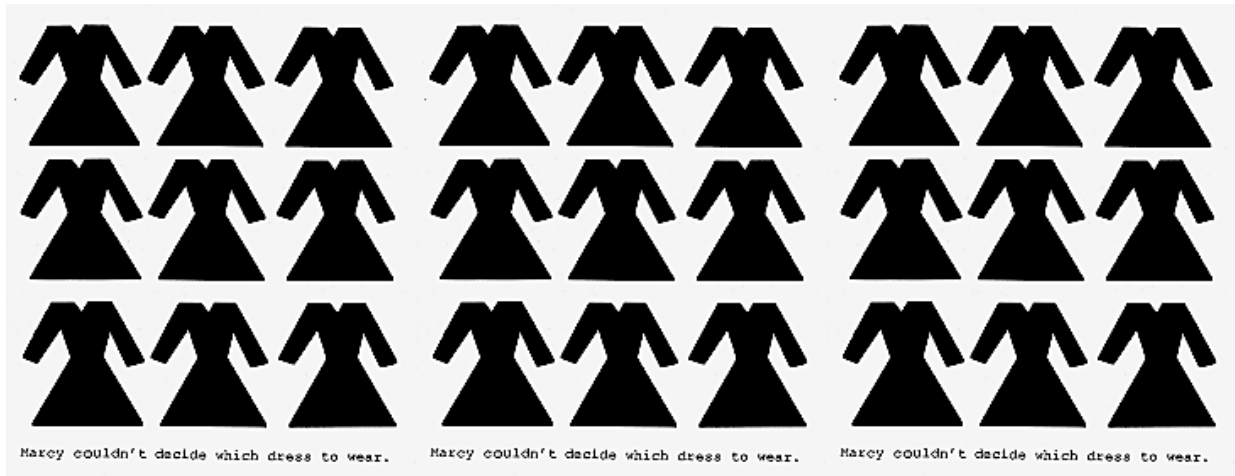


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Languaging Language
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With the development of Second Order Cybernetics and its epistemology, the understanding of what happens between the participants in the communicative domain in terms of languaging (not of language) is compelling.

The western philosophical and scientific traditions have created and worked with the idea of language as an autonomous combinatorial system of symbols and rules, which constrain the combinations producing grammatical sentences. This abstract construct is seen, in a great extent, as previously given to individuals as a species specific property. It depends on two basic notions:

a) the one of representation, in a twofold way: signs and symbols are said to represent things in the world, mediating symbolically between these and concepts and feelings represented themselves in our minds. According to this way of looking, this double conformity is what responds for adequate behavior, linguistic or other, and for communication between individuals that "possess" the same language. This leads us to talk about the imperfections of language to represent non-linguistic worlds.

b) the one of correspondence, which responds for the distinction between pairs like literal / metaphorical sentences or expressions, true / false statements, mind dependent / mind independent reality, and a whole architecture of dichotomies within which we have got used to live and reason, to the point of finding it our natural way.

As the Second Order Cybernetics claims the observer to be part of the systems and thus of processes we call "cognitive" and as the observer is described in terms of autopoiesis, our dependence on this early notion of language is a **Gordian knot** to be cut here. From Maturana (1978, 1988 and 1989) as well as from Maturana and Varela (1987), we

understand that what happens between human beings in a linguistic domain is a recursive history of consensual coordinations of consensual coordinations of actions, along which emerge the world of objects and symbols we live in, together with what we call meaning, consciousness, reasoning. These, the western tradition treat as abstract entities and not as processes, as it is of our interest here.

This way of looking allows us to understand:

a) our experience of living in language, as legitimately including both the interpretive variability between individuals and also within the same subject, as well as the experience of interpretive congruence;

b) the networks of conversations we participate in along life as prior texts (A. L. Becker, 1988 and 1991) we reweave contingently, bringing history and circumstances into our understanding of language;

c) our communicative difficulties as overcome only through conversational effort -- as opposed to the belief that an observer independent reality is a resource that validates our beliefs, and that sentences or texts constructed according to the rules of a language per se carry meanings which should be instantaneously apprehended by efficient hearers.

The idea of languaging is thus a challenge and at the same time a hope for those who have lived in language aware of language.