

# **ON THE PROCESS OF SIGNIFICATION, OR, HOW DOES MEANING EMERGE?**

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# SIGNIFICATION AND MEANING

- They are not equivalent terms:
  - Even if a sign is signified (e.g./confluent vesicles/), it may still remain meaningless.
  - Meaning is attributed by the receptor, upon an insight regarding a *possible totality* that ***signifies the sign in its context.***

# MEANING IN MEDICINE

- A sign **only** is meaningful when it opens a **semantic field** (a field of possible meanings).
- But that virtual semantic field must be **restricted** when aiming at decision-making and acting.

# EXTENSION-RETRACTION DYNAMICS

- For a sign in the medical context to acquire meaning, it must be defined, qualified and set in a context (extension of denotation and connotation)
- For decision-making, it is necessary to restrict the scope of possibilities to those more likely to be meaningful
- And leading to decisions with the highest probability of therapeutic success

# CONNOTATIVE FIELDS

- Are the fields co/rrelated with a sign
- They don't define the sign, but open ways for its possible meanings, "*that which this sign might signify*"
- The connotations of signs are possible "explanations", modalities of understanding

# SIGNIFICATION AND DENOTATIVE FIELDS

Denotative fields refer to a given sign, incorporating its concrete qualifications, as a definition”

**This something is “this”**

e.g., “confluent vesicles, filled with a clear fluid, on an erythematous background, accompanied by itching, especially in the night”, etc

# DENOTATIVE FIELDS

- Qualification of signs leads to the **extension of the denotative field:**

*This “something”, such as it is now, may be defined as “this and that”*

# DENOTATIVE FIELD, SIGNIFICATION AND MEANING

- The boundary of a denotative field is a ***signification***, but this is still insufficient to establish its ***meaning***
- It is but a description of an isolated phenomenon, an extension and its definition in its actual concretion
- For meaning to emerge, it is necessary a con/figuration, an extension of connotations, i.e. that which might be understood in that “something”

# MODES OF SIGNIFICATION

1. Through definition
2. Through qualification of the sign as a function of modulating axes
3. Through the inclusion of other signs (configurations)
4. Through the extension of the connotative field

# SIGNIFICATION THROUGH DEFINITION

- The first signification is linked to the definition of the sign (translation of the visual sign into a linguistic sign)
  - /VESICLES/
- From the “normal aspect” to a sign in the medical context



# SIGNIFICATION THROUGH QUALIFICATION



- Qualification of the normative sign /vesicles/ into **“these”** vesicles:
  - Confluent
  - On an erythematous background
  - With clear filling

# QUALIFICATION THROUGH MODULATING AXES

Vesicles:

- Appear in cold weather
- During fever
- Itch: in the night; by warmth

# EXTENSION OF MEANING THROUGH INCLUSION AND CON/FIGURATION



- The same patient may also present:
- A whitish coating on the tongue
- **Except** on the tip
- And the anterior part of the middle line

# SIGNIFICATION THROUGH EXTENSION OF THE CONNOTATIVE FIELD

e.g., by correlation with other disciplines, here:

1. This sort of vesicles may be elicited by contact with poison ivy
2. Microscopically: detachment of epidermis

