

Concord in Discourse



Approaches to Semiotics

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Concord in Discourse

Harmonics and Semiotics
in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism

by

Stephen Gersh

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A. G. G. in memoriam

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Conventions of translation and transliteration

1. *Latin citation.* Phrases and sentences translated from Latin are occasionally introduced by the symbol †. This indicates that the syntactic context if not the basic meaning of the original has been altered in order to facilitate rapid citation.
2. *Concordia/harmonia, proportio.* Translation shifts from “concord” to “harmony” and back reflecting changes between *concordia* and *harmonia* in the original sources. Augustine uses the first term primarily, Eriugena the second term primarily, and Boethius both terms equally. However, these and other writers treat them as broad equivalents within the metaphysical context. Translation also shifts between “ratio” and “proportion”. When the Latin *proportio* occurs on its own in the sources and signifies a 2-term numerical relation, “ratio” is the more natural English rendering. But when the term occurs in the sources together with *proportionalitas* [proportionality] which signifies a 3-term numerical relation, “proportion” more accurately reflects the original usage.
3. *Greek transliteration.* Phrases and sentences quoted in Greek have normally been transliterated according to a standard modern practice. However, in cases where such terminology comes not from an original Greek text but via a Latin intermediary, some degree of variation has been permitted.

Introduction

0.1 Modern notions of structure and signification

A Tandem Fama nuntiante cognoscunt quod Phoebus gaudet Parnasia rupes. Licet inde quoque ad Indici montis secretum obumbratumque scopulum nube perpetua posterius migrasse perhibebant, tamen Cirrhaeos tunc recessus et sacrati specus loquacia antra conveniunt. Illic autem circumstabat in ordinem quicquid imminet saeculorum, Fortunae urbium nationumque, omnium regum ac totius populi. Videbantur aliae transacti cursus emensa fugientes; consistebant aliae sub conspectu, adveniebantque quamplures, atque ita nonnullis eminus vanescebat disparata prolixitas, ut velut fumidae caligationis incredibilis haberetur aura. Inter haec mira spectacula Fortunarumque cursus motus nemorum etiam susurrantibus flabris canora modulatio melico quodam crepitabat impulsu. Nam eminentiora prolixarum arborum culmina perindeque distenta acuto sonitu resultabant; quicquid vero terrae confine ac propinquum ramis acclinibus fuerat, gravitas rauca quatiebat. At media ratis per annexa succentibus duplis ac sesquialteris nec non etiam sesquiterciis, sesquioctavis etiam sine discretionem iuncturis, licet intervenirent limmata, concinebant. Ita fiebat, ut nemus illud harmoniam totam superumque carmen modulationum congruentia personaret. Quod quidem exponente Cyllenio Virtus edidicit etiam in caelo orbes parili ratione aut concentus edere aut succentibus convenire. Nec mirum quod Apollinis silva ita rata modificatione congrueret, cum caeli quoque orbes idem Delius moduletur in Sole, hincque esse quod illic Phoebus et hic vocitetur Auricomus; nam Solis augustum caput radiis perfusum circumactumque flammantibus velut auratam caesariem rutili verticis imitatur; hinc quoque Sagittarius, hinc quoque Vulnificus, quod possit radiorum iaculis icta penetrare.

[Thanks to Rumour's report, they eventually learn that the rock of Parnassus is graced by the presence of Phoebus. Although one also heard that he had since departed for the peak of an Indian mountain hidden and shaded by perpetual cloud, they nevertheless repair to his Cirrhaean abode and the talkative recesses of his sacred cave. All around there stood in due order the events which time will bring to pass: the fortunes of cities and nations, of all kings and every people. Some of these appeared to flee on completing their measured course; others stood in full view; many were approaching. Some vanished afar, with so great a distance between them that a mysterious gust of dark vapour seemed to seize them. Amid these

2 Introduction

wondrous sights and the vicissitudes of Fortune, a sweet harmony arose from the movement of the trees as the breezes whispered through them with a certain melodious effect. For the crests of the largest trees, being more elevated and therefore extended, resonated with the highest pitch. The roughness of the lowest pitch shook whatever was close or near to the ground in drooping boughs. But the crests of the median trees in the fixed intervals of their mutual accompaniments sounded duple (2:1), sesquialter (3:2), sesquiterce (4:3), and even indivisible sesquioctave (9:8) intervals not without intervening limmata. So it happened that this grove resounded with the whole of harmony and the divine song in the consonance of its modulation. As the Cyllenian explained these things, Virtue also learned that the heavenly spheres emit melodies or contribute to their accompaniments in a similar manner. And it is not surprising that Apollo's grove is concordant in such a fixed harmony, since the same Delian god in the shape of the sun also modulates the heavenly spheres. So it happens that in one place he is called Phoebus and in another Auricomus — because the august head of the sun filled and encircled by flaming rays is akin to a shining head of golden hair. For this reason, he is also called Sagittarius and also Vulnificus, since he can penetrate what he strikes in casting his rays]. Martianus Capella: *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* I. 11–13.

- B Mais il suffit d'écouter la poésie, ce qui sans doute était le cas de F. de Saussure, pour que s'y fasse entendre une polyphonie et que tout discours s'avère s'aligner sur les plusieurs portées d'une partition. Nulle chaîne signifiante en effet qui ne soutienne comme appendu à la ponctuation de chacune de ses unités tout ce qui s'articule de contextes attestés, à la verticale, si l'on peut dire, de ce point. C'est ainsi que pour reprendre notre mot: arbre, non plus dans son isolation nominale, mais au terme d'une de ces ponctuations, nous verrons que ce n'est pas seulement à la faveur du fait que le mot barre est son anagramme, qu'il franchit celle de l'algorithme saussurien. Car décomposé dans le double spectre de ses voyelles et de ses consonnes, il appelle avec le roble et le platane les significations dont il se charge sous notre flore, de force et de majesté. Drainant tous les contextes symboliques où il est pris dans l'hébreu de la Bible, il dresse sur une butte sans frondaison l'ombre de la croix. Puis se réduit à l'Y majuscule du signe de la dichotomie qui, sans l'image historiant l'armorial, ne devrait rien à l'arbre, tout généalogique qu'il se dise. Arbre circulatoire, arbre de vie du cervelet, arbre de Saturne ou de Diane, cristaux précipités en un arbre conducteur de la foudre, est-ce votre figure qui trace notre destin dans l'écaille passée au feu de la tortue, ou votre éclair qui fait surgir d'une innombrable nuit cette lente mutation de l'être dans l'*hen panta* du langage:

*Non! dit l'Arbre, il dit: Non! dans l'étincellement
De sa tête superbe*

vers que nous tenons pour aussi légitimes à être entendus dans les harmoniques de l'arbre que leur revers:

*Que la tempête traite universellement
Comme elle fait une herbe.*

Car cette strophe moderne s'ordonne selon la même loi du parallélisme du signifiant, dont le concert régit la primitive geste slave et la poésie chinoise la plus raffinée. Comme il se voit dans le commun mode de l'étant où sont choisis l'arbre et l'herbe, pour qu'y adviennent les signes de contradiction du: dire "Non!" et du: traiter comme, et qu'à travers le contraste catégorique du particularisme de la *superbe* à l'*universellement* de sa réduction, s'achève dans la condensation de la tête et de la tempête l'indiscernable étincellement de l'instant éternel.

[But it is enough to listen to poetry — as was undoubtedly the case with F. de Saussure — for a polyphony to make itself heard and for all discourse to appear laid out along the various staves of a musical score. In fact, there is no signifying chain which does not subtend, as though attached to the punctuation of each of its units, all the relevant contexts articulated vertically, so to speak, in respect of this point. In such a manner, we shall see by citing our word "tree" once again — this time not as an isolated noun but at the boundary-point of one of these punctuations — that it crosses the bar of the Saussurian algorithm not only through the fact that the word "bar" is its anagram (barre → arbre). For broken down into the twofold spectrum of its vowels and consonants, it recalls along with the rubber and the plane tree the significations of strength and majesty which it possesses according to our flora. Tapping all the symbolic contexts where it occurs in the Hebrew of the Bible, it sets up on a leafless mound the shadow of the cross. Then it is reduced to the capital Y of the sign of dichotomy which, were it not for the image adorning a book of heraldry, would owe nothing to a tree however genealogical it is said to be. Circulatory tree, tree of life in the cerebellum, tree of Saturn or of Diana, crystals precipitated in a tree conducting lightning, is it your countenance which traces our destiny in the tortoise-shell heated by a fire, or your irradiation which gives rise to that slow mutation of being from the unnameable night in the *hen panta* of language?

*No! says the Tree. It says: No! in the sparking
Of its proud head*

lines which we consider as legitimately understandable in terms of the tree's harmonics as are their continuation:

*Which the storm treats as universally
As it does the grass.*

This modern verse is arranged according to the same law of the signifier's parallelism which harmoniously governs both the primitive Slavic epic and the most refined Chinese poetry. This is apparent from the selection of the tree and the grass from a common mode of existence so that the signs of contradiction — saying “No!” and treating as — may occur there, and that through the categorial contrast of the particularity of *proud* with the *universally* of its reduction may be accomplished in the condensation of the head (*tête*) and the storm (*tempête*) the indiscernible sparkling of the eternal instant].

Lacan: 1966: 503–504.

A satisfactory understanding of these two passages is perhaps to be realized only after completion of the analysis which they demand, though even before it the reader may detect with what ingenuity they interconnect the topics of harmony and signification. This interconnection represented in ancient times and still represents in the modern era a certain profound intuition. So it easily justifies its own exploitation in a discussion which is both historical and speculative. But since one could argue that what is interconnected with signification is nowadays structure rather than harmony, some observations on this further topic are worth inserting as preface to any commentary arising from the two passages themselves.

The notion of “structure”¹ can be interpreted ontologically or semantically — that is, with the structured terms corresponding to existent things or to semantic properties² — and in modern times it is the second viewpoint which has predominated.³ Why? Undoubtedly because structure itself is seen to be significant and signification itself to be structured.

Considering it initially from a pre-semiotic angle⁴, we can say that the modern account of structure has a minimalist component. Structure is here understood as a relation between 2 terms such that each exists through or is known through the other⁵, this relation — since there are only 2 terms involved — being best characterized as “opposition”⁶. The modern account of structure can also be said to have a maximalist element. Here, structure is conceived as a relation between n terms such that each exists through or is known through all the others⁷, this relation — since there are now n terms involved — being best characterized as “difference”.⁸ That both varieties of structure involve relations between terms such that each exists through or is known through the other(s) is the reason why structure in general can be said to depend more on its relation than on its related terms.⁹

Yet structure is often viewed as equivalent to signification, because its underlying relation, seen primarily in the form of difference-in-sameness, is itself identified with the significant. In fact, signification can only arise from the relation of difference-in-sameness. For example, where two terms differ as the presence and absence of some determination, the difference is significant on one condition: that both the presence and absence of that determination are combined with the presence of a further determination. Conversely, signification cannot arise from the relation of difference alone. The apparent suggestion of Derrida that this is possible depends on certain further assumptions: i. that the two terms differing as presence and absence of a determination can be treated as a single term in violation of the law of contradiction — the difference therefore providing its own sameness — and ii. that the two terms differing as presence and absence of a determination can be combined with a third term which is left unexpressed, such assumptions being integrated easily into the polysemous discourse of “différance”.¹⁰ In short, since the underlying relation, seen primarily in the form of difference-in-sameness, can be identified with signification, structure itself may be viewed as equivalent to the significant.

But Eco has criticized the linguist Jakobson for describing two different things as “structures”: a set of differential elements which are not meaningful in themselves — viz. the phonemic units —, and a set of differential elements correlated with another set of differential elements and becoming meaningful through that correlation — viz. the phonemic units correlated with semantic components — ; whereas Eco himself prefers to call the former a “structure” and the latter a “code”.¹¹ Such criticism which implies the possibility of dissociating structure and signification conceals a complex sequence of premisses. 1. Relation is difference while correlation is difference-in-sameness; 2. Only correlation produces meaning; 3. Structure is relation while code is correlation; and 4. Only code involves meaning. Now it is perhaps justifiable to argue that structure implies relation or difference (= 3) and that meaning implies correlation or difference-in-sameness (= 2). Yet it does not follow that structure can be non-meaningful. Two things differ in possessing-not possessing some property with respect to their simultaneous possession of a further property: e.g. /b/ and /p/ differ in being voiced-unvoiced with respect to their simultaneous status as bilabially plosive. In other words, this relation is itself *co-relative* in nature.

Considering it from a post-semiotic angle,¹² we can therefore say that the modern analysis of structure has as its minimalist component: a *sig-*

nifying relation between 2 terms such that each exists through or is known through the other, this relation — given that there are only 2 terms involved — being describable as “signifying opposition”. The modern analysis of structure can also be said to have as its maximalist element: a *signifying* relation between n terms such that each exists through or is known through all the others, this relation — given that there are now n terms involved being describable as “signifying difference”.

However, if there is a functional equivalence between structure and signification, one should not assume a similar equivalence between structure and sign. This is especially the case when the latter is understood from the orthodox Saussurian viewpoint as that union between acoustic image = signifier and concept = signified on which oral language is founded.¹³ In fact, the non-equivalence between structure and sign in this sense was demonstrated by some of the best critical writing of the 1970s.

An illustration of this tendency is provided by an argument of Kristeva:

1. She argues initially for replacement of the unity of sign by the plurality of “network”.¹⁴ Whereas signs or single vertical relations between terms have been the object of conventional semiotics¹⁵ — especially those linking the Saussurian signifiers and signifieds — networks or pluralities of vertical-horizontal relations between terms must be the object of its regenerate counterpart.¹⁶ In accordance with Saussure’s own teaching about anagrams,¹⁷ these networks of vertical-horizontal relations must not only be studied but also produced¹⁸ as models of vertical-horizontal relations.

2. The models or “paragrams”¹⁹ constitute formalizations of relations²⁰ arising within texts, between texts, or within and between texts.²¹ Within texts, they may contain varying numbers of relations: a comparatively large number, a comparatively moderate number, or a comparatively small number.²² Between texts, the paragrams may exhibit various types of relation: linking writer to reader, linking writer to anterior text, linking reader to anterior text, or linking writer to reader and to anterior text.²³ Within and between texts, they may embody other types of relation: linking phonemic or phonemic to non-phonemic units, linking semantic or semantic to non-semantic units, or linking syntactic or syntactic to non-syntactic units.²⁴

3. These quasi-mathematical²⁵ models are also to be understood as dynamic in contrast to the staticity of traditional notions of “form”,²⁶ and infinite in contrast to the finitude of traditional ideas of “system”.²⁷ How-

ever, the presence of these two characteristics is particularly associated with a further refinement of the theory.

4. The models or paragrams constituting formalizations of relations arising within, between, or within and between what are now styled “phano-texts” exist in relation to another level of linguistic functioning now labelled “geno-text”.²⁸ Geno-text can be contrasted with phano-text as productive to communicative,²⁹ as signifier to signified,³⁰ and — in a spatial analogy — as depth to surface.³¹ Corresponding to an apparatus of signifying practices in general,³² the geno-text may also be defined negatively as neither transcendent object³³ nor transcendent thought³⁴ and positively as both plurality³⁵ and totality.³⁶ Corresponding to any individual printed text,³⁷ a phano-text may also be described as that object of structural semantics³⁸ whose fundamental unit is the signifying ensemble.³⁹ Geno-text has a relation to phano-text which is materially implicative,⁴⁰ activated in the process of reading,⁴¹ and forming a point of intersection — another spatial image⁴² — called the “signifying differential”.

5. Kristeva argues ultimately for replacement of the unity of sign by the plurality of a “signifying differential”⁴³ although aspects of the unity of sign are preserved.⁴⁴ This signifying differential — which underlies all the vertical-horizontal relations between terms:⁴⁵ that is, in their dynamic extension from the word-sign to the infinite signifier,⁴⁶ all the semic articulations of homonymy, synonymy,⁴⁷ etc. — is the object of a regenerate semiotics.⁴⁸ The signifying differential owes something to the notion of distinctive features in Prague linguistic theory⁴⁹ and to that of the signifying chain in Lacanian psychoanalysis,⁵⁰ although dispensing with the former’s assumption of fixed opposition and with the latter’s of fundamental units.

According to this argument, although there may be a functional equivalence between structure and signification — in the sense of signifying differential⁵¹ — one should not assume a similar equivalence between structure and sign. The same conclusion emerges when the latter is considered not just from the Saussurian viewpoint as the union between acoustic image and concept⁵² but in the variety of its traditional philosophical guises. In fact, the non-equivalence between structure and sign in general is the only assumption which makes this historical variation intelligible.

A typology of earlier theories might be sketched in the following way:

The minimalist post-semiotic structure discussed earlier⁵³ provides the starting-point. This structure is analyzable into a. referent, b. relation, and

c. *relatum*⁵⁴ or else — with caution against misinterpretation in Saussurian terms — into a. *signifier*, b. *signification*, and c. *signified*⁵⁵ or else — using language less redolent of Saussure — into a. *significatory referent*, b. *significatory relation*, and c. *significatory relatum*. It is easy to demonstrate that most philosophical theories of the sign have operated with this underlying signifying structure, such accounts differing among themselves only 1. according to their mode of realizing the units a, b, and c; and 2. according to their selection among the units a, b, and c to be realized. In case 1, the units may be treated as ontological, conceptual, or linguistic.⁵⁶ For example, Peirce's *representamen*⁵⁷ is an ontological realization of a; the Saussurian *signifier* and Hjelmslev's "substance of expression"⁵⁸ its conceptual realization. Hjelmslev's "form of expression"⁵⁹ is a linguistic realization of a. The Hjelmslevian sign-function⁶⁰ is a linguistic realization of b. Frege's *referent*⁶¹ is an ontological realization of c; the Saussurian *signified* and Hjelmslev's "substance of content"⁶² its conceptual realization. Hjelmslev's "form of content"⁶³ is a linguistic realization of c. In case 2, such units may be combined in dyads or triads.⁶⁴ For example, Saussure combines *signifier* and *signified* in a dyad of conceptually realized a + conceptually realized c; Hjelmslev *substance of expression* and *substance of content* in a dyad of conceptually realized a + conceptually realized c.⁶⁵ Peirce combines *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant* in a triad of conceptually realized a + ontologically realized c + conceptually realized c.⁶⁶ Since all these philosophical theories of the sign have operated with different modes of realizing the structural units and different selections among the structural units to be realized,⁶⁷ it is obvious that the sign corresponds to a particular manifestation of the general signifying structure rather than to that signifying structure itself.

Two further aspects of this signifying structure should be stressed. First, the minimal structure is always expandable since each of its terms is itself a relation between two further terms and each of those further terms itself another relation, etc. — hence arises the maximal structure mentioned earlier.⁶⁸ Secondly, the maximal structure is always contractible since any of its relations is itself one term of a further relation and any of those further relations itself another term, etc. Such infinite expansion and contraction through the reciprocal convertibility of relation and term is easy to visualize when the units are linguistic, more difficult when they are conceptual, and most difficult when they are ontological in nature.⁶⁹

This understanding of a signifying structure has been criticized perhaps most articulately by Eco.⁷⁰ However, his main arguments that, since a pre-

sence is always a non-relational element, a signifying structure opposing a presence to an absence cannot be constituted by relation alone; and that, since a signifying structure by definition opposes a signifier to a signified, the idea of such a structure as consisting of signifiers alone is incoherent, fail to convince. To the first criticism one can reply that only a presence with respect to the given signifying structure is required; with respect to another structure that same presence is reducible to a relation. Furthermore, relation cannot be treated simply as a binary opposition like 0/1. The second criticism can be countered by saying that only a signified with respect to that specific signifying structure is necessary; with respect to another structure that same signified is conceivable as a signifier.⁷¹ Moreover, a signified in the narrow sense of concept prior to language can certainly be ruled out.

As originally suggested, the notion of “structure” can be interpreted ontologically or semantically — where the structured terms correspond to existent things or to semantic properties.⁷² Although in modern times it is the second approach which has been dominant, in the ancient and medieval worlds the two approaches were pursued concurrently with the second dependent on the first.⁷³ Our project is therefore to employ the modern semantic notion of structure to interpret both the ancient ontological and the ancient semantic notions of structure in an intertextual reading.⁷⁴ But since the corresponding term *structura* is unknown or rare in the relevant passages, we must begin the detailed analysis with its primary surrogate.⁷⁵

Part I: Concord

Chapter 1

Concord in general

1.1 Harmony, signification, and the structure of semantic fields

Semiotic literature has been marked by a tendency to privilege the “harmonic”.⁷⁶ This fact strikes any reader of such material who is not entirely satisfied by following the interplay of diversities but also willing to entertain that *homoion theōrein* [contemplation of similarity] described by Aristotle as the mark of superior intelligence.⁷⁷ The privileging of harmonic elements is illustrated by one modern phonologist’s analogy between the interrelation of phonemes and the articulate sounds representing them and that of values contained in a musical score and their realizations.⁷⁸ In his study of native American mythology, another theorist compares the relations between components of mythical narratives and those between the mythical narratives themselves to an elaborate musical structure.⁷⁹ This is no passing metaphor but an isomorphism systematically developed, since mythology and music are both conceived as linguistic in character. In fact, a threefold comparison is proposed between articulate speech at one extreme and musical language at the other with mythical expression occupying an intermediate position. But in noting all these tendencies it is important not to reinvent the wheel. That ideas emerging at a particular point in time correspond with others prevalent during earlier periods of human history can easily be obscured through modifications of the conceptual contexts in which these ideas are presented. We must not forget such similar privilegings of harmonic elements as the medieval theologian’s analogy between the interrelation of musical sounds and the silences punctuating them and that of substances comprising the created order and their privations.⁸⁰

An attempt follows to explore something diffused through a major segment of literary history which has previously eluded interpretation: the appearance of the lexeme “harmony” and the activation of certain of its semes in conjunction with the lexeme “signification” and the activation of some of its semes in medieval philosophical texts.⁸¹ Given that they are not logical universals capable of abstraction from some particularity, the

semantic objects “harmony” and “signification” together with their unfolded properties cannot be comprehended before the textual reading. On the other hand, since they may be treated as *pseudo*-universals for certain limited purposes, these semantic objects and their unfolded properties can perhaps be *pseudo*-summarized in advance of that reading.⁸²

It is generally understood that the significant is a species of relative. For example, dictionary definitions⁸³ of “signification” suggest a relation of something present to something absent leading to communication, where the present element is a conventional token or more specifically a linguistic item.⁸⁴ ideas reappearing in that technical definition of “sign” — which has been debated in linguistic and semiotic literature from Saussure onwards⁸⁵ — as containing the three aspects of signifier, signified, and signification.⁸⁶ It is also obvious, though less frequently discussed, that the harmonic is a species of relative. Thus, dictionary definitions⁸⁷ of “harmony” suggest a relation of some quantity to another quantity leading to pleasure, where the two quantities are parts of a whole or more specifically musical pitches in a chord.⁸⁸

That the significant and the harmonic are different species of relative is a statement to which one may quickly agree, and there is abundant testimony in medieval philosophical texts to the drawing of this conclusion. That the significant and the harmonic are a *single* species of relative is a more contentious matter, although evidence for the drawing of this further conclusion by medieval writers is no less abundant.

What seems to have occurred was the transformation of a logical into a semiotic principle. The latter assumes that if two semantic objects contain a sufficient number of properties in common, they may be treated as identical, notwithstanding their actual positions within the logical hierarchy of genus and species.⁸⁹ For the significant and the harmonic this sufficiency was achieved through their common properties of relativity and ternarity.

In many texts, harmony is treated as a ternary relation describable as equality, inequality, and harmony itself. This complex relation can arise through 1. the addition of components, 2. the complementarity of relations, 3. the constancy of ratios, or 4. the substitution of properties, examples of the first being provided by A. the theory of versification and of the second by B. the reconciliation of good and evil in the providential order. In as many texts, signification is handled as a ternary relation describable as sameness, difference, and harmony itself. This complex relation can occur between 5. signifier, signified, and signification,

6. mediated signified, unmediated signified, and signification, or 7. signified, signifier, and interpreter, examples of the first being supplied by C. the reconciliation of negative and affirmative in the divine naming and of the second by D. the theory of symbols. Finally, in a few texts the connection between harmony and signification is strengthened by a singular property of harmony as such: a self-contradiction which generates and is sustained by a semantic shift.⁹⁰

So the significant and the harmonic are treated as identical, irrespective of their actual positions within an *Arbor Porphyriana*, because of their common semantic properties of relativity and ternarity. It is important not to forget that a logical principle has been replaced by a semiotic one.⁹¹ Otherwise, many aspects of the broader complex of semes associated with the two primary lexemes will not be understood.

As seems likely, the broader complex of semes⁹² conferring an implicit structure on the "harmony-signification" discussion of the medieval period includes the following items: "absolute-relative", "binary-ternary", "simple-complex", "existent-understood", and "dialectical-mathematical". Eventually more discussion will be needed on the reasons for isolating precisely these.⁹³ For the present, we should merely note: first, the list comprises items ultimately structured in a semantic field rather than an ontological hierarchy; secondly, their interrelation follows not a single but a variety of patterns; third, the list comprises items entirely structured according to textual use rather than abstract reflection.

1. The status of "absolute", "relative", etc. as elements⁹⁴ structured in a semantic field will be underlined by our handling of them neither as concepts referring to things, nor as words referring to things, nor as concepts referring to other concepts, but as words referring to other words. This constitutes a purely intensional semantics⁹⁵ dealing with the interrelation of semantic objects through the presence of common semantic properties. Yet in the primary texts, the semantic elements distinguished by our analysis will sometimes be treated as concepts or things and sometimes not so treated by the authors themselves. So the purely intensional semantics operates as a sort of zero-degree in comparison with which the departures of medieval writers into psychology or ontology⁹⁶ can be measured.

2. The variety of patterns governing the interrelation of items in the list is best explained by considering some of those models for the organization of semantic fields currently under discussion.⁹⁷

A first model is based on what are termed “family resemblances”.⁹⁸ As applied to the present context, this envisages within a given lexeme an interrelation of sememes through the possession of common semes so that, by beginning with a sememe S_1 containing the semes s_1, s_2, s_3, s_4 and passing through a series including the sememe S_3 which contains as semes s_3, s_4, s_5, s_6 , we reach a sememe S_5 containing the semes s_5, s_6, s_7, s_8 .⁹⁹ The series contains sameness between sememes S_1 and S_2 through the presence of semes s_2, s_3, s_4 in both S_1 and S_2 , mediation between sememes S_1 and S_5 through sememe S_3 ’s possession of semes s_4 and s_5 , and difference between sememes S_4 and S_5 through the presence of seme s_4 in S_4 and seme s_8 in S_5 , and so forth.¹⁰⁰

The triad of sign, object (or ground), and interpretant in Peirce’s semiotics provides a second model.¹⁰¹ Here the “sign” is something which stands to somebody for something.¹⁰² It produces in the mind of that person an equivalent or more developed sign called the “interpretant” of the first sign.¹⁰³ The sign stands for something which is its “object”.¹⁰⁴ Yet it stands for that object not in all respects but in reference to an idea called the “ground” of the sign.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the interpretant must have a second triadic relation. In this, the sign’s relation to its object becomes the interpretant’s object and produces another interpretant to this relation. Likewise, the second interpretant will have a third triadic relation. In this, the interpretant’s relation to its object becomes the second interpretant’s object and produces yet another interpretant to this relation.¹⁰⁶ According to Peirce’s theory, the process of interpreting signs continues indefinitely.

For present purposes, it is especially the nature of the interpretant which needs clarification. This emerges not as something physical and perhaps not even as something psychic, but rather as a set of semantic properties.¹⁰⁷ Assuming the single triad as described, a second group of semantic properties will function as the interpretant of a first set by selecting from these first properties. Assuming the multiplication of such triads, a third group of semantic properties will function as the interpretant of the second set by selecting from these second properties, and so on.¹⁰⁸ In both these cases, selection may occur in accordance with sameness or difference of properties. Sameness between two groups of semantic properties means that these properties are named by the same interpretant. Difference between two sets of semantic properties means that the properties are named by different interpretants.¹⁰⁹

A third model consists of what is termed the “semiotic square”.¹¹⁰ According to this, a semantic element should be viewed as possessing

a special type of relationality which permits it to be analyzed into the semes s_1 and s_2 of a first, the semes s_2 and \bar{s}_1 of a second, the semes \bar{s}_1 and \bar{s}_2 of a third, and the semes \bar{s}_2 and s_1 of a fourth semantic axis.¹¹¹ In addition, each of the four semes resulting from this process may be combinable with each of the four semes resulting from analysis of another semantic element.¹¹² The relations emerging between different pairs of semes are now defined more precisely as contrariety on the axes between s_1 and s_2 and between \bar{s}_2 and \bar{s}_1 ; as contradiction on the axes between s_1 and \bar{s}_1 and between s_2 and \bar{s}_2 ; and as implication on the axes between \bar{s}_2 and s_1 and between \bar{s}_1 and s_2 .¹¹³ In theory, similar relations emerge between the further pairs of semes which interact through criteria like compatibility or incompatibility with the relations between the original pairs.¹¹⁴

These three models for the organization of semantic fields can be applied to the list of items distinguished earlier in various ways. Some items may be understood as properties entering into a family-resemblance structure of overlapping samenesses and differences or divided into such a structure, some as constituting pairs of terms whose relation is comprehended through a third term¹¹⁵ or as constituted by such terms, and some as properties entering into a square pattern of contrary, contradictory, and implicated¹¹⁶ or divided into such a pattern. In certain situations two or three of these models can be applied simultaneously or in overlap to a given semantic phenomenon.¹¹⁷

3. The status of “absolute“, “relative“, etc. as elements structured according to textual use¹¹⁸ will be revealed through the complex interdependence between the language of the primary sources and our meta-language relative to the latter. But at this point, some new factors must be introduced into the discussion.

1.2 The schemata of writing and reading

If it is true that the approach to the history of philosophy in any period called “deconstruction” is a meditation on writing,¹¹⁹ it is equally true that an approach to the history of philosophy during the Middle Ages of any description is such a meditation. This is because philosophical activity was understood to be primarily exegetical in character during the medieval period, and for medievals and moderns alike exegetical activity focusses attention on the nature of writing as such.

One justification for the role of interpretation in philosophical method might nowadays run as follows: if philosophy involves an expansion rather than a reduction in language's everyday semantic functions, this expansion is promoted most readily by a system of durable signs.¹²⁰ Moreover, if philosophy is expressed more fully through discourse in written than through that in oral form, this written form is comprehended most fully by a systematic method of exegesis. In the Middle Ages, certainly, the role of interpretation in philosophical method was justified along different lines: i.e. that since the written text of the Bible was the ultimate source of philosophical truth, likewise other written texts — themselves interpreting the Bible — were secondary sources of that truth. Nevertheless, this reasoning led in turn to a provocative conception of the exegetical situation itself where the individual who writes is also the reader of an anterior text, that individual reading in the process of writing and writing in the process of reading.¹²¹ Another justification for the role of interpretation in philosophical method today might therefore take the same form: we can write a philosophical text and also be readers of its earlier counterparts, reading those texts in the process of writing and writing that philosophy in the process of reading.¹²²

Given that our project constitutes such a reciprocal interaction of interpreting text and interpreted texts, certain features of its presentation are appropriate. For example, the structure of the ensuing discussion as a whole will mirror that of certain primary sources; partial schemata used in that discussion will parallel other patterns arising in the original sources. Such intellectual categories are neither simply established by medieval writing, nor simply projected from modern reading,¹²³ but generated through the indissoluble combination of the two.

Forming the structure of the entire discussion is a threefold division of topics into "logical", "harmonic", and "semiotic".¹²⁴ The triadicity as such subsists in reciprocal dependence with triadicities underlying the narrative structures of many primary sources, although the nature of the triadicity depends reciprocally on a more convoluted semantic structure detectable in those sources. Its topography can be summarized as follows:

- i. The lexemes "harmony" and "signification" both contain the semes "relative" and "ternary".
- ii. The lexeme "relation" contains the semes "binary" and "ternary" as well as other semes coordinate with the latter, while the semes

- “binary” and “ternary” are contained by the lexeme “relation” as well as by other lexemes coordinate with the latter.¹²⁵
- iii. The lexemes “harmony” and “signification” both contain the seme “relative” but no other seme coordinate with the latter, while the seme “relative” is contained by both the lexemes “harmony” and “signification” as well as by other lexemes coordinate with the latter.
 - iv. The lexemes “harmony” and “signification” are semiotically identical with one another.

Inspection of this complex semantic structure furnished by the sources reveals three unfolded lexemes to be analytically useful — a. Relation (L) + binary (s), b. Harmony (L) + relative (s) + ternary (s), c. Signification (L) + relative (s) + ternary (s) — which we shall henceforth call “logical”, “harmonic”, and “semiotic” respectively.¹²⁶

Regarding the partial schemata used in our discussion, some more extended preliminary remarks are necessary.

Most prominent among these is the schema of opposition. The enormous proliferation of oppositional schemata during the last thirty years in semiotic literature need not be described here. It is enough to note that different types of opposition formulated in phonological research¹²⁷ — for example, the privative (where two terms have an identical element and one term has an element missing in the other),¹²⁸ the equipollent (where two terms have an identical element and each term has an element missing in the other),¹²⁹ the bilateral (where two terms have an identical element which is not found in other terms),¹³⁰ and the multilateral (where two terms have an identical element which is found in other terms)¹³¹ — can be discovered in medieval texts and/or applied to their interpretation.¹³² The difficulties of transferring phonological oppositions to the semantic sphere are well known, and are paralleled by those of translating phonological oppositions into the philosophical domain. Nevertheless, it will be useful to think in terms of certain semantic oppositions: especially those of “simple-complex”, “existent-understood”, and “dialectical-mathematical”, when reading the primary sources.

Another prominent schema, or rather type of schema, is the geometrical analogy. It is nowadays common to describe linguistic and semiotic phenomena by using geometrical images, as when the “syntagmatic” plane of language (sequential combination of linguistic items in utterances) and the contrasting “paradigmatic” plane (associative simultaneity of linguistic items in memory) are depicted as horizontal and vertical axes

respectively.¹³³ It is equally viable to treat logical and metaphysical ideas in this manner, although such applications have the peculiarity of increasing both ambiguity and reification. For example, from the simultaneity of certain spatial relations in the diagram:



Figure 1. Reciprocity of relations

one assumes without hesitation the reciprocity of those relations which it depicts.¹³⁴ And given the presence of certain graphic relations in the schema:

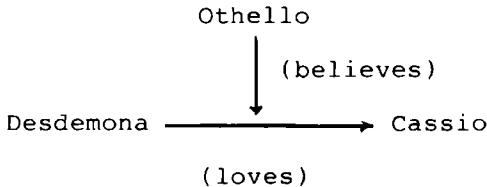


Figure 2. Existence of relations

one assumes with no less hesitation the existence of the relations which are depicted.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, since medieval writers found such images a natural mode of expression, we shall follow that practice in our interpretation of their texts.

Another prominent schema is the square of oppositions already mentioned.¹³⁶ Detailed analysis of its application in semiotic literature of recent years is best deferred until the relevant section of chapter three. For the present, it should merely be noted that a version of that square involving two generations of terms — where each of the four terms taken in sequence is superimposed on the previous term in the sequence (a_1 on \bar{a}_2 , a_2 on a_1 , \bar{a}_1 on a_2 , and \bar{a}_2 on \bar{a}_1) to produce four new combined terms (b_1 , b_2 , \bar{b}_1 , and \bar{b}_2);¹³⁷ and where combinations of earlier contrary and complementary pairs produce the new contrary pairs, of earlier contradictory pairs the new contradictory pairs, and of earlier complementary and contrary pairs the new complementary pairs — can be discerned in medieval texts and/or applied to their interpretation.¹³⁸ It is only to be expected that a combination of oppositions can be utilized less frequently and should be employed with greater caution than any individual opposition in philo-

sophical contexts. However, there will be compelling reasons for articulating the set of semantic elements: creating (a_1), created (a_2), not creating (\bar{a}_1), and not created (\bar{a}_2) together with some of its analogues in reading the primary sources.

If this project indeed constitutes a reciprocal interaction of interpreting text and interpreted texts, one final consequence of importance may perhaps be noted. That the presence of three or more levels of discourse in such a literary phenomenon somewhat reduces the difficulty — which has long bedevilled attempts at formulating a cogent theory of exegesis — of determining precisely how to partition the text under discussion into minimal significant units for purposes of interpretative equation, comparison, or contrast.¹³⁹ When the text being analyzed is not exegetical in character, the segmentation will depend entirely on its interpreter's choice. But when the text itself takes exegetical form, the points at which it passes either between direct quotation and mere paraphrase or between the exegetical and non-exegetical modes themselves will be determinable, provided also that the previous materials are extant. These principles are applied in the interpretations of Augustine and Eriugena which now follow.

1.3 Augustine's understanding of order and concord

Within the tradition of European metaphysics, the work of Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354–430) is rightly seen as a landmark. During the earlier years of his career, Augustine was occupied with the task of assimilating teachings of the pagan Platonic philosophical tradition — represented primarily by Plotinus — and of distancing himself from the influential but deviant Manichaean sect. In pursuing both these aims, it was necessary for him to come to grips with a mathematically-based view of reality to which concepts drawn from harmonics made a significant contribution. This fact is documented by the composition of his first literary work entitled *De pulchro et apto*. The book is no longer extant, although we can gain some impression of its content from remarks in Augustine's later autobiographical *Confessiones* and from the employment of the terms *pulchrum* [beautiful] and *aptum* [fitting] elsewhere in his writings. That the second term is etymologically connected with the Latin word *apere* indicating the joining of two things is important. This verb performs a linguistic function analogous to that of the Greek verb *harmonozein*. The latter in its turn is etymologically linked with the word *harmonia* which signifies the joining of

sounds in music. There is no doubt that Augustine was aware of this bilingual constellation of meanings since he exploits it quite systematically in his earlier works.¹⁴⁰ Considering the nature of his Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophical education, it would have been more surprising had he avoided it.

Nevertheless, when looking for evidence of harmonic language in Augustinian philosophy, we cannot be restricted to the occurrence of *harmonia* and its cognates. Employed here is an intimidating multitude of terms whose overlapping meanings can only be comprehended by painstaking study of the different contexts. Within this network, the relation between *ordo* [order] and *concordia* [concord] provides the starting-point most convenient from the methodological angle.

In his early work *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, Augustine distinguishes between the views of the two religious groups especially by criticizing the Manichaeans' negative attitude to the contents of the sensible or corporeal world. Sensing the conflict with the book of *Genesis*' explicit teaching that the created world is good, he underlines the positive features of physical objects:

Haec vero quae tendunt esse, ad ordinem tendunt: quem cum fuerint consecuta, ipsum esse consequuntur, quantum id creatura consequi potest. Ordo enim ad convenientiam quamdam quod ordinat redigit. Nihil est autem esse, quam unum esse. Itaque in quantum quidque unitatem adipiscitur, in tantum est. Unitatis est enim operatio, convenientia et concordia, qua sunt in quantum sunt, ea quae composita sunt: nam simplicia per se sunt, quia una sunt; quae autem non sunt simplicia, concordia partium imitantur unitatem, et in tantum sunt in quantum assequuntur.

[Those things which tend towards being, tend towards order. When they have achieved it, they achieve being itself, so far as a creature can achieve it. For order reduces that which it orders to a kind of agreement. But being is nothing other than unity. Therefore, to the extent that each thing obtains unity, it also exists. The operation of unity consists in the agreement and concord through which composite things exist in so far as they exist. Simple things exist through themselves because they are unified. But things which are not simple imitate unity through the concord of their parts. They exist to the extent that they achieve it].¹⁴¹

A text such as this presents many difficulties to a conceptually innocent reader, although its meaning becomes tolerably clear when read against the historical background of Greek Neoplatonism. Augustine adapts a classical ontology in envisaging on one side, a metaphysically transcen-

dent (non-spatial and atemporal) creator God and on the other, a created world characterized primarily by its dynamic tendency towards the creator. In marking out this structure, a number of terms — being, unity, order, concord — are connected with one another through various meanings which they share. An obvious difficulty for the reader lies in deciding whether these terms apply to the creator God, the creature, or both. This can be allayed by noting that in early Augustinism such terms apply simultaneously in all these senses not through any conceptual imprecision but in order to capture the peculiar nature of the relation between creative and created being. However, in the present passage being and unity seem to refer primarily to the creator and in a derivative sense to his creation: they are properties which he somehow transmits. The status of order seems more ambivalent in the scheme. By contrast, concord is applied specifically to the creature in the text, since it results from a certain limitation in its tendency towards divinity. We can perhaps summarize the argument now by saying that the created world strives towards being and unity, that being is equivalent to unity, and that both terms characterize the divine cause. Created things also have tendencies towards order and concord, order somehow being the precondition of concord, although both arise in the course of the creature's striving. Finally, the relation between the two pairs of goals is made explicit in the depiction of the creative process itself. The creator God, as unity, creates by imparting of himself in a kind of downward projection of divine power. Created things strive upwards towards that unity, but can only capture it so far as their composite status permits: that is as concord of their parts.

This compressed but elaborate theory, which recalls the Plotinian and Porphyrian teaching about the *proodos* [procession] and *epistrophē* [reversion] of reality, is important for us in several ways. In the first place, it shows how concord lies at the heart of created being itself and secondly, it signals the association of concord and order. In the writings of Augustine from the earliest period until the end of his life, there is a continuous preoccupation with the philosophical notion of "order" — he even devoted a dialogue explicitly to this question (*De ordine*). Although the topic has been much discussed by modern scholars, we should briefly review the evidence for it in other Augustinian texts.¹⁴²

In a general sense, order signifies that multiplicity of the created world which corresponds to the unfolding of divine providence. The implications of this notion of multiplicity are worked out with some care by Augustine who in different contexts shows how created things are characterized

by equality, difference, and opposition to one another. The dramatic conclusion of *De musica* is that God's providence distributes numbers through all creation. Numbers begin from unity, are beautiful through *aequalitas* [equality] or similarity, and are connected by order. Created things likewise desire unity, strive to achieve the greatest similarity to themselves, and seek salvation in a definite spatial or temporal order. Furthermore, all things must be made by a unitary principle, through a form *aequalis* [equal] and similar to its goodness, and through the goodness by which the two are connected. This intricate analogy between the number series, the created world, and the trinitarian God links the notions of order and equality in all three cases.¹⁴³ The association between the concepts of difference and order emerges from the passage in *De civitate Dei* where various senses in which peace can be found among created things are explained: that is in the parts of the physical body or the faculties of the soul, among the dwellers in an earthly community or the saints who comprise the celestial city, and so forth. In all these instances, we see that order *parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens* [which assigns appropriate positions to equal and unequal things].¹⁴⁴ The notions of order and opposition are linked in a section of the anti-Manichaean polemic of *Contra Faustum*. Against the thesis that the presence of *contraria* [opposites] like white and black, hot and cold, sweet and bitter in the visible world reveals the operation of antagonistic primary causes: God and Hyle, another viewpoint is urged. Since a sensory quality repellent to one creature may be attractive to another, it is rather the power of order which is apparent. Even the members of the race of darkness envisaged by Manichaean mythology find that nourishment which sustains them sweet, although both they and their food are products of the negative principle of Hyle in the universe.¹⁴⁵ These three texts drawn from both earlier and later phases in Augustine's career provide the materials necessary to understand his conception of order. Clearly it represents the multiplicity of creation in which each thing has a specific status determined by equality, difference, and opposition to others.

However, the Augustinian notion of order implies not only that the world is structured but that its structure has a positive ethical value. This aspect is underlined by the role played by order within interpretations of the Scriptural text: *Wisdom* 11. 21. That God created the world in *mensura* [measure], *numerus* [number], and *pondus* [weight] is an idea which forms the starting-point of extended philosophical discussions.¹⁴⁶ Given

that the Scriptural teaching itself originated in the context of Hellenistic Pythagoreanism, the exploration of what might be termed the quasi-mathematical connotations of divine providence was not inappropriate.¹⁴⁷ The clearest evidence of such development occurs in passages where order appears in a grouping of terms the first two members of which correspond to those in the Scriptural triad.¹⁴⁸ This pattern is mirrored in cases where the same notion occurs inside a triadic grouping in juxtaposition with the first member only of the Scriptural set.¹⁴⁹ Similar thinking is revealed in passages where order occurs in a grouping of terms of which none is identical with the members of the Scriptural triad.¹⁵⁰ The importance of the superimposition of these patterns in Augustine's works is considerable, since their combined effect is to remind us of two major themes of his philosophical reflection from the earliest years: one pagan and one Christian.¹⁵¹ The pagan element is the Neoplatonic triad of first principles with whose implications he was wrestling at the time of his conversion. He could have known from reading Plotinus' and Porphyry's writings that the third principle — Universal Soul — was constructed mathematically according to the teaching of the Platonic *Timaeus*. The other element is the Christian Trinity whose third Person was at the same period in his career the most difficult to conceive. Yet he knew that the Holy Spirit was somehow responsible for the unfolding of divine providence in created things.

It would be unnecessary and perhaps tedious to describe in detail the repetition of triadic motifs in the writings of Augustine. Suffice it to say that the frequent appearance of order as the third term in such configurations points to the importance of the notion as a synonym for the unfolding of divine providence. However, something should be said about the association between triadic schemata and the notion of concord. This link has emerged *en passant* in several of the texts already considered, yet there is at least one in which the issue is brought into the centre of focus.

Augustine's *De musica* concludes with an account of the operation of the Trinity in creation where the numerical theories developed earlier in the treatise are put to extensive use. That this divine power extends even to the lowest reaches of the visible world is shown by considering the element of earth:

Quae primo generalem speciem corporis habet, in qua unitas quaedam et numeri et ordo esse convincitur. Namque ab aliqua impertili nota in longitudinem necesse est porrigatur quaelibet eius quantumvis parva

particula, tertiam latitudinem sumat, et quartam altitudinem qua corpus impletur. Unde ergo iste a primo usque ad quartum progressionis modus? Unde et aequalitas quoque partium, quae in longitudine et latitudine et altitudine reperitur? Unde correlativeitas quaedam (ita enim malui analogiam vocare), ut quam rationem habet longitudo ad impertilem notam, eandem latitudo ad longitudinem, et latitudinem habeat altitudo? Unde, quaeso, ista, nisi ab illo summo atque aeterno principatu numerorum et similitudinis et aequalitatis et ordinis veniunt? Atqui haec si terrae ademeris, nihil erit. Quocirca omnipotens Deus terram fecit, et de nihilo terra facta est. Quid porro? Ipsa species qua item a ceteris elementis terra discernitur, nonne et unum aliquid quantum accepit ostendit, et nulla pars eius a toto est dissimilis, et earundem partium connexionem atque concordiam suo genere saluberrimam sedem infimam tenet?

[For this primarily possesses the general form of body in which is proven to be a certain unity, numbers, and order. Each particle of this, however small it may be, must be extended from a partless point into a length. It must assume in third place a width, and in fourth place a height by which the body is completed. Whence comes this mode of progression from the first to the fourth? Whence also the equality of parts which is found in length, width, and height? Whence that certain correlation — for this is my preferred rendering of “analogy” — according to which the proportion between the length and the partless point corresponds to that between width and length, and to that between height and width? Whence, I ask, do these arise except from that supreme and eternal principle of numbers, similarity, equality, and order? If you take these properties away from earth, it will be nothing. So the omnipotent God has made earth, and earth is made from nothing. But one can go further by considering the form itself by which that same earth is distinguished from other elements. Does it not show how much it has received a certain unity? Is it not true that none of its parts is dissimilar to the whole? Does it not hold that lowest position which is salutary for its kind through those same parts’ connection and concord?]¹⁵²

The meaning of the text becomes clear when read in conjunction with the passage cited at the beginning of this section. The background of Neoplatonic ontology is the same — the contrast between the metaphysically transcendent God and spatio-temporal created things — although the present passage gives less and more information on different points. The framework is less elaborate in that the created world in general is replaced by the physical element of earth, and that the created is no longer characterized as dynamically tending towards its creator. Conversely, greater elaboration is shown in the clear demarcation between creative and created being, in the more extensive selection of terminology applied to

the creature: unity, number, equality, similarity, order, and concord, and in the precise geometrical analysis of the creature's concord of parts. However, most important of all is the explicit trinitarian motif which emerges in the final lines. The creative principle confers form on the physical element in a threefold manner reflecting the trinity of its own essence, the conferring of concord being the third moment in this creative act.

Having benefitted from this first encounter with the primary sources, we may perhaps return to the more external perspective for a moment. This allows us to perceive in the frequent substitution of the notion of order for that of concord by these texts a semiotic identification between the two lexemes. Moreover, the corresponding substitution of the notion of concord for that of order within the treatment of the triadic principle allows us to approach the semiotic identification from the other direction. Yet the situation is also complicated by other factors. Association of the concept of order with those of equality, difference, and opposition can be understood as the actualization of three primary semes within the lexeme "order". Association of concord with the concepts of equality and proportion can be understood as the actualization of two primary semes within the lexeme "concord".

Two points should be made about these groupings of terms which I shall for convenience henceforth call the "isotopies of order and concord".¹⁵³ In the first place, there is not identity between the meanings of concord and order but merely overlap. It is undeniable that, for Augustine, the term "concord" has certain senses not parallel to those of the term "order". Yet there is certainly a range of meanings within which the two lexemes may be treated as identical. The second point is that in studying the interrelation between concord and order one can begin equally well with the former as with the latter. Augustine does not state that "concord" is the fundamental term in comparison with which the meaning of "order" should be assessed nor the reverse. Furthermore, his practice in employing the terms gives no suggestion of such an arrangement of priorities.

The perspective sketched above is perhaps adequate for viewing the interrelations between the notions of concord, order, equality, difference, proportion, and opposition. But in reading the primary sources it has already become obvious that the meanings of these concepts can only be grasped fully within an even wider range of philosophical terms. Thus, further notions like creating and created without reference to which concord, order, and the rest make little sense must be introduced as secondary semes actualized within the various lexemes. There should be no attempt

to catalogue these additional factors exhaustively, since the possibilities of semiotic implication are immense or even infinite. However, the importance of the division into creating and created being and the subdivision of the latter into proceeding and returning — part of what I shall term the “isotopy of creation” — needs to be underlined. Likewise the division into atemporal + non-spatial and temporal + spatial being and the mediation of the two by non-spatial + temporal being — part of what will be termed the “isotopy of time-space” — cannot be overlooked. Naturally when exploring such further ramifications of terminology, the principles stated earlier concerning identity, overlap, and reciprocity of meanings must be kept in mind.

1.4 Eriugena’s understanding of order and harmony

Almost five centuries separate the creative activities of Augustine and Iohannes Scottus Eriugena (fl. 850–870). Yet there is a considerable degree of similarity between their respective methods and intentions. Eriugena, unlike his predecessor, stood in the presence of a well-established tradition of Christian theological speculation in Latin. His philosophy was uniquely influenced by those Greek patristic writers: Gregory of Nyssa, pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and Maximus the Confessor, to whose translation he must have devoted the labour of many years. Unlike Augustine, the later writer remained most of his life a practising teacher of the secular liberal arts. But despite these differences, the indebtedness of Eriugena towards the greatest philosopher of the early western church is apparent on every page of his writings. Especially, we see him looking back over his shoulder to Augustine’s earlier works: the anti-Manichaean treatises and the dialogues most influenced by Greek Neoplatonism. All this makes it reasonable to approach Eriugena using the framework suggested by the previous analysis of texts.

The topic of order is perhaps less frequently emphasized by the ninth-century writer, although it remains interwoven in the texture of his thought. This is true from the time of his early polemical *De praedestinatione* (850–851), through the period of his masterpiece *Periphyseon* (or *De divisione naturae*), down to that of the *Expositiones in Ierarchiam caelestem* (probably 865–870). Something of a shift of interest is clearly visible between earlier and later works, since the notion of order is expressed increasingly in the languages of mathematics and harmonics.

This is almost the mirror-image of the development which took place during Augustine's career.

For Eriugena also, order signifies the multiplicity of the created world corresponding to the extension of divine providence. In the *Periphyseon*, he explains how the traditional arrangement of the primordial causes — a Christian counterpart of the transcendent Platonic Forms — in terms of more generic and more specific must be understood. This does not signify that the causes were created in the divine essence in some temporal sequence, but that they were brought forth by providence in a certain ineffable and incomprehensible *ordo* [order].¹⁵⁴ Later in the same work comes a remarkable interpretation of creation from nothing in which “nothing” signifies the divine essence as it contains the primordial causes in their state transcending space and time, and “from nothing” the unfolding of the divinity through the emanation of the primordial causes into the realm of multiplicity. According to this view, every *ordo* [order] of natures from the celestial beings to the lowest level of the physical world constitutes a manifestation of the divine, brighter or darker depending on its proximity to the utterly transcendent source of all illumination.¹⁵⁵

So far, Eriugena's argument follows closely along the Augustinian track. Yet in an important passage explaining the classical Platonic theory of participation between different levels of being he moves more resolutely into the region of harmonic imagery.

Omne quod est aut participans aut participatum aut participatio est aut participatum simul et participans. Participatum solummodo est quod nullum superius se participat, quod de summo ac solo omnium principio quod deus est recte intelligitur. Ipsum siquidem omnia quae ab eo sunt participant... Participans vero solummodo est quod supra se naturaliter constitutum participat, a nullo vero infra se posito participatur quoniam infra se nullus ordo naturalis invenitur, sicut sunt corpora quorum participatione nulla rerum subsistit... Cetera vero quaecunque ab uno omnium principio per naturales descensiones gradusque divina sapientia ordinatos usque ad extremitatem totius naturae qua corpora continentur in medio sunt constituta et participantia et participata sunt et vocantur.

[Everything which exists is either participant, or participated, or participation, or simultaneously participated and participant. That which is only participated is that which does not participate in anything above itself. This is understood rightly of the supreme and sole principle of all things, namely God. For all things which derive from him participate in him... That which is only participant is that which participates in something placed naturally