of mass media and social media plays a significant role in shaping a living semiosphere and the collective semiotic. This impact would be direct rather than via materialist forces.

8. The meta-sign and the leader

Some organic intellectuals can become signs independently, giving rise to a collective semiotic. A Peircean sign is a medium for communication. An object represents a representamen. Furthermore, there is an understanding of the sign, and this is the interpretant (Peirce 1998). Organic intellectuals can emerge as a Peircean sign owing to the role that they played in creating a collective semiotic in the semiosphere.

For instance, "Karl Marx" is a representamen. The representamen denotes an object, the person called Karl Marx. The various ways in which Marx is interpreted create many interpretations. These three features of the sign are not static, but in a dynamic correlation. They together constitute the sign. This sign can become a metalanguage in

ways that Lotman and Kristeva have emphasized. Raja stresses that the incumbent Indian Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi, who is also an organic intellectual, creates symbolism to emerge as the foremost organic intellectual of India:

Mr. Modi deliberately constructed his symbolism in three ways, ways which are called semiotic strategies. The first way is to portray himself distinctively. Mr Modi uses catch-words and phrases to define himself, portrays himself as a doer, speaks in first person 'I' and uses non-verbal mediums to deliberately build his symbolism. The second way is to put forward his policy platform by using phrases like 'Gujarat Model' and as a problem solver and dream merchant. Lastly, Mr. Modi builds his own symbolism by associating himself with big ideas like development, corporations, national plans and Hindu Nationalism. (Raja 2019, 4)

Due to such semiotic strategies and large-scale positive propaganda in mass media and on social media, a leader can become a meta-sign. As a result, that leader can acquire charismatic authority on charismatic grounds. "[I]n a charismatic manner: exceptional sanctity or heroic qualities or exemplary character of a person, and of the orders that this person proclaims or creates (charismatic rule)" (Weber 2019, 342). Consequently, a leader becomes an authority in his or her own right, as happens in many dictatorial and totalitarian regimes, where a leader rises to self-description.

When a leader rises to self-description in a semiosphere, he or she can induce a collective semiotic in the semiosphere. The leader can create a language or languages, idioms, slogans and mantras. The collective semiotic can also be generated in and through language by a leader who deals in the realm of emotions and matters of the heart. Such leaders can use strategic communication to pass on the message correctly in order to achieve the intended outcome.

A leader can become a symbol allowing the leader's supporters to recognize one another. Supporters can form a community around the leader, making the leader a *cause célèbre*. They become ideal citizens who do as the leader asks; they become good and obedient followers. The leader can then command loyalty not for legal and rational reasons but because of charismatic rule – the community gains power and influence.

Given the power of the collective semiotic over individual consciousness and behavior, this semiotic can be used by the rich and the powerful to achieve their ends. The collective semiotic can be reflected in the language of a semiosphere. Employing hegemonic language, the collective semiotic can be deployed in religion, political communication, elections, advertisements, social mobilization, etc.

A collective semiotic, however, can be a double-edged sword. It may be used by the hegemonic bloc, but it can also be used for counter-hegemony. The counter-hegemonic bloc can also have a collective semiotic, which it can create using its own media and devices. While charismatic leaders and organic intellectuals can build hegemony, they can destroy it, too. The clever deployment of language in a semiosphere can bring this about.

9. A leader and the broader contemporary reality

A leader can come to define a semiosphere. For example, the Indian Prime Minister Modi used a slogan in the 2014 Indian National Elections: *Abki Baar, Modi Sarkaar* (this time a Modi government). An entire semiosphere can revolve around a single person, his language, ideology and narrative. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord says that social relations are mediated through images. In an image-saturated society, people may not relate to the leader in person but rather to the leader's image and self-presentation. Multiple photos of the same person can also occupy a semiosphere. We live in a world of copies without an original (Baudrillard 1983).

The collective semiotic of a hyperreal semiosphere is mostly disordered and wild. On the other hand, surges of a collective semiotic may engulf the semiosphere, and it may lose all sense of legality, truth and rationality in a frenzy of collective effervescence. A crowd comes about as a consequence of discharge, "the moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal" (Canneti 1960, 17). This moment of unity in a collective semiotic comes in very handy during events like elections, war, riots and communal frenzy in which the agents of one or another power want people to unite under a flag or a leader which they support unconditionally.

Such a collective semiotic can define a semiosphere in which all languages and texts are deciphered by a dominant code. The code

often interprets everything according to a binary logic in a storytelling fashion (Cosenza 2020). Such codes provide a consistent narrative to the people who inhabit a semiosphere in which the good battles the bad, or one class fights another, or one race eats up another. Occasionally, a dominant code defines everything in a semiosphere.

A collective semiotic can spawn violence across the semiosphere through wars encapsulated in language (like the “culture wars”) as well as in conflict and violence between various groups and institutions. This predicament occurs especially in the modern, urban world. When a dominant code interprets a flurry of activity on social media, a we-subjectivity develops that is mostly independent of reality.

What Jürgen Habermas calls the system, consisting of state and market structures, tries to ride such an unhinged lifeworld. The market can depend on its collective representations and use them to serve the interests of capital. Similarly, the state and political parties can use collective representations imbued with a collective semiotic to win votes and popularity in a living semiosphere.

The system and the lifeworld can fuse into one organism with a common aim, as expressed in strategic communication tools. Such a fusion can occur in shared languages, texts, codes; organic intellectuals deliberately install a semiosphere to transform sociopolitical forces into hegemony and ghosts of society and politics. Totalitarianism comes about when there is no psychological imagination beyond the party becoming a movement, as Hannah Arendt specifies (Arendt 1951).

Such semiospheres and their collective semiotic activity can create a mythology around an individual, an organic intellectual, transforming him or her into a superhuman figure. This figure has power over individuals and can be a dictator in semiospheric and non-semiospheric space. This helps perpetuate the power of the superhuman in a vicious circle.

Consequently, social change is the contingent result of the interplay of impulses and drives in the realm of a collective semiotic. This process can be natural and communicative. A collective semiotic may be consciously produced by Machiavellian political communicators when the process is deliberate, instrumental and goal-directed. Social change can result from this mutual process.

10. Conclusion

This paper shows how Kristeva's semiotic can be developed into the collective semiotic of a social body, which, in a semiosphere, creates the new horizon of a we-subjectivity in the lifeworld and brings about change. A living semiosphere endowed with multiple structures constitutes a space for strategic communication where Gramscian organic intellectuals create hegemony, and many emerge as meta-signs with charismatic authority.

Such a phenomenon elucidates the process that Kristeva rightly foresees: "social change [...] is inseparable from instinctual and linguistic change. [...] [T]he opaque and impenetrable subject of social relations and struggles [is transformed] into a subject in process/on trial" (Kristeva 1984, 104–5). The thetic break propels the collective subject in the living semiosphere from the pre-linguistic to the linguistic, from genotext to phenotext.

A new theory may always draw on concepts from different traditions. The attempt made here at a unique view of social change is no exception. The theory takes a social-psychological phenomenon occupying a symbolic realm to demonstrate how society can change or be made to change through a collective semiotic. This collective semiotic, unlike Kristeva's semiotic, is not necessarily unconscious.

In both Kristeva and this essay, the collectivist-individualist divide has been bridged. Kristeva speaks of "signifying practices," the different types of discourse in society. Kristeva develops her fourfold classification: narrative, metalanguage, contemplation and text. All at once, the body (the basis of the semiotic), the semiotic drives, the subject and collective society become part of a single reality. For Kristeva, the overcoming of the binary between ideas is, in one way or another, the stuff of discourse in society.¹ This essay has attempted to overcome the binary between the individual and collective dimensions in ways that

¹ "In narrative, *instinctual dyads* (positive/negative, affirmation/negation, life drive/death drive) are articulated as a nondisjunction (-v-). [...] In narrative, the social organism is dominated, ruled by, and finally reduced to or viewed through the structure of the family. [...] *Metalanguage* may be said to suture the signifying process by eliminating the negative charge, by subordinating negativity to affirmation, and by *reducing instinctual dyads to positivity*. [...] *Contemplation* [...] is a signifying system that includes 'genres'. [...] In this signifying system, *instinctual dyads* are knotted in a nonsynthetic combination in which 'plus' and 'minus' interpenetrate like the ends of a magnetized chain. [...] What we call the *text* differs radically from its contemplative simulation, for in the text the *instinctual binominal* consists of two opposing terms that alternate in an endless rhythm" (Kristeva 1984, 90, 93, 95, 99; emphasis in original).

diverge from Kristeva. The starting point for Kristeva is the individual semiotic, while the enquiry undertaken here begins by recognizing the silent consciousness of humanity.

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