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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOTMAN'S SEMIOTICS OF CULTURE
FOR THE MODERN IDEOLOGIES THEORY**

Ilya V. Demin (a)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Samara National Research University (Samara University), Samara, Russian Federation, ilyadem83@mail.ru

Abstract

The applying possibilities of the semiotic theory terminological apparatus of culture in the context of ideological language research are disclosed. Four problems faced by the modern theory of ideologies are formulated: 1) the problem of identification criteria of ideology, 2) the problem of correlation of ideology and general knowledge, 3) the problem of distinguishing the paradigmatic and socio-historical aspects of the functioning of ideologies, and 4) the problem of typology of ideologies. The transformation of each of these problems in the methodological context of Lotman's semiotics of culture is revealed. The author considers some key provisions and concepts of Lotman's semiotic theory: irremovable linguistic pluralism of culture, communication as crossing of semiotic borders and search for a common language, translation as a universal component of human thinking, dialectics of language and text, metalanguage as an integral structural component of the semiotic space of culture. The author reveals the methodological significance of these positions and concepts for modern theory of ideologies, distancing itself from the extremes of speculative dogmatism and conventionalism. It is shown that Yu. M. Lotman's theory of culture allows capturing and describing the semiotic unity as well as the irremovable ideological diversity of the political world. Ideological models colliding and coexisting in the symbolic universe of politics can be described using the terms of cultural semiotics ("language", "semiosphere", "translation", "border", "communication", "metalanguage"). A distinction is made between the linguistic and metalanguage levels of ideology functioning.

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, the semiotic approach has become increasingly widespread in studies of society and culture, which suggests a semiotic turn in the social sciences and humanities. The fields of political philosophy, political sociology, and political linguistics, which traditionally include studies of ideology, have also been affected by this trend (Malinova, 2003; Solov'ev, 2018, 2019; Tishkov, 2019; Zolyan, 2018a, 2018b). However, terminology and research techniques developed within structural linguistics, semiotics of culture, and philosophy of language are often applied uncritically, combining eclectically with traditional approaches and methods of analyzing ideology. The philosophical foundations, conceptual framework and heuristic potential of the cultural-semiotic approach to the analysis of political-ideological phenomena have not yet been thematized.

2. Problem Statement

Let us focus on the main problems faced by modern theory of ideologies.

1) *The problem of the identification criteria of ideology as a belief system and/or type of discourse.* This problem is of fundamental importance for contemporary social and political sciences. It is evident at the level of political history and social psychology as well as at the level of the history of philosophy and the history of political doctrine. Its essence should be formulated as follows: on what basis can ideology be separated from related phenomena and types of discourse that have non-ideological (for example, national, cultural and linguistic, religious) nature?

2) *The problem of the cognitive nature of ideology (the problem of the relationship between ideology and "general knowledge").* This problem can be seen as a particular case of the problem of identification criteria. The key issue here is the relation and interrelation of ideology and science, ideology and social knowledge. With all the reservations regarding the mutual influence and interpenetration of scientific knowledge and ideological doctrines, the "intersubjectivity" and relativity of knowledge, the cognitive distinction between ideology and science itself remains unshakable.

Contemporary sociological research, oriented toward methodological constructivism and conventionalism, attempts to *circumvent* this problem by contrasting ideology not with *knowledge as such, but with common* (for this or that society) knowledge. The inadequacy of this strategy is highlighted by the fact that social groups with different "identity ideologies" often invest the concept of common knowledge with completely different meanings, assigning this status to different (even mutually exclusive) sets of ideas. How should the problem of "common knowledge" be solved when "external" (non-sociological, epistemological) criteria are rejected? It seems to us that this question cannot be answered as long as the terms "ideology" and "common knowledge" are used in an average-conventional sense.

3) *The problem of distinguishing between the socio-historical and paradigmatic aspects of ideology.* The terminological confusion that often accompanies not only socio-political but also theoretical discussions around the concept of "ideology" often stems from the failure to distinguish the two aspects (philosophical-paradigmatic and sociological) of consideration. The term "ideology" has two different, though interrelated meanings. Ideology, as a concrete-historical set of politically significant

beliefs and convictions, is a factor in the formation and preservation of group identity. Unlike concrete-historical ideology, an "ideological paradigm," usually terminologically identified with a particular philosophical and ideological "ism" ("liberalism," "socialism," "conservatism," "anarchism," etc.), cannot be unambiguously "tied" to any social group or structure. Its function is to order and structure the entire semantic field of politics, to "map" the "territory of the political."

4) *The problem of typology of ideologies.* The recognition of the need to distinguish between two aspects of ideology, two perspectives of its consideration makes the problem of the basis for distinguishing "basic" ideologies (ideological paradigms) relevant. What criterion should be taken as the basis for the typology of ideologies? The typology sought cannot be based on speculatively postulated values or worldview principles. However, the complete rejection of the search for a common denominator of meaningfully varied ideological positions, doctrines, and doctrines inevitably leads the theory of ideologies into the dead-end of social conventionalism.

3. Research Questions

1) What are the main philosophical and methodological problems faced by contemporary theory of ideologies?

2) What is the significance of Lotman's semiotics of culture for contemporary theory of ideologies?

4. Purpose of the Study

This article outlines the ways of applying the conceptual and methodological innovations and terminological apparatus of Yu. M. Lotman's semiotics of culture in the context of studies of the language of politics and ideological discourses. The main emphasis will be placed on the basic concepts of the semiotic theory of culture ("communication", "border", "translation", "metalanguage") and their significance for the study of the semantic field of politics.

5. Research Methods

In the process of research a comparative (comparative) method of research was used, the problem-thematic method of analysis and presentation of the material was used.

6. Findings

The semiotic interpretation of culture developed by Lotman has been repeatedly analyzed by both domestic (Faritov, 2017; Zolyan, 2019, 2020) and foreign authors (Andrews, 2003; Waldstein, 2008), it is well studied and in demand in modern social and cultural studies. Let us briefly dwell only on its provisions, which allow to clarify the mentioned problems, to outline the ways of their solution.

1. *The irreducible pluralism and "polyglotism" of culture.* The principle of linguistic pluralism manifests itself at all levels of semiotic analysis of culture. Lotman (2010a) noted: "The situation of a plurality of languages is original, primary" (p. 13). Different languages of culture "both overlap each

other, reflecting one and the same thing in different ways, and are located in "one plane", forming internal borders in it" (Lotman, 2010a, p. 13). The position about *multiplicity* of coexisting, overlapping and/or bordering each other cultural languages is not a simple empirical statement, it acquires the character of a *fundamental methodological presumption*: "The notion that one ideal language is possible as the optimal mechanism for expressing reality is an illusion. The minimal working structure is the presence of two languages and their inability, each separately, to cover the outer world" (Lotman, 2010a, p. 13).

The methodological pluralism of Lotman's (1992) concept of culture is conditioned by the fact that "a single phenomenon cannot have a singularity that requires at least two systems to be compared" (p. 388).

2. *Cultural communication as the crossing of semiotic boundaries and the search for a common language*. The polyglot model of culture reconsiders one of the key concepts of social sciences and humanities - the notion of communication. Communication no longer presupposes the presence of one language common to the communicating parties; on the contrary, it is the situation of *initial multilingualism* that makes communication possible and necessary. All communication is nothing but going outside, beyond the boundaries of the available language; communication presupposes crossing the semiotic boundary.

3. *Translation as a universal component of human thinking*. Any form of sign communication presupposes and includes the act of translation, which is defined by Lotman (1996) as "an elementary act of thinking" (p. 193).

The semiosphere is characterized not only by the *multiplicity* of languages, but also by their principled *heterogeneity*. Cultural languages are different in their nature, origin, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic parameters. The correlation of heterogeneous languages of the semiosphere is interpreted and described by Lotman in terms of the *theory of translation*. The range of possible ways of correlation of languages extends from complete mutual translatability to complete untranslatability. These models of the relationship between languages are at opposite poles, and in real cultural communication are never realized in pure form. Fundamentally, the notion of translation turns out to be key not only to describe languages *within one culture*, but also to clarify the relationship of symbolic universals of *different cultures*. Lotman replaces the opposition of the semiotic and the non-semiotic (extra-linguistic) with the opposition of the *translated and the untranslated*.

4. *The correlation of language and text*. Lotman's semiotics of culture distinguishes two models, differently describing the relationship between language and text. In the models of cultural communication, which gravitate to the pole of full inter-translatability (a situation characteristic of artificial languages), language precedes text, and text appears as a manifestation of the possibilities of the available language system. At the opposite pole (complete untranslatability), to which "poetic" languages gravitate, the relationship between language and text is reversed. The starting point here is no longer language, but *text*. The latter is always "richer and more complex than any of the languages, because it is a device in which languages collide and are juxtaposed" (Lotman, 2010b, p. 582). The text of culture here acts as a "reserve of polyglotism" and a generator not only of new cultural meanings, but also of *new languages*.

5. *Language and metalanguage*. Every culture produces not only heterogeneous languages and texts, but also *metalanguages*. Through metalanguages culture carries out self-reflection, generates self-descriptions and self-explanations: "Each kind of culture creates its own conception of cultural development, that is, the typology of culture" (Lotman, 1992, p. 386). Meta-languages constitute a "necessary condition of semiotic functioning" of language systems. "Only with their help systems are aware of themselves and realize themselves as wholes" (Lotman, 2010b, p. 588). The function of meta-linguistic structures is that they further organize "the heterogeneous semiotic world, partly translating it into its own language, partly excluding it from its limits" (Lotman, 2010b, p. 588).

In this point the central methodological problem faced by the semiotic theory of culture becomes clearly visible. On the one hand, metalanguage (language of description) cannot be "separated from the cultural language of the society to which the researcher belongs" (Lotman, 1992, p. 387). Therefore, typology compiled by him/her always "characterizes not only the material he/she describes, but also the culture to which he/she belongs" (Lotman, 1992, p. 387). On the other hand, in semiotics of culture there is a task of creating

uniform system of metalanguage, which would not coincide for any of the parts of description with the language of object (as it was in all preceding typologies of culture, in which language of the last synchronous section of culture invariably acted as metalanguage of all description). (Lotman, 1992, p. 388)

Scientific typology cannot do without singling out cultural universals, and the latter, in turn, presuppose a metalanguage that does not coincide with the language of the object under study. Lotman makes an attempt to construct a metalanguage on the basis of spatial models, in particular, the apparatus of topology. He proceeds from the fact that "any model of culture can be described in spatial terms" (Lotman, 1992, p. 406). Different types of cultures structure space in different ways, generate non-conforming (or even incompatible) spatial structures of the world picture. What they have in common, however, is that they can be described and correlated by means of spatial (or quasi-spatial) terms and semantic oppositions ("outer - inner", "us - them", "top - bottom", "center - periphery", "organized - unorganized", etc.).

Let us now see what meaning each of the problems outlined in the modern theory of ideologies acquires in the context of the semiotics of culture.

1. The understanding of the problem of identification criteria of ideology in the cultural-semiotic optics involves the comparison of ideological and non-ideological (for example, scientific, religious) ways of conceptualizing politics.

Proceeding from the idea of irreducible linguistic pluralism of culture, we can conclude that ideology in any historical epoch of its development should not be regarded as the *only* source of political meanings, the only possible model of political reality. Ideology may be the *dominant* way of conceptualizing political life, but it is never *the only* "access code" revealing the dimension of politics.

2. The problem of the cognitive status of ideology and "common knowledge" in the horizon of the cultural-semiotic approach can be partially clarified by introducing the concept of "background ideology".

Here are some examples of the functioning of the background ideology. Modern theory of state and law, as well as modern political science, relies heavily on the ideological presumptions of *classical liberalism* (the principle of separation of powers, equality of all before the law, the idea of inalienable human rights, the distinction between "democratic", "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" political regimes, etc.) and uses the language of the *liberal* ideological paradigm as an ideologically neutral metalanguage. Equally striking examples of the substitution of scientific terms for ideological concepts can be found in the language of Soviet social science. However, it does not follow from the fact that some presumptions inherent in ideologies, in a certain historical context, come to be viewed by most (or even all members of society, including specialists in the social sciences) as self-evident axiomatic truths, that they lose their *specifically ideological* character. Not every set of beliefs that functions as "common knowledge" in culture can be recognized as *ideologically neutral*.

3. The problem of distinguishing between the socio-historical and paradigmatic aspects of the functioning of ideology in the optics of the cultural-semiotic approach can be described using the terms "language" and "text".

The term "ideological paradigm" in the context of the semiotic approach indicates the "solid core" of political language, fixing those meanings that do not find adequate expression in the linguistic space of the alternative ideological model.

Any meaningful ideological text (a political treatise, manifesto) uses the semantic resources of existing ideological paradigms, taking one or another language as basic or performing their "synthesis". In turn, political texts are capable of transforming existing and even generating new political languages (ideological directions).

4. The difference between ideological paradigms in the optics of semiotics of culture is represented as a difference in the ways of structuring the political space. Ideological paradigms (liberalism, socialism, conservatism) represent different models of social reality ("social ontologies"), each of which "maps" the territory of the political in its own way. Boundaries and reference points that seem important in one ideological paradigm may turn out to be secondary or insignificant in the context of another.

Substantive differences between ideological paradigms cannot be reduced to differences in the construction of a hierarchy of political values (freedom, equality, justice, property, tolerance, etc.). The differences in value orientations traditionally emphasized by political science are derivative. The starting point is the difference in the ideological structuring of social reality, strategies of its interpretation. In other words, political axiology always implicitly refers to political ontology and epistemology. In our opinion, this is one of the most significant discoveries of the modern semiotically oriented theory of ideology.

7. Conclusion

The significance of Lotman's semiotics of culture for the political sciences lies in the possibility to record and describe the semiotic unity and at the same time the irreducible linguistic diversity of the political semiosphere. The context of semiotics of culture allows us to reveal the semantic specificity inherent in the ideological way of modeling social reality as a whole and, at the same time, to develop a device for comparative description of various ideological models (background ideologies).

Unlike a number of poststructuralist and post-Marxist movements that also focus on analyzing the language of ideologies, Lotman's semiotics of culture prevents the boundaries between ideology and science from blurring, mixing and fusing political research with political practice, in other words, avoids the relativistic consequences of what in postmetaphysical philosophy is called the "practical turn".

Describing the semantic field of politics with the terms "frontier," "translation," and "metalanguage" makes it possible, if not to solve, then at least to circumvent the problem of reference (the relation between political language and political reality), which was a stumbling block for most philosophical-political theories of the 20th century.

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