

* Introduction to a Systemic Theory of Meaning *

[Christophe Menant](#) (last update 11 April 2008)

(More is available at "Information and Meaning" <http://cogprints.org/3694/>,
"Information and Meaning in Life, Humans, and Robots" <http://cogprints.org/4531/>)

1) Introduction.

- Information and meanings are present everywhere around us as well as within ourselves.
- Specific studies have been implemented in order to link information and meaning:
 - Semiotics, Biosemiotics
 - Phenomenology
 - Analytic Philosophy, Linguistics
 - Psychology
- No general coverage is available for the notion of meaning.
- We propose to fill this lack by a systemic approach to meaning generation.

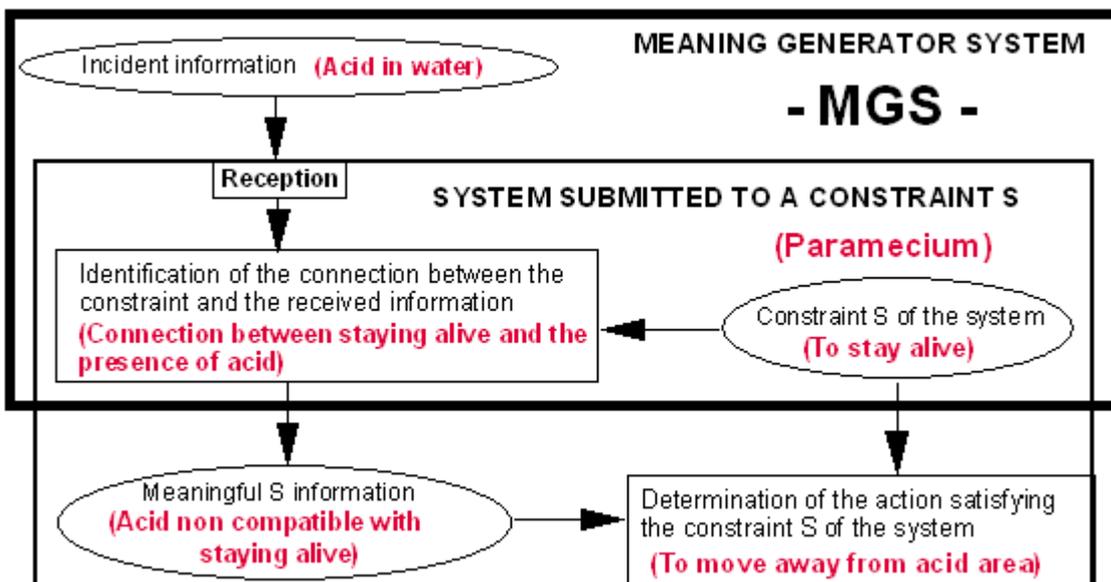
2) Information and Meaning. Meaning Generator System.

- The word "meaning" is most of the time related to the performances of humans.
- The nature of human is unknown ("Hard Problem") => Nature of "meaning" unknown.
- Proposal is to analyse "meaning" at the level of elementary life (paramecium), and to reformulate the results in a systemic approach.
- Definitions and properties of "meaning" and of a "Meaning Generator System" (MGS).

A meaning is a meaningful information that is created by a system submitted to a constraint when it receives an external information that has a connection with the constraint.

The meaning is formed of the connection existing between the received information and the constraint of the system.

The function of the meaning is to participate to the determination of an action that will be implemented in order to satisfy the constraint of the system.



3) MGS Characteristics.

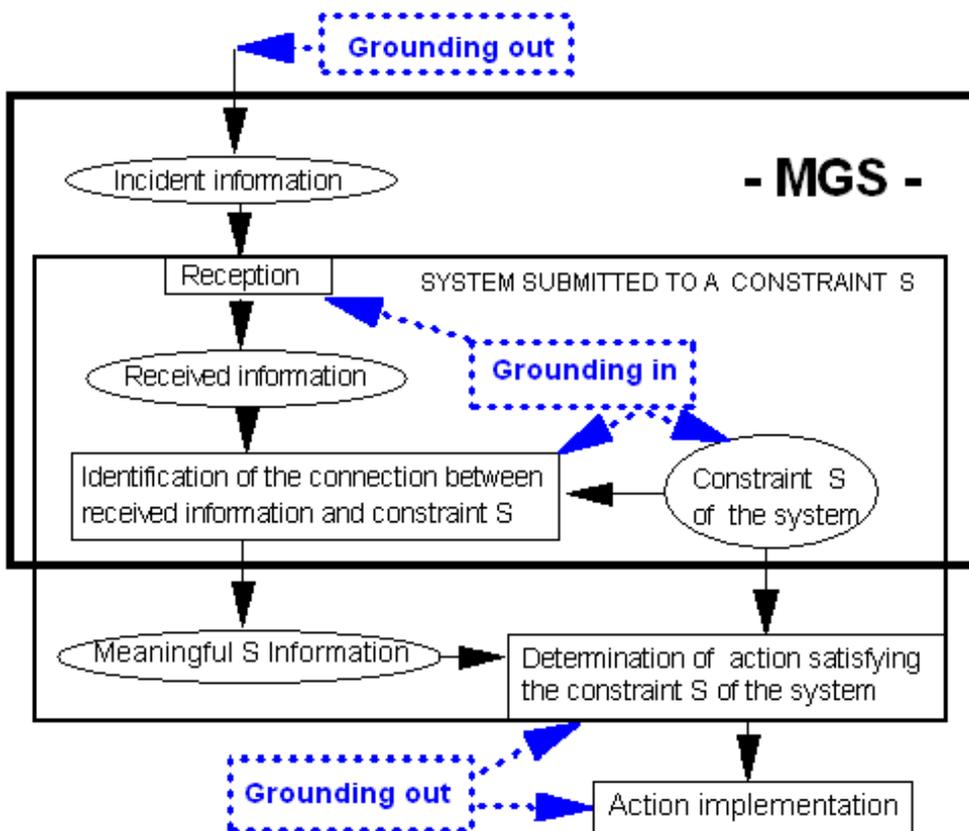
- a) Usable as a building block for higher level systems. Fits with an evolutionary approach.
- b) Dynamically links the characteristics and nature of a system with its environment. Interactivity.
- c) Usable for different systems having different constraints (animals, humans, robots, ...).
- d) Allows for the grounding of the meaning "in" and "out" of the MGS.
- e) Several MGSs can be linked to build up networks of meanings.
- f) Close to a simplified version of the Peircean triadic approach on sign.
- g) Needs some conceptualization of the notions of constraint and autonomy.

4) Transmission of a Meaning.

- a) A meaningful information can be transmitted to other systems and survive to the MGS.
- b) Introduction of "Efficiency of a Meaning" and of "Domain of Efficiency of a Meaning".

5) Grounding of a Meaning.

- a) The MGS approach provides two components for the grounding of a meaningful information generated by a system submitted to a constraint in its environment:
 - Grounding in the MGS by the elements which belong to the MGS.
 - Grounding out of the MGS by the elements located outside of the MGS.
- b) Introduces possibilities for evolutionary groundings by networking of systems.



6) Conclusion and Continuation.

- a) Basic elements for a systemic theory of meaning have been introduced.
 - b) Key notions have been defined (meaning, constraint, MGS, meaning transmission, efficiency of a meaning, groundings of a meaning in/out the MGS).
 - c) Continuation with applications to specific domains (life, human, robots, ..) and extension of the MGS to the notion of representation as built up by a set of meaningful information.
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