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ON THE CONCEPT OF EXPRESSING

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The aim of this sketch<sup>1</sup> is to explicate the notion of expressing used in sentences of the form: *Utterance U expresses thought T*. Since such a statement, due to the notorious ambiguity of the term "to express," does not unequivocally define our field of interest, let us begin by presenting the main intuitions usually associated with the concept of expressing, which are also of concern to logical semiotics.

1.

There are three main senses in which we can speak of expressing psychological states by means of linguistic utterances. Firstly, it can be said that the sentence *Jan is Polish* expresses the thought that Jan is Polish regardless of when or by whom this thought was experienced. In fact, in accordance with the discussed sense of the term "expressing," we can speak of an utterance expressing psychological states never experienced by anyone. Assume that up until now nobody has experienced the thought that Columbus discovered America in 9653 BC. Nevertheless, this thought has been expressed (in the present sense of the term) by an utterance of English: *Columbus discovered America in 9653 BC*. In the discussed sense of this term, the normative utterance *Every citizen of the Polish People's Republic should refrain from arming a ship with piracy in mind* expresses an imperative experience that it

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is a part of my doctoral dissertation *Problemy znaczenia i obowiązywania normy prawnej a funkcje semiotyczne języka* [*Problems of Meaning and Validity of Legal Norms in the Light of Semiotic Functions of Language*], written in 1967 under supervision of Prof. Zygmunt Ziemiński.

should be the case that no citizen of PRL arms a ship with piracy in mind, regardless of the fact that this norm has never been applied, that is to say, no one has had the opportunity to ‘seriously’ experience the corresponding imperative state.

Secondly, we frequently speak of expressing a psychological state by means of an utterance as revealing those states to other persons (e.g. Ossowska 1928: 145f; Ajdukiewicz 1978: 229; Kmita 1965: 38f). Accordingly, expressing would be a special sort of relation, holding between an utterance and a psychological state, that lets other people figure out the psychological state the author of the utterance is in. To be more exact, the relation of expressing thus understood holds not between an utterance and a psychological state but between the action of formulating the utterance and the psychological state. It is so because the fact that someone has experienced something is brought out by a linguistic behaviour consisting in formulating an utterance, rather than by the utterance itself.

Thirdly and lastly, it is sometimes said that a linguistic behaviour expresses a psychological state in the sense that it belongs to the same relationship as the psychological state of laughter does to joy, a groan to pain, etc.; that is to say, it is brought about by the fact that the person in question is in this psychological state (Ossowska 1931: 216f).

These three concepts of expressing are utterly different. The domain<sup>2</sup> of the relation of expressing<sub>1</sub> is a set of utterance-types understood as classes of utterances construable in a given language (Nowak 1968: 4f), while the converse domain consists in the set of general, not particular, psychological states (i.e. the set of *types* of psychological states; see von Wright 1963). Let us illustrate this with the example discussed above. If we assume that no one has ever formulated the utterance *Columbus discovered America in 9653 BC*, or experienced the corresponding thought, then the claim that this utterance expressed this thought even before I had formulated it is possible to maintain only if by utterance we mean the set of utterances of the same form as a particular utterance construable in the given language, whereas by thought we understand the set of thoughts similarly (with respect to content) to a certain possible concrete thought (actualized or not).

The relations of expressing<sub>2</sub> and expressing<sub>3</sub> are totally different in this respect. They have a common property: their domains consist of concrete, actually exhibited linguistic behaviours, whereas their converse domains

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<sup>2</sup>The domain of a relation  $R$  is a set of objects that stand in relation  $R$  to other objects; the converse domain (the range) of  $R$  is a set of objects such that some object bears  $R$  to them.

are sets of concrete and actualized (i.e. actually experienced by someone at some time) psychological states. They are distinct in that they are obtained under different conditions. An utterance expresses<sub>2</sub> a thought if the fact of formulating this utterance informs somebody that the author of the utterance has this thought. An utterance expresses<sub>3</sub> a psychological state if it has been formulated as a result of experiencing this state, in reaction to this experience. It might be said, therefore, that expressing<sub>1</sub> corresponds perhaps to what Tadeusz Kotarbiński (1966: 3) called indirect expressing, while expressing<sub>2</sub> and expressing<sub>3</sub> are two kinds of direct expressing.

It seems that — contrary to appearances — the concept of expressing<sub>1</sub> is not pragmatic in nature; that relativizing it to (general) psychological states is, in fact, redundant. To see this, let us restrict the concept of expressing to descriptive sentences. Now it seems that utterances like *Sentence S expresses the thought that p* are simply synonymous with utterances such as *Sentence S says that p*, *Sentence S states that p*, or *Sentence S claims that p*. The ordinary sense of the term "sentence (...) claims that (— — —)" requires that we substitute names of descriptive sentences for "(...)" and names of propositions for "(— — —)." Propositions can be construed as types (sets) of synonymous sentences (Church 1956: 4f). So, in any case, the sense of the above term should be such that the utterance *Sentence S claims that p* is true when *p* is a set of sentences synonymous with *S*.

The concept of expressing<sub>3</sub> is, in turn, a special case of a more general notion, namely the notion of manifestation. For by saying that a scream is an expression of someone's fear, we state the same thing as in saying that running off is a manifestation of fear of a real or apparent danger. We might suggest a general description according to which someone's behaviour at a given time is a manifestation of her psychological state at that time when the fact that she experiences this psychological state is a necessary component of a sufficient condition for exhibiting this behaviour.<sup>3</sup> If we apply this concept of manifestation to the issue at hand, we get what follows: the action of formulating an utterance expresses<sub>3</sub> a psychological state of the author of the utterance when the action is a manifestation of that psychological state.

Let us now try to explicate the concept of expressing<sub>2</sub>. It will require, however, some introductory conceptual analysis.

## 2.

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<sup>3</sup>On the concept of the essential element of a sufficient condition, see Kotarbiński 1965: 15.

According to the initial intuition regarding the concept of expressing<sub>2</sub> presented above, an utterance expresses<sub>2</sub> a psychological state when the fact that the author of the utterance has formulated this utterance provides someone with the information that the author is in that psychological state. Consequently, the concept of expressing<sub>2</sub> depends on the concept of informing. That is why we now need to analyze the notion of being informed of something with a sentence.

It immediately turns out that it is necessary to distinguish potential information from the actuality. Presumably, a sentence *S* actually informs *X* that *p* if *X* has come to think that *p* and *X* would not have thought that *p* if *X* had not received (read, heard, etc.) *S*. *S* potentially informs us that *p* if reception of *S* is a necessary component of a sufficient condition for experiencing the belief that *p*. The concepts in question, however, require a number of relativizations. The most obvious one is the need for relativization to a particular language: we are not likely to agree that some English sentence is informative for people who do not know English. Equally evident is the need to relativize the concept of informing to empirical knowledge: a sentence providing a lot of information to someone familiar within a given discipline could be extremely uninformative for someone with poor knowledge of the field. Less obvious, however, is the need to relativize the concept of informing to certain rules of inference. And indeed, if the rules used by people in communication could be reduced to the rules of inference based on logical tautologies, then such relativization would be redundant. The actual communicative processes, however, also involve extralogical rules of inference. Accordingly, the sentence *N and M stated that p* conveys the information that *p* only to someone who endorses the rule that permits one to accept a sentence asserted by two independent informers (given that *N* and *M* are independent and trustworthy informers; Giedymin 1961: 58). For someone who does not endorse this rule, or even for someone who just does not use it, the above sentence remains uninformative.

All those requirements are met by the following definition: a sentence *S* of a language *L* POTENTIALLY INFORMS that *p*, relative to rules *R* and empirical knowledge *K*, if and only if (1) for any person *X* proficient in *L* and acquainted with the system of *K*: applying *R* to *S* by *X* (and perhaps to some sentences from *K*) is a necessary component of a sufficient condition for *X* to experience the thought that *p*, and (2) some *R*-consequence of *S* (i.e. some sentence resulting from applying *R* to *S*) states that *p*. Clearly then, in the light of this definition, if a sentence informs that *p* relative to rules *R*, then some *R*-consequence of *S* states that *p*. This reveals the dependence of

the pragmatic notion of informing on the semantic concept of stating.<sup>4</sup> A sentence ACTUALLY INFORMS someone that  $p$  at a given time, if and only if it potentially informs that  $p$  and if that person has actually thought that  $p$  at that time as a result of applying the relevant rules of inference.

Let us return to the initial description of the concept of expressing. An utterance expresses<sub>2</sub> a psychological state when the fact that the author has articulated that utterance informs someone that the author is in that psychological state. According to the above understanding of the term "to inform," it is not facts that inform, but sentences. Thus, instead of saying that the fact of articulating an utterance informs of something, we should say that a sentence stating this fact informs of something. Accordingly, the concept of expressing<sub>2</sub> could be defined as follows: an utterance  $U$  of a person  $X$  at a time  $t$  expresses<sub>2</sub> a psychological state  $S$  (relative to a language  $L$ , rules  $R$ , and empirical knowledge  $K$ ) when the sentence  $X$  has formulated  $U$  at  $t$  actually informs a person  $Y$  at a time  $t'$  (relative to  $L$ ,  $R$ , and  $K$ ) that  $X$  is in a psychological state of the same kind as  $S$ . So, on the one hand, the descriptive sentence *Jan is Polish*, uttered by  $X$ , expresses<sub>2</sub>  $X$ 's belief that Jan is Polish, if the sentence  $X$  said "Jan is Polish" actually informs someone that  $X$  thinks that Jan is Polish. On the other hand,  $X$ 's imperative utterance *Offer your seat to the old lady!* expresses<sub>2</sub>, say,  $X$ 's attitude of reverence towards elderly people, insofar as the sentence  $X$  said "Offer your seat to the old lady!" actually informs (relative to someone's knowledge about  $X$ ) that  $X$  has such an attitude.

### 3.

Let us now try to determine whether such a concept of expressing<sub>2</sub> is indeed the concept we have in mind in saying that a given sentence expresses a certain thought. Presumably, it is slightly too broad. To see this, assume that someone said *Grunwald is a village within Ostróda county* and at the same time thought not only that Grunwald is a village within Ostróda county, but also that it was at Grunwald that Jagiełło defeated Teutonic Knights. The point is that a hearer could figure out not only that the speaker had a belief corresponding to the sentence uttered, but also that she thought that Jagiełło defeated Teutonic Knights at Grunwald. In this case both beliefs would be expressed<sub>2</sub> by the sentence in question, although it was formulated

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<sup>4</sup>The concept of informing adopted in this article differs from the popular understanding of semantic information as a set of logical consequences of a sentence (e.g. Bar-Hillel 1955: 302f) in that the latter is not relativized to a system of empirical knowledge and only assumes the logical rules of inference.

exclusively in reaction to experiencing the former belief. In general, it could happen that at  $t$   $X$  experiences psychological states  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k$ , but it is only in reaction to  $S_i$  that  $X$  formulates utterance  $U$  at that time. There may be a hearer whose knowledge about the speaker is so rich that she can figure out — based on  $U$  — that the speaker is experiencing  $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_k$ . So we should admit that  $U$  expresses<sub>2</sub> all those psychological states, rather than  $S_i$  alone.

To avoid this consequence, we could endorse the following definition of the concept of expressing: an utterance  $U$  of a language  $L$  expresses<sub>2</sub> a psychological state  $S$  of a person  $X$  at a time  $t$  (relative to inference rules  $R$  and empirical knowledge  $K$ ) if and only if (i) the act of formulating  $U$  by  $X$  at  $t$  expresses<sub>3</sub>  $S$ , and (ii)  $U$  itself expresses<sub>2</sub> (relative to  $R$  and  $K$ )  $S$  as experienced by  $X$  at  $t$ .

#### 4.

The concept of expressing introduced above can be easily generalized by means of the following concept of symptom: a state of affairs  $p$  is a SYMPTOM of a state of affairs  $q$  relative to knowledge  $K$  and rules of inference  $R$  if and only if sentence  $p$  potentially informs — relative to a given language,  $R$ , and  $K$  — that  $q$ .

It is easy to see that the concept of expressing proposed above could be briefly defined as follows: an utterance expresses a psychological state if formulating this utterance is a manifestation and a symptom (with suitable relativizations) of the fact that the author of the utterance is in that psychological state.

The presented concepts of expressing and symptom have a relatively broad and varied domain of application. I will discuss three such applications — in the field of semiotics of natural language, methodology of history, and jurisprudence.

(A) Hector Castaneda (1957) introduced the notion of lalic implication to refer to a special kind of relation between sentences: a sentence  $p$  lalically implies a sentence  $q$  if and only if the mere fact that  $p$  is used requires the truth of  $q$ . For instance,  $X$ 's utterance *I'm hungry* lalically implies the sentence  $X$  exists. Castaneda (1957: 91) regards the lalic implication as an extralogical ("quasi-logical") relation, typical of natural languages.

Now, it seems that the author's intuitions would be compatible with the following explication: a sentence  $p$  lalically implies a sentence  $q$  (relative to empirical knowledge  $K$  and inference rules  $R$ ) when for some  $X$ , for some time  $t$ , the sentence  $X$  formulated  $p$  at  $t$ , in conjunction with  $K$ , inferentially

entails  $q$  with respect to  $R$  (i.e.  $q$  can be derived from the conjunction in question by applying inference rules  $R$ ). So the sentence *I'm hungry*, uttered by  $X_1$  at  $t_1$ , lalically entails the sentence  *$X_1$  is hungry at  $t_1$*  since the following sentence seems to belong to the universally accepted empirical knowledge: *For any  $X$ , for any time  $t$ : if  $X$  formulated the utterance "I'm hungry" at  $t$ , then  $X$  exists at  $t$* , while this sentence in conjunction with the sentence  *$X_1$  formulated the utterance "I'm hungry" at  $t_1$*  entails (via ordinary logical rules of inference) the sentence  *$X_1$  exists at  $t_1$* .

By employing the concept of symptom discussed above, we could say that a sentence  $p$  LALICALLY IMPLIES a sentence  $q$  (relative to empirical knowledge  $K$  and rules of inference  $R$ ) when the fact that someone has formulated the sentence  $p$  is (relative to  $K$  and  $R$ ) a symptom of the state of affairs  $q$ .

A question arises whether the notion of lalic implication, explicated in this way, is indeed an extralogical relation. The answer is trivial: if by logical concepts we understand only the concepts explicable in terms of logical syntax or logical semantics, then indeed, the concept of lalic implication is not a logical one; if, however, the denotation of the term "logical concept" is extended so that in addition it includes concepts explicable in pragmatic terms, then the concept of lalic implication is a logical concept, because it requires appealing to pragmatic concepts (e.g. the notion of knowledge).

(B) In the methodology of history, there is a well-known distinction between direct and indirect sources (or between tradition and remnants):

Indirect sources present historical facts by means of conventional signs (writing, language, and other conventional signs) [. . .]. On the other hand, the direct sources often make do without such conventional signs, [because they are pieces of historical reality in their own right, that is to say,]<sup>5</sup> they are themselves historical facts. (Topolski 1978: 393)

This division is not exhaustive, since direct sources are themselves "pieces of historical reality," and the acts of formulating them are historical facts. We shall explicate the notion of direct source in this way: a state of affairs  $p$  is — relative to knowledge  $K$  and rules of inference  $R$  — a DIRECT SOURCE for the question *Is it the case that  $q$ ?* if and only if the state of affairs that  $p$  is (relative to  $K$  and  $R$ ) a symptom of the state of affairs that  $q$  or the state of affairs that not- $q$ . This explication clearly shows that linguistic utterances

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<sup>5</sup>Translator's note: although the passage in square brackets has been omitted in (Topolski 1978), I have included it in accordance with the Polish original (J. Topolski, *Metodologia historii*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1968, p. 270), since Leszek Nowak directly refers to it in the subsequent sentence.

can also be treated as direct sources — insofar as, instead of focusing on their content, we consider that they (or rather the acts of their formulation) are symptoms of certain states of affairs. In particular, those states can consist in the fact that their authors are in certain psychological states — then linguistic utterances are treated as symptoms of those psychological states, that is, they are considered in the light of what they express. As a result, historians can examine historical sources from the following points of view: (a) as purely indirect sources, i.e. as containing signs which communicate something; (b) as both direct and indirect sources, i.e. as involving signs which communicate something and, in addition, the facts of formulating those signs are regarded as symptoms of certain states of affairs (in particular — of psychological states of the authors of those signs); (c) as purely direct sources, i.e. as symptoms of certain states of affairs.

(C) Some legal theorists once took the view that legal norms are true or false in that they are, or are not, reflections of social reality. Remnants of this view can be found in the following statement:

The concepts involved in the normative material undoubtedly reflect a certain reality. They speak of citizens, goods, organization of state authority, etc. [...] They inform, therefore, about all areas of life that are subject to legal regulation. (Kowalski 1960: 183)

It is, however, immediately evident that this conception rests on confusing the relation of informing with the relation of being a symptom: norms do not state anything (since they prescribe or prohibit), but the acts of establishing them are indeed symptoms, e.g. of some kind of social relations, class interests, and thereby of the class structure of a given society, etc. The norm itself, however, informs of nothing. The impression to the contrary rests on the fact that sentences of the form *The norm prescribing this or that was established at this or that time in this or that society* does indeed — according to our definition of the concept of symptom — inform of something.

Similar misunderstandings, based on mixing up the relations of informing and expressing, occur in the context of semiotic characterization of assessments. We read, for instance:

Assessments such as "This law is just" [...] differ from descriptive judgements such as "Fish breath through gills" in that the former express our subjective attitude towards the evaluated object. We use them to communicate what we accept, what we like, what tastes good, etc. People often forget, especially in the heat of the fight, that they are talking about their tastes, and not about objective features. (Kowalski 1967: 9)



Again, from the fact that assessments express the attitude of approval or disapproval, it is inferred that they inform us that the subject has this attitude. However, it is not the assessments themselves that inform us about the attitude, but sentences of the form *X formulated at t an assessment A*, which (perhaps together with assumptions regarding *X*'s sincerity) entail that the person formulating the assessment is adopting the corresponding attitude. The assessments themselves can function as symptoms of the attitude of approval (and thereby express this attitude) and communicate something entirely different. For instance, the assessment *Jan is intelligent* expresses the attitude of approval, but at the same time it communicates, say, that Jan has the ability to solve problems for himself. Assessments can also communicate nothing while expressing a certain attitude — e.g. *This law is just*.

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