

Introduction: Reflecting on Ferdinand de Saussure’s intellectual legacy in the modern context of the development of semiotics and history and epistemology of ideas

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In this special issue we publish the works of researchers from several countries (Switzerland, Estonia, Italy and the United Kingdom) who agreed to our proposal to reflect on Ferdinand de Saussure and his legacy in the framework of modern semiotics, as well as history and epistemology of ideas. The name of Saussure is often mentioned in modern works on semiotics and its history and Saussure is sometimes considered as one of the founders of the “science of signs”; at the same time, Saussure as such is often equated to the most famous book published in 1916 under his name – the *Course in General Linguistics*. Even if this issue reflects partly this tendency too, all its contributors understand the importance of distinguishing between this book and Saussurean ideas as such, drawing cues, as far as possible, from all the Saussurean texts available to us, and considering Saussure’s legacy not dogmatically, but as a field on which we have not finished working yet.

John Joseph’s article about Saussure’s dichotomies and the “structuralist semiotics” opens the issue. The *Course in General Linguistics* is known to be based on several dichotomies (such as *langue* and *parole*, signified and signifier, arbitrary and motivated, synchrony and diachrony, *langue* and *langage*, etc.). Showing how several scholars – including some generally considered to be “classics” (Louis Hjelmslev, Charles Bally, Valentin Voloshinov) thought about these oppositions, Joseph offers an epistemological analysis of the “Saussurean grounds” of what today is often called “structuralist semiotics”. The authors of the following articles also reflect on Saussure and his theories when discussing the intellectual heritage of scholars such as Roland Barthes (and also Louis Hjelmslev) (article by Alain Perusset), as well as Luis Jorge Prieto, one of the last successors of the Saussurian “tradition” in Geneva linguistics (article by Israel Chavez). Alain