

Review of: "Historical Semiotics"

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[http://Historical Semiotics by Grigory Khislavski](#) In historiography, the way from positivist source fetishism of the 18th century to the historical semiotics of the 2000s is long. The idea of a past that could be reconstructed from its traces, the sources, was first overtaken by the structuralist idea of the world as texts and, by Khislavski, by the idea of history constituted by signs. In general semiotics, the object of research interest is defined as 'signs'. A sign may be a picture, term or a narrative, which signifies something which is rendered meaning by a signifier. The signifier is a conceptual system, derived from theories of essential sciences, in the case of history for instance from anthropology, cultural studies or politology. Khislavski's starting point is the problem of a demise of history in the juvenile world view and a quest to re-establish history semiotically approachable signs from past epochs. Khislavsky denounces history as phenomenological remembrances or hermeneutically retrievable experiences. He adheres to critical rationalism as the foundational intellectual approach and focuses on the theoretically bolstered method of semiotics as the bridge between the subject and the object of cognition. The anchorage on the theory of semiotics enables an epistemologically valid explanation of history by means of communicative signs. Khislavski rebuffs the view of historical knowledge-acquirement as 'anything goes'. He refers to the systems theory as the way to construct a theoretical model of analyzing historical signs on the basis of the time-specific cultural and social systems. The systems beget the signs and the signs tell the history. In Khislavski's model the signs travel, with their conceptual meaning and content changing due to the systemic context. Michel Foucault and Jack Derrida, as representatives of structuralism, strongly emphasized the historicity of concepts. Being a post-structuralist theory, historical semiotics, as represented by Khislavski, are used to develop a theoretical model of the historicity of signs. The signs change the communication of history. Khislavski does not in his conclusion return to the problem of the demise of history in education. Immanently, he seems to argue, that the scientification of history by means of the semiotic theory and method would enhance the status of history in the communicative space of school. Sirkka Ahonen