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THE "HARBINGER OF CHAOS": SEMANTIC ANATOMY OF A SIMULACRUM

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This article analyses a number of statements delivered by E. Musk in mass media interviews and posted via the Twitter / X platform. The paper argues that the discursive statements under analysis do not meet the criterion of truth and therefore are identified as simulacra. The article focuses on the reconstruction of propositions that generate false senses in the said statements. The paper provides typological semiotic and functional characteristics of respective language units. Special attention is paid to the reconstruction of a "virus program" encoded in Musk's statement on empathy. The statement's inner "textual structure" and its frame representation are suggested. Interdisciplinary interpretations are carried out in the framework of the myth-oriented semiosis theory.

Key words: myth, simulacrum, semantics, E. Musk, system, empathy, entropy

Колесник О.С. "Провісник хаосу": Семантична анатомія симулякра. У цій статті аналізується низка висловлювань І. Маска, здійснених в інтерв'ю засобом масової інформації та опублікованих через платформу Twitter/X. У статті стверджується, що аналізовані дискурсивні конструкти не відповідають критерію істинності та ідентифікуються як симулякри. Фокусом дослідження є реконструкції пропозицій, які породжують хибні смисли в цих твердженнях. У статті наведено типологічні семіотичні та функціональні характеристики відповідних мовних одиниць. Особлива увага приділяється реконструкції "вірусної програми", закованої у твердженні Маска про емпатію. Запропоновано внутрішню "текстову структуру" твердження та його фреймову модель. Міждисциплінарні інтерпретації здійснюються в рамках теорії міфологічно орієнтованого семіозису.

Ключові слова: міф, симулякр, семантика, І. Маск, система, емпатія, ентропія

The present-day dynamics of semiosphere is marked by wide-range "energy-information fluctuations" that are responsible for the rise of new irrational constructions (derivative myths) which give birth to a profusion of alternative realities.

In this regard, the "re-mythologizing" of culture that once manifested itself as readdressing the initial irrational structures of knowledge as iconic representations of experience arguably approximated to a primary configuration of the state of affairs, now acquires an absolutely new sense. Present-day "re-mythologizing" unfolds as extensive modeling of derivative "tertiary myths". Unlike the "secondary mythology" of religious teachings or traditional political doctrines, myths of the new age create an image of "reality" which is so obviously unreal that it falls under the definition of simulacrum. Respectively, "linguo-modeling period" of civilization's development (Kolesnyk, 2011) no longer qualifies to be "post-industrial" or "informational". The current civilization model is best described as the "post-truth" one.

The fundamental feature of the current civilization and its "semiosphere" is the exponential rise in the number of simulacra as symbolic "copies" of things without originals (Baudrillard, 1994) facilitated by electronic media. Verbally created images of the world may share and accentuate a certain feature found in empirically accessible "primary" reality and thus acquire the quality of real, realistic or quasi-real, eventually turning into an inchoative axiomatic secondary myth. In the course of multivector interactions driven by diverse and often contrary pragmatics, language users shade or distort a basic reality as well as hide the absence of things and states of affairs in a "primary reality" (cf. for instance systematic lies produced by representatives of Russia in the UN Security Council (Kolesnyk, 2022)). Eventually, a profusion of simulacra "stretches" the boundaries of the informational space to a degree when their reference to any reality ("primary", alternative or even traditional mythic space) is deleted. In this case the entropy of the informational space as the container of the civilization's "operational system" becomes excessive and results in its irrevocable breakdown.

Modern media and social media have been recently addressed in linguistics as the context-creating phenomena that determine peculiarities of language use (Panjaitan 2024, Samples 2024, Yerina 2024) with a shift towards the use of AI in social media (Gambini, 2024) or with some attention to the stylistics of political narratives employed as the tools of shaping public opinion (Wasinger, 2025). We suggest that electronically facilitated political discourse is responsible for modeling alternative worlds primarily those irrelevant to the "primary" reality or incompatible with "primary myth" or even "secondary mythology" of value systems, cultures and doctrines.

This article provides a glimpse into discursive representations of simulacra delivered by Elon Musk as the owner of resources and platforms for them to have a world-wide impact.

Methodology

Interpretations are carried out within a synthetic interdisciplinary approach that employs semantics analysis, elements of discourse analysis, and frame modeling "tweaked up" through the prism of the theory of myth-oriented semiosis and M-logic methodology (Kolesnyk, 2016, 2021). Language units' and discursive construals' semantic features, functional and semiotic characteristics are tackled in regard to their correspondence to open systems' architecture (hierarchical levels: physical (1), psycho-emotional (2), mental (3), social-adaptive (4), intergroup interactional (5), axiological (6), informational (7)) and basic laws of development (complimentary, determinative and symmetric causative logic of systems' hierarchic components' interactions, laws of polarity, fractal iterations, analogy, alternative development etc.). The key point is the reconstruction of the irrational inchoative structures behind the said discursive construals as the "basic operators" shaping a false alternative reality.

Results and Discussion.

Elon Musk's posts and statements released through different media address virtually all levels of systemic interactions. A level 2 event with the structure {[Sb] feels / experiences [emotion]} is verbalized as:

(1) *I'm happy to be first buddy!* (Musk, 2024b)

This utterance is essentially a declarative assertion of one's elevated positive emotional state (implying that the experiencer was not in this state before a certain transformation had taken place). The cause of the emotional elevation is indicated by the phrasal designator "*first buddy*" which appears to be an unofficial status marker. The structure that is similar to the phrase "*first lady*" implies that the "partner" of the "*buddy*" is the head of the state.

A colloquial *buddy* implies the speaker's equi-ranking auto-positioning in regard to the other person. We may speculate that the reason could be either hypertrophied self-esteem, low esteem of the implied person or the indication that a previously executed scenario (sponsoring the election campaign) entitles the subject to a special status with special powers. Therefore, this statement may pursue the following set of pragmatic intentions: to create a material (verbal,

semiotic) marker of a new status (level 1), express emotions caused by this achievement and, arguably, irritate opponents (level 2), introduce the idea of power's new allocation to the informational space and the nation's "mental space", impact the patterns of relations within the social group (society) in the new capacity (level 4), impact large-scale interactions in both politics and business as the new status allows it (level 5), reinforce the axiological secondary myth "success → increased material resources → [successful investment] → power → increased success → ...[CYCLE]" (level 6), realize a hidden yet world-wide declaration of "being a top manager at the state level of the most powerful nation in the world" (level 7). The latter, curiously, demonstrates a perlocutionary effect as Mr. Musk was appointed by president Trump the head of Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) which granted him the status of a "special government employee".

The construal (2) *Am considering taking Tesla private at \$420. Funding secured.* (Musk, 2018) demonstrates the following deep frame-structure:

{[Sb / SYS] plans [Sth, TRANS |SYS2|] intends to use ([Sth, INSTR|resource|] ← influenced [SO])}

The first part of the surface construction is a syntactically clipped declarative index that outlines the subject's intentions of changing ownership of a large-scale business. The component "*taking Tesla private*" denotes the procedure "TRANS |SYS2|" unfolding at level 1, while its pragmatics may be determined by the symmetrical level-7 intention of "changing the world according to one's design that requires a totally controlled (privately owned) tool". The unit "*considering*" refers to the Level 3 systemic activities of planning, modeling, strategizing etc. The level 3 procedures are are symmetrically projected onto the level 5 large-scale inter-group activities as Tesla is obviously envisioned as a "game changer" in the business world.

The second component "*Funding secured*" is a promise-coloured assertive singnum realized by a nominative phrase. The construction represents the states of affairs as "finite" (i.e. a complete procedure of a sub-frame "influenced [so]" that provides functionality of the slot "[Sth, INSTR|resource|]"). However, by the time the post appeared on the platform (2018) the funding had not been secured yet. The market reacted instantly to Musk's false statement (essentially, a lie, a simulacrum) and Tesla investors "lost \$12 billion over 10 days as a result", although Musk "was found not liable for the loss suffered by the shareholders" (Duffy, 2023)

Mask's statements delivered during his guest appearance on Saturday Night Live in 2021 reveal peculiarities of a "system's auto-diagnostics" and self awareness:

(3) *"I'm actually...the first person with Asperger's to host – or at least the first to admit it".... So I won't make a lot of eye contact with the cast tonight. But don't worry, I'm pretty good at running 'human' in emulation mode."* (Grobar, 2021) explicates the logical frame-structure {[Sb / SYS] is / declares to be ([such 01 - quality], [such 02, performer of function 01]) (acts [so] ← is / declares to be [such 03, performer of function 02])}

The phrase *"first person with Asperger's to host"* is a double quali-signum: *"with Asperger's"* is a characterizing descriptor, referring to a system's level-1,2,3 configurative deviations that manifest functionally at level-4. *"The first... to host"* is a quantifying-qualifying identifier that is intended to accentuate a paradox in regard to the first statement and appears false as Dan Aykroyd had both hosted the show in 2003 and admitted to being diagnosed with the same syndrome. Musk's statement is therefore a simulacrum aiming at highlighting his uniqueness.

The predicative *"[am] pretty good at running 'human' in emulation mode"* as a metaphoric descriptive assertion enhances the idea of uniqueness and rather incepts the idea of "non-human" likely implying "super-human" which allegedly justifies Musk's statements on a wide range of matters (his "partner-buddy" D. Trump favours the blunt hyperboles like *"No one knows more about [...] than Donald Trump"* (NowThisImpact, 2020) or *"Nobody does better ... than Trump"* (Vice News, 2018).

The construal delivered in the same monologue (4) *"To anyone I've offended, I just want to say, I reinvented electric cars and I'm sending people to Mars in a rocket ship. Did you think I was also going to be a chill, normal dude?"* (Grobar, 2021) sports the logical frame-like structure:

{[Sb / SYS] performs [THIS, function 01] [THIS, function 02] [THIS, function 03] inquires about / states being [SUCH, quality 01] [SUCH, quality 02]}

The cluster of a declarative assertion of being a pioneer in a number of fields (which is false) and a descriptive assertion presented as a rhetoric question intensifies the idea of "not being normal" yet likely alluded to as "superior".

E. Musk eventually goes beyond personal eccentricity and inserts himself in international politics meddling in other countries' internal affairs. In particular, he expresses his support of the German ultra-right AfD party, often identified as right-extremist and pointed at as pro-russian. An initial publication ran (5.1) *"Only the AfD can save Germany"* while an expanded version delivered as a commentary stated that (5.2) *"the AfD can save Germany from becoming a shadow of its former self"* as it was growing *"comfortable with mediocrity"* and therefore declining economically (Dorn, 2025). The respective frame structures are :

{[SYS 01] /potentially/ impacts SYS 02 [so]} and {[SYS 01] /potentially/ impacts SYS 02 [SO /preventing a detrimental TRANS| SYS 02|] }

The assertive declaration of the initial "X-publication" that encompasses the designation of an agent "AfD", modified by the specifying qualifier of limiting semantics "only", a predicate sporting deontic modality "can save" and an indexal designator of a patient "Germany" is then complimented with the indication of a transformative process "becoming" which is specified by the qualifying nominal phrasal designation of a potentially detrimental state of a system "a shadow of its former self". This discursive construal that is obviously intended as a post-truth legi-signum delivers the inchoative implicatures: "Germany is declining" (a deliberate exaggeration that intentionally deviates from the basic reality) and "current Germany is only a shadow [of a once glorious state]" (an allusion to the "times of former glory" indexed at by the notorious nazi salute at Trump's inauguration ceremony). As Germany's current political leadership is identified as "mediocrity" (cf. Musk's tweet in German "*Olaf ist ein Narr*" (Musk, 2024a)) the ultra-right AfD is represented as an ideological successor of the "effective leadership of the former days" (a simulacrum created by distorting the facts).

The following statement from the CNN interview (March 5, 2025) refers to levels 6 and 7 of the systemic hierarchies and reflects the "war of worlds" that unfolds at a number of planes

(6) "*The fundamental weakness of Western civilization is empathy, the empathy exploit,*" Musk said. "*There it's they're exploiting a bug in Western civilization, which is the empathy response.*" Empathy [he said] has been "*weaponized*" (Wolf, 2025).

Its semantic "deep structure" contains a network of non-linearly allocated propositional "code-ons" that we represent graphically as a cluster:

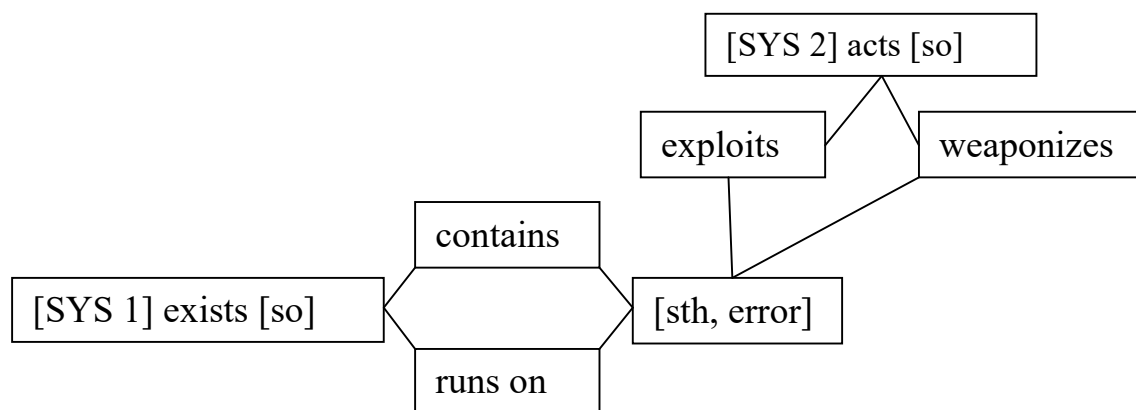


Figure 1. Frame representation of the "empathy" simulacrum

This assertive discursive construal encompasses a number or hierarchically correlated verbal signs. The linear representation of the reconstructed propositions appears as follows (the indentation marks a sub-systemic, subordinate nature of a proposition, two adjacent rows represent a logical subject and a logical predicate, the comment tag <!--...> is borrowed from html-coding for denoting semiotic and functional characteristics of the "surface" language units that represent the propositions under discussion):

- (1) A phenomenon "*civilization*" (a system, SYS-1) <!-- designator, ascertainer > is denoted as present in the state of affairs
 - (2) the basic typological feature "*Western*" <!-- descriptor, identifier > is ascribed to SYS-1 [implying a feature "*non-western*" of a respective phenomenon SYS-n]
 - (3) a structural - functional feature / flaw of SYS-1 "*weakness*" <!-- assertion> is denoted
 - (4) the feature "*fundamental*" <!-- assertive qualifier > is ascribed to the *flaw*
 - (5) the feature "*empathy*" <!-- assertive identifier > is predicated to the *flaw*
 - (6) the functional-instrumental feature "*exploit*" <!-- assertive statement / specifier with negative evaluative implicature> is ascribed to the *flaw*
 - (7) the flaw's feature "*empathy*" <!-- ascertainer / statement> is doubled and marked as as an object of a specific procedure
- (8) an agent "*they*" <!-- assertive ascertainer > is defined **(a)** as a system (SYS-2) of an equal or even higher rank than SYS-1 [implying that SYS-2 can perform actions targeting SYS-1] or **(b)** as SYS-1 itself [implying that it is running an auto-destructive program]
 - (9) the functional feature "*'re exploiting*" <!-- assertive ascertainer > is predicated to SYS-2
 - (10) the object (patient) of energy-informational impact performed in (9) is identified as "*a bug*" <!-- assertive ascertainer > ; (10) is co-referential to the proposition (3)
 - (11) the locative feature "*in ... civilization*" <!-- ascertainer > is ascribed to (10); (11) is co-referential to the proposition (1)
 - (12) the typological feature "*Western*" <!-- descriptor, identifier > of (11) is doubled; (12) is co-referential to the proposition (2)
 - (13) the functional-identifying feature of "*response*" <!-- assertive identifier> is predicated to (10) and projected onto the co-referential proposition (3)
 - (14) the typological ontological feature "*empathy*" <!-- assertive identifier> is ascribed to (13)
- (15) The phenomenon "*empathy*" <!-- designator, ascertainer > is denoted, implying the coreference with (3), (10), (14)←(13)

(16) the transformational feature "*has been "weaponized"* <! Assertive descriptor-qualifier > is predicated to (15)

Thus, this set of propositions employs the "source-code" {[empathy = bug = weakness] → weapon → danger → negative assessment / attitude} which unfolds as a text-like "virus" program: "empathy is a systemic error; a system can be manipulated due to this error; a system can be transformed inappropriately (weaponized); there is someone who manipulates the known reality / regular state of affairs; a configurative error and potential undesirable transformational consequences of are likely to occur within a system that runs on a specific type of relations (empathy)". The surface discursive construal contains co-referential designations and repetitions thus turning into a tool of suggestion and manipulation with a strategic implicative pragmatics of creating irrational ("tertiary mythic") premises for certain institutional actions and transformations in the real space-time, and ultimately intending to "re-program" and control "bio-units".

The propositions within the "deep structure" demonstrate the logic of objective and attributive-complimentary connections yet they do not meet the criterion of truth as they contradict the universal algorithms of open systems' functioning, i.e. the laws of nature.

Natural open systems interact competitively (in a plane defined by the "producer" VS "consumer" opposition) and are subjects of natural selection. However, systems of different ranks in relatively balanced state (in terms of satisfactory resources, operational space, realistic pragmatics and expected "navigation trajectories") do not engage in mutual annihilation and demonstrate patterns of coexistence and even empathy (Lambert, 2024; Matthews, 2023), while one of the basic mechanisms that provides their sustainability is symbiosis (Douglas, 1994, 1).

Defining empathy as a "systemic error" actually denies the natural essence of humans as a species (despite a number of humans' unnatural behavioral patterns and the tendency toward auto-destruction, human empathy appears as almost the only mechanism by which they are still adhered to the web of Life).

Therefore the discursive construal (5) demonstrates deep semantic and conceptual inversions that facilitate the construction of a high-level simulacrum (a tertiary myth). Deliberately accentuated contradiction of the statements' content and natural order of things as well as common sense, deliberately false identification of "*response*" (a universal procedure of systemic interactions) and "*exploiting*" (a solely anthrop mechanism of dominating other systems) constitute

an "illocutively charged" means of modeling an alternative reality on the fundamentally unnatural basis.

Conclusions. We treat the discursive construal (6) as a certain "coming out" of the anti-anthrop virus-like egregor which is striving to establish a technological, technocratic mono-dimensional vector of the world's transformation. Elon Musk who proves to be a prolific generator of simulacra of (1) to (5) types appears as an avatar of the said egregor. While he may appear a Loki / trickster type eccentric "big mouth", his unlimited resources and dehumanized "operational system" (worldview) allow him to sponsor his "first buddy", the incoherent speaker, deconstructor of recent political and axiological mythology who seems to be supporting Russia-the-aggressor rather than the once important democratic world, and essentially promote the agenda concocted by the blogs of the architects of the new "Patchwork" world order (Curtis Yarvin's *neo-reactionary* or *Dark Enlightenment* movement) that resonated with figures like Peter Thiel and brought people like J.D. Vance to the helm of the now inverted state, likely making both "first buddies" irrelevant in the short historic perspective.

Semiotically, discursive construals (1) through (5) may be identified as quail-, sin- and legi-signa that allow a glimpse at the "source code" of the Plane of Chaos manifesting itself through an "avatar" speaker. Construal (6) as an "extended index" designates the point at which the Plane of Chaos is attempting an invasive entry into the currently functional "primary reality": defamation of the basic principle of natural sustainable development (empathy) is bound to be substituted by a new "inchoative myth" of "ultimate power". This simulacrum may start a chain-reaction of open world-wide conflicts which already involve most of the nations (led by the "factions" of "generational parasite invaders" (Russia), "wise shadow lords" (China), "cowboys gone astray" (the U.S.A.), "rising dominators" (India), and oil-controlling "money bags" of the Arabic world). Interactions based on dehumanized, de-valued and unbalanced exchange of raw power are likely to bring this world to the critical level of entropy, eventually destroying it.

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