

## SEMINAR “SEMIOSIS AND EDUCATION”

Semiotics as Philosophy for Education

Monday 3 October 2011 – 14h – 17h

Université de Cergy-Pontoise – Site Universitaire de Gennevilliers

Le séminaire « Semiosis and Education », financé conjointement par la PESGB (Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain) et l'Université de Cergy-Pontoise, est organisé dans le cadre des travaux d'un réseau international ayant pour objet les liens entre Sémiotique et Education. Le séminaire qui aura lieu en octobre 2011 fait suite à une première rencontre, organisée en octobre 2008 à Gand, et s'appuie sur un ensemble de travaux de recherche produits depuis plusieurs années.

Le réseau et le séminaire visent à explorer :

1. le potentiel que représentent les théories sémiotiques pour la recherche en éducation, notamment les différentes conceptions de la sémiotique (Peirce ou Deely par exemple) et leur possible contribution aux théories de l'apprentissage, et plus généralement aux pratiques et aux politiques éducatives ;
2. la contribution possible des problématiques éducatives à la théorie sémiotique. On considère ici notamment l'analyse du développement humain par le moyen de la communication ; et
3. les applications possibles des théories sémiotiques aux politiques et aux pratiques éducatives (en termes notamment de travail empirique).

Le séminaire d'octobre 2011 s'attachera plus précisément à la clarification des notions de sémiotique et de sémiose, au regard d'abord de la philosophie générale et d'autre part de la philosophie de l'éducation.

*La langue du séminaire est l'Anglais.*

The seminar “Semiosis and Education”, jointly founded by PESGB (Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain) and the University of Cergy-Pontoise, is organised within the Framework of an international network focusing on semiotics and education, following an invitation seminar held at the University of Ghent in October 2008, and building on a considerable body of existing work.

The aims of the network are to explore:

1. The potential of semiotic theory to contribute to educational theory. This includes exploration of philosophical conceptions of the semiotic —e.g. Peirce, Deely— in terms of their potential contributions to learning theory and educational practice and policy more broadly;
2. The potential of engagement with educational questions to contribute to semiotic theory. This includes considerations of human development and questions of progress via communication; and
3. The possible applications of semiotic theory to educational policy and practice (including empirical work).

October's seminar will focus on the task of clarifying what we might mean by the semiotic, in relation first to philosophy and secondly to philosophy of education, through exegesis of and debate around the potentially seminal accounts summarised above.

Despite considerable public, professional and academic disquiet about the ubiquity of crude objectives-led, 'delivery' models of education (and other services), the academic response has struggled to formulate convincing alternatives. Postmodernists, while sympathetic to Jean-Francois Lyotard's argument that an age of 'incredulity towards metanarratives' reduces previously value-rich pursuits such as education to 'performativity' (Lyotard, 1984), have failed to argue beyond a postfoundationalist or anti-foundationalist position, although some have attempted to show how this can of itself have educational merit (e.g. Blake, Smeyers, Smith and Standish, 1998). Paradoxically, there are senses in which no thinking can lack foundations; indeed, Lyotard's own argument that the *grands recits* of modernity were being replaced by the *petit recits* of postmodernity could be said to offer recits, or the fall of metanarratives, a sort of foundational status. Speakers have been at the forefront of pursuing and developing the argument that the various expressions of a semiotic

and/or rhetorical, hermeneutic or narrative turn in education and other areas of social thinking provides the grounds for rethinking educational theory, policy and practice at a number of levels. The relationship between the concepts 'semiosis', 'rhetoric', 'hermeneutics' and 'narrative' is a complex one that the applicants have been engaged in clarifying, though there is general acceptance that 'semiotic(s)/ semiosis' is potentially the broadest term, if only insofar as it is used to explain phenomena beyond those of human communication: for example, as biosemiotics, zoosemiotics, ecosemiotics and pansemiotics (Maran, 2006). Suffice to state here that, notwithstanding potentially considerable philosophical differences (for example, in the emphasis placed on theorists of language, such as Saussure, in developing semiotics, as opposed to non-linguistic philosophers such as Peirce), the consequences of regarding any of these terms as fundamental to education will often be congruent, and discussion of their relative values can of itself be highly productive. While there are theorists and philosophers who have explored the possibilities of narrative, rhetorical, hermeneutic and semiotically based approaches to, inter alia, history (Ricoeur, 1986), social life in general (Burke, e.g. 1941; Gadamer, 1975) and even ecology (Kull, 2000, on Von Uexküll; Maran, 2006), speakers collectively are among a very small number to date exploring the implications for education, at the levels of theory and practice.

This seminar intends to narrow the terms of this debate by focusing explicitly on philosophical interest in the semiotic and the implications of this interest for educational theory at a number of levels.

Prof. Andrew Stables

Department of Education – University of Bath - [A.W.G.Stables@bath.ac.uk](mailto:A.W.G.Stables@bath.ac.uk)

### **Program**

The program of the seminar will be soon online:

<http://www.n.u-cergy.fr/spip.php?rubrique2593>

### **Practical information**

Seminar "Semiosis and Education" - Monday 3 October 2011 – 14h00

Université de Cergy-Pontoise

Site Universitaire de Gennevilliers

11-33 avenue Marcel Paul

F-92230 Gennevilliers

(RER C – Gennevilliers)

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Contact at Cergy: Sébastien Pesce – [sebastien.pesce@u-cergy.fr](mailto:sebastien.pesce@u-cergy.fr)