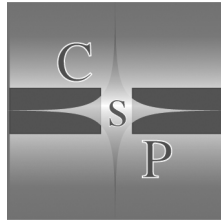


# The Future of Post-Human Semantics



The Future of  
Post-Human Semantics  
A Preface to a New Theory  
of Internality and Externality

By  
Peter Baofu



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To Those in the Future World beyond Internality and Externality in  
Semantics



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- 3. *Beyond Civilization to Post-Civilization* (2006)
- 2. Volume 1: *The Future of Human Civilization* (2000)
- 1. Volume 2: *The Future of Human Civilization* (2000)



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## FOREWORD

The problem about the accuracy of communications has plagued mankind from the beginnings of recorded history. The difference between what was said and what is understood is illustrated in the story of Adam and Eve where each player (including the serpent) attached a different meaning to the proscription against eating the fruit of a designated tree. And so it remains that semantic occurrences get played out countless times a day in human interactions.

Dr. Peter Baofu has taken on the challenge of confronting the subject of semantics. He gives us a tour-de-force of existing approaches to the subject and thereafter presents his unique approach to this conundrum that continues to mystify human lives. May his readers enjoy this ride and benefit from his insight.

*Sylvan Von Burg*  
*School of Business*  
*George Washington University*



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Like all other previous books of mine, this book is written to challenge conventional ideas or, in the current context, on semantics—and to replace them with an original way of thinking about its future fate (in relation to internality and externality).

Consequently, this book receives no external funding nor help from any formal organization or institution, because of its political incorrectness—as this is something that I often stressed (and repeated) in all my previous books.

My only reward is that amazing wonder about something new in the history of ideas on semantics.

In any event, I greatly appreciate the foreword by Sylvan von Burg at George Washington University.

And as always, I bear the sole responsibility for the ideas presented in this book.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

- ALD = Peter Baofu. 2007. *The Rise of Authoritarian Liberal Democracy: A Preface to a New Theory of Comparative Political Systems*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Ltd.
- BCIV = Peter Baofu. 2006. *Beyond Civilization to Post-Civilization: Conceiving a Better Model of Life Settlement to Supersede Civilization*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- BCPC = Peter Baofu. 2005. *Beyond Capitalism to Post-Capitalism: Conceiving a Better Model of Wealth Acquisition to Supersede Capitalism*. NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- BCOS = Peter Baofu. 2010. *Beyond Cosmology to Post-Cosmology: A Preface to a New Theory of Different Worlds*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge International Science Publishing, Ltd.
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- BEPE = Peter Baofu. 2011. *Beyond Ethics to Post-Ethics: A Preface to a New Theory of Morality and Immorality*. Charlotte, NC: Infomration Age Publishing.
- BNN = Peter Baofu. 2006. *Beyond Nature and Nurture: Conceiving a Better Way to Understand Genes and Memes*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Ltd.
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• PART ONE •

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*Introduction*



# CHAPTER 1

## *INTRODUCTION—THE RICHNESS OF SEMANTICS*

---

In the 1950s, W. V. Quine argued for the indeterminacy of meaning and reference based on the principle of radical translation. In *Word and Object*, Quine asks the reader to imagine a situation in which he is confronted with a previously undocumented, primitive tribe and must attempt to make sense of the utterances and gestures that its members make. This is the situation of radical translation. He claimed that, in such a situation, it is impossible in principle to be absolutely certain of the meaning or reference that a speaker of the primitive tribe's language attaches to an utterance.

—Wikipedia (WK 2011)

### **The Fight between Metaphrase and Paraphrase**

Is semantics really so indeterminate that, as W. V. Quine (1960) once argued in *Word and Object*, in the example about a previously undocumented, primitive tribe, “it is impossible in principle to be absolutely certain of the meaning or reference that a speaker of the primitive tribe's language attaches to an utterance”? (WK 2011)

This thought-provoking stand in semantics can be contrasted with an opposing view like “literal translation” (or “metaphrase,” in contrast with “paraphrase”), in that, as John Dryden put it, “when [words] appear... literally graceful, it were an injury to the author that they should be changed.” (WK 2011a; C. Kasperek 1983) This alternative practice (of literal translation) can be seen in the work by Robert Pinsky, when he “used a literal translation in preparing his translation of Dante's *Inferno*

(1994), as he does not know Italian,” and “Richard Pevear worked from literal translations provided by his wife, Larissa Volokhonsky, in their translations of several Russian novels.” (WK 2011b)

Contrary to these opposing ideas (and other views as will be discussed in the book), semantics (in relation to internality and externality) is neither possible (or impossible) nor desirable (or undesirable) to the extent that the respective ideologues (on different sides) would like us to believe.

Surely, the challenge to these opposing ideas in semantics does not mean that semantics is useless, or that those fields of study (related to semantics) like philosophy of language, linguistics, psychology, communication studies, hermeneutics, logic, computer science, semiotics, pragmatism, and so on should be rejected too. Of course, neither of these extreme views is reasonable.

Instead, this book provides an alternative (better) way to understand the future of semantics, especially in the dialectic context of internality and externality—while learning from different approaches in the literature but without favoring any one of them (nor integrating them, since they are not necessarily compatible with each other).

In other words, this book offers a new theory (that is, *the interactive theory of semantics*) to go beyond the existing approaches in a novel way.

If successful, this seminal project is to fundamentally change the way that we think about semantics, from the combined perspectives of the mind, nature, society, and culture, with enormous implications for the human future and what I originally called its “post-human” fate.

## **Internality and Externality in Semantics**

A good starting point is to define the term “semantics” at the outset, which, in accordance to a formal definition, is “from the Greek word *σημαντικός* (*semantikos*), ‘significant,’ from *σημαίνω* (*semaino*), ‘to signify, to indicate’ and that from *σημα* (*sema*), ‘sign, mark, token’”—and thus refers to “the study of meaning. It focuses on the relation between signifiers, such as words, phrases, signs and symbols, and what they stand for, their denotata.” (WK 2011c)

Semantics is therefore a sub-field of linguistics, for “the study of meaning that is used by humans to express themselves through language. Other forms of semantics include the semantics of programming languages, formal logics, and semiotics.” (WK 2011c)

The study of meaning is complicated, however, because “meaning is inferred not only from the verbal form, but from the current context. It assumed that some intended meaning is present by the writer or speaker in