

Semiosis as a Model of Purpose-driven Representation

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Abstract: The paper examines a particular aspect of the way semiosis models complex anthroposemiotic activity as exemplified by the “persuasion path” implicit in any source or origin of intentional influence in human communication. Now, in theory, we should be able to account for every stage in the process of semiosis, and this ability has a bearing on the way signs are to be classified according to the nature of their immediate objects. The topic is a pretext, consequently, for exploring the stages in semiosis from the dynamic object to the sign via the immediate object in selected pictorial examples of purpose and intentionality in semiosis, since, to be understood successfully—indeed, to function at all—any such persuasive or influential activity depends upon the formal organisation of its representation. The paper thus presents one possible explanation of the role of the immediate object in cases of evident intentionality. However, in view of the fact that Peirce never developed a clear idea of semiosis, it is necessarily speculative and abductive.

Keywords: Peirce, semiosis, sign, purpose-driven representation, intentionality, immediate object

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A purpose is merely that form of final cause which is most familiar to our experience.

CP 1. 211 (1902)

I . Introduction

The paper examines the contribution of a sign’s immediate object to the way

semiosis models the type of complex anthroposemiotic activity exemplified by the series of formative stages implicit in, for example, Edward Bernay's (1947) apology for "scientific" persuasion—what he referred to, apparently without cynicism, as "the engineering of consent" and, of course, by any other source of influence. Since, for Peirce's theory of signs to be a viable scientific proposition we have to be able to account for every stage in the process of semiosis, such an ability will necessarily require at some point that signs should be classified according to the nature of their immediate objects. The topic is a pretext, therefore, for exploring the stages in semiosis from the dynamic object to the sign via the immediate object in selected examples, since any persuasive or influential activity requires the formal organisation of its representation and there can be no communication without representation, irrespective of the nature of the "agents"—human or otherwise—involved. While not all representations are purpose-driven—those with an existent dynamic object can be shown to be causal rather than intentional—the paper presents one possible illustration of the role of the immediate object in cases of conspicuous intentionality. Note, finally, that Peirce never used the term "intentionality", he referred instead to "purpose" or "intention" (the latter generally in the restricted, technical sense of "first intention" "second intention").

The paper is organized as follows: in view of developments in his theory of signs over the ten years at the beginning of the last century, chronology is the backbone or framework of any investigation of Peircean semiotics. Initially, then, a brief review of the well-known ten-class system from the syllabus of 1903 accompanying Peirce's Lowell lectures on logic precedes a description of the post-1903 hexadic system of sign-action, in which the sign comes to be defined as a medium and which also leads to the definition of semiosis in 1907. This is followed by discussions first of semiosis itself, and, subsequently, of the implications of Peirce's statements concerning the immediate object. Since his changing conception of the ways in which signs are to be classified is characterized by a gradual move from phenomenology to a form of ontology as the basis of the analysis of classificatory divisions into subdivisions, a section is devoted to this important theoretical decision. Finally, discussion in two case studies of intention-driven representations present the hypothesized function of the immediate object in the development of the deliberative stages leading from conception to representation.

II. Peirce's Evolving Theory of Signs

i. The Sign as Medium

In the course of the Lowell lectures of 1903 Peirce had defined the sign in the following manner, in which the continuing influence of his conception of phenomenology is clearly visible:

A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. (CP 2.274, 1903)

This definition involving three correlates, namely sign, object and interpretant, enabled him to establish a typology formed of three divisions. These were a division for the sign, one concerning the relation between sign and object, and, finally, a division concerning the sign and its interpretant. With his three categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, he was able to subdivide these divisions and combine the resultant subdivisions as represented on Figure 1 so as to derive only ten classes of signs from a potential twenty-seven.

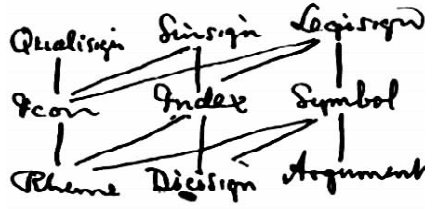


Figure 1 Peirce's Table of Compatibilities between Subdivisions

The scheme on Figure 1 indicates the categorial affinities holding between the subdivisions of these three trichotomies. The vertical columns correspond to the three categories leading from Firstness on the left to Thirdness on the right, while the horizontal entries correspond to the Sign, Sign-Object and Sign-Interpretant trichotomies. The "rules" drawn by Peirce on Figure 1 are simple. First, two vertical lines associating three subdivisions of the same phenomenological complexity

form one class. For example, the first, least complex class, the qualisign, is obtained by tracing the leftmost pair of vertical lines linking subdivisions partaking of Firstness from qualisign to rheme through icon. Since a qualisign cannot combine with a subdivision of greater phenomenological value such as an index (Secondness) or a symbol (Thirdness), there is no need to mention the icon and the rheme in the class label: the terms are redundant, hence, simply, “qualisign”. Similarly, another vertical trace associating the subdivisions partaking of Thirdness leads from legisign to argument through symbol, yielding the tenth, most complex class, the argument. As the vertical line shows, a Thirdness can only be preceded by another Thirdness, so there is no need to specify the association with legisign and symbol.

A second “rule” allows a downward diagonal trace from right to left, going from the phenomenologically more complex subdivisions to the less. For example, it is possible to trace a class from sinsign to icon, which necessarily leads to rheme. This yields the iconic sinsign, another case where mention of the rhematic status of such a sign is superfluous. By combining subdivisions in this way Peirce obtained ten classes of signs (Figure 2), which he numbered according to increasing phenomenological complexity, and in which the terms not indicated in bold can be omitted from the class label.

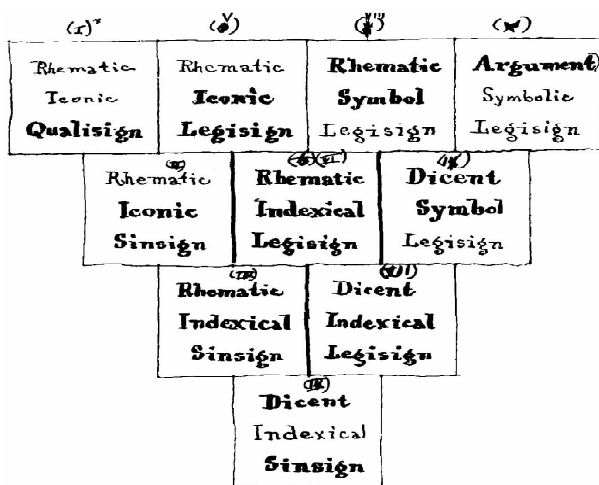


Figure 2 Peirce’s Ten Classes of Signs from the Syllabus of 1903 (R 549 16; EP 2 296)

However, in the period 1905 – 1906, no doubt partly as a consequence of the

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expanded set of correlates, he was led to specify the role of the sign more completely than before, and, in the course of integrating two objects and three interpretants in his conception of representation, explicitly attributed to the sign itself a more precisely defined mediating role, as we see in the following extract from manuscript RL 463, a draft letter to Lady Welby dated 9 March 1906:

I use the word “*Sign*” in the widest sense for any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature). Being medium, it is determined by something, called its Object, and determines something, called its Interpretant. In order that a Form may be extended or communicated, it is necessary that it should have been really embodied in a Subject independently of the communication; and it is necessary that there should be another subject in which the same form is embodied only as a consequence of the communication. (EP 2 477, 1906)

As can be seen from the quotation, the 1906 draft insists upon the fact that the sign is a medium for the communication of a “form”. Just what sort of entity is this form that the object communicates to the sign via the immediate object? Peirce suggests an explanation for this in a variant page 3 of another contemporary manuscript, R 793:

[That] which is communicated from the Object through the Sign to the Interpretant is a Form. It is not a singular thing; for if a Singular thing were first in the Object and afterward in the Interpretant outside the Object, it must thereby cease to be in the Object. (R 793 5, 1906)

Clearly, if what was communicated from the object to the sign were an existent, singular entity it would cease to be located in the object once it had been communicated to the sign and would cease to be in the sign as soon as it had been communicated in turn to the interpretant. The form communicated by the dynamic object to the sign via the immediate object is therefore necessarily qualitative, quality being described as the “monadic element of the world” (CP 1.426, c. 1896) and consequently the only category of being that can simultaneously be “the same form” embodied in sign, objects and interpretants. In the course of normal human communication, for example, signs—media—as defined by the 1906 statement above simply need to be perceivable and to accommodate such forms emanating, of course, from the dynamic object. Potential media, then, according to this view, are the artist’s canvas, cinema-, computer- or TV-screens, neon

hoardings outside department stores, metal panels on roadsides, old-fashioned school blackboards, and even human skin. As for the form communicated, it is tempting to consider it as the form of the immediate object.

ii. Semiosis Defined

A new stage comes with the document entitled “Pragmatism” (Prag) of 1907. This is manuscript R318, a 698-page document consisting in various drafts of letters to editors, all of which were rejected. Parts of the manuscript are reproduced in CP 5.465 – 496 and parts in EP 2 398 – 433, a delicate situation as it tends to highlight, as in the case of the CP selections concerning the logical interpretant, for example, concepts which are thought to be important from their prominence in the *Collected Papers* but never appear again after 1907. The variants in the manuscript, which really requires to be read in full, show that Peirce now saw the nature of the association of the three foundational constituents of semiosis or “semiosis”, as he also called it (CP 5.473, 1907), as being the dynamic action involving the “cooperation” of three subjects, namely a sign, its object and its interpretant:

It is important to understand what I mean by *semiosis*. All dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects [whether they react equally upon each other, or one is agent and the other patient, entirely or partially] or at any rate is a resultant of such actions between pairs. But by “semiosis” I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a coöperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs. (CP 5.484, 1907)

In the same manuscript, Peirce, no doubt aware of the immensity of the task, defines “semiotic” in a novel manner and announces the need for future research into the identification in logic of what he saw as all possible varieties not so much of classes of signs, but of *varieties of possible semiosis*, thereby establishing a necessary theoretical relation between class of sign and class of semiosis:

I am, as far as I know, a pioneer, or rather a backwoodsman, in the work of clearing and opening up what I call *semiotic*, that is, the doctrine of the essential nature and fundamental varieties of possible semiosis; and I find the field too vast, the labor too great, for a first-comer. (R 318 119, 1907)

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Such a relation would have been inconceivable in 1903, since the classes of signs were not directly linked to the action in which the sign was engaged: the only correlate so linked was, necessarily, the sign itself, since at this time it was both the determination of the object and the determinant of the interpretant, while the ten classes of signs involved neither of the other two correlates but, rather, *relations* between the sign and the two correlates. The statement is important, then, in two ways: first, it establishes that there is not one form of semiosis, but many different types. Second, it implies that to each distinct type of semiosis there corresponds a distinct class of signs; conversely, each distinct class of signs is necessarily the result of a distinct type of semiosis. Consider, furthermore, the following example of a sign that Peirce offers in the same manuscript:

Suppose, for example, an officer of a squad or company of infantry gives the word of command, “Ground arms!” This order is, of course, a sign. That thing which causes a sign as such is called the *object* (according to the usage of speech, the “real,” but more accurately, the *existent* object) represented by the sign: the sign is determined to some species of correspondence with that object. In the present case, the object the command represents is the will of the officer that the butts of the muskets be brought down to the ground. For the proper outcome of a sign, I propose the name, the *interpretant* of the sign. The example of the imperative command shows that it need not be of a mental mode of being. (R 318 51–53, 1907).

The interesting features of this example are, first, that the object can now be the will of the officer, a case of intentionality in semiosis which confirms the potential for such a semiotic determinant to be found in an earlier description of the immediate (intentional) interpretant in the 1906 draft (EP 2 478) mentioned above as a determination of the utterer, and second, that the interpretant—here the existential interpretant and elsewhere referred to in manuscript R 318 as the “energetic” interpretant—can not only be a thought or habit but also an action. In the draft of 9 March, 1906, Peirce seemed still to consider the sign’s object as what the sign represented immediately—the model in a photograph, for example. In the pragmatism manuscript of 1907, however, the object of the military command is the *source of the imperative utterance*, namely, the officer’s will, not the implicit grammatical subject *You*, the ground and the muskets. In 1907 he thus identifies the dynamic (“real”) object of the military command “Ground arms!” as the will of

the officer, a theoretical decision which makes the dynamic object the locus or source of, amongst other things, intentionality, purpose and persuasion.

iii. Universe or Category?

Over the course of the years between 1903 and 1908, beginning probably in 1906 with the publication of “Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism” (cf. CP 5. 544 – 5. 546), Peirce was led to adopt a different set of values enabling him to subdivide the trichotomies of the ten-division systems he had begun to derive in the summer of 1905. A universe, Peirce claimed in 1906 (CP 4. 545), is not the same as a category, and he continued:

Let us begin with the question of Universes. It is rather a question of an advisable point of view than of the truth of a doctrine. A logical universe is, no doubt, a collection of *logical* subjects, but not necessarily of metaphysical Subjects, or “substances”; for it may be composed of characters, of elementary facts, etc. (CP 4. 546).

Instead of the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness from 1903, in 1908 he explicitly employed three “universes of experience” as described in “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God” (CP 6. 452 – 6. 493, 1908). These were subsequently defined modally to be composed of possible, existent and necessitant entities (including signs, objects and interpretants) and became the means of subdividing trichotomies in his December 1908 three-division, six-division and ten-division typologies (EP 2 478 – 491).

In a manner which clearly parallels the way he began his description of speculative grammar in the intended Syllabus of 1903 (EP 2 267 – 272) and in the letter to Lady Welby of 1904 with its six divisions of signs (CP 8. 327 – 8. 333) by means of an introduction to phenomenology and the three categories, Peirce prefaced the definition of the innovative hexadic process of signification in 1908 by a thorough and explicit association of three modally-defined universes with semiosis, by which he established the subdivisions within each of six new trichotomies:

It is clearly indispensable to start with an accurate and broad analysis of the nature of a Sign. I define a Sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its Interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former[. . .] I

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recognize three Universes, which are distinguished by three Modalities of Being. One of these Universes embraces whatever has its Being in itself alone[. . .] I denominate the objects of this Universe *Ideas*, or *Possibles*, although the latter designation does not imply capability of actualization[. . .] Another Universe is that of, 1st, Objects whose Being consists in their Brute reactions, and of, 2nd, the Facts[. . .] I call the Objects, Things, or more unambiguously, *Existents*, and the facts about them I call Facts[. . .] The third Universe consists of the co-being of whatever is in its Nature *necessitant*, that is, is a Habit, a law, or something expressible in a universal proposition. (EP 2 478 -479, 1908)

These universes of experience were later to become a single universe of existence in his correspondence and drafts to William James. In the following extract from a draft letter to James composed a month after the one to Lady Welby in which the twenty-eight and sixty-six classes of signs were first mentioned, Peirce offers the following definition of the sign and an innovative development in his conception of the dynamic object detailing a number of cases where the sign's dynamic object corresponds to or identifies a "universe of existence" (EP 2 492 -493, 1909). In other words, the dynamic object is, or determines, an ontology:

A Sign is a Cognizable that, on the one hand, is so determined (i. e. , specialized, *bestimmt*) by something *other than itself*, called its Object (or, in some cases, as if the Sign be the sentence "Cain killed Abel" in which Cain and Abel are equally Partial Objects, it may be more convenient to say that that which determines the Sign is the Complexus, or Totality, of Partial Objects. And in every case the Object is accurately the Universe of which the Special Object is member, or part), while, on the other hand, it so determines some actual or potential Mind, the determination whereof I term the Interpretant created by the Sign, that that Interpreting Mind is therein determined mediately by the Object. (EP 2 492, 1909)

By identifying the dynamic object as the universe itself, rather than the earlier typological conception in which the dynamic object is referred to one of three universes in the classification of signs, Peirce has simplified the theoretical framework considerably, if only briefly, but shows a certain hesitation in his verbocentric examples as to what the object of a sign really is. Note that in a letter to James dated 14 March 1909 he did subsequently refer to a three-universe system (EP 2 497).

As seen above, we have Peirce discarding the phenomenological framework

mentioned in his intended syllabus for the Lowell lectures five years earlier and in the letter to Lady Welby of 12 October 1904, adopting instead what in this paper is referred to as an ontological one, i. e. one in which Peirce has specified domains of possible, existent and necessitant entities and relations among them. There are a number of possible explanations for such a move, but the reader is reminded that the choice of three universes as opposed to the earlier phenomenological categories as the means of establishing the subdivisions of the various trichotomies is dismissed as irrelevant by certain Peirce specialists, who claim that the concepts that Peirce has been referring to in the texts above are nothing more than another term for the categories, that, in fact, the phenomenology, or “phaneroscopy” as he had been calling it since 1904, still provided in 1908 the principles for subdividing the divisions of his typologies (Savan, 1988, p. 53; Anderson, 1995, p. 140; Freadman, 2004, p. 160; Houser, 2005, p. 459 and Bellucci, 2018, p. 335, for example). There are several arguments against such a claim.

There will be a process of any kind which involves the dynamism necessary for the determination of a sign that is “percussive”, for example the case where the dynamic interpretant **Id** is an existent on Table 1, and produces an action such as bringing musket-butts to the ground, the categories are clearly inapplicable: a category is a type of predicate or descriptive term concerning phenomena and is incapable of materially organizing a sequence of correlates resulting in musket-butts being brought to the ground. We know, too, that Peirce derived the single sign, the two objects and the three interpretants at the time when he was still working with his categories, and that he claimed in 1907 that it was the categories that defined the three interpretants (R 318 281). Since there is no way in which he could have derived such a one-two-three correlate system using the universes of the sort described in 1908, universes must be logically and functionally distinct from categories. In any case, it would be difficult for defenders of the “category = universe” thesis to assimilate a category of any sort to the single universe of *existence* as Peirce described it briefly to James in the draft of February 1909 (EP 2 492), even though he did subsequently refer James to a three-universe system (EP 2 497). Finally, in view of Peirce’s strictures on the ethics of terminology and given the fact that he was still presenting work elsewhere on his phenomenology, now termed “phaneroscopy”, if he mentions universes as classification criteria in the

1908 letter and drafts and in subsequent letters and drafts to William James, an extract of which was quoted above (EP 2 492, 497, 1909), it can reasonably be assumed that he meant universes and not categories. The distinction is important as many non-specialist readers of Peirce from other disciplines can easily be misled into thinking that semiosis is somehow based upon phenomenology. See Chapter Three of Jappy (2016) for a longer discussion and references.

III. Semiosis

In 1908, in a letter to Lady Welby, Peirce describes the six-correlate process of semiosis as the following sequence:

It is evident that a possible can determine nothing but a Possible, it is equally so that Necessitant can be determined by nothing but a Necessitant. Hence it follows from the Definition of a Sign that since the Dynamoid Object determines the Immediate Object,

which determines the Sign itself,
which determines the Destinate Interpretant,
which determines the Effective Interpretant,
which determines the Explicit Interpretant.

The six trichotomies, instead of determining 729 classes of signs, as they would if they were independent, only yield twenty-eight classes; and if, as I strongly opine (not to say almost prove) there are four other trichotomies of signs of the same order of importance, instead of making 59049 classes, these will only come to sixty-six. (SS 84 – 85, 1908)

Standardizing the interpretants, the process can be represented quite simply by Figure 3. Note that not every authority agrees on the order given below as the explicit interpretant is sometimes taken to be the immediate and the destinate to be the final.

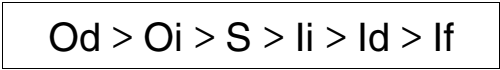


Figure 3 The Linear Order of Semiosis (SS 84, 1908, interpretants standardized)

Since these correlates are organized in logical, linear order, we see that signs have a “history” originating first in the dynamic object and continued by the

immediate. This history can be traced from the following table (Table 1), in which the order of divisions has been labelled to show the linear structure of semiosis as described above. There are three points to note concerning semiosis and the order of divisions as represented on Table 1:

Table 1 The Six-division Typology of 1908 Reflecting the Order of Semiosis

(semiosis)	Subject				
	Od →	Oi →	S →	Ii →	Id →
Universe					
Necessitant	collective	copulant	type	relative	usual
Existent	concretive	designative	token	categorical	percussive
Possible	abstractive	descriptive	mark	hypothetical	sympathetic

- Since the order of the correlates occurring in the determination sequence corresponds to the order of divisions or trichotomies forming the typology, any discussion of semiosis naturally involves the typology and vice versa.

- The passage from an intentionality such as the officer’s order emanating from the dynamic object to its representation by the sign is shown not to be immediate: we must therefore theoretically be able to identify aspects of the immediate object in order to classify the sign.

- To be perceivable at all by, say, a human interpreter, the sign must be an existent—a token or an instance of a type—but the immediate and dynamic objects can both be necessitant. In short, both can be of greater modal complexity than the sign. On the “cut-down” table, Table 2, the sign represents an intentionality (a necessitant **Od** and a formal structure (a necessitant **Oi** more complex than itself).

Since these correlates are organized in logical, linear order, we see that signs have a “history” originating first in the dynamic object and continued by the immediate. This history can be traced from Table 2, in which the order of divisions corresponds to the linear structure of semiosis as described above (Table 1). It should be noted, however, that in all his numerous tabular typologies Peirce never set out his divisions horizontally as on Table 1 but, rather, vertically down the page. Moreover, he never set out a six-division typology based solely on the correlates.

Table 2 The Three Divisions from the Dynamic Object to the Sign

(semiosis)	Subject		
	Od →	Oi →	S →
Universe			
Necessitant	collective	copulant	type
Existent	concretive	designative	token
Possible	abstractive	descriptive	mark

The Mediate Object is the Object outside of the Sign; I call it the Dynamoid Object. The Sign must indicate it by a hint; and *this hint, or its substance,* is the Immediate Object. (SS 83, 1908, emphasis mine)

One way to determine the nature of the immediate object and to show how it communicates to the sign form from the dynamic object is by adopting the definition from 1906 given earlier and treating the sign *strictly* as a medium—airwaves, a page in a book, a piece of canvas or an oak panel, a computer of cinema screen, even human skin[. . .] This is the method adopted here: *any sign determining its series of interpretants is the fusion of the form-bearing immediate object and a medium.*

This hint or substance constituting the immediate object raises a theoretical problem to be considered concerning the two major ways proposed by Peirce of classifying and analyzing the same sign: the 1903 Syllabus version and the post-1906 semiosis-based conception of the sign as medium in a dynamic process. Consider (1), the transcription of a spoken utterance and (2) and its written version:

(1) [ðis ru: mz veri kʊld]

(2) This room is very cold.

Utterances (1) and (2) constitute a simple example of diamesic variation: the same assertion expressed in two different media. In the case of the spoken utterance, the medium is the air which transmits its particular form as the sequence of troughs and peaks of the airwaves conveying the message. In the second case, it is the paper and the series of ink marks on it on the written page of this journal that constitute the medium, but the assertion could just as easily be conveyed by other media, a computer screen, for example, or a classroom blackboard. In each case the intentionality of the dynamic object is the same, but the two distinct media have

been formed—informed—by distinct immediate objects.

Now, on analysing the signs within the phenomenology-based system of 1903 we find that both are replicas of dicent symbols, one of the ten classes of signs obtained from the three divisions that Peirce derived in his syllabus for the Lowell lectures, namely the sign division, the sign-object division and the division concerning the relation between sign and interpretant. It is important to notice that neither the dynamic object nor the immediate object is involved explicitly in the classification, which must perforce, therefore, be considered as static. As the following definitions suggest, the three divisions were obviously based upon a theory in which the action of the sign is dependent upon a conception of determination which is only *implicitly* dynamic—a conception in which, rather, the notion of triadicity is uppermost:

Every sign stands for an object independent of itself; but it can only be a sign of that object in so far as that object is itself of the nature of a sign or thought. For the sign does not affect the object but is affected by it; so that the object must be able to convey thought, that is, must be of the nature of thought or a sign. (CP 1. 538, 1903)

My definition of a representamen is as follow:

A REPRESENTAMEN is a subject of a triadic relation TO a second, called its OBJECT, FOR a third, called is INTERPRETANT, this triadic relation being such that the REPRESENTAMEN determines its interpretant to stand in the same triadic relation to the same object for some interpretant. (CP 1. 541, 1903)

Such definitions and others like it from the Lowell lectures suggest that at the time Peirce was less interested in the action of the sign as a process than in the classification of signs, now that he had developed his phenomenology and had thus developed the conceptual framework required to establish his divisions and to subdivide them. The dynamism implicit in the three-correlate definitions of 1903 like those above were only really made explicit five years later in the “post-scriptum” addressed to Lady Welby in a draft of December 28, 1908.

The system developed on Figure 4 (RL 463 144; EP 2 490 - 491; 28 December, 1908) from is completely different from that of 1903 (Figure 2), since it is the correlates themselves that constitute the divisions of the classification and not the sign and two sign-correlate divisions of 1903. Moreover, since it is always the

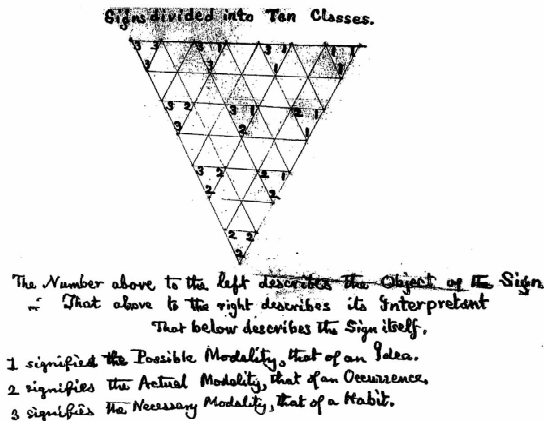


Figure 4 The “Post-scriptum” Ten Classes of Signs with Peirce’s Explanations

dynamic object situated top-left in each of the classes that is the most complex of the three correlate divisions if one correlate is more complex than the other, and that it is always the interpretant which is the least complex of the three if there is one correlate less complex than the others, we can consider the classes to be based on the process of semiosis described on Figure 3. But even with this form of “cut-down” semiosis composed solely of $Od \rightarrow S \rightarrow If$, there is no immediate object to inform the sign with the intentionality of the dynamic object: there is no immediate object to “implement” the formal organization of the sign as medium, in other words.

Within the ontology-based system of 1908, on the other hand, where these two variants (1) and (2) of the assertion would be classified as instances or tokens of a collective copulant type (interpretant divisions omitted for simplicity). This system, as described by Peirce to Lady Welby in the letter of 23 December 1908 *does* have an immediate object that communicates to the sign form inherited from the dynamic object, a property which makes Peircean semiosis a possible model for intention-based representation. With this in mind we examine two illustrations of the principles involved.

IV. Two Case Studies

As a final discussion of the way the hexadic system of 1908 with its inclusion of an immediate object differs from the Syllabus conception of signs of 1903 which

doesn't, we examine two contrasting examples of how the immediate object informs the sign.

ii. A Studio Portrait

Consider, first, the photograph of a studio portrait in Figure 5.



Figure 5 Portrait of a Young Chinese Girl

To begin with, it is convenient to review two definitions from the 1902 – 1903 period as these will make clear the differences between a semiotic system that doesn't have an immediate object and one that does:

We say that the portrait of a person we have not seen is *convincing*. So far as, on the ground merely of what I see in it, I am led to form an idea of the person it represents, it is an Icon. But, in fact, it is not a pure Icon, because I am greatly influenced by knowing that it is an *effect*, through the artist, caused by the original's appearance, and is thus in a genuine Obsistent relation to that original. (CP 2. 92, 1902)

A man's portrait with a man's name written under it is strictly a proposition, although its syntax is not that of speech, and although the portrait itself not only represents, but is, a Hypoicon. But the proper name so nearly approximates to the nature of an Index, that this might suffice to give an idea of an informational Index. A better example is a photograph. The mere print does not, in itself, convey any information. But the fact, that it is virtually a section of rays projected from an object *otherwise known*, renders it a Dicsign[. . .] It will be remarked that this connection of

□ 符号与传媒 (21)

the print, which is the quasi-predicate of the photograph, with the section of the rays, which is the quasi-subject, is the Syntax of the Dicisign; and like the Syntax of the proposition, it is a fact concerning the Dicisign considered as a First, that is, in itself, irrespective of its being a sign. Every informational sign thus involves a Fact, which is its Syntax. (CP 2. 320, 1903)

These quotations offer useful explanations as to how we are to understand the difference between sign and object within the classification theory of 1903, in which two of the three divisions are relational. The first shows how for Peirce, the object of the artist's sketch on Figure 5—a simple crayoned likeness which, he claims, most observers familiar with the person portrayed elevate to the semiotic status of an index—is simply the young model, while the crayon lines on the artist's sheet constitute an iconic sinsign. The second quotation, dealing with photographs and for which the human and non-human elements to be found in the studio are the determinants of the section of rays composing the “subject” half of a propositional sign of which the predicate half is the print, explains why the studio and its human and non-human elements constitute the object of the photograph, a dicent sinsign. In neither definition, nor in any other from the period, is the intentionality responsible for the bringing into being in any identifiable way of the portrait or of the photograph of the sketching of the portrait.

The structure and linear functioning of semiosis as described to Lady Welby in 1908 does make it possible to identify such an intentional origin and to understand how this origin determines the way a pristine artist's sheet is modified by the lines and forms crayoned upon it. The dynamic object on Figure 5 is, we may be sure, the sitter's desire to be commemorated in the sketch by or for her parents, otherwise she wouldn't be sitting there in the first place. In other words, to distinguish herself from the millions of selfie-takers, she or her parents have deliberately elected to immortalize the moment by means of a crayon representation on the sheet of a studio artist's sketch-pad clipped to an easel. Such deliberation is the object of the sketch: an object, therefore, intentional in nature. The medium, is composed of a sheet of paper and the accompanying non-randomly distributed crayon marks. The dynamic object is thus necessitant and the sign is classified in this division as collective. As a pictorial representation, the sketch itself offers no proof of the existence of its object. It is nevertheless understood to have been contracted to represent an

individual, and the represented properties of the young sitter—lines, shapes, colours—function as the immediate object. As a class of signs, the image on its own would be classified as a collective, designative token as shown on Table 3.

Table 3 Classification of the Studio Portrait of a Young Girl

(semiosis)	Subject				
	Od →	Oi →	S →	Ii →	Id →
Universe					
Necessitant	collective	copulant	type	relative	usual
Existent	concretive	designative	token	categorical	percussive
Possible	abstractive	descriptive	mark	hypothetical	sympathetic

ii. A Donor Portrait

Within the system of 1903, and without a caption, Memling’s panel is an iconic sinsign. With the caption, the panel is multimodal and becomes a replica of a dicent indexical legisign. Hypoiconically, it is diagrammatic, as there are conventional contrastive relations holding, for example, between the positions and sizes of the protagonists.^① It is indexical by virtue of the proper names in the caption (“the ‘referents’ are like this”), and as these are verbal signs it is also a legisign. It is dicent because caption plus image (indices + icon) form, as mentioned in the second (1903) quotation reviewed above, a type of proposition.

According to Wikipedia “A donor portrait[. . .] is a portrait in a larger painting or other work showing the person who commissioned and paid for the image, or a member of his, or (much more rarely) her, family”. At the time of the painting, the commission of many religious paintings was a form of commercial transaction between patron and artist, the patron supervising many aspects of the finished work, even paying for expensive pigments such as ultramarine. In the case of a donor portrait the donor was included in the painting. Such portraits were organized in a conventional manner, where the donor was represented kneeling and often depicted on a smaller scale than the accompanying holy figures, here the Virgin Mary and Saint Anthony Abbot; the latter is recognisable by his attributes, namely the staff

^① For a description of Peircean hypoiconicity the reader is referred to Chapter Five of Jappy (2013).



Figure 6 Hans Memling, *Virgin and Child with St. Anthony the Abbot and a Donor*

and the little pig by his right foot. Since the relation between donor and Virgin corresponds to a difference in secular *vs.* holy status it is represented by relative size, where secular status is shown as reduced, and also by differences in stance, with the secular element kneeling while the Virgin and child are standing. These differences in status are further deliberately indicated by the Virgin and child's occupation of the centre of the image with the donor to the side, and by the Virgin's being depicted in splendid colour while the donor is in lowly sub hues.

The dynamic object here is principally the donor's desire to be commemorated for posterity in the painting but this desire is necessarily combined with contemporary artistic conventions—Memling no doubt had his own Flemish conception of how to paint portraits. And it is this combination which determines the features characterizing the structure and contents of the image: the dynamic object is thus necessitant and the sign classified in this division as collective. Memling's complex sign considered simply as a *medium* or vehicle in the artistic sense is composed of oils and an oak panel. It is thus existent and as a medium is classified as a token What the immediate object, the "hint" or "its substance" of the dynamic

object in the sign, imparts to this medium is the peculiar and unique distribution and disposition of colours and shapes in the painting identified above from the point of view of their hypoiconic values, arranged to signify the contrast in status (holy vs. secular) and identity (Virgin, saint, donor) of the various figures. This means that the organization of the portrait is not determined, as in the portrait of the young girl on Figure 5, according to the physical features of the model, or here, according to those of the donor, but according to a complex system of contractual determinants: unlike the portrait of the young girl, which is an image hypoicon, Memling's image is diagrammatic; that is, it operates semiotically on a more complex hypoiconic level determined by the contract between painter and donor. The immediate object communicates this complex combination of values—donor's desire and artistic conventions—as a diagram in the Peircean sense.

The difference in hypoiconic values in the two types of portrait can be seen at the **O_i** stages on Table 3 and Table 4. In the first case, the immediate object, which organizes the medium according to salient physical features drawn from the young girl, is thus existential, the hypoiconicity is that of the image and the sign is classified as *designative* in this division, whereas on Table 4 the immediate object is necessitant, communicating to the medium representative features of convention, contract and personal wishes—factors more complex than actual physical appearance—structuring the sign diagrammatically, for which reason the sign is classified as *copulant* in this division. In short, since they involve contracts, such donor portraits necessarily present contractually and deliberately significant aspects of the immediate object, this being the conspicuous evidence of the way the donor and artist had agreed on the contents and organisation of the portrait. As a class of signs, the donor portrait would thus be classified as a collective, copulant token (Table 4).

Table 4 Memling's Donor Portrait Classified

(semiosis)	Subject				
	Od →	O _i →	S →	I _i →	Id →
Universe					
Necessitant	collective	copulant	type	relative	usual
Existent	concretive	designative	token	categorical	percussive
Possible	abstractive	descriptive	mark	hypothetical	sympathetic

V. Conclusion

In view of the widespread employment of the concept of semiosis, it is surely a theoretical necessity to be able to identify and characterize the nature of each stage in the process, and not simply for classification purposes. The paper has sought to treat as media such signs as two portrait paintings in an attempt to determine the exact semiotic status of the various immediate objects composing the representation of the intentionalities in which they originate; to determine, that is, their status within the three-universe classification system advanced by Peirce in 1908. In order to do so the field chosen was that of obvious intentional activity glossed broadly as purpose-driven representation.

By isolating significant aspects of the immediate object—comparing the simple structure of the studio portrait with Memling’s formally more complex donor portrait, for example—the paper has sought to identify aspects of the immediate object’s role in semiosis that take its definition further than the blanket description of “object inside the sign”. The operating principle adopted took at its face value the hexadic definition of semiosis advanced by Peirce in his letter to Lady Welby of 23 December 1908 and isolated the sign as a simple medium as an artist might. This made it possible to hypothesize as the contribution to semiosis the arrangement of the elements composing two pictorial media as the form communicated by the immediate object, which can thus be seen to function as a filter of the intentional influence of the sign’s dynamic object.

To what extent would Peirce have agreed with the methods employed and resultant findings concerning the immediate object mentioned above? He probably would not, since his definitions of the immediate object are strictly logic-oriented and his examples most often logocentric. More to the point, he would never have indulged in analyses of case studies such as those discussed above, as he was more interested, he tells William James (EP 2 500), in discovering all possible types of signs rather than in analyzing actual cases. Nevertheless, since he never exploited empirically his conception of semiosis, the paper has sought to investigate one aspect of its heuristic potential.

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