3. THE VERIDICTORY SQUARE

Things are entirely what they appear to be,
and behind them... *there is nothing.*
Sartre

SUMMARY

An analytical tool developed by Greimas and Courtés, the veridictory square (or square of veridiction) may be described in simple terms as the semiotic square built on the opposition being/seeming. It can be used to examine the dynamics of veridiction (truth and falseness) in a semiotic act, particularly a text. The factors it takes into account are the following: (1) the evaluating subject, (2) the object being evaluated, (3) the specific characteristic evaluated in the object, (4) veridictory status: true (being + seeming), false (not-being + not-seeming), illusory (not-being + seeming) and secret (being + not-seeming), (5) the time of the evaluation and (6) transformations or changes in one or more of these factors. For example, when a cabaret Elvis goes into to his dressing room after the show and then comes out, he goes from seeming + not-being Elvis (illusion) to not-seeming + not-being Elvis (falseness).

1. THEORY

The square of veridiction, developed by Greimas and Courtés, which we will refer to as the *veridictory square*, can be used to examine the dynamics of truth/falseness in any semiotic act, particularly a text. In simple terms, we will consider the veridictory square as the "opposition" being/seeming projected onto the semiotic square. The veridictory square applies especially to texts in which truth/falseness is a prominent theme (the primary theme or at least an important one), for example *Tartufe* (Molière), *The Game of Love and Chance* (Marivaux), or *Each in His Own Way* (Pirandello). However, any reasonably long text implies a dynamic between truth and falseness, as do certain morphemes, words and expressions, such as "pseudo-", "crypto-", "so-called", "supposed", etc.

NOTE: THE VERIDICTORY SQUARE AND KLEIN'S 4-GROUP

As it turns out, the veridictory square is not actually a semiotic square, but a structure related to Klein's 4-groups (see Courtés, 1991, pp. 114-120 and 137-141; Greimas and Courtés, 1982, pp. 310 and 369; Greimas and Courtés, 1986, pp. 34-37, and 105). This model, taken from the logic of mathematics, has been used in psychology by Piaget. The primary differences are the following: Klein's 4-group maps out two elements that are not necessarily in opposition (seeming and being, or wanting and doing, for instance). And since it addresses all of the possible combinations between two variables and their respective privative terms (for example, not-seeming and not-being, not-wanting and not-doing), it is composed solely of metaterms (compound terms).

In the theory we are discussing, any element subjected to interpretation (interpretive doing) is composed of and within the conjunction of a being and a seeming. Being is always accompanied by seeming and seeming is always associated with being. An element's being and seeming can be identical (for instance, a monk's seeming and being when he is wearing the robe) or opposite (for example, a layman will appear to be a monk with the robe as a disguise)[1].

NOTE: DIFFERENT WAYS TO INTERPRET THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BEINGAND SEEMING

Clearly, there are several ways to conceptualize being, seeming and the relations between them. Each of these entails a different philosophical position, some of which are: (1) A being may not have a seeming and a seeming may not have a being. (2) Any being possesses a seeming, which is operative at the beginning, middle and end of its appearing, and which may or may not match its being. (3) Being exists, but is only accessible in its seeming. (4) Being is only an abstract reconstruction derived from seeming, which is the only accessible reality.

Being and seeming can each change through transformation. However, the transformation is not always accompanied by a corresponding transformation of the other variable: seeming may change without a change in being, and being may change without a change in seeming. For example, an honest citizen may become a wealthy drug dealer without any difference in his seeming.

In contrast with seeming, the knowledge one has about being may change without any difference in being (if, for example, you think someone is honest because he appears to be, and then you realize that despite appearances, he is not).

[1] Veridictory evaluations thus operate along the axis of immanence (being *vs.* not-being) and the axis of manifestation (seeming *vs.* not-seeming (Courtés, 1991, p. 114). According to Greimas and Courtés (1982, p. 130), these categories should not be seen as ontological ones, since it is simply a matter of characterizing a state in terms of being and seeming in the context of a modal categorization.

NOTE: BEING/SEEMING AND RECIPROCAL PRESUPPOSITION

Since seeming does not necessarily match being, and since being can change without any change in seeming and vice versa, then there is no *a priori* relation of reciprocal presupposition between being and seeming, even though this sort of relation can be established in certain semiotic acts (for instance, in Manichaean narratives, the bad guys always look bad and the good guys look good, except in cases of betrayal and deception).

1.1 THE CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE VERIDICTORY SQUARE

The main constituent elements of the veridictory square, with the author's additions, are the following[2]:

1. The observing subject (S1, S2, ...) (the real author, implied author, narrator, character, etc.; see the chapter on thymic analysis).

2. The object being observed (O1, O2, ...)

3. The characteristic of the object being observed (C1, C2, ...)[3].

NOTE: OPPOSITE CHARACTERISTICS

If the characteristic placed on the veridictory square has an opposite (good/bad, for instance), it can be used; in this case the positions on the square are reversed (1 becomes 3 and 2 becomes 4, or the reverse). Following the principle of homogeneity in description (Floch, 1985, p. 200), one should avoid switching from a characteristic to its opposite within one square (for example, one would put "good" for being and not-seeming rather than "good" for being and "bad" for seeming).

4. The marker(s) for seeming and being (M1, M2), that is, the elements that support a designation of seeming or being. The markers may be omitted in the analysis.

5. The four terms: being and seeming and their privatives, not-being and not-seeming.

6. The four metaterms[4] (or compound terms) that define the four veridictory statuses:

- True or truth (being + seeming),
- Illusory or lie (not-being + seeming),
- False or falseness (not-being + not-seeming),
- Secret or dissimulation[5] (being + not-seeming)[6].

Since the lexical labels for the metaterms (true, illusory, false, secret, etc.) are only indicators, one must not be misled by them. To take an example, when a cabaret Elvis goes into to his dressing room after the show and then comes out, he goes from seeming + not-being Elvis, which is illusion, to not-seeming + not-being Elvis, which is falseness. Intuitively one might argue the opposite: that he should be in the "true" position when he becomes himself again; This would indeed be the case for another characteristic: "himself" rather than "Elvis".

[2] Where appropriate, we will show transformations in the subject, object or characteristic using a prime (S', O', C') in the notation.

[3] In logic, the characteristic (C) and the object (O) correspond to the notions of predicate (the given characteristic) and subject (that which possesses the characteristic), respectively.

[4] For the sake of simplicity, we are excluding the contradictory metaterms being + not-being and seeming + not-seeming, which are theoretically possible in a complete combinatorial analysis. To our knowledge, no semiotician has proposed the existence of contradictory metaterms, although we can predict their existence by deduction (see the chapter on the semiotic square).

[5] Courtés explains (1991, p. 115): "In actuality, the negation of /seeming/ required for a /secret/ is never more than partial, as the person for whom the /secret/ exists must at least sense that something is being hidden from him; if there is a total negation of /seeming/, the subject involved would not be placed in the /secret/ position, but simply in a position of /not-knowing/, or ignorance. This means that all the while hiding something, a /secret/ must give a few indications that might prompt the subject to make inquiries or find out more." In our opinion, this restriction is not useful, and it stems partly from the influence of the lexical item chosen to express the conjunction between being and not-seeming ("secret"), and partly from the all-inclusive nature of the standard Greimasian veridictory square, which mixes the various points of view involved (in this case, that of the dissimulator and that of the person confronting the dissimulation). Per Aage Brandt (1995) has proposed these names for the four metaterms, in order: evidence, simulation, non-pertinence, and dissimulation. Bertrand (2000, p. 152), who combines Fontanille's proposals (in Greimas and Courtés, 1986, pp. 34-35), suggests an approach in which the relations of governance between being and seeming are modulated so that modal structures can be specified, depending on whether seeming governs (determines) being (self-evident truth), being governs seeming (a proven or revealed truth or a mark of authenticity), being governs not-seeming (an arcane secret), or not-seeming governs being (dissimulation, secretiveness). In this way, the relation between being and seeming, which is initially non-directional (despite the transition from seeming to being, from the interpretive standpoint), gives way to a relation that will either be balanced ("neutral" truth, illusion, falseness, or secret) or oriented in one direction or the other.

[6] The semiotic square built on the opposition true/false must be distinguished from the semiotic square of veridiction, which maps out being versus seeming, and produces the metaterms true, false, illusory and secret. For that matter, as far as we know, the relations between this particular square and the square of veridiction have not yet been examined. Briefly, the complex term (true + false) on the semiotic square corresponds to an element classified simultaneously in positions 1 and 3 of the veridictory square. The neutral term (not-true + not-false) on the semiotic square is akin to secrecy or illusion. It remains to be seen how the notion of undecidability in logic (see Martin 1983, for instance) is to be reconciled with the neutral term or the absence of a position on the semiotic square. (For example, in logic, elements separate from any proposition may be undecidable: *apple* and *red* taken separately are undecidable, but *This apple is red* may be decidable). One final possibility is to have gradations on the true/false axis, thereby obtaining ± T and ± F in an inversely proportional correlation, which would correspond to some form of complex term.

Neither of the two characteristics is preferable in and of itself, but the analyst must take care not to switch unthinkingly from one to the other.

NOTE: THE ROLE OF THE CHARACTERISTIC

Vandendorpe (1994, p. 9) summarizes the originality of the Greimasian veridictory square in the following way, but also signals a possible shortcoming: "Truth is thus no longer seen as that which is implicit in language, nor is it in a transcendent position as one of the fundamental conditions of existence: It is only the flip side of falseness, with which it maintains a perfect symmetry, a point on which the authors are quite explicit (Greimas and Courtés, 1982, p. 116). However, we must say how regrettable it is that this definition is not expressed in terms of some category pertaining strictly to enunciation: By structuring truth and falseness as a conjunction between *being* and *seeming*, Greimas sanctions the interpretation of this category on an ontological level instead of a simple discursive level, despite all the cautionary statements he has made. This lack of vigilance is what prompts Claude Bremond to deride the veridictory square, objecting vehemently that the result of combining not-seeming with not-being can only be "absolutely nil"." From a theoretical standpoint, the veridictory square does in fact appear to lean towards ontologism. As far as veridictory status is concerned, the philosophical presuppositions (which are found in every analytical tool and every theory) of dialogics seem to have fewer epistemological consequences (see the chapter on dialogics). However, from a functional standpoint, Bremond's objection can be put aside so long as we include the structural features that we are proposing to enhance the veridictory square: This is a matter of relating not-seeming and not-being to a characteristic, which is itself related to an object. In this way, anyone could not seem to be a monk and not be one without vanishing into the philosophical void.

7. The four possible positions an object may occupy on the square, each of which corresponds to one of the four metaterms (1: true, 2: illusory, 3: false, 4: secret), and if applicable, the sequence of positions occupied by a single object (for example, 1 → 3).

NOTE: MOVEMENTS ON THE VERIDICTORY SQUARE

The conventional veridictory square appears to harbor several other useless aprioristic limitations. In our opinion, one of these is the notion that it must be composed solely of metaterms; another is the principle that movement may take place only between adjacent positions (for example, from 1 to 2, but not from 1 to 3 without going through 2) (see Courtés, 1991, p. 145). We prefer to leave open the assuredly marginal, but real possibility of a being with no seeming or a seeming with no being, if for no other reason than to be able to describe the present text, which demonstrates these possibilities. We have adopted these words from Floch (1985, p. 200), emphasizing the deductive value of the semiotic square: "As we can see, the point of the square is to give structure to the coherence of a conceptual universe, even if that universe is not recognized as "logical"; we can use the square to predict the trajectories that meaning can take, and the logically present, as-yet-unused positions that it can occupy." We also prefer to leave room for the possibility of nonadjacent trajectories, however rare they may be. We might add that Greimasian semiotics shows a predilection for simple trajectories, with no feedback loops or short circuits: unitary generative trajectories in which no stage can be short-circuited (although they can be interrupted prematurely, for example in abstract semiotic acts) and narrative trajectories biased in favor of the unicity of what has been done (as in reverse-chronological, unitary logic, where a narrative program generally presupposes one and only one trajectory) rather than the multiplicity of future possibilities (a logic of possibilities).

8. Time (T).

As with any analysis that focuses on content, three main kinds of time can be taken into account: time as represented in the story, narrative time (the order in which the events of the story are presented), and tactical time (e.g., the linear sequencing of semantic units from one sentence to the next). While reading the text, for example, one may come across position 2 followed by position 3, whereas the chronological order in the story might be 3 followed by 2.

Temporal segmentation can be based on various criteria. In a veridictory analysis, the most pertinent criterion for demarcating temporal intervals is, naturally, a change in one of more key beliefs (for instance, time interval T1 would last until a change in the key belief initiates interval T2)[7]. Naturally, one can establish relations between this temporal segmentation and some other segmentation based on some other criterion, such as time in the usual sense (belief interval T1 might last from Monday to Wednesday morning; T2 from Wednesday noon to Thursday evening), or actions (T1 might last from action 1 to the beginning of action 3; T2 from the middle of action 3 to action 7) or tactical segmentation (paragraphs, chapters, scenes and acts or sequences, and so on).

1.2 AN EXAMPLE OF A VERIDICTORY SQUARE

We will first describe a veridictory square without giving a visual representation of it: In Molière's play *Tartufe*, with respect to the characteristic 'devout' (element C), Tartufe (element O) goes from seeming devout + being devout (time 1, position 1: truth) to seeming devout + not-being devout (time 2, position 2: illusion) in the eyes of Orgon (element S) when the ostensible markers of religious devotion (the black habit, the anointed speeches, the omnipresent breviary, etc.) no longer carry as much weight as the opposite markers (the attempt to seduce his protector's wife, among others).

[7] In a thymic analysis, the criterion is a change in the thymic evaluations, and so on.

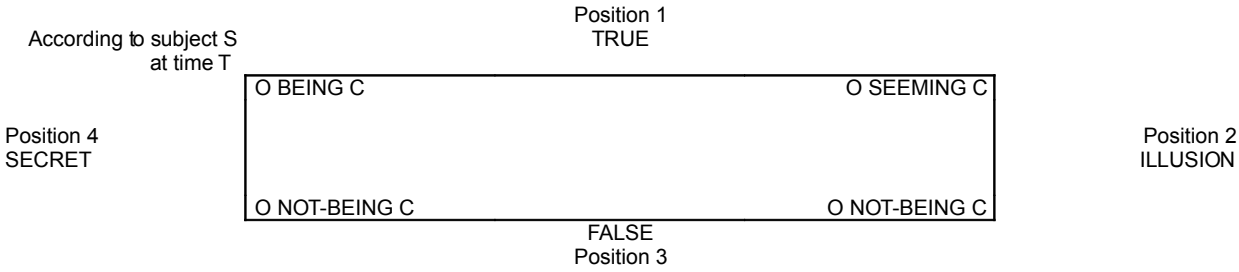
1.3 VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

Strictly speaking, there is a distinction to be made between the veridictory square as a conceptual network and the visual representation of the network. (The same principle applies to other analytical tools, like the semiotic square, the actantial model, etc.) The conceptual network is usually represented visually as a "square" (which is usually rectangular). The veridictory square as a network is unitary in principle (one subject, one object, one characteristic, but one or more time intervals). The veridictory square as a representation may include one or more of these veridictory networks (a single subject and several objects, several subjects and a single object, and so on).

1.3.1 SQUARE FORMAT

This how we represent the modified veridictory square:

The modified veridictory square

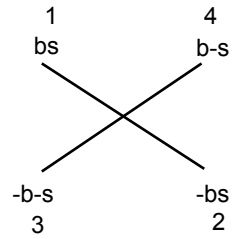


Legend: S: subject; O: object; C: characteristic; T: time

1.3.2 "X" FORMAT

Greimas and Courtés also use an X-shaped diagram to represent the veridictory square (and to represent other 4-groups) (*b* indicates being; *s* is for seeming; the minus sign indicates not-being or not-seeming; the numbers indicate the corresponding positions):

X-shaped diagram of the veridictory square



1.3.3 TABLE FORMAT

We also advocate the use of tables, for this tool as for other analytical tools with visual representations. Consider the following story: *A man buys a supposed Cartier watch and realizes later that it is an imitation*. We would create a table like this:

The modified veridictory square represented in table form:

NO	TIME T	SUBJECT S	OBJECT O	SEEMING	BEING	CHARACTERISTIC C	POSITION
1	t1	man	watch	seeming	being	Cartier	1
2	t2	man	watch	seeming	not-being	Cartier	2

1.4 BELIEFS: CHANGE AND RELATIVIZATION

1.4.1 DECIDABLE/UNDECIDABLE AND REAL/POSSIBLE

An observing subject (for example, the analyst, the narrator or a character) may be unable to specify one or another of the terms that determine veridictory status. In this case, the term or the status would be undecidable; if the relevant term has not (yet) been specified, then the term or status is undecided. Decidable terms and statuses (those that are neither undecidable nor undecided) fall into two broad divisions, depending on which ontological status (status relative to existence) of the following two they are marked for: real (certainty) or possible (possibility, doubt)[8]. In order to represent the category of possibility (cases where the subject is in doubt about being and/or seeming), one can use a question mark (*?)*)[9]. In this case, another symbol is necessary to distinguish the observing subject's doubts from the analyst's (who is also an observing subject, apt to be led by the author down a veridictory alley or to make up his own incorrect veridictory interpretation).

Seeming may be based on one marker (the seven tongues of the beast, for instance, as we will see later) or more (the clothing and breviary for Tartufe). There may be variations in the degree to which a marker can be associated by the subject with its corresponding being. For instance, in the tale "The Beast with Seven Heads", the false hero who brought back the seven heads of the beast as evidence of his exploit was unmasked by the real hero, who countered him with the seven tongues. Two interpretations are possible: the false hero's seeming has collapsed (he is in not-seeming + not-being a hero) or the seeming is there, but everyone knows that the being does not correspond to it (he is in seeming + not-being a hero). Unlike the heads in the case of the false hero, for Tartufe, certain markers retain the power to evoke their corresponding being, but they become secondary in quantity and/or quality compared to other markers indicating the opposite being (he can wear all of the monk's clothing he wants; what matters is that his behavior is assuredly not that of a monk)[10].

1.4.2 ASSUMPTIVE/REFERENCE VERIDICTORY EVALUATIONS

A veridictory evaluation is always subject to relativization: The supposed being may turn out to be only seeming, and not, in fact, actual being. However, in any given semiotic act, one generally finds reference evaluations that determine the ultimate truth. As a consequence, one needs to distinguish relative elements, which are called assumptive, from absolute elements, known as reference elements, since the first are judged by the second. Assumptive evaluations are subject to contradiction by the reference evaluations. Reference being and relative being can agree: In this case the being that a character presumes is correct would be confirmed, or at least not contradicted, by the reference subject (such as the omniscient narrator).

For example, Mary (S1, assumptive) thinks that in his robe (M), Peter (O) is and appears to be a monk (C). John (S2, assumptive) thinks the opposite. The narrator (S3, reference) eventually tells us that although Peter appears to be a monk, he is not. Mary's and John's evaluations are assumptive. The two evaluations are in opposition: there is a conflict in beliefs (the reverse would be a consensus in beliefs). The first evaluation is erroneous and the second one correct, because it corresponds to the reference evaluation (meaning the narrator's). Obviously, a given subject's belief may change. A "conversion" may or may not be preceded by doubt, during which the belief and the counter-belief confront each other, or by verification, whose purpose is to select one belief according to specific tests and criteria.

NOTE: THE DYNAMICS OF OBSERVING SUBJECTS

The standard veridictory square needs an additional feature, in our opinion, to address the dynamics of the observing subjects' viewpoints. At least in its most common usages, the veridictory square combines a stable, reference being, linked to the point of view of a subject associated with a universe of reference, and a seeming that changes, linked to the point of view of a subject associated with a universe of assumption. For example, in *Little Red Riding Hood*, the big bad wolf does not seem bad (along the pathway), but he is; later he seems bad (when he reveals his identity and says: "The better to eat you with... "). The reference being is nothing more than a being that, unlike the others, is not subject to relativization (mere seeming instead of actual being), and the analyst needs a way to describe this dynamic. In our opinion, one must be able to establish being as relative (initially, for Red Riding Hood, the wolf *is* not bad), and to express this belief, not just as a conjunction between not-seeming bad and being bad (which is the absolute point of view, since it is never contradicted in the story), but also as a conjunction between not-seeming bad and not-being bad, as formulated and applied to the wolf by Red Riding Hood. In this respect, the veridictory square seems to suffer from the same general inadequacy found throughout the interpretive component of Greimasian semiotics: Corresponding to the abstract subject at the source of the generative trajectory are two subjects: an interpreter whose position has not been very thoroughly worked out, and, for thematized interpretation within the text, a reference hermeneutic who possesses the ultimate knowledge of the text and thereby has continual access to the being of being[11].

[8] It seems that in practice, the conventional Greimasian veridictory square only dealt with actuality as an ontological category, and did not take into account the modal category of possibility.

[9] Although one might think otherwise, there can actually be doubt about seeming/not-seeming as well as doubt about being/not-being. For example, Tintin might wonder if his disguise really makes him look like a woman, and his duped victim may wonder at the virility of this strange woman.

[10] A "marker" is what Courtés calls anything that can change seeming into not-seeming or vice versa. For example, the seven tongues allow the real hero – the one who really did kill the beast with seven heads – to reveal his identity before the king and to confound the traitor who presented the seven heads of the beast as proof of his victory (1991, p. 116). We use the term in a broader sense: a marker is any element that helps to designate being and/or seeming, accurately or not.

[11] In Greimasian theory one finds a lack of symmetry: sometimes the focus is on the source element, such as the source of the generative trajectory, and sometimes it is on the target element, such as the choice of backwards-chronological logic over consecution for the sequencing of narrative programs (see the chapter on the narrative program).

1.4.3 ONE VERIDICTORY EVALUATION EMBEDDED IN ANOTHER

As in any evaluation, one subject's point of view can be integrated into or embedded in another's: thus, a veridictory evaluation can be made about a veridictory evaluation. For instance, Mary (S1) might believe, wrongly or rightly, that Peter (S2) believes that John is and appears to be a monk (see also the analysis of *Tartufe* that follows). The simplest solution is to include the second subject in the characteristic. In this example, the subject is Mary; the object is John; the status, seeming + being; and the characteristic "a monk, in Peter's opinion". There is another possibility: The subject is Mary; the object is "John is and seems to be a monk, in Peter's opinion"; the status is being + seeming; and the characteristic, "true".

1.4.4 PART VS. WHOLE AND ELEMENT VS. CLASS DYNAMICS

As with other analytical tools, it can be helpful to include mereological (whole vs. part relations) and set dynamics (class vs. element relations), whether they apply to subjects (as in the case of a dual personality), objects or markers. For instance, for a person disillusioned with love, all people of the opposite sex (or possibly same sex) appear to be nice, but are not. Or the markers may suggest a particular evaluation overall (the whole), while some of them (the parts) may support the opposite evaluation (he looks like a monk, even though he swears at times). For more details on mereological and set dynamics, see the chapter on structural relations and the chapter on thymic analysis.

2. APPLICATION: MOLIÈRE'S *TARTUFE*

Consider the following synopsis of the primary veridictory plot in Molière's play *Tartufe*:

T1: Orgon's entire entourage does not believe that Tartufe is devout, except his mother.
T2: Orgon believes in Tartufe until the moment when, hiding under the table, he hears Tartufe trying to seduce his wife, Elmire.
T3: Armed with the truth, Orgon tries to convince his mother, Madame Pernelle, but she defends Tartufe rather than believing Orgon.
T4: Orgon's mother obtains proof of Tartufe's deceit when Mr. Loyal comes to seize Orgon's property for Tartufe.
T5: The Prince seems to be in support of Tartufe, because one of his emissaries, the exempt [sub-lieutenant] accompanies the scoundrel to go evict Orgon by force, or so Tartufe believes.
T6: The exempt reveals to everyone that the Prince knows who Tartufe is. Tartufe is arrested.

Below is a "veridictory table", rather than a square, which illustrates this rendition of the play:

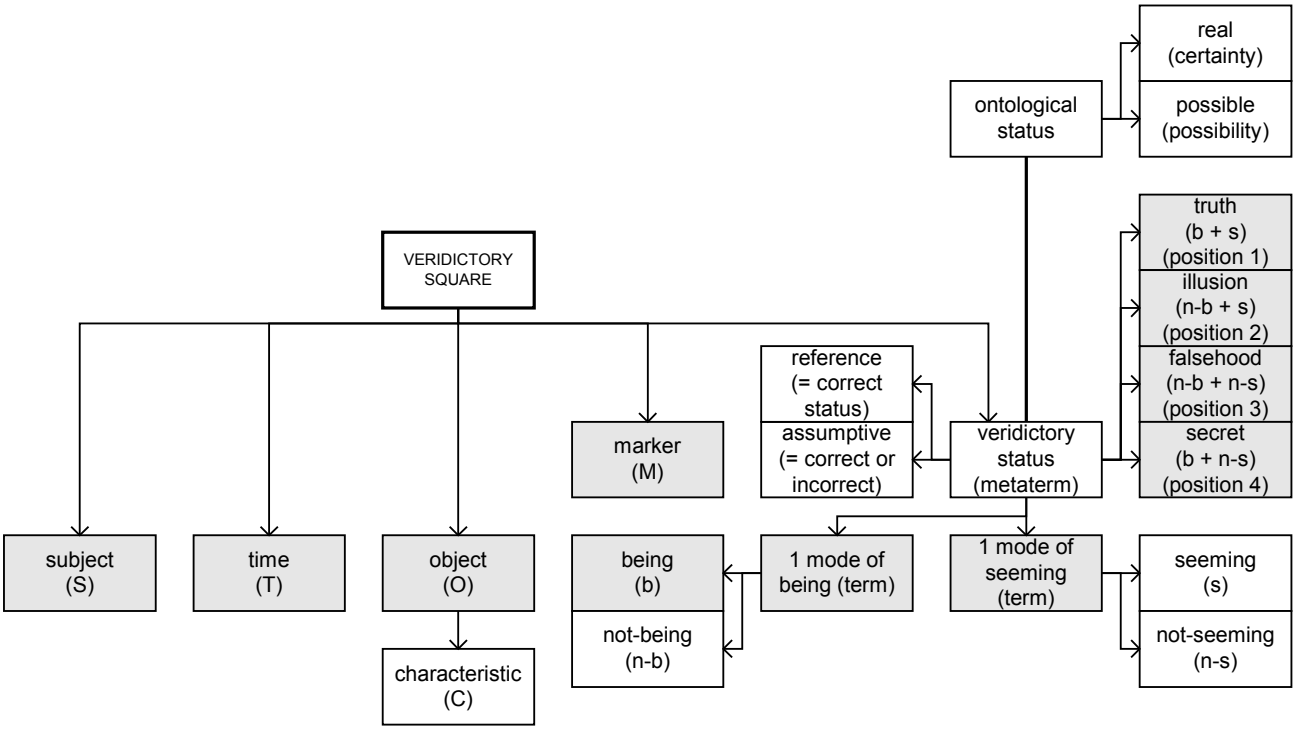
An example of a veridictory square: Tartufe

NO	TIME T	SUBJECT S	OBJECT O	SEEMING	BEING	CHARACTERISTIC C	POSITION
1	T1	Orgon's entourage except his mother	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout	2
2	T1	Orgon	Tartufe	seeming	being	devout	1
3	T2	Orgon	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout	2
4	T1-T3	Orgon's mother	Tartufe	seeming	being	devout	1
5	T4	Orgon's mother	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout	2
6	T1-T6	Tartufe	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout	2
7	T5	Prince and exempt	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout in the Prince's view	2
8	T5	everyone except the exempt and the Prince	Tartufe	seeming	being	devout in the Prince's view	1
9	T6	everyone	Tartufe	seeming	not-being	devout in the Prince's view	2

Note: The reference evaluation is the one on line 6. In addition, you will notice that in order to accommodate the surprise ending of the play, we have changed the characteristic in mid-analysis by integrating the Prince's point of view. (Thus, there is a veridictory evaluation within a veridictory evaluation, or more accurately, within the characteristic of the evaluation.)

3. SUMMARY DIAGRAM

Diagram summarizing the veridictory square



LEGEND
1. Vertical arrows: components (for ex., a veridictory category is composed of a mode of being and a mode of seeming)
2. Horizontal arrows: classifications (for ex., a mode of seeming is classified as seeming or not-seeming)
3. Bold-face link with no arrow: other relation

The results of the analysis depend on both the time of observation and the observer (subject) whose point of view is being reported.