

ECOSEMIOTICS BETWEEN MATTER AND LIFE

The background features a teal shape on the left with three black circles of varying sizes. On the right, a black shape contains a network of thin, curved lines in teal, orange, and white, connecting several small white circles. The overall aesthetic is modern and scientific.

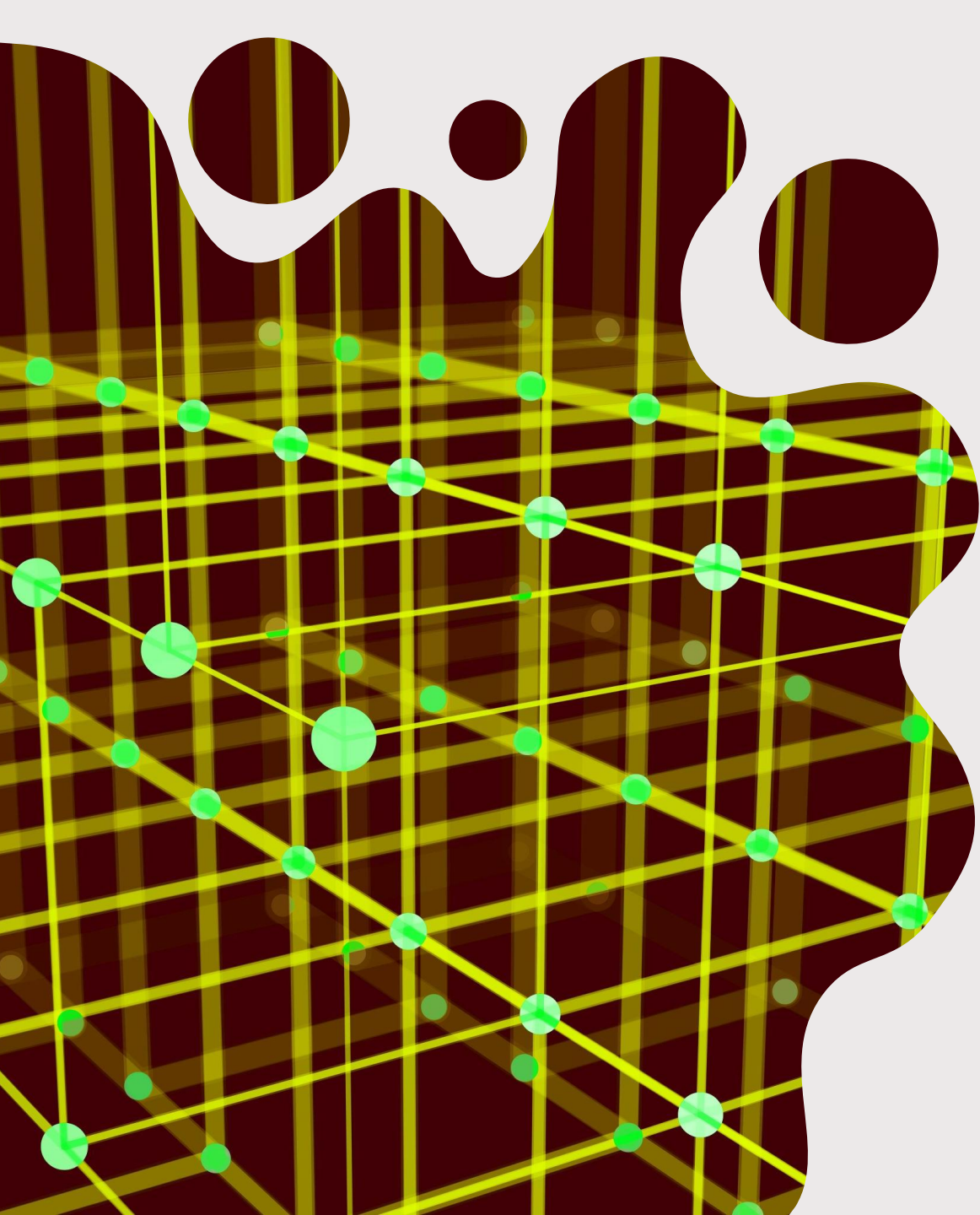
STARTING FROM JOHN DEELY'S
INTERPRETATION OF SEMIOTIC
SCAFFOLDING

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Arguments

- Introducing Deely's use of semiotic scaffolding to justify that semiosis extends beyond life;
- Show how this view is not in conflict with biosemiotics;
- Propose an extended ecosemiotics as a tool to hold physiosemeiosis and biosemiotics together.



(SEMIOTIC) SCAFFOLDING

"A scaffold is a structure which sustains or upholds things while new levels or dimensions are added to what is already existing".

"[...] And that is just what semiosis does respecting the universe as a whole".

WHY EXTEND
THE DISCOURSE
TO THE ENTIRE
UNIVERSE?





"to show how and why Hoffmeyer's notion of semiosis as providing the scaffolding for the development of life needs also and *further* to be understood as providing the scaffolding whereby the originally lifeless universe developed in such a way as eventually to become capable of life".

HOW?

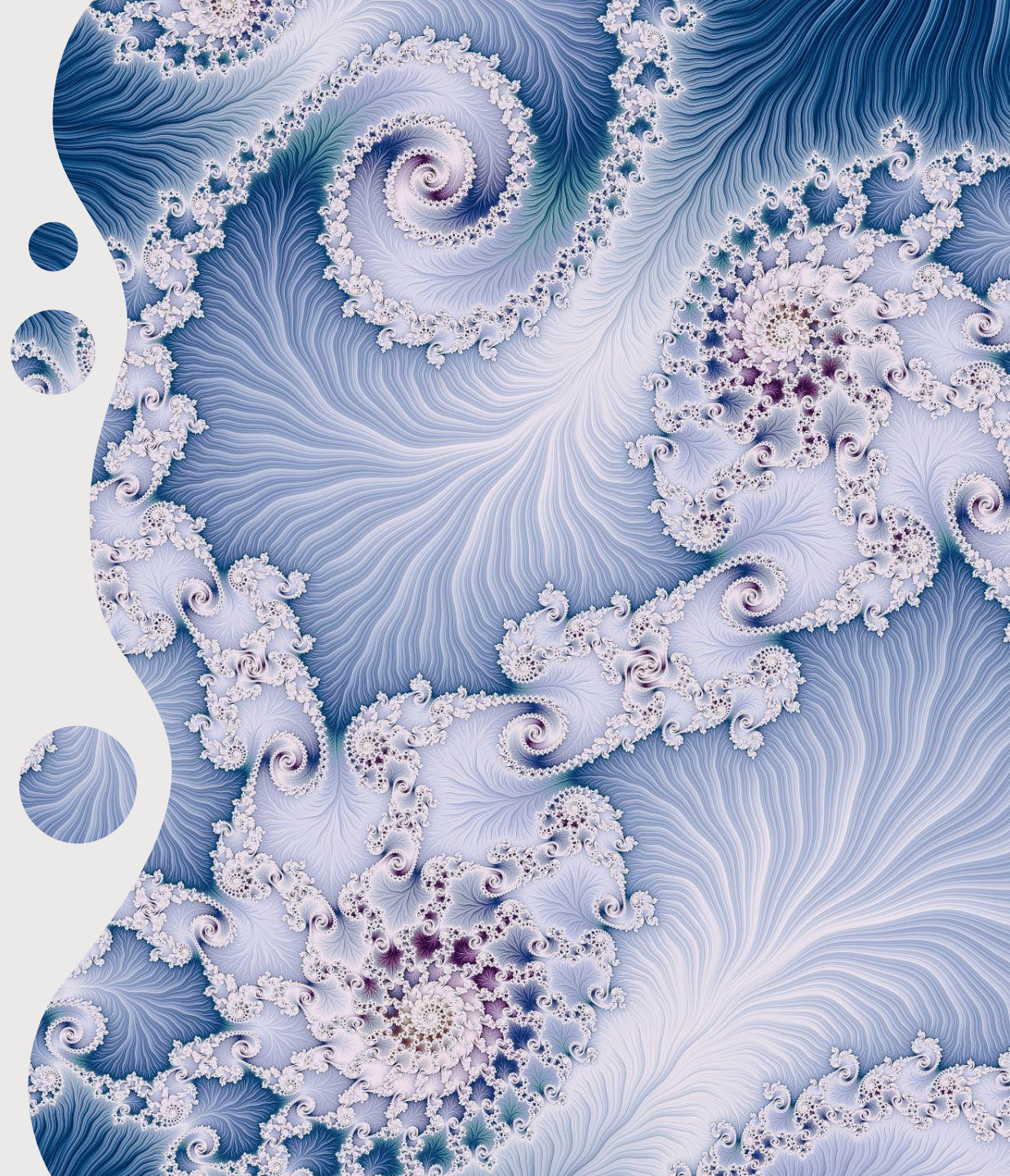
Deely is looking for the conditions of possibility for the emergence of life. To do so, he uses Hoffmeyer's notion and extends it to the structure that sustains life, but is not itself living.



PRINCIPLE OF SYNEDOCHE

A continuous synecdoche, similar to a fractal but corresponding to an embedding of different and co-existing, stratified and hybrid layers.

This is the conservative part of the interaction, which is indispensable for further acts of semiosis and interpretation to emerge





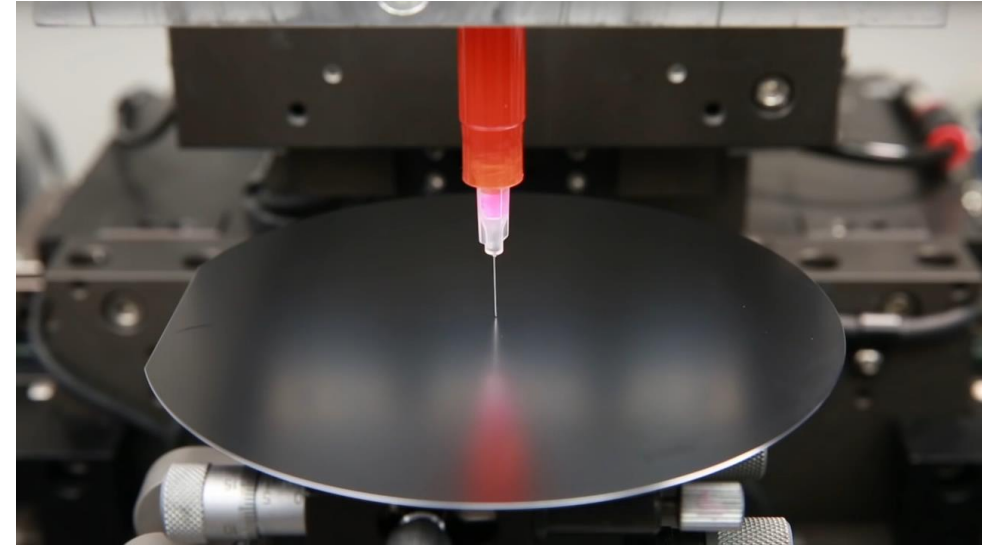
HOW FAR DOES LIFE EXTEND?

Semiosis in nature certainly belongs to living beings, but it also extends beyond them. Inanimate matter, if it were truly inert, could not have been the basis for creating life and generating diversity within and without itself.

DON'T BE NAIVE!

The distinction between physiosemiosis and pan-semiosis is clear. Here we see that matter is so-called inanimate or inert because of our prejudices.

Materials are active, agentic, responsive, and discursive.





IT IS NOT ABOUT GOING AGAINST

"But my opinion is that the idea applies to the full extent of semiosis, which –again in my opinion– is broader than the realm of biosemiotics. Thus, while biosemioticians like to repeat Sebeok's maxim that semiosis is coextensive with life, they are resistant to seeing that life is not coextensive with semiosis, and in this paper I want to indicate *why* –or perhaps I should rather say *how*– a semiosis is presupposed not only for living things to exist, but for living things to have been able in the first place to come into existence!"



WHAT IF WE TOOK HIS
PROPOSAL SERIOUSLY?



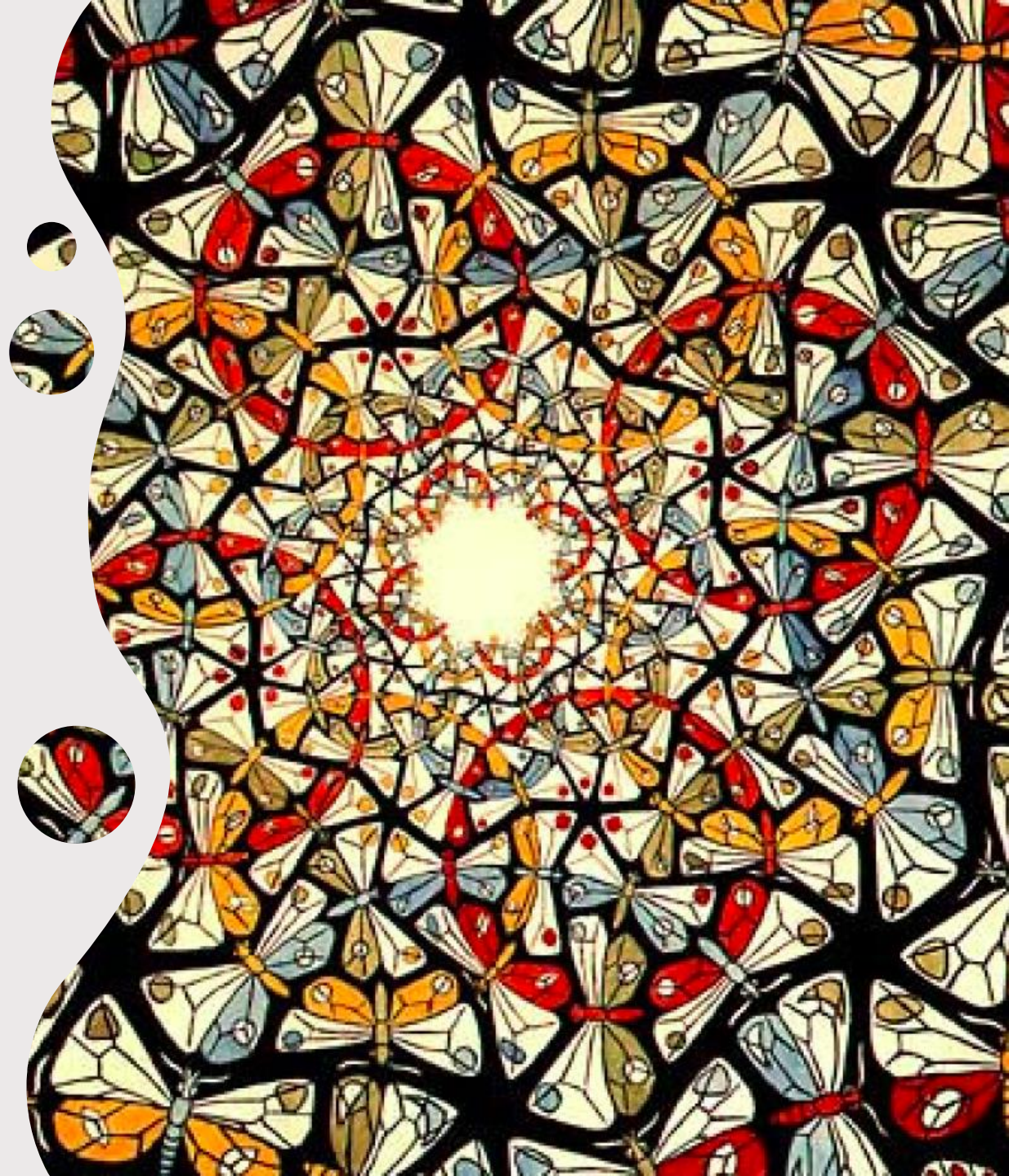
EXPANDING ECOSEMIOTICS

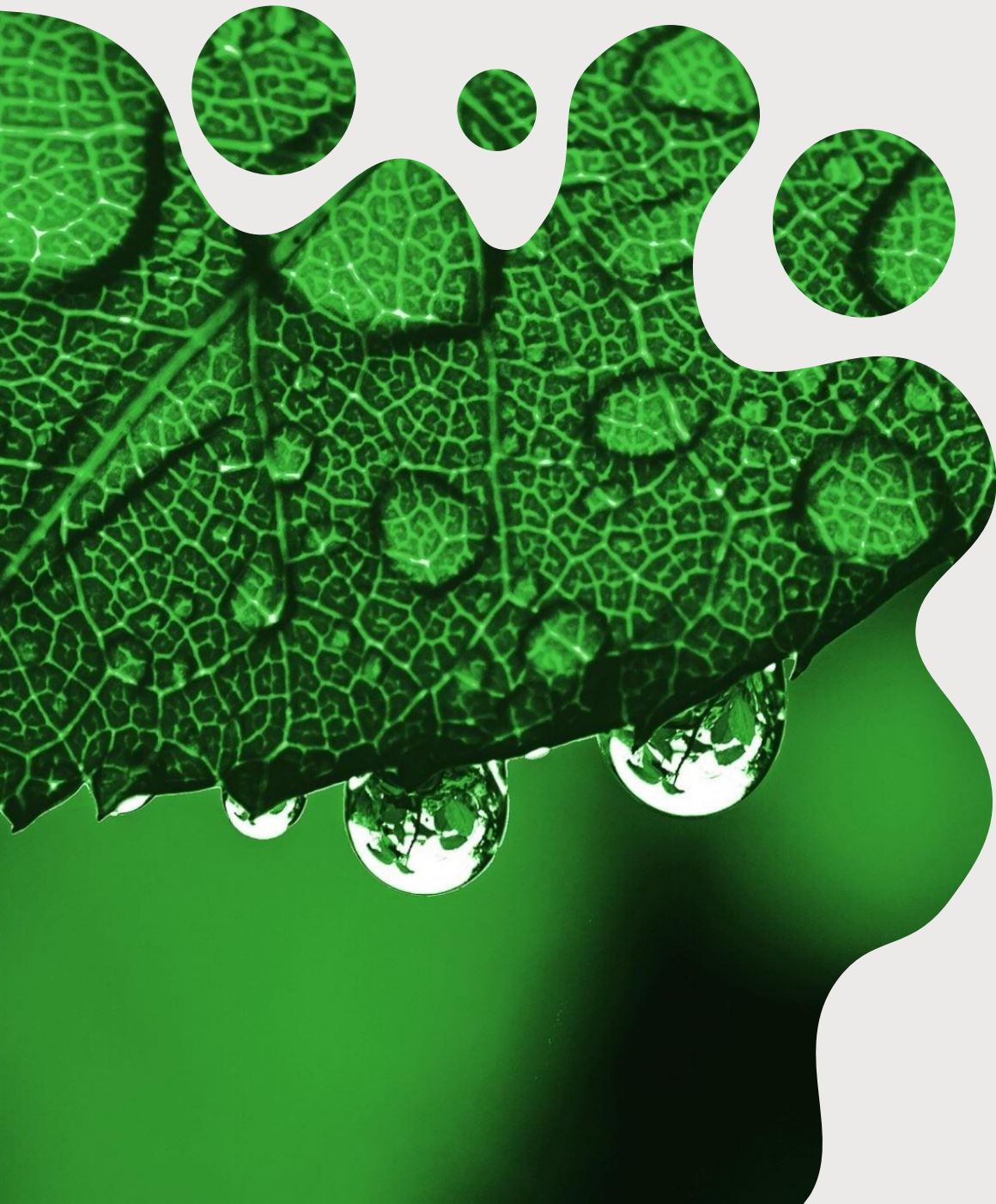
In order to understand the complexity of the semiotic processes occurring in living systems, we need to take an ecosystemic perspective. This is because every ecosystem does not only consist of organic agents, but is above all a network of interdependent heterogeneous elements. In all emerging models involving the life sciences, attention to the complexity of co-occurrence and context must be made explicit.

ECOSYSTEMIC BIOSEMIOTICS

An “ecosystemic view of life” , a point of view that intersects complexity theories, semiotics, and ecology. We must look at complex systems from an ecosystemic view of integration. A cell, a forest, a hurricane, and a society are complex systems connected in an ecological communication.

Semiotics, complexity, life, and matter thus appear intertwined in what I call ecosystemic biosemiotics, i.e. a semiotics that focuses on the emergence of meaning in living systems while taking into account the ecological and material processes in which life emerges and evolves.



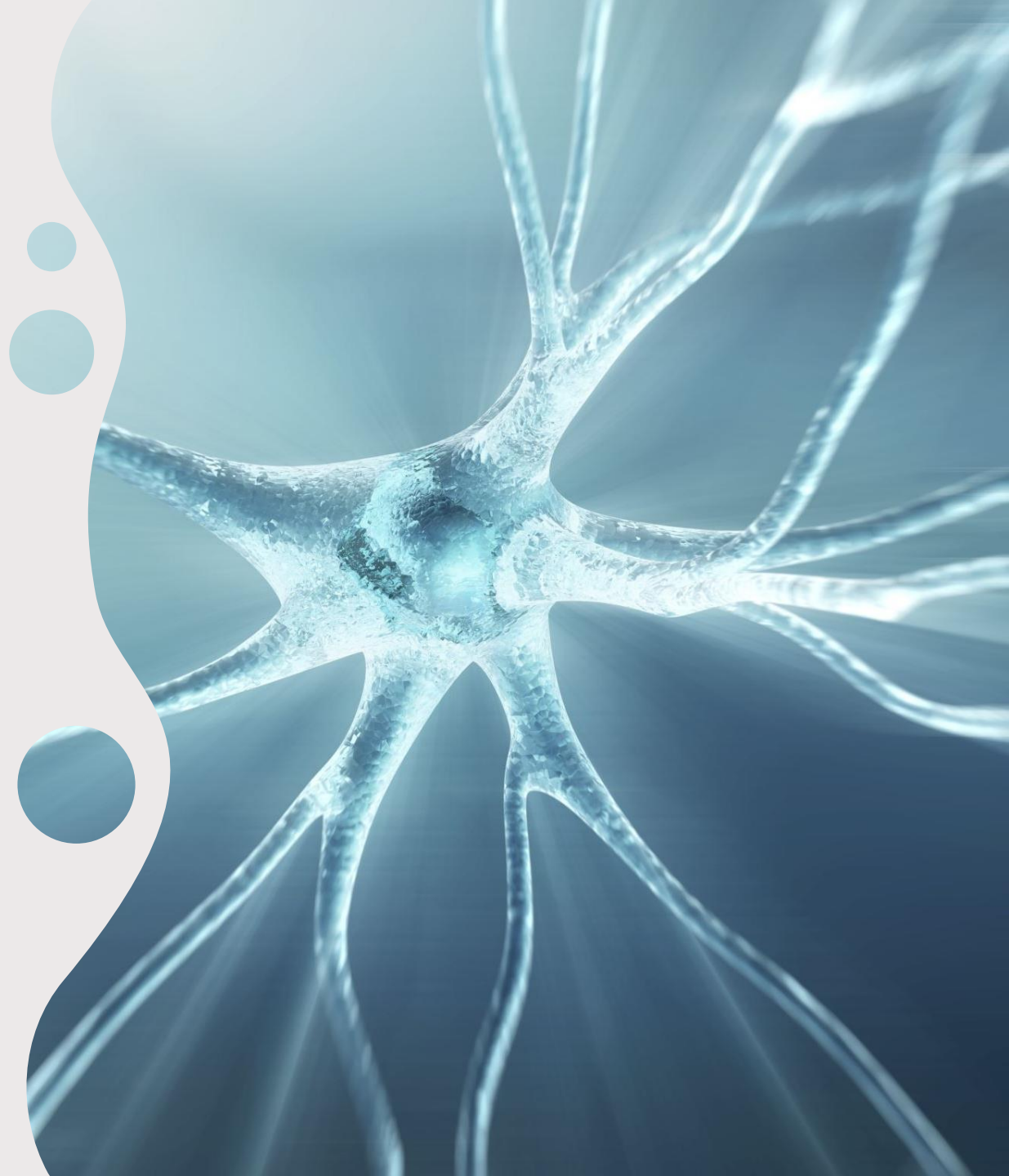


PHYSIO AND BIO IN THE SCAFFOLDING

It is possible to reinterpret physiosemiosis from ecosemiotics, which recalls the notion of '*Physis*', in the Greek sense of the term, i.e. nature as a whole. The semiotic scaffold can be a useful framework for making life and non-life dialogue through complicity and continuity, showing the intricate semiotic network and its processes, in a first and fundamental reality.

NATURE'S SCAFFOLDING

By integrating these fields of knowledge, we can discern a means of identifying the construction of meaning in a given meaning-making ecosystem. Everything is embedded in a network of meanings that we can call “environmental semiotics” or Ecosystemic Biosemiotics.





Thank you

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