Géza Balázs:

The Birth of the Language of Art

An artistic and linguistic approach

Abstract

Language is not merely a vehicle for communicating thoughts. Indeed, it has always been an art medium in itself; mimesis: a form of social, creative activity, bringing joy to those who use it. Art and language are also intertwined on a variety of other planes. The concept underlying the connection between the two is no longer visible. It has been hidden by the passing of time, but deduction may shed light on it. Artistic and linguistic activities represent man's most characteristic attribute, making us who we are. In a structural, functional, and metaphysical approach to art and language one can presume a close ontological (or anthropological) link between the two. The following phenomena all merit particular attention in the parallel evolution of art and language: ancient, undifferentiated forms of awareness, syncretism, ancient folklore, and basic forms, in which abstraction may already be observed. Art and language rely on the transfer of meaning, that is, the transfer of the meaning of concrete, specific signs to other referents by way of abstraction. The original syncretism is moved by fundamental processes and instinctive connections, such as rhythm, repetition, indexicality and iconicity. Language comprises movement, tune, song, and image. Isomorphy facilitates interoperability between phenomena, resulting in a cultural evolution based on biological evolution, involving accelerations and leaps, as in the process of evolution. Abstraction enables man to exercise dual encoding and create secondary modelling systems, generating an endless series of new forms of awareness.

Key words: art and language, anthropological connection, mimesis, sycnretism, ancient folklore, abstraction, repetition, rhythm, isomorphy, secondary modelling systems

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Introduction

The undertaking may be alarming at first. I wish to shed light on the common root and common origin of art and language. How can they be brought together? After all, although both are cultural phenomena, art is non-verbal, while language is verbal. In order to elucidate these phenomena as a whole, I am positing an extensive art-theory and language-theory approach, which would best be termed anthropological or metaphysical (organic). My linguistic starting point: language is not merely a means of thought transfer; instead, it, too, from its very inception, bears the essence of art – namely, mimesis. It is a social and creative form of activity which, similar to games, brings entertainment or joy. Beyond this, art and language merge on many planes. The original link is lost to the obscurity of Time, but it can be deduced. All linguistic and artistic activities make up Mankind's most idiosyncratic qualities. Through this structural, functional and metaphysical approach to art and language, we may postulate strong ontological (anthropological) ties, common to both. When comparing the formation of art and language, the following phenomena merit special attention: ancient undifferentiated modes of thought, syncretism, primeval folklore and basic forms. In these features, we can already discern abstraction. The basis of art and language is the transfer of meaning – that is, the meanings of concrete, tangible signs are transferred to other signified objects by means of abstraction – the initial combination (or syncretism) being activated by analogy or fundamental concepts and instinctive interrelations (rhythm, repetition and iconic or indexical signs). Language originates from

movement, melody, song and image, with transitions among these phenomena being facilitated by isomorphism. The result comes about with advances and strides in evolution, along with cultural evolution built upon biology. As a result of this abstraction, Mankind becomes capable of dual codification, bringing into existence again and again new forms of thought and secondary systems of modelling.

Ancient syncretism	Processes	Speech/Language/Art
motion – dance – melody – music >>> SPEECH depiction, image >>> SPEECH	combination, isomorphism, analogy, instinctive interrelation, advancement, rhythm (repetition, symmetry), icon, index, abstraction	duality, codification, distinction, secondary systems of modelling

Table 1. Basic diagram of connections between art and language

Joint codification of language and art in Mankind

Language itself meets the criteria of art. The basis of my assertion is that language is the starting point and main factor in the process of becoming a person. Several signs point to this – for example, the development of individuality. The infant forms a relationship to the world practically immediately, voicing sounds and series of noises. Initially, however, the child's language is not linguistic in nature. Instead, it is actually motion and melody – that is, music-based. Melodious gurgling develops into distinct sounds or sound combinations; later, interjections; and eventually, articulated sentences. The initial, pre-linguistic period of language clearly shows that sounds, feelings and intellectual development (self-development and wishes directed at the outside world) are perfectly unified at the infantile stage. The infant's baby talk is both melodic and musical, developing with time into a linguistic (verbal) phenomenon. Musical and linguistic developments proceed simultaneously as the child grows. Incipient musical skill and talent are separate questions – as is language skill. Yet, on some level, everyone can sing, just as everyone can also talk (if there is no

other impeding factor). Therefore, everyone sings and speaks, but not everyone will become an opera singer or an orator. Music is encoded in our everyday use of language. In other words, all people who speak use musical means of expression as they talk. Linguists even use the term music – 'the musicality of language' – but they do not trace this back to the development of a tribal or individual identity. What are language's musical tools? As a chapter on phonetics from a former introduction to linguistics described it: 'Sounds have characteristic values as well. Some are more musical than others. The "l" is more melodious and sonorous than the "t", which is sheer noise. The musicality of sounds plays a role in the emotional undercurrents of speech. Often, though, the emotional role is not tied to one distinct sound, but the relationship and blending of multiple sounds (cf. Kosztolányi's poem "Ilona")' (Bárczi 1953, 34). One modern encyclopaedia of linguistics covered the phenomenon thus: 'Intonation is often referred to as the melody or music of language. [...] The areas of speech and music are mutually enriched by their obvious similarities' (Crystal 1998, 221). As a rule, the musical means of language are treated in the closing chapter of texts on syntax. Of these 'insubstantial' means, they mention the following: emphasis, intonation, word order and pauses. Under the title 'Spoken Word's Musical Means of Expression', the following phenomena are listed: vocal pitch, vocal scale, volume, tone of voice, emphasis, intonation (melody of speech), tempo (speed of speech) and pauses (Balázs 2000, 61–65). In the initial editions of a general volume compiled with Mária Kovács, the same are mentioned under 'Spoken Word's Musical Means of Expression: Texts When Read and Read Aloud' (Balázs 1994, 169–172, later published 2005).

The expression 'verbal arts', by which we understand oratory, artistic interpretation and poetry recital, also refers to the connection between art and language. The sound of language itself contains aesthetic value – for example, a pleasing voice. According to psychological research over a wide range of cultures, a thin, high-pitched, 'dry' voice is uninteresting and sometimes unpleasant. Above all, a low-pitched voice commands attention. Deep voices resonate with more 'body', radiating personality and warmth. Hungarian culture favours the moderately low-pitched baritone male voice and the mezzo-soprano female or child voice between alto and soprano (Balázs 2000, 32, citing psychologist László Vékassy).

Linguistic science and guides to correct usage mention the musicality and melody of speech in relation to its aesthetic effect. The sound, when pleasant,

is euphony; when unpleasant, cacophony. Certain musical means and sounds are pleasant on their own, or they may have an unpleasant effect. Instructors in the field point out that language has an aesthetic function not only in arts or poetry, but also in colloquial communication. This arises from the given language's acoustic attributes. '[In the Hungarian language], the average ratio of vowels to consonants is 42:58. Between voiced and voiceless consonants, it is 36:23. From a musical standpoint, both ratios are advantageous. Also favourable is the rare occurrence of consonant clusters. Variety, however, is somewhat limited by the rules of vowel quality and harmony, as well as the great preponderance of the 'short e' sound (ĕ) in everyday speech' (Grétsy and Kovalovszky 1985, 2/1278). Avoiding consonant clusters and complicated expressions (as well as the monotonous repetition of sounds, syllables, words and the 'short e' sound) is conducive to euphony.

Mankind's passion for games and playing reveals the connection, relationship and evolution that arise between language and art. The way we play and experiment with the opportunities afforded by language (word games, plays on words, jokes and puns) is also reminiscent of artistic means of expression.

We clearly regard art as a typically human pursuit, even if we can discover precedents of it in the animal world. We also regard language as a typically human endeavour, even if we can detect antecedents, in the form of simple systems of symbols, in the animal world. Semiotician Thomas Sebeok, who demonstrated numerous instances of art precedents in the animal world, raises the following question regarding the origin of both written and oral forms of verbal art: 'How sensible is it to seek prototypes of aesthetic and non-verbal sign systems among Mankind's animal predecessors?' (Sebeok 1983, 10). After posing the question, he provides a series of examples of 'aesthetic' behaviour in animals. That is, the origins of linguistic and non-linguistic (verbal and non-verbal) activities exhibit parallels.

We have other proof of how deeply language and art are codified together in Mankind. Indeed, both are deeply connected to our basic emotions. For example, one such basic emotion is joy. We need not prove that art provides enjoyment, but we speak much less about language as a source of joy, even though joy is codified in language. (I express my ideas about the joys of language in more detail elsewhere: Balázs 2010 and 2020.) We can best uncover the codification of joy in so-called figures of thought, which are manifestations of different thought forms – that is, techniques of creative language organiza-

tion (or the methods whereby language changes). (I write about the anthropological character of figures of thought elsewhere in more detail: Balázs 2008; while the deep codification of figures of thought can also be shown in dreams: 2013.) The best known figures of thought fall into the adjective (as in additive) category, which includes repetition and its numerous variations. A baby's first manifestations of communication are also repetitions. In music and the fine arts, the simplest source of pleasure is repetition (recapitulation or refrain). Thus, even talking to oneself (and babies love to talk to themselves) is a source of joy. Later, this is supplemented by company. Human beings are social creatures, so every exchange between mother and child (or parent and child) and eventually all emotionally-charged conversations are further sources of joy. István Hárdi explicitly wrote that, in friendly conversations, there is a circulation of libido – in other words, an exchange of pleasure. Here is the quotation verbatim: 'On one occasion during my chats with István Hollós, he referred to the psychoanalytic concept regarding speech. In friendly conversation, a unique exchange of thoughts occurs. An emotionally instinctive circulation of libido (in his words) takes place, whereby the individuals practically fertilize one another intellectually' (Hárdi and Vértes 1985, 18). The power of language and art merge in the resulting catharsis in both speaker (creator) and audience alike.

This phenomenon is easy to prove. How often do we 'just happen' to be talking to a person (or people) and lose track of time? Later, we do not even know what we were discussing so freely and at such length. Following the lead of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (2007), pop psychology calls this state 'flow'. The point of flow is a transcendence of space and time. We may observe it in many activities, pursuits and forms of creation, but (which has not been stressed enough) also in the use of language. Therefore, enjoyment is codified in language – just as it is, for example, in sexuality, consumption, movement and every sort of human creative endeavour. Moreover, repetitive activities and creativity are components of the so-called human behavioural complex, described by Vilmos Csányi in 1999. In other words, they are part of human behaviour.

Consequently, we may state that language and art share the same root; and thus, in their original state, language and art were one. That is, language itself is art; or, to put it another way, art can be considered language.

From simple to complicated or from complicated to simple?

From a material mindset, human progress can be seen in development, in the advancement from the simple to the more complex. From a metaphysical (organic) standpoint, we suppose a world that was at one time complete, compared to which the human world represents a simplification (or degradation). On the basis of Eastern (non-Aristotelian, mainly Asian) multi-layered logical thought, we need not form an argument concerning this. One view could be true, or the other, or a combination of both. Nevertheless, I shall sketch out a logical possibility. We may call it a hypothesis, because it can be reached both by logic and by experience, even if ultimately (like everything else) it remains unproved. 'All phenomena can only be comprehended metaphysically. By contrast, scholarship sees the human community as the result of long development...' (Hamvas 1995, II/344).

The origins of the arts and language are indivisible. Common to both is a break from concrete, biological, life-sustaining activity. This is simple to prove. After all, life exists without language and artistic pursuit. In all probability, it did so; and it is our current experience that, in a world that possess language and art, there are some for whom they are not only pointless, but superfluous as well. That is, the evolution-devolution dynamic adopted by Hamvas (1995, II/357) still applies in our day. The basic concept of evolution is also present in ancient thought. Neklyudov (1982, 199) mentions that in the folklore of peoples from Southeast Asia, there is a round chimerical figure with neither arms nor legs that does not walk, but rolls along the ground. The servant Saura, who turns up in Russian folklore, seems to have no body. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic creatures, present in practically all mythologies, can be understood as some sort of transition (passage, development). The transformation of mythical and legendary figures is common in folklore. From the myths of Australian Aboriginals, Meletinsky (1982, 161) cites a notion that could even be termed reverse evolution: 'This occurred when the animals were still humans.'

Ancient syncretism and isomorphism

Cultural historians and folklorists agree that, in ancient societies, they neither distinguished nor separated the economic and spiritual spheres and thought

processes. Ivanov summarised it thus: 'We may suppose that, during phylogenesis, art – just like writing, religion and a few other sign systems – separated from some undifferentiated, unified system […], which we may term syncretism' (Ivanov 1982, 115). We must imagine that the economic, spiritual, material and intellectual ideals were all united. In an ancient culture, production of goods, movement, drawing, music and language were undivided, and all activity drifted from its concrete nature in the direction of abstract, symbolic meaning. Perhaps I am not wrong in illustrating this by quoting as an example a thought that Vilmos Tánczos expressed in 2007 with regard to Hungarians living in Moldavia: 'Prayer filled their entire day.' Or a titbit of my own from Szilágy County [now Sălaj in Romania], which amounts to the same thing: 'At Christmas, the village was filled with song.' Hence, to put it another way, it was all is one. Every activity was practical and symbolic at once. Béla Hamvas (1995, II/172-173) had this to say: 'The metaphysical *hen kai pan* means All and One; or, all is one. […] Because *hen panta einai* means all One.' To explain it a bit more fully: 'An analogy exists between the passage of the stars and the individual person's psyche, physical life, social standing, lifestyle and history. But the passage of the stars refers to something even loftier: the world of ideas and spirituality. […] Analogy signifies that what is on high is the same as what is below. The stars see out of Mankind's eyes, and cosmic lines run across Mankind's palms' (Hamvas 1995, II/171-172).

Ancient folklore is characterised by primeval syncretism, in which the make-up of myths and tales can be seen as identical (Meletinsky 1982, 183). Syncretism is always present in cultural periods and genres. Such was the sung ballad or, in our time, poetry set to music, as well as operettas, operas and musical. Yet, we may also consider completely new media genres such as radio plays, films and television shows.

From syncretism arises transition and transfer between forms of thought, and its structural basis is isomorphism. Dance, music, creative art and imitation are all inseparable. Ritualistic folk performance syncretically unites the elements of dance, pantomime, music, fine arts (partially) and eventually poetry' (Meletinsky 1982, 149). Therefore, movement, dance, song and speech are all characterised by the presence of isomorphism, which allows for the transfer of corresponding (isomorphic) qualities. One such isomorphic feature (and a natural phenomenon as well) that appears in all these areas is rhythm (repetition) – not to mention its refined variation, symmetry. Because of this, we can apply

expressions (quite typical in Hungarian) to primeval syncretism and isomorphism – such as material, handicrafts and musical mother tongue.

Certain regressions and deteriorations indicate primeval syncretism – for example, the confusion of written and pictorial signs typical of schizophrenia, in which case 'we may witness the return to archaic forms' (Ivanov 1982, 142). At this same time, this is demonstrated by some children's drawings that employ primeval symbols.

If we suppose a primeval lack of differentiation, then there must have also been a primeval lack of forms. That is, there were primeval, undifferentiated – natural – ancient forms, which in time, through gradual differentiation, became (or developed into) distinct formations. Undoubtedly, occurrences of symmetry (and rhythm in particular) apply here.

Correspondences and combinations

In the most ancient forms, mimicry (mimesis) and motor characteristics such as rhythmic motions, movement, melody and articulation turn up as instinctive manifestations, combined and interrelated. I stress that these are instinctive activities. They stand in relation to two instinctive motives: growing up (learning) and the basic need for motion and the perpetuation of the species. Growing up requires mimicry, and motion is needed to remain upright and maintain the species. We may call these the initial stirrings of independence: basic actions, doodling, customary greeting, gurgling-mumbling and musical outbursts. Out of the elementary actions, crafts and professions develop (such as pottery and carving). Doodling becomes decorative or fine arts, greetings become dance, outbursts music and song, and gurgling-mumbling speech. Yet, all of them have a single shared element: rhythm. It seems the most fundamental motive and motivation of human activity is rhythm. It is strongly related to natural forms (the passage of days and months) and basic forms (symmetry); and, as we know, all this is identical to repetition. Toporov (1982, 90) also refers to the relationship between symmetry and repetition: 'Symmetrical repetition can be associated with rhythmic repetition.' Rhythm (and elsewhere repetition) could be the most ancient instinctive and elementary activity, the basis for all human activity. This phenomenon can be observed in all people even now. After all, every individual displays rhythmic moving patterns, repeating, counting and a striving or motivation for symmetry. Therefore, these represent out anthropological idiosyn-

crasies. 'The principle of rhythm can be observed everywhere. Semantic rhythm goes along with composition and stylistic rhythm' (Neklyudov 1982, 208).

Further combinations occur in basic formations. At first, melody, music and speech appear together, melded into one another, followed by pictures and writing. Later, according to the necessity and compulsion to communicate, they are simultaneously divided into the basic forms: music, song, speech, writing and pictorial depiction. Many signs point to this combination. 'By virtue of the physical and physiological nature of vocal music (music's oldest form to emerge), it resembles the elements of speech' (Langleben 1982, 454). Thus, it is possible, the quotation continues, after the division of cultural strata, that 'the development of the majority of known musical notation began with the attempt to use the accustomed written form to jot down music.' Because music and language – as I alluded to earlier – are isomorphic. 'To be precise, writing's coming into existence must have been simultaneous with the break from primeval art's syncretic unity, in order for its communicative and mnemonic function to be distinct from the syncretic whole. [...] The appearance of writing was not called into existence by the requirement to record oral speech, but by the need to convey information over time and space, and the artistic means of depiction suited this goal better than the expressive means of language' (Karapetyantz 1982, 467–468).

Arbitrariness and advancement

Hence, at one time, there was unity, analogy and a lack of differentiation (primeval, archaic, analogous thinking). Yet, how could progress come about? Was it some necessity or compulsion? Perhaps it was the growing population density, the hordes coming into contact, and provision (hunting, gathering) requiring ever more organisation. Perhaps it was something arbitrary.

Speaking of the arbitrary: 'In the biological progress of evolution, arbitrary processes are among the indispensible factors upon which the pursuit of perfection depends. [...] Another key feature is the occurrence of selection. A portion of the new, randomly appearing features are retained, and others are discarded. [...] The practice of modern painters shows that they accept the arbitrary as a potentially valuable factor in the creative process' (Waddington, quoted in Sebeok 1983, 7).

One explanation is progress or advancement. In our case, it spans from passive perception of the world to consideration of it and the will to influence and

reform it. Another phenomenon of advancement is concrete symbols becoming symbolic symbols. But how? Progress as a phenomenon is practical in nature, but with human beings, it is unquestionable and continuous. The invention and 'advancement' of abstraction undoubtedly marked the starting point of human culture and language. (Presumably, today's 'advancement' phenomena do not necessarily lead to good. Such examples include the love of sweets, comfort and laziness – a team of biologists raises the example of the Fall of Roman Empire.)

As I conceive it, such an 'advancement' – the aforementioned change from concrete to abstract – brought about human (artistic, linguistic) communication. Moreover, as others see it, 'In order for us "to create a new system of communication", we need more than the old signs or signals. We also need new ones. People are constantly forced to create new sentences (new systems) from the language they use and "apply" in human communication. What is more, they are continuously compelled to generate new information. This probably explains the most important characteristic of the forefather ("Adam") who lived 30-50,000 years ago: creativity. Use of the human language and the continuous use of human communication made him constantly practice the method of creating new systems' (Bárány et al. 2012, 42).

According to this, the key factor is creativity. Yet, this is no particular cause, rather an effect. Creativity follows from something – from 'progress'. Of course, it could have, but this random 'advancement' in question continues to remain an enigma. Meanwhile, at the instant of language creation, there was already metaphor (transfer of meaning, depiction). After all, 'language is naturally, "by its very nature" metaphorical' (Neklyudov 1982, 207). To this day, it is the driving force behind our artistic, scholarly and everyday thinking.

Semiotic explanation of progress

With semiotic terminology, it is quite simple to describe the process by which signs transformed into symbols (human signs). In the beginning, there was the index and the icon. The former is a symptomatic or indicative sign. Animals also use these signs. Animal signs make up a bounded system, and the quantity can be determined – allegedly from the cuckoo's single sign to at most several dozen. As a result of this particular 'advancement', the original symptomatic, indexical and iconic signs become increasingly abstract (abstraction); they lose their natural connection to nature in part or entirely (denaturalisation); occa-

sionally, as a result of further abstraction, they become unrecognisably divorced from what they signify (dematerialisation). '[The] "denaturalisation" and "dematerialisation" of creative forms [...] is in harmony with the historical-logical progress of the formation of thought.' (In terms of depiction, it is the continuation.) 'To a significant extent, this comes about in the process of active depiction itself' (Stoljar, 1982, 76). In semiotic terminology: initially, there is a decrease in indexicality (de-indexicality) and iconicity (de-iconicity), leading to the appearance and proliferation of symbolic signs (symbolisation) that can soon be called arbitrary. As a result, the language has become by now 'a graveyard of dead metaphors' (Lotz 1976, 26). To generalise, probably every linguistic form is motivated, but we can no longer prove it, only perhaps sense it. The same thing occurred with symbols; yet, this happened on another level. Our primeval symbols had their own meaning and probably a concrete link to reality, but we have forgotten them. Hence, with today's mind and knowledge, it is impossible or difficult to understand them. 'At one time, Mankind wrote a ceremonial drama across the sky, distributing the main roles among the stars and constellations. In this way, they tried to live up to God's will: "on Earth as it is in Heaven". And this was successful. I believe the customs of the time spoke to this – the star that shone upon them on Christmas night, what they could read on the church's altarpiece, what the priest preached. Meanwhile, the Christmas decorations and material objects informed it,' wrote Marcell Jankovics (1988, 7). This knowledge and awareness wore away with the passage of centuries and millennia.

Dichotomy

One of the preconditions and forerunners of progress and advancement could be the emergence of dichotomy. What is dichotomy? Dichotomy can be shown at every level of symbolic systems. It can have several dimensions: one or the other, old and new, concrete and abstract. The point is that certain systems and planes reflect and develop from each other. To use a linguistic analogy, Ivanov (1982, 115) named the ancient culture's art-communication syncretism 'original bilingualism', in which fine arts, pictographs and hieroglyphic writing is united. Iván Fónagy (1996/97) mentioned the dual-coding of speech, whereby the natural, motivated, archaic code is present and operates in the depths of today's further developed and arbitrary code. Thus, dual-coding signifies that, in linguistic communication, signs are naturally archaic and arbitrary (or becoming

arbitrary) at the same time. Following Uexküll's lead, Sebeok (1983, 13) theorised that a more archaic and (interspecies) non-verbal code precedes and accompanies the verbal code to this day. We may even call this human communication's dual code (or dual organisation). The main characteristic of human speech is dual organization or division (separation). In other words, it is made up of two abstract structural levels: elements that bear no meaning (sounds, letters) and elements with meaning built upon them (e.g., words). 'The peculiarity of the human language is how even its smallest elements with meaning are structured. The words with meaning are made up of sound formations. [...] At the higher level, sentences and declarations are made up of elements with meaning (roots of words and affixes); at the lower level, meaningful elements are made up of those without meaning (sounds)' (Szabolcsi 1978, 51). The dichotomy has further stages: the basis of speech's secondary system of symbols (e.g., writing) (Lotz 1976, 12). Similarly, in the Tartu school of thought, more complex modelling procedures (arts) are built upon the primary modelling systems (language), by which means they express reality's relationship on two levels (Voigt 2014, 221). In Juri Lotman's original definition (1973, 236, 239), 'those systems based upon the natural language gain auxiliary structures and constitute two-pronged languages – self-evidently called secondary modelling systems. [...] Art is a unique modelling activity.' Vilmos Voigt (2014, 221) wrote this about primary and secondary modelling systems: 'Compared to simple physiological-psychological reactions, a secondary system would be behaviour or the etiquette within a culture, as well as a piece of art built upon the language or a literary work. This thought ties in with the semiotic arrangement (that of the Tartu school), in which primary and secondary signifying systems are distinguished from each other, and the arts belong to the latter category' (Voigt 2014, 221).

The origin of variations – accompanied by the phenomena of dissection and unification (divergence and convergence) – begins with the process of separating the 'combinations'. This comprises particular forms of thought – including, for example, the emergence of creative forms (genres).

Art hidden in nature

In many respects, biological organisation and structure give a pre-indication of cultures – in other words, we depart from what is natural and proceed towards culture (Sebeok 1983, 64). There are transitional forms – for example, architec-

ture in nature and animals that are master builders (Sebeok 1983, 64). Consider the beavers' dams and the ants' architecture. A token of our special relation to animals is that, in every corner of the Earth, on the most ancient artistic artefacts and cave drawings, we find animals (buffalos, mammoths) with iconic signs everywhere. Sprinkled throughout the animal world, there are phenomena that provide models. We my even consider that, embarking from them, the higher order of thought forms came into being, formed by perhaps imitating them or perhaps through further development ('advancement'). In this case, this 'forward leap' or 'progress' signifies abstraction.

From the point of view of a joint examination of art and language, Thomas Sebeok (1983) approached the theme best. He sought to answer the question whether the optimal organisation of certain animals' communication systems would make it possible to build an aesthetic function upon them (Sebeok 1983, 10). In the field of animal communication, Sebeok observed the following phenomena that he considered artistic – that is, aesthetic in nature and approaching the communication of human beings: the pleasure principle (joy, stimulation, thrill) (1983, 11, 58), symmetry, repetition, the impulse for play, and love of goods or activities (1983, 15–17). In the latter case, there was a ritualising use of tools (1983, 66). Also of great significance is the fact that art is both useless and meaningful, aimless and yet important. People are able to live out passions which they would be unable to indulge in their everyday lives (1983, 47). From the perspective of language, we may add that language use, despite its towering importance, is very often just an occasional, 'useless' activity that serves to pass or fill the time.

Investigation of animal communication did not reach the level of human communication, although there are analogies and some connections. For the purposes of communication, animals employ a limited number of signs (signals, indices) in various sign systems. 'In the course of their comparative research, they summarised the number of distinct varieties of signals used by the different animal species; and with six species of fish, they identified between 10 and 26 different signals. Naturally, species with a complicated system of social relationships had the highest number. What is interesting is that these numbers did not at all lag behind what they experienced among birds and mammals' (Markó 2012, 63). From the animal's biologically organised communication, the following features approached human communication: rhythm (based on that of birds, Sebeok 1983, 32), answering (replying: ibid, 40) and a phenomenon that can be

observed among birds, the ability to pick out certain series of sounds from the background noise (cocktail party problem: ibid, 33).

It is no accident that we find fundamental relationships among our relationships with animals, in animal stories (to this day) and our first depictions of them. The higher level, at which people mimic nature or the behaviour of animals – for example, copying the dances of birds – is considerably widespread (Sebeok 1983, 30). The most ancient form of theatre was pantomimes imitating animals (Meletinsky 1982, 30). Dürer as quoted by Sebeok maintains, 'Truly art lies hidden in nature, and those who can lift it out of nature take possession of it' (1983, 81). The imitation of nature appears in the copying of certain natural forms.

We might think that the language of social animals, those that live in a society, would be the closest to that of humans. That is why the communication of bees and ants aroused the researchers' interest. The ants' language is exciting. 'It is inaudible to the human ear, and the human nose cannot grasp it. [...] If they could write poetry, it is likely that our most elegant perfumes would not match the harmony of an ant sonnet' (Markó 2012, 63). Yet, interestingly, bird speech stands the closest to the human register. According to Sándor Wilhelm, 'Speaking animals – that is, those that reproduce human words, using them properly when the opportunity arises – turn up among parakeets, crows, ravens and birds possessing especially developed voice-producing organs' (Wilhelm 2012, 69).

From the very beginning, people have wanted to understand animals. Spying on animals and noticing how they communicate led to luring animals close and catching them. Such, for example, are the fishermen's 'decoys'. There is a method still practiced on the Tisza River whereby a 'clapper' decoy instrument emits a deceptive sound that spreads far through the water at regular intervals. It is reminiscent of the catfish's noisy feeding, to which their gluttonous fellow species respond.

The mimicry of animal communication and animal sounds is a linguistic and anthropological phenomenon.

Analogous thought: art and language

Primeval, archaic thought is characterised by analogy. 'Ancient Mankind saw analogy directly – living it, uttering it, constantly discovering new analogies and perceiving new pictures. [...] The pictures in the primeval language were not poetic semblances. The ancient images corresponded to the content of the

ideas, in the Platonic sense, which is none other than transcendent intelligence. [...] The primeval language was built upon analogy, and analogy upon things' intrinsic nature..." (Hamvas 1995, II/167, 169). Hence, analogy signified an actual connection – index (isomorphism) or icon (semblance, correspondence). Both indexicality (concrete reference or indication) and iconicity (imitation, picturing and depiction of nature and environment) played a decisive role in the birth of the arts. The art of movement could have been primary, with motion and dance leading to melody on the way to language. 'Speaking and singing in the beginning meant the same thing' (Pracs quoted by Harlap 1982, 269). Melodies not bearing meaning proceeded songs – that is, language. Just like language, music is an exclusively human phenomenon (Sebeok 1983, 29). Out of the rhythmic activities and motions, what took shape were melodies, music and, at the same time, verbal arts (poetry and language itself). The rhythm of primeval music was both musical and possessed the rhythm of speech (Harlap 1982, 225). With arts related to drawing, growth in the communicative function of depiction, imitation of nature and pictorial representation brought about picture writing. De-iconisation (abstraction) of picture writing led to the other writing systems.

Meletinsky supposes that arts related to drawing (the fine arts) were likely primary, only followed by the art of words (1982, 47). Among the most ancient (and most current) drawings are vulva signs (30 BCE) and animal depictions. In all certainty, the symmetry found in nature served as a pattern for Mankind. The psychological reason for this is probably the desire for harmony and order. Symmetry can be observed in depictions since the Palaeolithic Era (Ivanov 1982, 125). 'Observing the forms of animals, plants and their own bodies, as well as the rhythm and technique of work processes, the sense of proportion and symmetry was cultivated [in people]' (Meletinsky 1982, 147–148). Then, with one leap in progress, rhythmic and repetitive phenomena of symmetry and asymmetry appeared in speech and then eventually in oral folklore (Toporov 1982, 90; Neklyudov 1982, 207). Psychological parallelism is the association of human emotional life with natural phenomena (Toporov 1982, 152).

Indeed, the parallel between depiction and communication may have existed from our very origins. This may be supposed from puppetry in our own time, as well as stage acting and storytelling with gestures. We may observe how 'on relics from the time of ancient civilizations, they used the tools of depictive art to illustrate the message also conveyed by the pictorial signs. This is similar to the Eskimo practice of always accompanying their stories with drawings and sym-

bols, which are expected in the course of the narration or made out of snow' (Ivanov 1982, 115). Today, we would refer to this phenomenon as multimedia communication or multimedia text.

There is no proof of what caused primeval, concrete, pictorial thought to become abstract thought formations. One answer is that it came about by itself, but it is clearly more complicated than that. Language arising from pictures is one piece of evidence that, in the most archaic languages (for example, Aranda in Australia), the word is inalienable from a definitive visual image (Stoljar 1982, 77). The link between primeval art and picture writing is indubitable (Karapetyantz 1982, 467). Some researchers investigating the sign system found in Hungarian folk art claim that these signs were once elements in a system of picture writing and possessed meaning – as the term picture writing implies (Pap 1993). Only by now, we have forgotten this code. Nowadays, art serves to revive it and sensitise us to the code.

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