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## **Strutting and Fretting upon the Stage. From representation to (en)action and back again**

**Keywords:** sign, representation, speech act, relevance, action, enaction

The sign was firmly established as the central concept of linguistics by Saussure; subsequently, it was mostly taken for granted rather than discussed. Chomskyan linguistics claimed that the sign concept lacked pertinence. With the revival of semiotics in the 1960ies, the sign had a very short triumph, before it was rejected by the followers of both Greimas and Eco, who instead wanted to see signification as a process. Peirceans continued to talk about the sign, though again they conceived of it more like a process. Speech act philosophy also took a process approach, but added a responsible subject, so that the process was turned into an act. Meanwhile, the advantages of considering meaning from different perspectives, as both an entity and a process, as suggested by Humboldt, Bühler, and Coseriu, was largely neglected.

In cognitive science, the central notion was at first representation, which is a term sharing at least part of its conceptual network with the sign, but, more recently, it has been argued that there are no representations, or that representations are really a kind of action, basically of a more concrete and often unconscious kind. At least in the form of "radical enactivism", to use Hutto's term, this conception seems to amount to a rejection of any mental aspect of meaning, similar to the case of (philosophical) behaviourism. Merleau-Ponty, often invoked in these quarters, certainly took a more complex stance, as did Husserl before him. The argument of this contribution will be that, while approaches such as speech act theory, including relevance theory, on one hand, and the idea of enaction, have certainly enriched our ideas of meaning, they do not dispense us of analysing the sign function as a specific mode of meaning, whether we look upon it as an entity, a process, or an action.