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Is Money a Linguistic Form?

Integrating Simmel's Construction of Monetary Value into the Framework of the Philosophy of Language

Abstract: In his study, the author discusses his hypothesis of money as a linguistic form, one understood *sensu stricto*, as Ferdinand de Saussure would. This approach seems to be the key to explaining some important phenomena: the so-called 'economics imperialism' in the social sciences and the specific character of economic language, as seen from the perspective of the humanities. Both the 'uncanny character' of economic terms and 'economics imperialism' appear in this text as symptoms, or ways in which economic signs, especially money understood as a sign, specifically manifest themselves. The logical analysis of the construction of these signs—analysis based on Saussure's and Simmel's propositions—is the main topic of this article. First, the author revisits a well-known parallel between formal structures of linguistic and monetary signs developed in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*. Second, a crucial difference in these structures is presented and theoretically explained using tools developed by Georg Simmel. The author goes on to consider whether this difference locates the monetary sign outside the realm of language per se. Finally, by applying certain claims made by Ludwig Wittgenstein on the limits of language, the author develops his hypothesis that money is a linguistic sign, but a specific one; it is a kind of a 'border phenomenon.' In this text, the author proposes the term 'linguistic form' to distinguish this kind of sign. Some theoretical and social consequences of this state of affairs are proposed; inter alia the immanent social antagonism between the symbolic articulation of the social sphere and the economic one.

Keywords: economics imperialism, monetary value, linguistic value, linguistic form, Simmel, de Saussure, Wittgenstein.

'Economics Imperialism' and the 'Uncanny' Character of Economic Signs

The language of economics presents a permanent problem for social theory. On the one hand, social theory has to cope with so-called 'economics imperialism' (Fine, Lazear 2000). On the other hand, the humanities in general, with their approach and imaginaries (Taylor 2004), can't seem to grasp the specificity of economics. Joseph Vogl states it in a highly metaphorical way: 'This may well be because there is something uncanny about how, in economic processes, circulating objects and signs take on a spectral willfulness (Vogl 2014: 5).

My hypothesis is that both issues—'economics imperialism' and the 'uncanny character' of processes and signs in economics—are rooted in the same phenomenon and can be explained using tools from the philosophy of language. Both the power of explanatory unification, which seems to be the foundation of 'economics imperialism', and its 'un-

canny' quality in the humanities and qualitative social sciences, as described by Vogl, are symptomatic of the specific and particular character of economic language. Stating it more theoretically, economic language is a particular linguistic form.

Several Polish authors wrote a summative paper (Brzeziński, Gorynia, Hockuba 2008) on 'economics imperialism,' investigating the astonishing expansion of economics into the fields of other social sciences. Their conclusions concurred with those of the majority of other researchers:

> It seems that what is most important is the intrinsic tendency of economics to unify different economic theories into one consolidated and coherent theory of economics. This tendency can be observed in its development over the last fifty years. In a manner still poorly analysed, this tendency was extended to social sciences as such […] (Brzeziński, Gorynia, Hockuba 2008: 205).

Uskali Mäki, a Finnish researcher who is relatively sympathetic with 'economics imperialism', nevertheless formulated a variety of applicability constraints for this process (Mäki 2008). In my opinion his most important constraint states that when a theory enters a domain of another theory, despite its ability to explain many phenomena, it should be dismissed if it conceals others. In the spirit of Foucault, I can extend Mäki's rationale, asserting that the manner in which different theories constitute their objects may also lead to the appearance or disappearance of some of these objects. This occurs when economics is applied to the social sphere. I propose that the reason for it is essentially linguistic.

It is important to add that if one adopts this perspective, it is hard to agree with the thesis that 'economics imperialism' is simply another form of 'scientific imperialism' (Mäki 2018)[1]. While scientific methods such as the quantitative methods used in the social sciences are trying to capture existing social phenomena with mathematical signs and tools, economics operates in a quite different manner. We can detect a trace of this 'different manner' in the way Edward Lazear, a strong defender of 'economics imperialism' argues. He maintains that economic language 'allows complicated concepts to be written in a relatively simple, abstract way' (Lazear 2000: 99).This method of changing 'complicated concepts' into something simultaneously 'simple' and 'abstract' is precisely the result of the specificity or different manner of constructing economic signs.

This different manner of constructing signs will be the main object of my further considerations.

Ben Fine, a strong critic of 'economics imperialism', writes:

> I argue that economics is now engaged in a process of colonizing the other social sciences. It is extending its methods as never before to analytical terrain that had previously been seen as lying outside its scope. […] In this vein, both the economy and society more broadly can be understood as the outcome of the aggregated behavior of otherwise isolated individuals, coordinated by the market or 'as if' market mechanisms (Fine 1999: 404).

In the next section, I examine two aspects of Fine's argument. The first pertains to economics 'extending its methods' into the terrain of other social sciences. I will consider the conditions of possibility for such an extension, using analyses of linguistic structures

[1] As one could conclude from the book newly edited by Uskali Mäki and associates: *Scientific Imperialism. Exploring the Boundaries of Interdisciplinarity*, Routledge 2018, especially see: *Scientific imperialism, folk morality, and the proper boundaries of disciplines*, by Adrian Walsh and Sandy Boucher.

to determine the specificity of economics in the realm of the social sciences. The second aspect pertains to the mechanism defining this specificity: 'a unique process of aggregation' on which economic language is based.

If Ben Fine is correct, this process produces a vision of society in which non-economic phenomena are not scientifically noticeable. Furthermore, all noticeable phenomena are coordinated by '"as if" market mechanisms.'

It is well-known in philosophy that the term 'as if' is used to indicate a shift from a descriptive level to a normative one. The use of the term in economics indicates precisely how the economy penetrates the domain of social sciences. 'Economics imperialism' is not a description, but a prescription. It projects a specific 'societal architecture' and provides an instrument to achieve this vision. The instrument exists at the level of language that economics uses. It is connected with the particular logical mechanism behind the construction of the main economic signs, especially those of 'monetary value'. It is this mechanism that Ben Fine called a 'unique process of aggregation'. The linguistic and logical nature of this 'aggregation' will constitute the core of my analysis.

The Analogy between Linguistic and Monetary Value

Money is the crucial element in the economy, both as an object of economic practices and as a fundamental sign of economic language.[2] Quite often the importance of money as a linguistic sign is accepted in the field of economic language, but denied when the economy is discussed as a real social practice. In the latter case, money is often comprehended as some kind of object. I will assume that in both cases, that is, in theoretical economic language and in economic practices, money's crucial position is determined by characteristics of its linguistic form. This assumption emerges from the general claim, rooted in structuralist and post-structuralist theory, that the position of the sign (signifier) in the symbolic field establishes both social practices and the language describing them. Thus, analysing money as a linguistic form can provide insight into it, both as a social practice in today's economy and as an element of language. In this sense, the term 'linguistic form' refers to a kind of linguistic sign which is a 'border phenomenon.'

The most important reason to adopt the post-stucturalist theoretical perspective is thus determined by its capacity to derive different levels of phenomena, including social phenomena, from the outcomes of linguistic analysis. In other words, this perspective might

[2] An exhaustive overview of the different ideas about money can be found in the book of Mary Mellor 'The Future of Money. From Financial Crisis to Public Resource', especially the chapter 'What is money?' (Mellor 2010). Interesting position is the one of Scott Ferguson, who writes in his 'Money's Laws of Motion,' 'Marxism attributes the greatest degree of being to immediate material relations, imagining monetary abstraction as a volatilization and estrangement of conscious local associations. By contrast, MMT (Modern Monetary Theory) hangs collective existence on a community's political center and maintains that money is an inexhaustible government instrument for socializing relations of production and distribution at a distance. Instead of condemning money for disrupting and evacuating otherwise self-subsistent local activities, MMT treats a people's remote obligations to a centralized polity as ontologically prior to any immediate association and sees monetary abstraction as a powerful public mechanism for variously coordinating and enlarging such obligations' (Ferguson 03/10/2017).

shed light on the way linguistic and monetary signs are constructed through the analysis of the 'logics of the signifier.'[3]

In *Writings in General Linguistics* (Saussure 2006) Saussure asks: 'Is there anything in the set of objects known to us, that can be precisely compared with language?' (Saussure 2006: 186). In posing this question, Saussure makes some important assumptions. First, by using the phrase, 'anything in the set of objects known to us', he assumes that we are dealing with a question of the most general kind; we can say it is an ontological[4] one. We know that from the standpoint of logic, sentences containing words like 'anything', 'always' or 'everything' refer to ontology. Thus, Saussure is asking a question about the ontology of our world. Second, he states that this 'anything' should conform to the linguistic form in its most important features, but not be language itself.

Saussure lists the most important features that determine this 'anything,' below:

> […] is there any fact in social life, that would be reducible to a formula, which is on the one hand, a convention, thus arbitrary, totally deprived of any natural relation with the object, totally optional and independent of it; while on the other hand, would be in essence a non-arbitrary and non-optional product of something of the same species as this formula, that precedes it (Saussure 2006: 186).

In Saussure's description, we find two important formal features of the 'anything' comparable with language. One is its lack of a natural relation to an 'object'; we can infer that the 'object' is of another species than the 'formula' itself. The other feature is the dependence of this 'formula' on a precedent state of affairs.

At the beginning of the second chapter of his *Philosophy of Money*, Simmel uses features similar to those in Saussure. but applies them to describe the formal position of money. He writes:

> Through all the discussions of the nature of money there runs the question as to whether money, in order to carry out its services of measurement, exchange and representation of values, is or ought to be a value itself; or whether it is enough if money is simply a token and symbol without intrinsic value, like an accounting sum which stands for a value without being one (Simmel 2005: 129).

Simmel proposed two potential descriptions of money, ultimately favoring the one which accords money no value in itself. It seems to me that this description offered by Simmel parallels that of Saussure; Simmel's 'money' is the 'anything' comparable with language, sought by the Swiss linguist.

So, is money a linguistic form?

This idea was not foreign to either Saussure or Simmel. The former wrote of an analogy between linguistics and economics: '…both sciences are concerned with a system of equating things of different orders—labor and wages in one and *signified* and *signifier* in

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[3] A comprehensive account of the ways different representatives of humanities and social sciences approached the question of money is given in Nigel Dodd's book *The Social Life of Money* (Dodd 2014). Dodd precisely reconstructs the reasoning of Saussure, but doesn't analyze it from the perspective of the logical mechanism underlying his propositions. This is exactly our aim.

[4] Ontology is embarrassing. It is embarrassing because it announces plainly what is uncouth to admit in ordinary discourse. Yet it is especially embarrassing because it means exposing the unexamined desires that drive everyday discursive struggles. For these reasons, ontological claims are often met with skepticism, disavowal, or scorn. Scott Ferguson, *ibidem*.

the other' (Saussure 1959: 79). Since, in his text, Saussure himself emphasized the operation of 'equating things of different orders,' he was obviously aware of the importance of this type of reasoning.

What are 'things of different orders'? They are things belonging to domains of existence which are unlike in their nature, or using the language of philosophy, they are absolutely different in their order of being. This means that they are ruled by different logics. In *Writings*… Saussure gives an evocative example:

> If somebody would ask us to identify, on the one hand, some kind of iron, gold, or copper sheet and, on the other, some species of horse, cow, or ram, both tasks would be easy; nevertheless if somebody would request us to determine what 'species' represents the strange juxtaposition of an iron sheet attached to a horse, a golden sheet pinned to an ox or a ram decorated with a copper adornment, we would protest, judging this task absurd. From the first moment and in one blow, a linguist has to understand that he is confronted with an absurd task (Saussure 2006: 23).

Thus, in order to identify a theoretical approach that allows us to conceptualize a 'system of equating things of different orders,' we need to find the logical reasoning that mediates between the two logical structures of the different orders. It would be the logical bridge joining two banks of 'different orders' over the abyss of absurdity. According to Saussure, the logical structure of what he calls 'the value' is the cornerstone of such a logical bridge. The 'linguistic value' in linguistics and 'monetary value' in economics.

Moreover, for Saussure there is a strict analogy between these two values. If he is right, money would simply be a linguistic sign. Nevertheless, using Simmel, we can show that despite the analogy, there is also an important difference between the logical construction of linguistic and monetary values.

This difference is extremely important, as it may form the basis of two diverging ways of building both practices in the social world and theoretical approaches describing them. If these diverging ways of constructing practices and theory are really based on different logical premisses, and thus on different ontologies of social being, we can assume that they are deeply incompatible. This can illuminate Vogl's 'uncanniness' of economic signs, that is, both the inability of the social sciences and the humanities to grasp economic objects on the one hand, while increasingly becoming cannibalized by 'economics imperialism' on the other. It is why I introduce the term 'linguistic form,' underlining the similarity of the monetary value to the linguistic one, while at the same time indicating the difference in the logical construction of these two values.

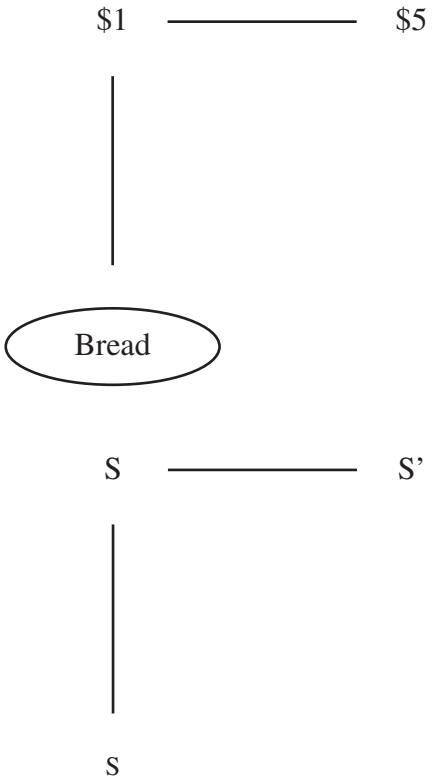
What are the Logical Structures of the Two Values: Linguistic and Monetary?

We find a comparison of the logical structures of linguistic value and monetary value in the fundamental fourth chapter of the *Course*…:

> …let us observe from the outset, that even outside language all values are apparently governed by the same paradoxical principle. They are always composed:
> (1) of a dissimilar thing that can be exchanged for the thing of which the value is to be determined; and
> (2) of similar things, that can be compared with the thing of which the value is to be determined.
> Both factors are necessary for the existence of a value. To determine what a five-franc piece is worth one must therefore know (1) that it can be exchanged for a fixed quantity of a different thing, e.g. bread; and (2) that it can

be compared with a similar value of the same system, e.g. a one-franc piece […]. In the same way a word can be exchanged for something dissimilar, an idea; besides, it can be compared with something of the same nature, another word (Saussure 1959: 115).

These two structures can be represented in a graphic way as shown below. The graphs appear quite similar to each other (the first representing monetary and the second linguistic value).



It is important to consider the meaning of the operation of 'comparison' in Saussure's statement: 'it can be compared with a similar value in the same system'. In the example of economic value, we compare the monetary sign (signifier) of $1 to $5; in the example of linguistic value, we compare the linguistic sign (signifier) of one phoneme to another. However, in each case, they are different operations. The formula S ÷ S' is not logically equivalent to the formula $1 < $5.

According to Saussure, who asserts it in several passages, the logical essence of the linguistic comparison S ÷ S' is negation. For example:

… value is therefore not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be "exchanged" for a given concept, i.e. that it has this or that signification [the vertical relation in the second graph—AL]: one must also compare it with similar values, with other words that stand in opposition to it [the horizontal relation in the second graph—AL]. Or: …their most precise characteristic is in being what the others are not (Saussure 1959: 115, 117).

Saussure poses it in stronger terms in this passage of *Writings*: 'Thus in the word there is nothing, that would not be already *outside it*; [emphasis—Saussure] […]' (Saussure

2006: 71). Thus, the logical relation, or the 'logical bridge' between S ÷ S', should be written and understood as the negation or even disjunction: S/S'. Saussure underscores the operation of negation with several examples. We understand the word 'ram' because it is not an 'ox' and it is not a 'mouton.' This rule of negation operates on different levels of linguistic signs; the consonant 'p' is distinguishable because it is not a 'b' or an 'f.'

If the logical bridge connecting the signifiers of monetary signs were the same, then Saussure's suggestion would be correct. This is the theoretical position of Paolo Virno in his insightful development of Saussure's thesis: "negation is the money of language" (Virno, Campbell 2009: 158). However, my position is that the *signifiers* of the monetary signs $1 and $5 differ in another way and it is that they are of a different order. Here, Simmel's theoretical approach seems crucial and might be the foundation of further reasoning, enabling the theorisation of the difference between natural and economic language; between the approach of the humanities to social phenomena, on the one hand, and of economics to social phenomena, on the other. In *Philosophy of Money,* Simmel gives us an instrument for translating the difference of incomparable qualities, as defined by negation, into the difference of intensity in a continuous medium.

> Two completely different phenomena that give the same pleasure to the same subject have, over and above all their differences, an equal force or an equal relation to the subject; […] Thus the substance of money, and everything that is measured by it, may be completely different, but they would have to coincide in the one point that they both have value; and even if value is nothing but a subjective response to the impressions received from things, at least the quality by which they affect the sense of value in men has to be the same in both—even though it cannot be isolated (Simmel 2005: 130).

I would note that Simmel's translation of differences is only possible because of his inclusion of a 'subject,' an entity that Saussure did not want to introduce into his own theoretical construct. Thus: 'They are set in a relation of equivalence only through the relationship that both have to the valuing person and his practical purposes.' (Simmel 2005: 132). However, in introducing a subject, Simmel seems to give us a definition based on individual and not objective qualities. To show how the subjective response is objectified as value, Simmel developed a theory of measurement included in his book under the subsection 'Problems of Measurement.' The cornerstone of this theory is the hypothesis that the subject represents the whole of the universe to himself and compares his 'subjective response to the impression received from things as a proportion of this whole' (Simmel 2005: 131–132).

The qualitative, logical relation of signs as negation (disjunction) is changed into a quantitative one when:

> …it is assumed—with certain qualifications—that the total amount of money equals the value of the total amount of commodities for sale […] If the equivalence of these total amounts exists as an effective, though unconscious *a priori*, there emerges an objective proportion between the partial quantities apart from that of their subjective fortuitousness. For now there really exists something that is exactly the same on both sides; namely, the division between each of the two partial quantities and the total quantity to which it belongs (Simmel 2005: 131–132).

The idea of an unconscious *a priori* equalizing the total amounts of two absolutely different qualities as the foundation for establishing their proportional values is philosophically brilliant. However, it should be considered more a Kantian 'regulative idea' rather than a mathematical operation. Nevertheless, according to Simmel, this metaphysical assumption, in the Kantian sense, provides a foundation for all complex operations of modern

economics. It rests on comparisons. This, in turn, begs the question: 'What are the linguistic conditions of possibility for such an operation?'

Continuity and Discontinuity

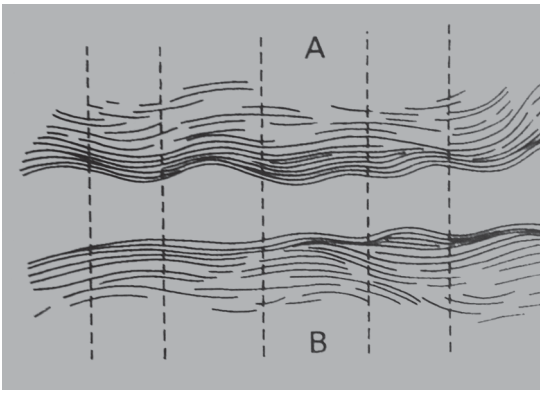
For our purpose—to understand the difficulty that social theories and humanities have with economic language—Simmel's most important contribution is his conceptualisation of what constitutes monetary value and thus, the monetary sign. According to him, the comparison of the subjective response to the whole is crucial for establishing this value.

Simmel believes that, the logical operation of comparison of proportions, and not the operation of negation (or disjunction),[5] is the basic operation bridging (connecting) signifiers of monetary value. Now comes the next crucial step of our reasoning: proportion reestablishes continuity where negation had previously broken it off.

To understand the importance of this difference, we have to return to Saussure and more deeply re-examine the logical genealogy of the linguistic sign. This should help us to reformulate Simmel's postulate in the precise terms of structuralist theory. It will also show us that money can be apprehended as a linguistic form, but situated on the limits of the linguistic realm.

To explain the genealogy of the linguistic sign, with negation (disjunction) as its basic structuralizing operation, Saussure uses a graphic illustration and explains:

> Psychologically our thought—apart from its expression in words—is only a shapeless and indistinct mass. Philosophers and linguists have always agreed in recognizing that without the help of signs we would be unable to make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two ideas. Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language.
> Against the floating realm of thought, would sounds by themselves yield pre delimited entities? No more so than ideas. Phonic substance is neither more fixed nor more rigid than thought; it is not a mold into which thought must of necessity fit but a plastic substance divided in turn into distinct parts to furnish the signifiers needed by thought. The linguistic fact can therefore be pictured in its totality—i.e. language—as a series of contiguous subdivisions marked off on both the indefinite plane of jumbled ideas (A) and the equally vague plane of sounds (B). The following diagram gives a rough idea of it (Saussure 1959: 111–112).



[5] In purely logical language we could say that in the place of the logic of propositions, with the disjunction as the major operation, we have to do with the logic of sets, where we have to do with comparing cardinality as the major operation.

Saussure suggests a process in which an 'indefinite plane'—or 'uncharted nebula'—is divided into parts. Every isolated fragment (e.g. A) is condensed in a way, that all attributes associated with all that is non A are repressed. The A connects with similarly condensed 'sound-image'[6] B. Ultimately, we get a system of binary oppositions where the thought A⁄A' is individually connected with phoneme B⁄B'. This can be represented as sign S⁄S'.

This process of concentration (or condensation) is a necessary moment, which we can apprehend as the transcendental condition for any formation of human language.[7] It can proceed on different levels of abstraction, thus producing more or less abstract words and notions, but always operating within the same, basic mechanism. Simmel gave this perspicacious explanation:

> The limited receptiveness of human consciousness and the economical and expedient manner of its use means that only a small number of the innumerable qualities and aspects of an object that interests us are taken into consideration (Simmel 2005: 133).

Nevertheless, language loses some features in this process of concentration; it ceases to represent some elements of the real. Specifically, it ceases to represent continuous values—continuums, intensities, gradients…

This fact was placed on record by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his interesting text, 'Some Remarks on Logical Form' (Wittgenstein 1993). This article, written between the period of the 'Tractatus…' and late writings of the philosopher, is substantial for us, as it represents the moment when Wittgenstein came quite close to structuralist intuitions. Analysing visual phenomena and their representation in language, he wrote:

> If now, we try to get at an actual analysis, we find logical forms which have very little similarity with the norms of ordinary language. We meet the forms of space and time with the whole manifold of spatial and temporal objects, as colors, sounds, etc., etc., with their gradations, continuous transitions and combinations, and combinations in various proportions, all of which we cannot seize by our ordinary means of expression. And here I wish to make my first definite remark on the logical analysis of actual phenomena: it is this, that for their representation, numbers (rational and irrational) must enter into the structure of atomic propositions themselves […] (Wittgenstein 1993: 31).

In this article, Wittgenstein considers the linguistic representation of different sensory phenomena. However, in his argument, he refers not only to sensations, but also to mental operations—'thoughts' as Simmel or Saussure would call them—of a higher order than pure receptiveness. He writes about 'gradations, continuous transitions and … combinations in various proportions.' All these operations are based on the comparison of continuous values, apprehended as Simmel did in 'Problems of Measurement.' While natural language should express them, Wittgenstein argues that it never does. Numbers representing continuous phenomena—'gradations, continuous transitions, and combinations in various proportions'- do not enter into 'the structure of atomic propositions themselves.'

In Saussure's genealogy of the linguistic sign, the break in the continuity of thought as sound, brought about by the operation of negation, is the main logical process. If this

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[6] The notion used In Course to emphasize, that the phoneme is not simply a sound but a representation of sound. Cf. p. 114.

[7] And then only, as Paolo Virno puts it: "negation projects that which distinguishes the relation between signs within the relation between propositions and facts," op. cit., p. 157.

position is accepted, it can be inferred that the representations of continuous processes postulated by Wittgenstein are not possible in natural language.

Wittgenstein tries to establish the basic features of a language that could express continuous values.

> …in this analysis we meet with logical forms quite different from those which ordinary language leads us to expect. The occurrence of numbers in the forms of atomic propositions is, in my opinion, not merely a feature of a special symbolism, but an essential and, consequently, unavoidable feature of the representation (Wittgenstein 1993: 31).

I have proposed an explanation for the fact that natural language did not introduce signs expressing 'logical forms' of operations regarding continuities. We can add Simmel's argument: the linguistic means appear 'only through the relationship that both have to the valuing person and his practical purposes.' Only when humans needed to express continuous values through linguistic means, especially when they needed to express the quantitative and not qualitative value of things, did they develop a system of signs enabling it—the linguistic form of monetary value.

Thus, we can say that the language introducing 'numbers in the form of propositions' postulated by Wittgenstein does exist and that it is the language using monetary values, the language of economics and the economy.

Concentration, Condensation, Aggregation

To deal with continuities, language had to develop a new kind of sign resulting from a new kind of operation. This operation had to invert the first level of concentration: the level where the 'mass of thought,' as Saussure would call it, was divided into elements opposed to one another by negation and logically 'bridged' by disjunction. It needed to reestablish the continuity of the 'mass of thought,' in order to enable the indispensable operation of comparison. Therefore, it had to dialectically transgress the first concentration process and found a new kind of linguistic sign.

In *Philosophy of Money*, Simmel described such an operation as follows:

> The multitude of factors—of powers, substances and events—that operate in modern life demand a concentration in comprehensive symbols which can be manipulated with the assurance that they will lead to the same result as if all the details had been taken into account, so that the result will be applicable and valid for all particulars. This should be possible to the extent that the quantitative relations between things become, so to speak, independent. The growing differentiation of our representations has the result that the problem of 'how much' is, to a certain extent, psychologically separated from the question of 'what'—no matter how strange this may sound from the logical point of view (Simmel 2005: 148).

The 'independence' of quantitative relations becomes possible when the 'subjective response to the impression received from things,' as Simmel called it, becomes the main phenomenon in the 'lived world.' This opens the path to the process of comparing things of different orders, since it is no longer the things themselves that are compared. Rather, it is the force, the gradient of different impressions made on the subject in the continuous environment of the representation of the 'whole.' We recall that this representation of the 'whole' is constructed as the sum of the total amount of money in the world equalized with

the total amount of commodities. This can be apprehended only as a regulative idea. In other words, it is an environment, or condition of possibility for the described operations.

At this point a new kind of linguistic form is constructed within the language system, one that represents not the particularity of individual things as natural language does, but the continuous gradients and forces or the subjective impressions of them.

Therefore, as with Saussure, we assume that 'the question of what' is a sum of different negativities, disjunctive relations determining the *signifier* S. The step enabling the graduation to 'the problem of how much' should be apprehended as an operation of a second level of concentration (or condensation). It would mean that every disjunctive relation of *signifiers* S shall be passed over to attain the pure fact of counting them as unique positions in the continuum of comparisons. Thus, they represent the gradient or intensity postulated by Wittgenstein.

From the philosophical standpoint we can say that the process of the 'first concentration' of the linguistic sign, based on the logic of negation (disjunction), represents a *principium individuationis*. It produces qualities, essences or identities, and becalms them. The 'second concentration' producing the monetary sign is a reversal of this process. It reproduces an 'artificial' continuity of being, representing the intensity of pure existence, 'as if' dissolving all the qualities.

This new linguistic form becomes universalised in the same way as all linguistic signs are, in the form of a system which is 'the outcome of the aggregated behavior of otherwise isolated individuals.' This is the formula of Ben Fine. The determinism of the monetary system thus has the same character as the determinism of the linguistic system, where the signs are conceived in a arbitrary way. Saussure writes about this: '…the individual does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in the linguistic community […]' (Saussure 1959: 69).

Thus, the monetary sign can be defined as a linguistic sign, but of a special kind, a liminal phenomenon in the realm of language. It is a 'linguistic form' parallel in its function to Wittgenstein's 'logical form'. As Simmel postulated, "the problem of 'how much' is psychologically separated from the question of 'what'—no matter how strange this may sound from the logical point of view." The fundamental logical difference between the operations that constitute these two types of signs can shed light on the strange impression—the 'uncanniness' of monetary signs representing 'how much,' when apprehended from the perspective of the natural language, representing mainly 'what.' The kind of sign representing 'what,' is the result of first level 'concentration' and disrupts continuity; the kind of sign representing 'how much,' the result of second level concentration, reestablishes it.

Humans perceive the world through the framework of language. The specific genealogy of signs of monetary value differs from all genealogies of signs of natural language. This results in the first 'masking' the second. If the main linguistic form in a culture is the idea of value, constructed in the way described above, all the worldly phenomena will be perceived through this form and will be located and compared within the field of a defined whole. Other ways of perceiving and describing phenomena will lose their legitimacy.

The main problem of 'economics imperialism' as addressed by Mäki, that of a theory entering the field of another and explaining many phenomena but hiding others, is rooted at a level deeper than that of theoretical discussion. If a linguistic form, constructed in a very

specific way, becomes the main optic determining a society's perception of the world, then the society will have enormous difficulties expressing and formulating alternative visions and rendering them legitimate. The permanent feeling of the 'uncanniness' at the limit of the two forms of language and different 'imperialisms' occurring there are the logical consequence of the situation I have described.

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