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### **Semiotics of non-sense: How can something that does not exist have meaning?**

Absurdity and nonsense are usually studied as literary, philosophical and/or logical categories. For example, in literary studies absurd is typically analyzed as a type of humor on the example of concrete texts and genres. In my paper, I focus on absurdity and nonsense as semiotic categories and as one of the mechanisms of meaning generation, basing my approach on the works of the semiotician and literary scholar Yuri Lotman, and especially his concepts of explosion (both as a change in the state of the system that provokes an unpredictable development and a situation when the information load of a text drastically increases) and the notions of “non-text” and “minus-device” that refer to the meaningful absence of structural elements that influences the perception of the text (Lotman 1962, 1970, 1990, 2009, 2010).

This problem highlights the inherent informational paradox of human culture and human communication systems, in which entropy does not impede communication but on the contrary stimulates it. I examine two cases of this phenomenon: 1) the first is dealing with the so-called nonsensical signs/words that can be coined and used in any natural language; 2) the second examines the problem of “non-signs” in the artistic texts and the importance to study them in relation to non-texts and extra-texts of their semiotic sphere. As an example, I analyze the mechanisms of meaning generation in several English (e.g., “Jabberwocky,” John Lennon’s texts) and Russian (e.g., *Eugene Onegin*, Daniil Kharms) texts that demonstrate different functions of “non-signs” in the structure of the text.

On a larger scale the example of how human cultures deal with nonsense (and “non-sense”) in communication has implications for the study of the evolution of human culture and language and also draws additional light to the methodological problem of the relation of the text to the sign.