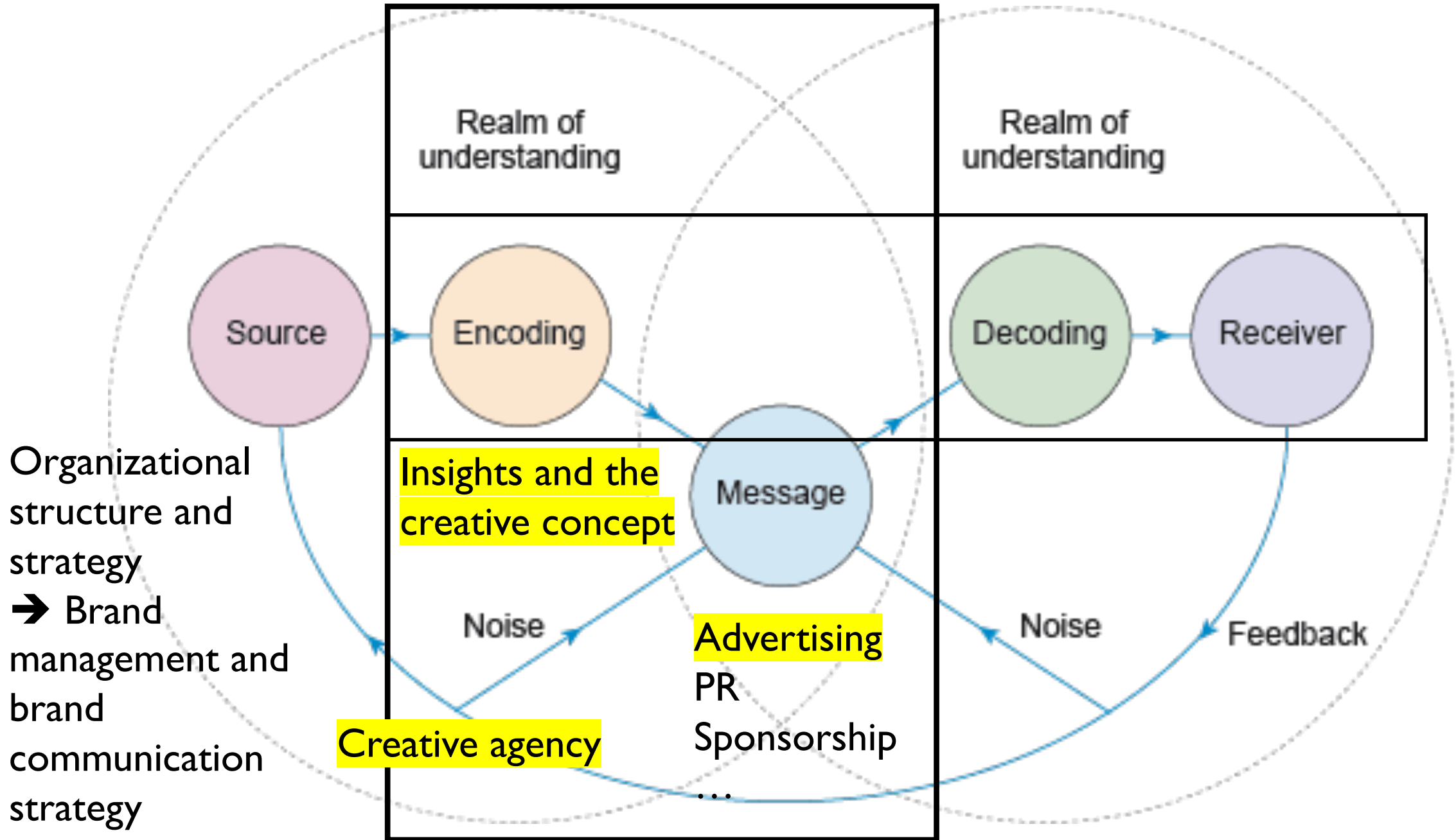


Encoding Advertising Semiotics

Hedon Blakaj, 2021



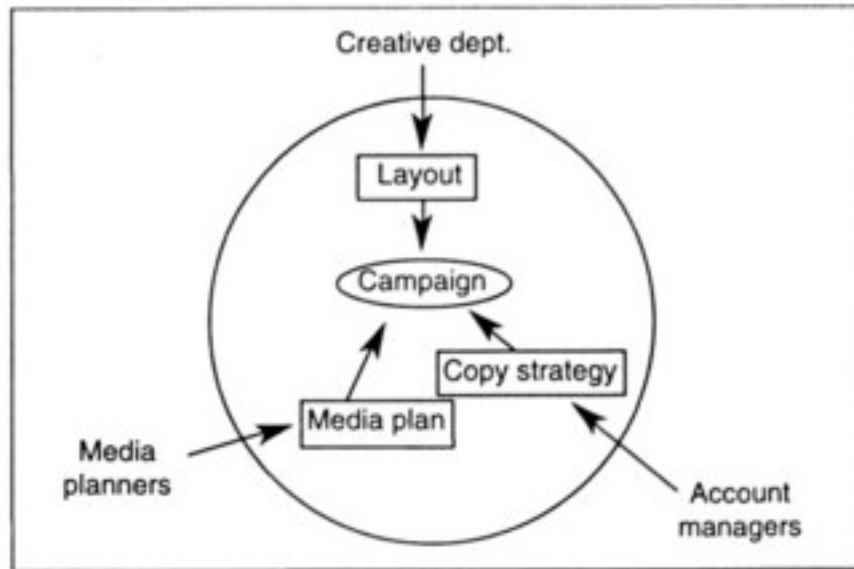


Fig. 2. The three main activities in advertising.

Brief +

Source/Client
brand

Starting point: “brand challenge”

What triggers brand challenge?

- Change in consumer preferences and tastes
- Brand repositioning
- Reaction to competition

...

Brief / document

- What is your brand about?
- The competitive landscape
- What is the “brand challenge” according to you?
- How do you see the overcoming of the brand challenge?
 - ➔ market research (consumer segment), data, insights, objectives...
- Communication objectives?
 - ➔ (e.g., increase awareness, foster loyalty, increase sales...)
- The message describing the brand value
 - ➔ (encapsulated in the creative concept)
- **Encoding**
- Media and the promotional strategy
- Campaign evaluation and metrics!

Creative agency

- Market research to generate (more) insights
- Traditional market research techniques like focus groups & databases to gauge consumer needs and behaviors (Rust et al. 2000)
 - Today, big data and analytics
- Cultural knowledge to “read” insights (Kelly et al., 2005; Holt, 2003; 2004)
- Insights: “an identification in consumers’ experience that can open up a commercial link” (Ariztia, 2013)
- Creative idea/big idea: “X”

(Re)write the brief & pitch it back to the client

SNICKERS BIG IDEA

(Piercing Insight)

When you are hungry, it's hard to concentrate and hard to focus on what matters. You don't perform to the level you normally do because there's something missing.

(Brand Connection)

Snickers is the perfect way to get back to being yourself. Packed full of peanuts, caramel, nougat, and milk chocolate, Snickers satisfies your hunger – all in a quick and easy-to-carry snack.

(Succinct Expression)

Snickers: You Are Not You When You Are Hungry.



Encoding

"to change something into a system for sending messages [...], or to represent complicated information in a simple or short way"

➔ In advertising: the system of signs!

(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/encoding>)

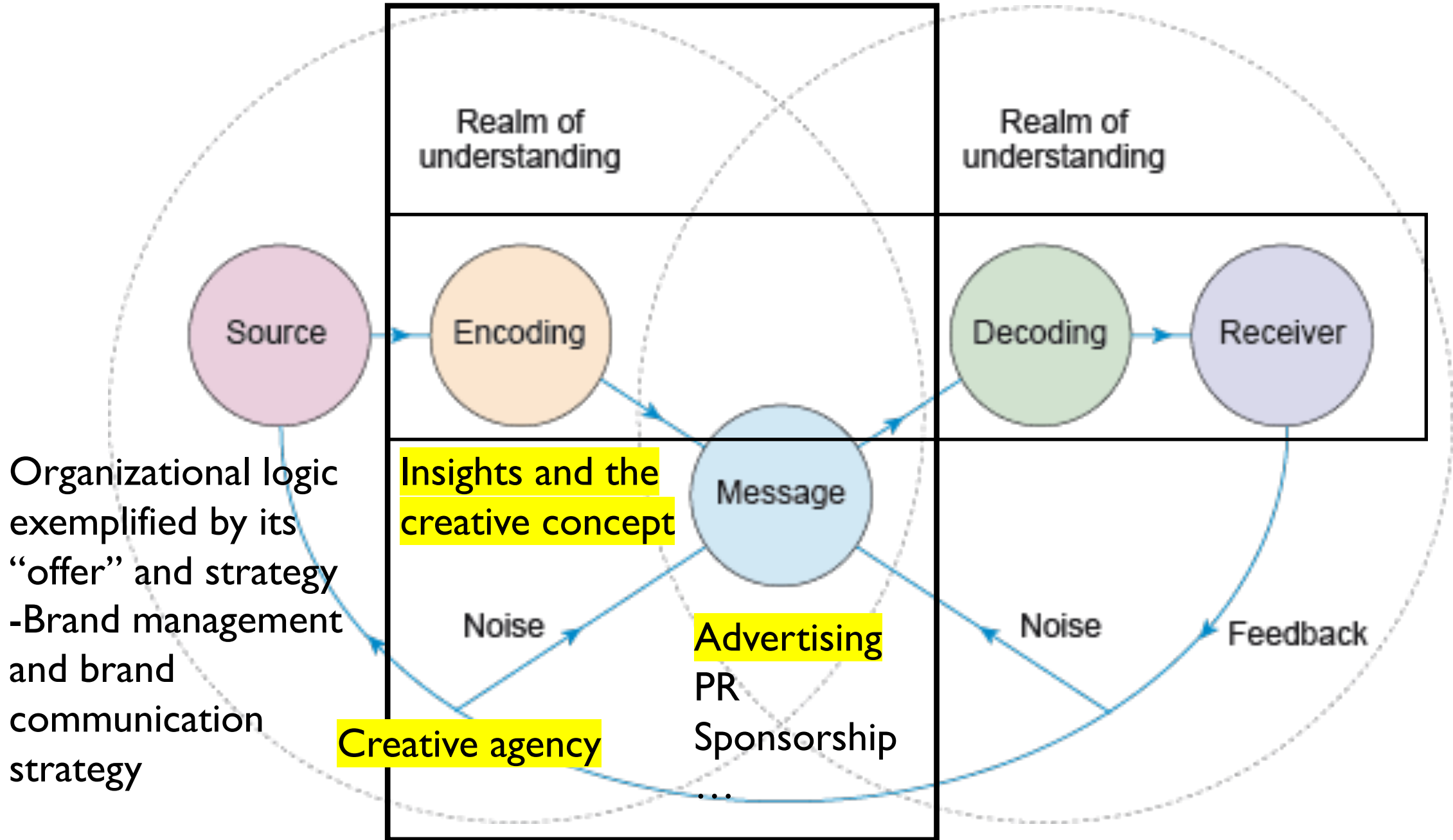
Encoding (copywriters and art directors)

Tone of voice

The aesthetic appeal

➔ Initially done via story boards!

(Moeran, 2009: The organization of creativity in Japanese advertising)



Advertising and advertising theory

few ideas and perspectives

What is advertising?

- One of the promotional mix tools
- Advertising = communicating with specific audiences
- Differentiate or (re)position brands, reinforce brand messages, inform and persuade, shift attitudes ...
- Bottom line: there's a disconnect with the customers' perception and the company's preferred perception qua a brand!

As a promotional tool

- High potential to engage consumers (audiences)
- High reach (see Batra and Keller, 2016)
- Short-term effects!
- Good for: change perceptions and building brand values, encouraging change in attitudes and behavior
- Advertising entails a call-to-action (think about how ads are encoding!)

See also, Fill (2009)

Advertising is more about
shifting people's perspectives,
making certain views more
salient or compelling

Perspectives

Consumer psych. Exercise

- Take Coca-Cola as an example
- Shout out words (associations) that you think of when you think of Coca-Cola
- Anything: emotions, colors, word associations, positive/negative etc.



Consumer psych. example

Associations

1. Refreshing
2. Happy & youth
3. Santa
4. Artificial sweet.
5. Obesity
6. Tasty
7. caff...
8. Bad teeth



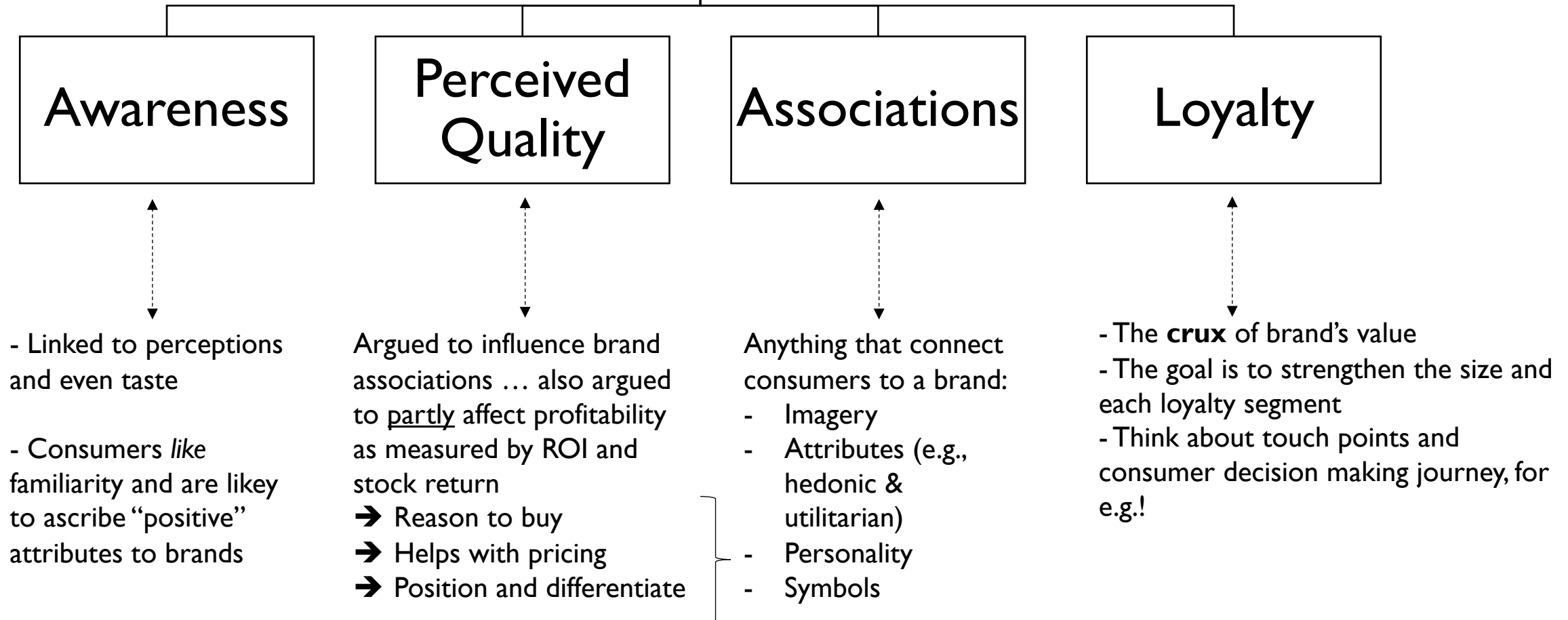
Consumer psych/cog. exercise

- From a consumer psych perspective, advertising strives to strengthen/weaken certain associations (or create new ones!), and increase salience in a product category
- You can also think of it as "in which order do certain ideas come to mind"



Brand equity

(Aaker and Joachimsthaler 2000: 17)



Consumer psych. example

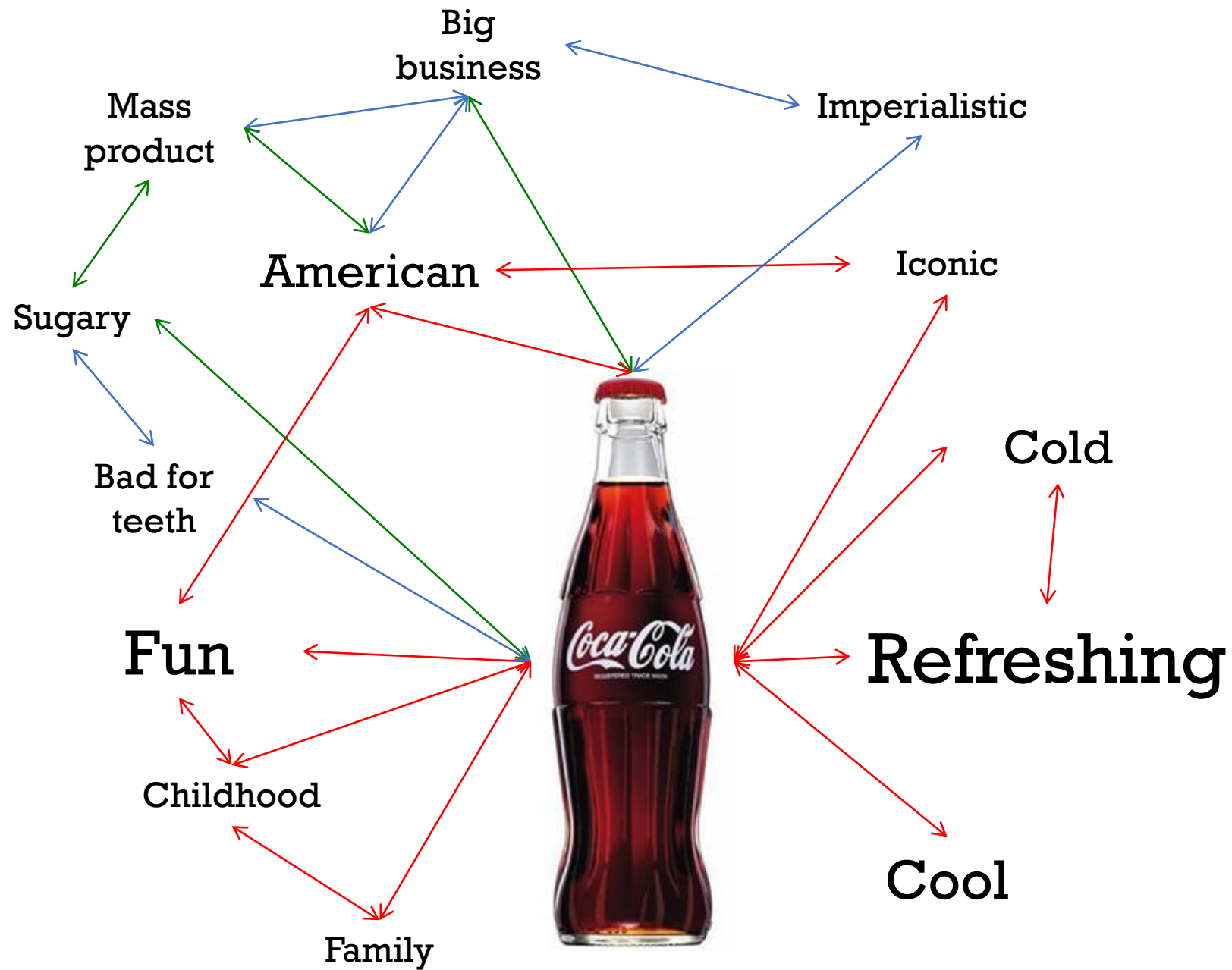
(Not so) current associations

1. Red
2. Enjoy
3. Glass
4. Sugary
5. Santa Claus
6. Family



Desired associations

1. Enjoy
2. Red
3. Family
4. Santa Claus
5. Glass
6. Sugary



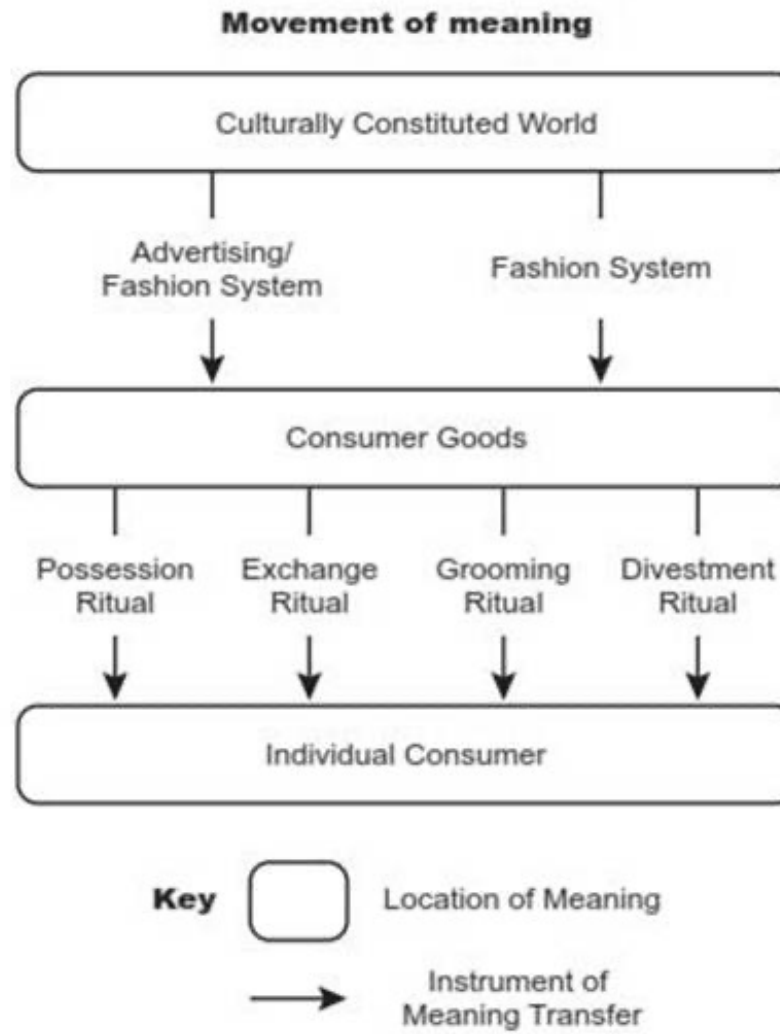
Cultural perspective

- Contemporary advertising is conceived of not as an occasional conduit of product information but rather as an omnipresent communication arena in which human reality is mediated
- Psych/Information processing model ignores the cultural context of consumption

Critique of the conventional perspective

- Overly individualistic (McCracken 1987)
- Managerial relevance ... why individuals buy ... leave out the **how**
- Exclusion of social interaction

- Not so much about the distinctive brand benefits as much as what the brand stands for (➔ symbolic value)
- “...brands are valued because, through them, people get to experience powerful myths” ... simple stories ... they provide ideals to live by, and they work to resolve life’s most vexing questions” (Holt, 2003)
- Consumers come to perceive the myth as encapsulated (embodied) in the product
- Relationships with brands are forged through ritualistic consumption

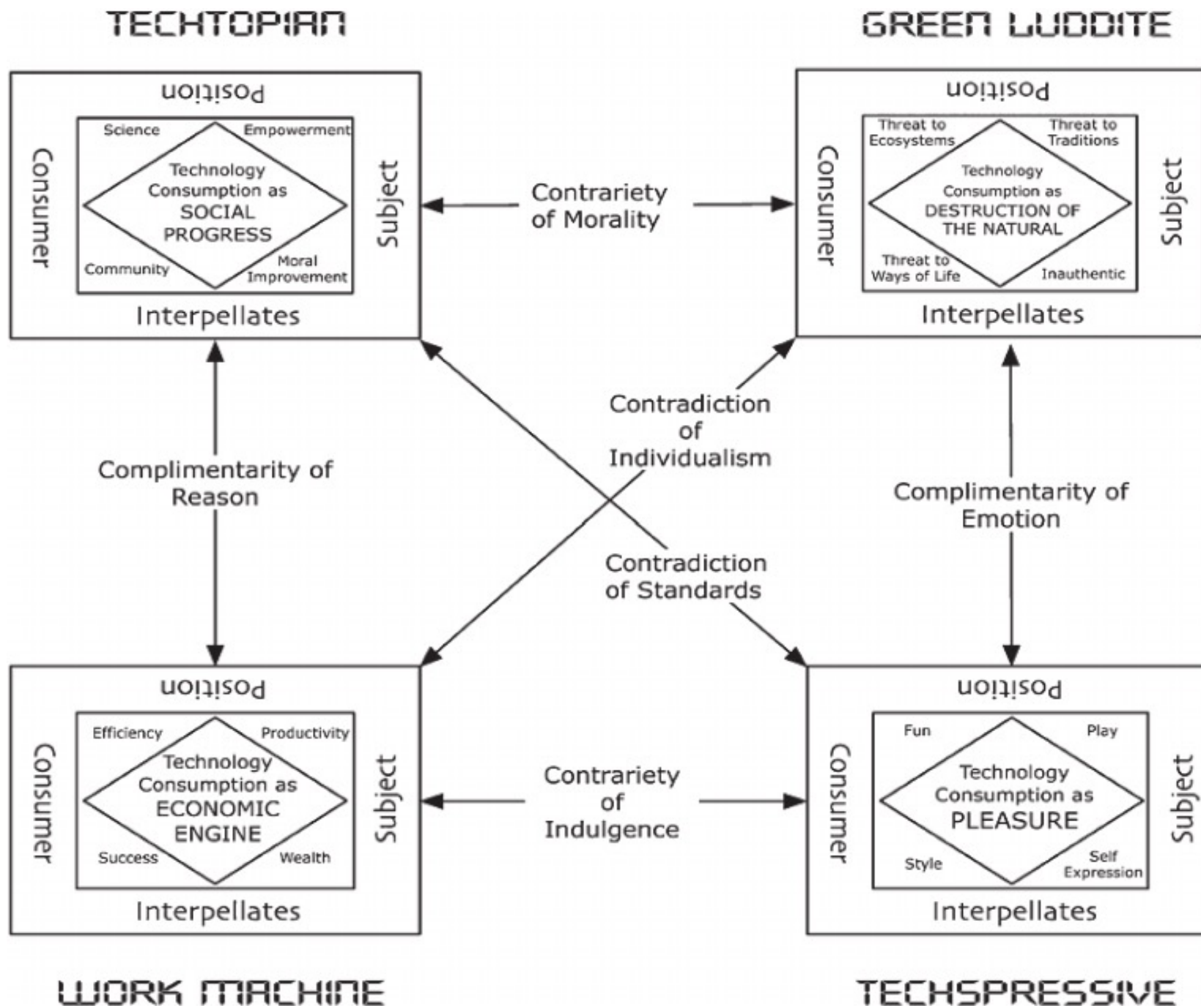


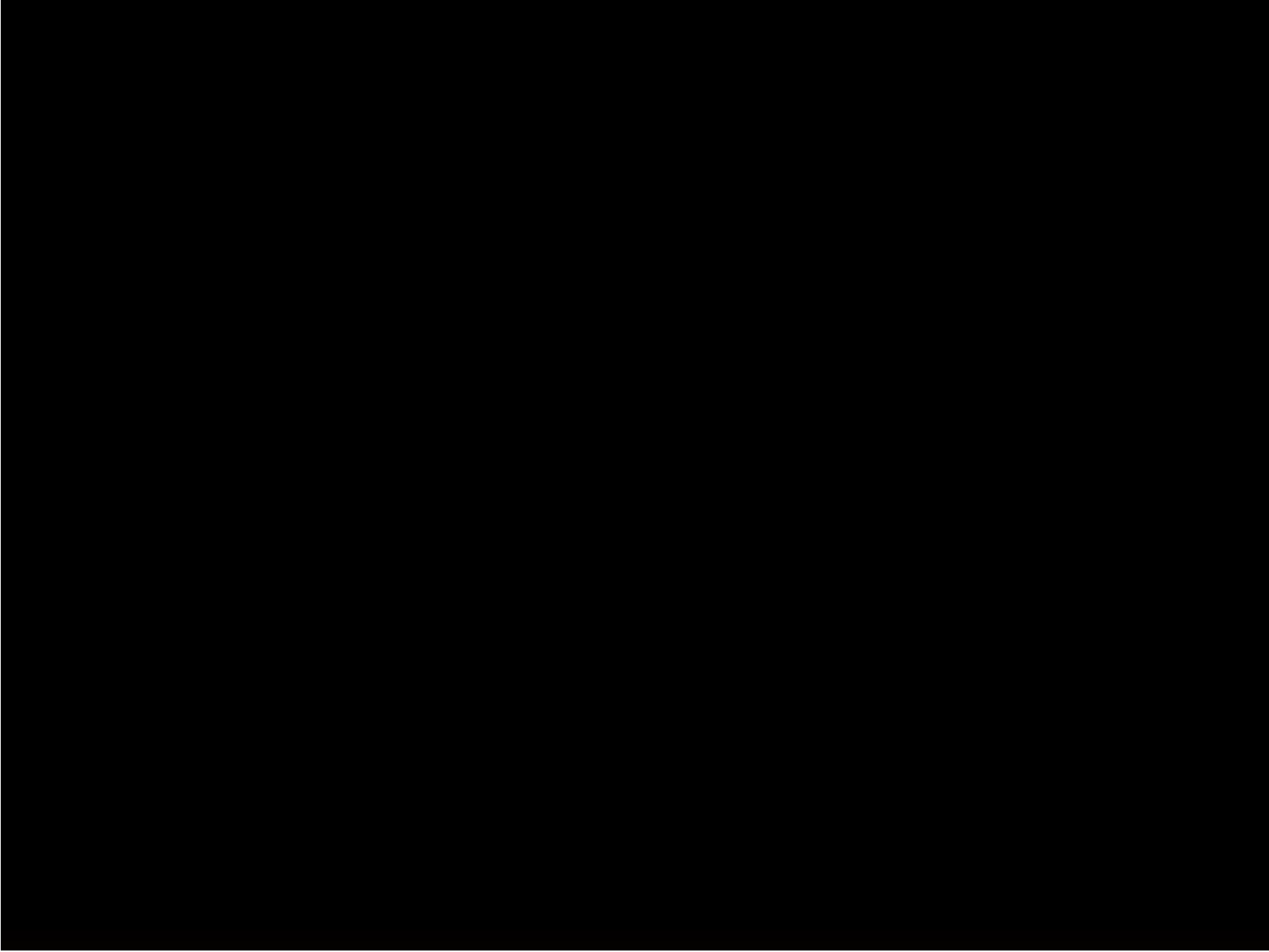
McCracken, 1986

EXAMPLE

How technology ideals (myths) inform the encoding of advertisements?

(... simple stories ... they provide ideals to live by, and they work to resolve life's most vexing questions" (Holt, 2003)





Semiotics

A (super) brief introduction

- Semiotics a broad field
- No consensus
- On semiotics as a method of analysis

- ‘semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign’ (Eco 1976, 7)
- A sign = anything that stands for something else
- In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects (Chandler 1994/2004/2017)
- “semio[tics] confronts the question of how images make meanings head on ... produce detailed accounts of the exact ways the meanings of an image are produced through that image (Rose 2016)

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

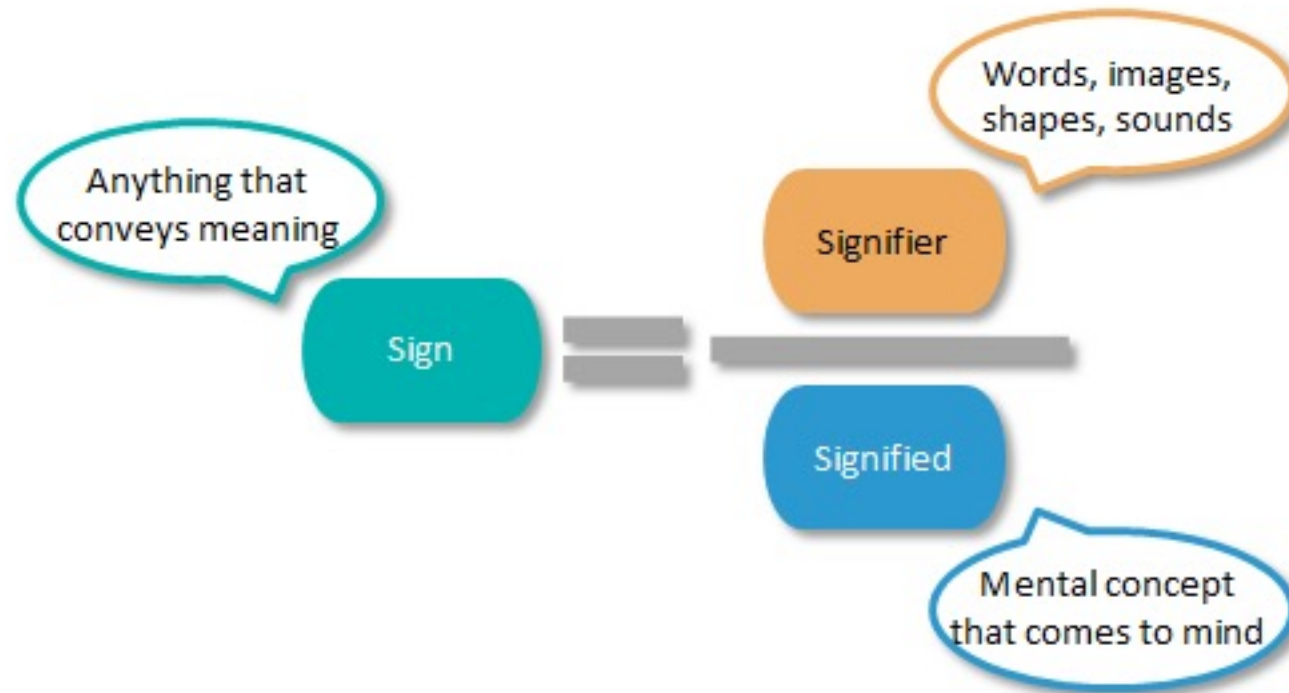
- Swiss linguist
- Lecture series or seminars in "general linguistics" (1907-11)
- The founding father of semiotics



The “sign” is the most fundamental unit of mainstream semiology.

From linguistics

- Sign = two parts only distinguishable at the analytical level
 - the first part → **signified** ... concept or and object,
 - second part **signifier** ... a sound or an image that is attached to a signified
- Arbitrariness





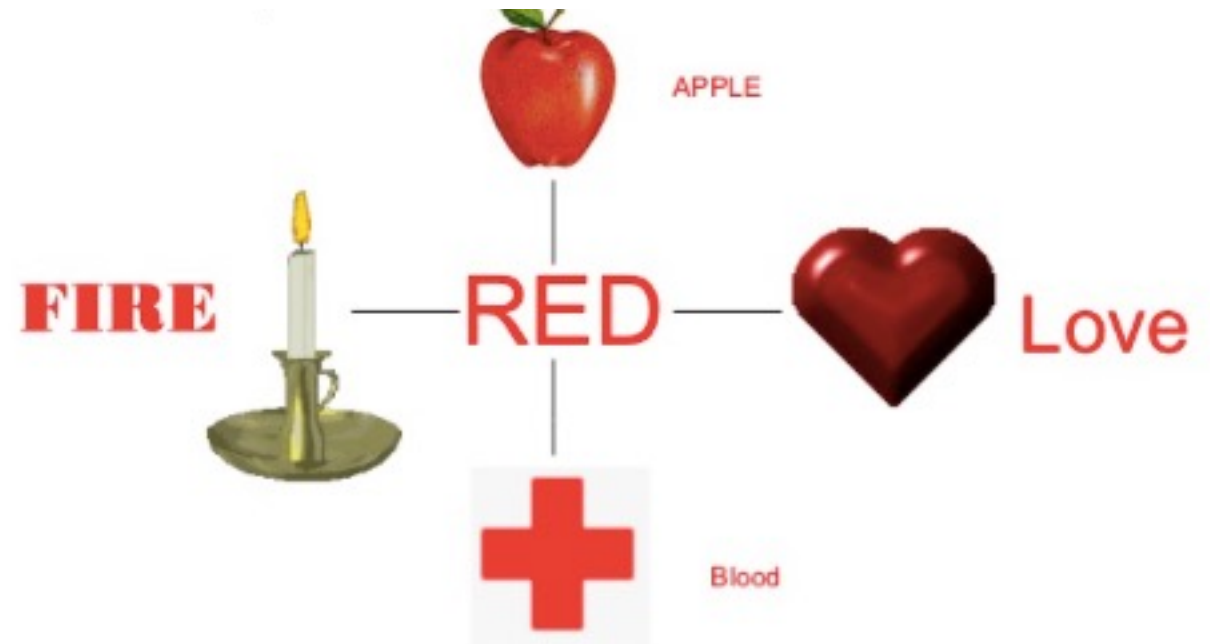
Signified

Signifier

Sign

Signifiers can have multiple signifieds (*concepts**):

Think of signifier red
A number of signifieds are possible:
(depending on the context)



Brands as signs



Roland Gérard Barthes (1915 – 1980)

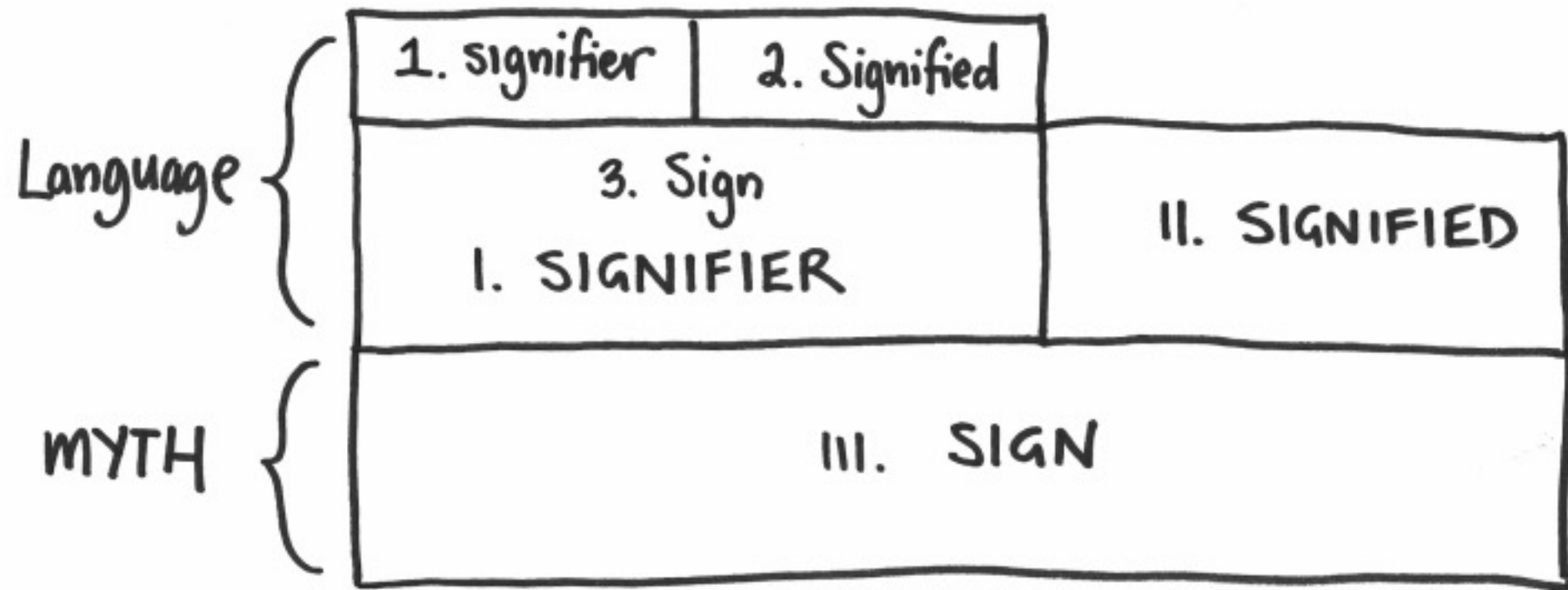
- French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist, critic and semiotician



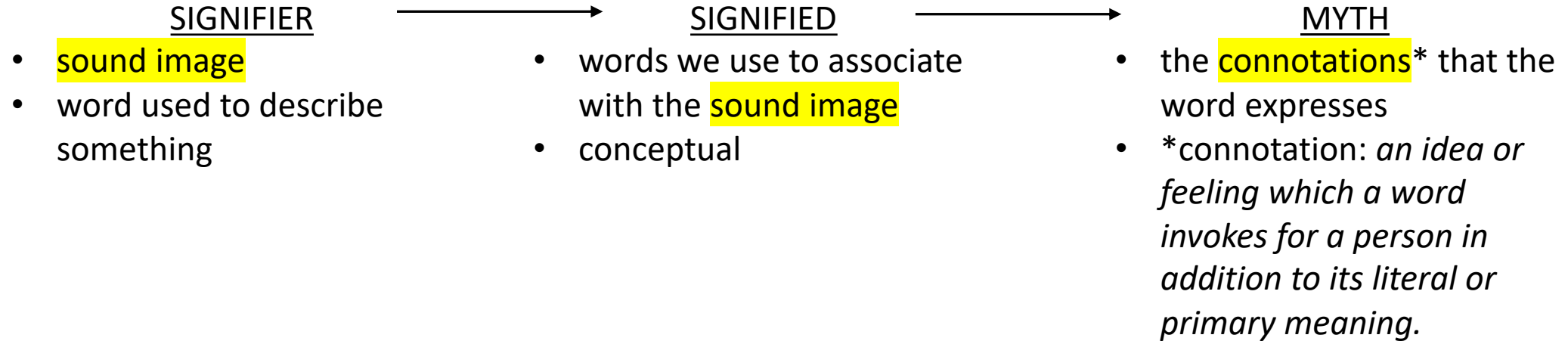
Roland Barthes

Mythologies

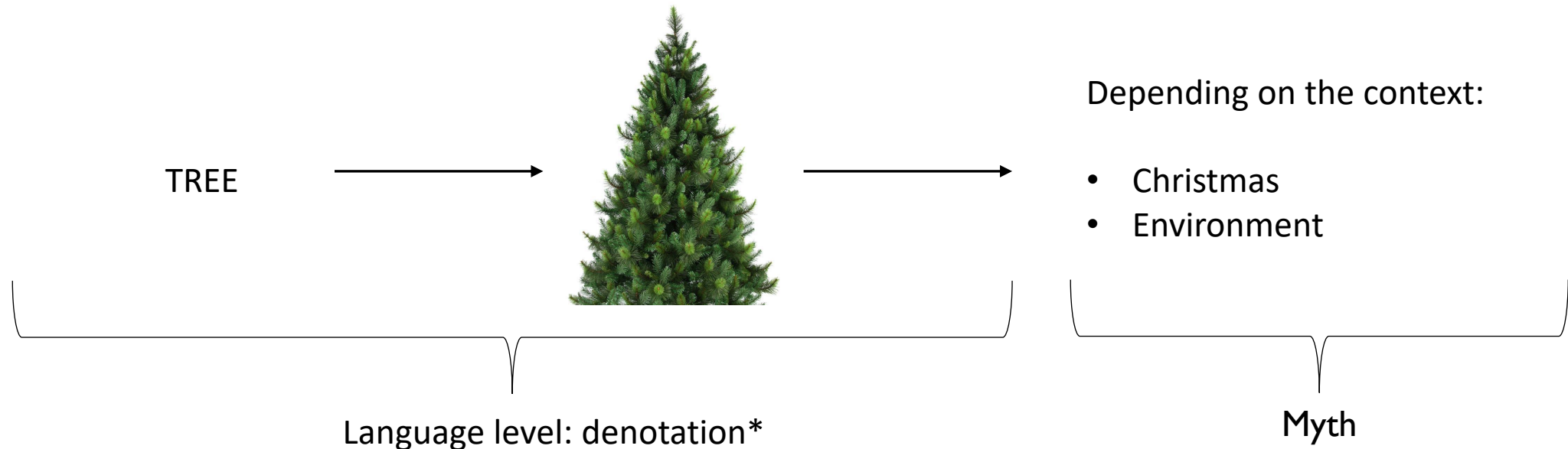




Red Rose	Romance
Red Rose of Romance Signifier	Love/Devotion Signified
Giving the rose proves my love MYTH	

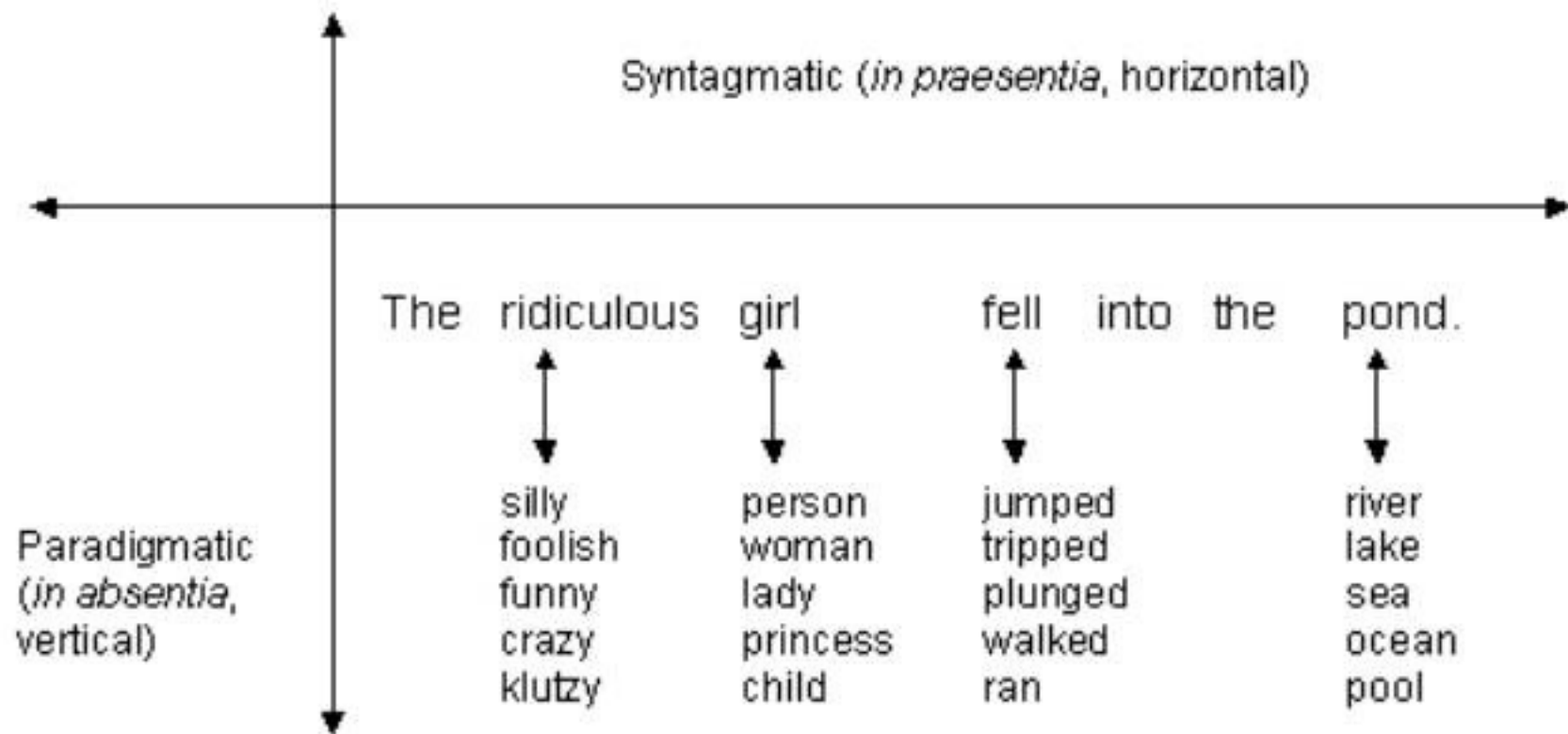


EXAMPLE



*The literal or primary meaning of a word, in contrast to the feelings or ideas that the word suggests.

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations





	Syntagmatic axes
P A R A D I G M A T I C	

Myth?



	Syntagmatic axes
P A R A D I G M A T I C	Person – space -

Myth?

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