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Peirce and image 2

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working papers*

L'icona nella teoria di Peirce come condizione della conoscenza e del segno

La nozione di icona è uno dei nuclei fondanti del sistema peirceano. E' ricalcata e derivata infatti da quella di *Quality of Feeling*, che sulla base della dottrina del "predualismo della qualità" regge tutta la teoria della conoscenza fenomenologica. Con 'pre-dualismo della qualità' intendo la posizione di Peirce che vede la *quality of feeling* come viene percepita, nella sua *suchness*, non dipendente da nient'altro. Essa è l'elemento primo in assoluto. La massima vicinanza ad una percezione pura della *quality of feeling* si può avere in uno stato di dormiveglia, quando può accadere ad esempio "in a slumberous condition to have a vague, unobjectified, still less unsubjectified, sense of redness, or of salt taste, or of an ache, or of grief or joy, or of a prolonged musical note." (1.303 c.1894)[1]. La qualità è la prima categoria faneroscopica (fenomenologica) di Peirce, la Firstness (Primità), e il *modo di essere* che esprime è la Possibilità. Questo punto è centrale nel pensiero di Peirce, e rappresenta insieme un elemento di platonismo e di realismo scotista: lo status ontologico della qualità è la possibilità. Pertanto "A quality of feeling can be imagined to be without any occurrence, as it seems to me. Its mere may-being gets along without any realization at all." (ivi).

Poiché la Semiotica di Peirce è anche e soprattutto una teoria della conoscenza, l'icona come 'Segno di Qualità' assume in essa il ruolo corrispondente. Pur non potendo qui esaminare integralmente il lavoro di Peirce sull'icona, tenterò di delineare con buona cura i suoi caratteri più importanti.

Definizione

La manifestazione della Primità nell'icona traspare immediatamente dalla sua definizione: "An *Icon* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes merely by

virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not." (2.247 1903-2). L'icona è dunque una relazione Segno-Oggetto che si instaura per carattere proprio del representamen[2]. Poiché ogni entità possiede o consiste in qualità, ne deriva che ogni entità può essere un'icona di qualche altra entità, se c'è qualcos'altro a cui assomiglia (sia esso qualità, individuo o legge). Non è segno, però, perché un tale oggetto c'è, ma per come è in sé stessa. Un simile principio sarebbe da solo sufficiente a costruire il pansemioticismo di Peirce: nessuna entità può essere esclusa dall'essere Segno (tranne il Phaneron, o Fenomeno, vissuto), poiché nessuna entità è esclusa dal poter essere (almeno) un'icona. Questo perché l'essere Segno è una *funzione* in cui un'entità è posta per un Interpretante e in relazione a un Oggetto. Il pansemioticismo trova un limite nella teoria dell'Interpretante: tutto può essere segno purché lo sia *per qualcuno*. Una semiotica che escluda dalla semiosi il momento dell'interpretazione e voglia accettare l'iconicità o somiglianza come relazione semiosica 'oggettiva' si ritrova subito in una 'zuppa' di segni in cui tutto sta per tutto 'ufficialmente' e 'in sé'.

Icona, Oggetto e Segno
Dato che vi sono due tipi di Oggetto[3], dobbiamo sapere da quale dei due origina la determinazione dell'Icona.
Poiché la divisione degli Oggetti è abbastanza tarda (intorno al 1903), mentre la tricotomia fondamentale è anteriore al 1867, in molti luoghi Peirce non pone questa distinzione.
Nella teoria matura afferma: "I define an Icon as a sign which is determined by its dynamic object by virtue of its own internal nature." (8.335 1904; cfr 8.344, 8.368).
La distinzione è importante in quanto la relazione non è tra Representamen e contenuto (Oggetto Immediato) ma connette direttamente l'Oggetto Dinamico, l'oggetto realmente efficiente, e il segno. Ovviamente questa relazione coinvolge sia il Segno in sé sia l'Oggetto Immediato.
Per quanto riguarda il Segno, sia il Qualisegno sia il Sinsegno e il Legisegno possono essere Icone, cioè avere un rapporto col loro Oggetto basato sulla somiglianza[4].
Tuttavia i Qualisegni possono essere *solo* Icone.
Per quanto riguarda il rapporto con l'Oggetto Immediato, esso è sviluppato solo molto tardi da Peirce, nell'ultima classificazione dei segni (Proni 1992 5.17.4). Tuttavia è richiesto dalla logica di Peirce che una catena di relazioni che prende il via da una Firstness debba essere tutta composta di Firstness, per il principio della prescissione non esclusiva (Proni 1992 5.17.2).
Perciò possiamo già affermare che se l'Oggetto Dinamico è una qualità e se il segno

è un Qualisegno, allora avremo necessariamente un'Icona.

Tuttavia, anche l'Icona ha delle esigenze logiche. Un'icona pura si identifica quasi con il suo Oggetto. Peirce lo afferma nel 1885 trattando di algebra logica: "Icons are so completely substituted for their objects as hardly to be distinguished from them." (3.362 1885). Lo ribadisce poi nel 1903:

> [...] anything is fit to be a *Substitute* for anything that it is like. [...] A Representamen by Firstness alone can only have a similar Object. [...] A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its quality; and its object can only be a Firstness. (2.276 1903-3)

L'Icona e il predualismo della Qualità

Si tratta ora di chiarire una questione, e cioè se un'icona sia un segno che *comprende* delle qualità o se sia *essa stessa* una qualità. In realtà si tratta di una questione terminologica. Una qualità pura non ha esistenza ma solo possibilità, e dunque per entrare in una relazione genuina quale la rappresentazione ha bisogno di un esistente che la metta in atto. Da parte sua un esistente, essendo un individuo assoluto, non può assomigliare a nessun altro esistente se non attraverso le sue qualità. Perciò è solo una questione terminologica se vogliamo chiamare icona un segno che esegue la sua funzione in grazia delle sue qualità, o un Qualisegno, che è *sempre* un'Icona. Il Qualisegno, lo si è visto, è una qualità pura e quindi una possibilità: "E' la qualità pura di un'apparenza e non è mai esattamente identico nello spazio di un secondo: invece di possedere identità, ha *grande similarità*" (8.334 1904). Le sue caratteristiche sono analoghe a quelle della Firstness.

Pertanto, un'Icona pura è più un concetto limite che una effettiva occorrenza segnica: "[...] even an idea, except in the sense of a possibility, or Firstness, cannot be an Icon. A possibility alone is an Icon purely by virtue of its quality." (2.276 1903-3). E' proprio a questo livello di purezza fenomenologica che si situa la fondatività della nozione di Icona, identificandosi con la Firstness. La teoria della somiglianza non è colpita dalle accuse di referenzialismo, perché va correttamente inserita nel quadro della fenomenologia scotista di Peirce (cfr Eco 1975:256-282). Le Qualità non sono individui ma appartengono a un ordine ontologico più semplice, quello della possibilità. Pertanto la loro somiglianza, quando sia accostamento di pure Qualità di Feeling, non è la relazione di due esistenti, ma di entità *men che numeriche* (cfr. Marmo 1984:208n47), quindi una continuità priva di individualità, una 'fusione' in cui Segno e Oggetto si sovrappongono e si confondono: "For a pure icon does not draw any distinction between itself and its object. It represents whatever it may

represent, and whatever it is like, it in so far is. It is an affair of suchness only." (5.74 1903-1).

La somiglianza è una relazione triadica, in quanto implica una mediazione, degenerata al massimo grado, cioè composta di tre monadi (Proni 1992 3.17.3, cfr NE 4:257 Und-2). Infatti anche l'Interpretante di un'Icona deve essere una Primità. Sulla base del sinechismo le tre monadi dovrebbero fondersi in una continuità di forme non individuali[5].

Ecco perché, come la Qualità è condizione della conoscenza, così l'Icona è condizione, e non conseguenza, del Segno. Senza somiglianza, come senza Primità, non si dà conoscenza. Lo stabilire somiglianze sulla base di Feeling simili è il presupposto della durata temporale degli individui (il tempo è ciò che consente di avere qualità opposte nello stesso individuo) e della esistenza di eventi (il cambiamento di qualità): senza la permanenza pre-temporale della Qualità non vi potrebbe essere la successiva rottura. L'individualità sussiste proprio come interruzione di continuità. La continuità della Qualità invece non richiede e non concede alcuna spiegazione[6].
In conclusione, l'Icona intesa in senso rigoroso è una qualità pura che sta per una qualità pura, secondo una relazione possibile, per un interpretante.

Da questo punto di vista è stata definita "self-presentation", in quanto sarebbe segno di se stessa e consentirebbe così il passaggio dal Phaneron (entità non semiotica) al segno, dando il via alla semiosi, che sorregge tutto il resto della conoscenza (De Tienne 1990:468, 509). C'è sicuramente un senso in cui questo approccio è corretto.

Il nucleo della nozione di icona, insomma, è che una Qualità di Feeling è un'entità men che numerica che non è distinta in individui e quindi non ha soluzione di continuità. Pertanto essa può costituire una relazione segnica di somiglianza tra ogni sua attuazione.

Icona e Ipoicona
Va però tenuto presente che le attuazioni non sono icone pure; anche se a volte Peirce non è sempre rigoroso, è in molti punti chiaro:

> 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 [Indexical] relation to that original. Besides, I know that portraits have but the slightest resemblance to their originals, except in certain conventional respects, and after a conventional scale of values, etc. (2.92 c.1902)

Come si vede, vi sono nel ritratto elementi di indicalità, poiché l'interprete, nell'ipotesi che si tratti del ritratto di una persona esistente, *abduce* un legame causale (sia pure indiretto) tra la persona e l'immagine.

Tuttavia un segno iconico non può affermare nulla riguardo l'esistenza del suo Oggetto: "the Object of an Icon is entirely indefinite, equivalent to <<something>>. [...] a pure picture without a legend only says <<something is like this:>>" (8.183 Und-1).

Vi sono inoltre elementi convenzionali, come Peirce sottolinea anche altrove: "Any material image, as a painting, is largely conventional in its mode of representation" (2.276 1903-3; cf NE 4:242 Und-2).

In sé quindi non esistono pure Icone: "An *icon* can only be a fragment of a completer sign."(ivi).

Perciò, possiamo decidere di chiamare icona l'icona pura e trovare un altro nome per i segni iconici, oppure di trovare un altro nome per l'icona pura e chiamare icona i segni iconici. Peirce purtroppo fa l'uno e l'altro, causando così a volte una certa confusione, nonostante sia molto chiaro sull'assunto teorico. Nel 1903 -per esempio- ha la felice decisione di coniare il termine *ipoicona*:

> But a sign may be *iconic*, that is, may represent its object mainly by its similarity, no matter what its mode of being. If a substantive be wanted, an iconic representamen may be termed a *hypoicon*. (2.276 1903-3)

Purtroppo questa terminologia sarà seguita solo all'interno di questo scritto[7]. Per quanto ci riguarda, dopo aver precisato la nozione, seguiremo l'uso del primo Peirce, che è anche il più diffuso, non distinguendo tra Icona e Ipoicona, e usando il termine "Icona pura" per riferirci all'Icona come qualità pura.

Come evitare che tutto assomigli a tutto

Un representamen iconico è dunque un segno che funziona *principalmente*, ma non solo, per somiglianza. Pertanto, si presenta come un insieme di qualità tra le quali alcune sono utilizzate per attivare l'Oggetto Immediato e tramite esso l'Oggetto Dinamico. Ma come distinguere nel representamen le qualità da utilizzare come 'rispetto' cioè come tratti dell'Oggetto Immediato da quelle da trascurare? Non possiamo a questo punto ritrovarci con qualcosa che assomiglia a ogni altra cosa? In effetti questo è un rischio, sulla base del principio (da Peirce attribuito a De Morgan) che "... any plurality or lot of objects whatever have some character in common (no matter how insignificant) which is peculiar to them and not shared by anything else." (6.402 1877). Questo rischio, che deriva dalla natura di possibilità

dell'Icona, viene evitato -come si è visto sopra- per l'intervento dell'Interpretante, il quale seleziona le qualità dell'ipoicona da attivare come Icone pure, qualità o tratti dell'Oggetto Immediato. In questo può essere aiutato da regole convenzionali o da indici.

Icona e Ground

La teoria di Peirce del 1867 stabiliva la nozione di *ground*, cioè di una base il riferimento alla quale costituiva la Qualità come astrazione. La relazioni di somiglianza erano infatti "Those whose relation to their objects is a mere community in some quality" (1.558 1867). Questa Qualità o *ground* era appunto il *terreno* su cui realizzare l'accordo. Peirce tendeva comunque a vederla come un concetto, un'entità esterna ai due relati. In seguito, dopo l'elaborazione della fenomenologia, la qualità in comune diventa l'Icona pura, ma ora è interna al Segno. Il platonismo si mitiga... Comunque, il termine *ground* tende a sparire molto presto dagli scritti di Peirce (cfr Eco 1979:30).

Icona, verità, informazione

L'icona partecipa di qualche carattere del suo Oggetto. Come abbiamo visto, l'Oggetto è però rappresentato da conoscenza, lo stato dell'indagine sulla Realtà, per quanto sia portata all'estremo come nel caso dell'Oggetto Dinamico. Dunque questa partecipazione dell'Icona ai caratteri dell'Oggetto non ha nulla a che vedere con la verità o falsità:

> The Icon does not stand unequivocally for this or that existing thing, as the Index does. Its Object may be a pure fiction, as to its existence. Much less is its Object necessarily a thing of a sort habitually met with. But there is one assurance that the Icon does afford in the highest degree. Namely, that which is displayed before the mind's gaze — the Form of the Icon, which is also its object — must be *logically possible*. (4.531 1905)

Con esclusione della verità/falsità, che non è pertinente in quanto non è dichiarativa, l'Icona può tuttavia rappresentare quasi tutto, proprio perché è l'unico segno che presenta i caratteri del proprio Oggetto e permette così di conoscerli, il che è la condizione per potersi chiedere se sono veri: "the icon is very perfect in respect to signification, bringing its interpreter face to face with the very character signified" (NE 4:242 Und-18).

Non solo, ma in molti casi l'Icona emerge fenomenologicamente proprio perché non è il valore di verità del segno il tema della comunicazione. La seguente citazione

può valere per ciò che Peirce avrebbe potuto dire del cinema:

> So in contemplating a painting, there is a moment when we lose the consciousness that it is not the thing, the distinction of the real and the copy disappears, and it is for the moment a pure dream -not any particular existence, and yet not general. At that moment we are contemplating an *icon*. (3.362 1885)

Pertanto, il ruolo dell'Icona è indispensabile in ogni tipo di comunicazione: "The only way of directly communicating an idea is by means of an icon; and every indirect method of communicating an idea must depend for its establishment upon the use of an icon." (2.278 c.1895).
Ne dà altrove un esempio:

> Immaginate due uomini che non conoscano nessuna forma comune di linguaggio, posti vicino, lontani dal resto della loro razza. Devono comunicare, ma come possono farlo? Tramite suoni imitativi, gesti imitativi, e tramite figure. Questi sono esattamente tre generi di somiglianze. E' vero che useranno probabilmente anche altri segni: indicheranno con il dito medio, e cose simili. Ma dopo tutto, le somiglianze saranno l'unico strumento in loro possesso per descrivere le qualità delle cose e delle azioni che hanno in mente. (FL:58 1893)

Persino le repliche di simboli, come le parole che state leggendo, non possono fare a meno di elementi iconici, come quelli che permettono di riconoscere che Z è uguale a Z.

Icona, diagramma e ragionamento matematico

Questa capacità di rappresentazione fa dell'Icona lo strumento di ragionamento per eccellenza. Nello sviluppo del suo sistema Peirce non prevede l'uso di nozioni semiotiche in Matematica. Tuttavia, è doveroso precisare che la nozione di diagramma è identica a quella di Icona:

> So [an icon] is every diagram, even although there be no sensuous resemblance between it and its object, but only an analogy between the relations of the parts of each. Particularly deserving of notice are icons in which the likeness is aided by conventional rules. Thus, an algebraic formula is an icon, rendered such by the rules of commutation, association, and distribution of the symbols. (2.279 c.1895)

Alcuni esempi vengono fatti da Peirce in 2.282 (c.1893). Le relazioni tra le parti

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dell'oggetto (come quelle che utilizza per esempio una parentesi graffa usata per ricondurre diversi termini a un iperonimo) sono infatti caratteri, cioè qualità, degli oggetti così come le qualità sensoriali. Queste ipoicone sono robustamente aiutate da convenzioni. Le parentesi -per esempio- potrebbero essere viste come mani. Più difficile capire come $y = 1/x$ sia ipoicona di un'iperbole. Forse, sviluppando una serie di valori di y e x si può avere un'idea della variazione della curva.

E' chiaro che in questo caso gli Oggetti sono concettuali, ma gli Oggetti di un'Icona possono essere di ogni tipo[8]. E' l'uso dell'icona che fa della matematica una scienza osservativa e del ragionamento deduttivo un procedimento osservativo-sperimentale:

> [...] all deductive reasoning, even simple syllogism, involves an element of observation; namely, deduction consists in constructing an icon or diagram the relations of whose parts shall present a complete analogy with those of the parts of the object of reasoning, of experimenting upon this image in the imagination, and of observing the result so as to discover unnoticed and hidden relations among the parts. (3.363 1885)

Infatti, nonostante l'incapacità di asserzione (che Peirce spesso esprime come "incapacità di veicolare informazione") e il fatto che vi siano nei diagrammi matematici elementi convenzionali, essi sono iconici perché dell'Icona hanno una proprietà importantissima, cioè quella di poter far scoprire nuovi aspetti dell'Oggetto, proprio attraverso l'osservazione e la manipolazione delle relazioni[9]. Nel brano seguente Peirce usa addirittura il termine 'verità', nonostante vada inteso solo come *possibile* verità. Per sapere se le nuove informazioni sull'Oggetto emerse dall'uso dell'Icona sono vere, infatti, l'Icona stessa non basta. E' necessaria la sperimentazione. L'Icona, tuttavia, è perfettamente in grado di esibire una necessità, come Peirce dimostra in 4.532 (1905). Essa assume così un ruolo fondamentale nella teoria dei grafi. In questa accezione l'Icona/Diagramma è molto simile a certe nozioni di *modello* (cfr Black 1962; Hesse 1966):

> It may seem at first glance that it is an arbitrary classification to call an algebraic expression an icon; that it might as well, or better, be regarded as a compound conventional sign. But it is not so. For a great distinguishing property of the icon is that by the direct observation of it other truths concerning its object can be discovered than those which suffice to determine its construction. (2.279 c.1895)

Certamente il diagramma è un'Icona con carattere generale perché non si riferisce a

una Qualità ma a un concetto. Tuttavia ha piena capacità iconica, compresa quella di confondersi con l'Oggetto:

> A diagram, indeed, so far as it has a general signification, is not a pure icon; but in the middle part of our reasonings we forget that abstractness in great measure, and the diagram is for us the very thing. (3.362 1885)

Si pensi per esempio alle formule della fisica o della chimica o agli apparati contabili e amministrativi. Per chi lavora abitualmente su di essi sono ormai quasi assimilati agli eventi che rappresentano.

Non solo, ma -afferma Peirce- icone di tipo algebrico sono presenti nelle proposizioni grammaticali e nella sintassi delle lingue, mentre icone di tipo non logico si trovano nei linguaggi ideogrammatici e gestuali.

Un altro uso dell'Icona è nei modelli in scala, nei bozzetti artistici: "The question asked is thus answered almost with certainty because it relates to how the artist will himself be affected." (2.281 1893).

Conclusione

La teoria dell'icona in Peirce è ancora oggi molto valida, in quanto la scelta di considerare la somiglianza come sentimento aurorale dell'esperienza e di porla come condizione della conoscenza, consente di costruire su di essa una teoria fenomenologico-cognitiva e una semiotica non referenzialiste, che non si basano cioè su una teoria ingenua della somiglianza *oggettiva*. Questa posizione, definita da Eco *iconismo ingenuo*, è stata di diversi studiosi, in particolare negli anni '60, ma non corrisponde alla teoria di Peirce.

L'icona, inoltre, costituendo la base delle ipoicone o segni iconici, sostiene raffinate costruzioni euristiche come i modelli, i diagrammi, le notazioni logiche più complesse.

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Note

[1] Per i riferimenti ai testi di Peirce vedi bibliografia.

[2] La rappresentazione, in Peirce, è una relazione triadica che correla Segno, Oggetto e Interpretante. Il Segno è un'entità a due facce: il Representamen è la parte del Segno non pertinente, l'Oggetto Immediato è la parte pertinente, il contenuto. Nel caso del testo che state leggendo, per esempio, sono Representamen il colore, il font, le dimensioni, è Oggetto Immediato la loro forma, la sequenza dei caratteri, la posizione dei termini nella frase, delle frasi nel testo. Nel caso dell'Icona pura, tuttavia, Representamen e Oggetto Immediato sono fusi insieme.

[3] L'Oggetto è anch'esso un'entità a due facce: all'Oggetto Immediato, o Oggetto presente nel Segno, si aggiunge l'Oggetto Dinamico, o Oggetto reale, mai effettivamente raggiunto dal rinvio semiosico ma motore della semiosi, orizzonte cognitivo costante.

[4] I Segni in sé –cioè senza relazioni con altri elementi della rappresentazione- possono essere Qualisegni, ovvero qualità che sono Segni; Sinsegni, ovvero esistenze, fattualità; Leggi, cioè regole, convenzioni. Icona, Indice e Simbolo, si ricordi, sono tipi di relazione tra Segno e Oggetto Dinamico.

[5] Il sinechismo è la dottrina peirceana secondo la quale la Realtà ha carattere continuo.

[6] Si può certamente investigare su come si possa formalizzare la somiglianza e come biologicamente essa possa essere percepita. Tuttavia, che essa sia cognitivamente *data* ad un livello estremamente primitivo è irrefutabile: senza la capacità di rispondere a *classi* di stimoli (cioè a stimoli *simili*) nessuna forma biologica può dirsi tale.

[7] In esso Peirce abbozza anche una divisione delle icone in immagini, diagrammi e metafore, che non ho ritrovato in alcun altro luogo: 2.277 1903-3.

[8] E' pensabile -per esempio- che tra i diagrammi e gli Oggetti mentali vi sia un certo feed back, in quanto l'icona usata può a sua volta determinare l'immagine mentale attraverso la costruzione di un abito.

[9] De Tienne (1990:569) mette in luce come la costruzione dei diagrammi sia compito dell'*immaginazione*, la quale estrae gli elementi prominenti del Phaneron.

Iconoscopy between Phaneroscopy and Semiotics

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first I shall lay out an essential premise to the argument I will develop in the second part, a premise that sums up a significant portion of the research I have been conducting for many years now on the connection between Peirce's phaneroscopy and his semeiotics. The second part, building on the results of the first, will present a number of considerations about Peirce's conception of image, especially as regards an essential semi-phaneroscopic, semi-semiotic activity that I shall dub "iconoscopy."

I. Premise: Transitioning from the Phaneron to the Sign through Perception

Studying the connection between phaneroscopy and semiotics begins by studying the connection between phaneron and sign, or representation, or semiosis, and specifically, by examining how the continuum of representation emerges from the continuum of the phaneron.[1]

Peirce gave many definitions of the phaneron, and most of them imply that its mode of being is distinctly different from that of sign-representation. The most basic definition of the phaneron is derived from the Greek etymology of the word, which means "manifest." The word *phaneron* "denotes whatever is throughout its entirety open to assured observation" (R 337: 4–5 & 7, 1904). The manifest is that which is plainly exhibited and fully apparent, a condition that obtains only when subject and object are utterly conflated: from the standpoint of a genuine lived phaneron, there is no subject-mind seeing to be distinguished from an object being seen; all that there is, is *seeming*, sheer appearance, and nothing more. Wherever there is a phaneron, there one will find, as the other side of an edgeless coin, a kind of observation that contributes directly to its manifestation, and Peirce called it "direct awareness" (as opposed to indirect consciousness). To be directly aware of the phaneron, he says, is to be "aware not merely before a Sign of it, or Substitute for it," but to be "put *facie ad faciem* before the very Phaneron itself" (R 645: 3 & 5, 1909). Appearance and mind are conflated, nothing mediates between the two—there is no sign activity, strictly speaking. Direct awareness is a face-to-face encounter, not a semiotic one. We may say that the mode of being of the phaneron is self-presentation, or perhaps more rigorously "self-presencing," for that is what it means for anything to be "phaneral": it has to be sheer experiencing, a kind of continuous happening in which nothing is detached from anything, and in particular no ego is experiencing itself as a phaneral ego in opposition to a phaneral non-ego. For such contrast implies a kind of distance between two poles that has risen to some level of consciousness, and

where a distance becomes felt, something is no longer manifest, no longer merely phaneral, and there then arises a need for mediation and therefore for representation. Representation fundamentally differs from phaneral self-presencing in that it consists in a re-presencing of something not immediately available through something else that happens to have some relation to it and to be available, either spontaneously, by accident, or by design. Representation therefore implies that something is not manifest but needs to be manifested through some other means than its own resources. Signs are vested with this mission of mediation and, even though signs themselves are phaneral while they are busy appearing, what makes them special is that, both through and beyond their own appearance, they are trying to manifest something else, and in doing so they exhibit their own particular mode of being, which we may call "other- or alio-representation," as opposed to phaneral "self-presencing." The key question is how does self-presencing develop into alio-representation: how do we pass from phaneron to sign? This is a problem Peirce began tackling as soon as he was mature enough to philosophize like a pro. In "Upon a New List of Categories," the challenge was to propose a hypothesis explaining how we passed from Substance to Being, that is, what exactly takes place when a copulative proposition gets formulated that unites some predicate or relative term to some subject term where before all that was available was the anonymous unity of an unanalyzed "substance" whose main virtue was that it offered something that was simply "present in general." There is no need here to remind you of Peirce's ground-breaking solution. What I want to emphasize is that, when Peirce developed his later classification of the sciences, his mature theory of perception, and his semiotic theory, what he was in part doing was rephrasing the issue partly solved in 1867 in the far broader terms of his categorial theory and metaphysical philosophy of the early 1900s, and that this entailed a clear-cut distinction between phaneroscopy and semiotics, thus between phaneral manifestation and semiotic representation, so that a revised account of the passage from the one to the other became necessary. At the heart of the matter lies Peirce's theory of perception. That theory is key because in it we find elements that are both phaneroscopic and semiotic. I cannot take the time to develop at any serious length Peirce's perception theory, but I trust that most of you are already familiar with its key elements. I will simply recall those few elements that I need for the sake of the present discussion, and of course none of you will be shocked that if we want to discuss Peirce's conception of the image, one needs to keep in mind not only what he had to say on that subject from a semiotic perspective, but one needs also to consider it from the standpoint of perception.

In the first place we must recall that percepts are not discrete sense-impressions but

anything that is sensorily apprehended as a single cohesive whole that exhibits itself to the full and without parts. Not being discrete, percepts present themselves with a natural intrinsic connexity which, as a connexity, escapes notice because it is not subject to control nor to questioning or analysis, but can only be acknowledged irresistibly. Percepts provide no cognitive information whatsoever; they result from a mind's uncontrolled sensory interaction with something seemingly outside of it, and as such they are pure "seconds" in the categorial sense: they are singular clashes between ego and non-ego. Percepts are neither purely physical nor purely mental events; they are both at the same time, and neither element (physical or psychical) is distinguishable within the percept taken as a whole.

Being pure instances of secondness, percepts of course include elements of firstness, but not of thirdness yet. Sometimes however, Peirce refers to three elements, the third being "the generalizing element" (CP 8.144). In such contexts Peirce is usually referring to what he calls the *perceptual fact,* and sometimes also the *percipuum* (but one needs to be cautious in such correlations for Peirce's analysis varies; suffice it to say that the percipuum is the percept as interpreted in the perceptual judgment). The perceptual fact is the intellect's "imperfect report" (CP 2.141, 1902) of the percepts; it is the result of a sustained observation and of an associative generalization operated on selected aspects of a series of percepts. Say you are looking from different angles at a book lying open before you; this act of looking occasions a series of percepts, the superimposition or coalescence of which gives rise to a general perceptual record of the book. The perceptual fact is highly fallible since it can only record a very limited set of features of the percepts. Percepts are individual events that happen hic et nunc (although not instantaneously), and as soon as one seeks to consider them, they are already gone and can only be recalled incompletely in memory. As a "memory hardly yet separated from the very percept" (CP 2.146, 1902), the perceptual fact is no longer the percept, but already an abstraction untrue to the percept.

The perceptual fact introduces a new ingredient, that of thirdness in its most elementary form, and this it shares with the *perceptual judgment* in which it is expressed. The perceptual judgment is that which asserts "in propositional form what a character of a percept directly present to the mind is" (CP 5.54, 1903). In other words, it is the official semiotic recognition of the factuality of the percept. The perceptual judgment's formulation is as compulsory and irresistible as the perceptual occurrence is. But since the judgment reflects the high degree of selectivity of the perceptual fact by covering only a very limited amount of characters of the percepts, it remains at best a hypothesis about such characters. In attributing existence to some feature of the

percept, the perceptual judgment operates an abductive inference "nearly approximating to necessary inference" (*CP* 4.541, 1906). The important point is that for Peirce, perceptual judgments are, on the one hand, the first premisses of all reasoning, and, on the other hand, they constitute the most elementary units of experience as such.

There are indeed two ways of looking at the perceptual judgment: phanerally (as a live experience) and semiotically (as an expressed proposition). A percept alone is not a phaneral ingredient because it lacks thirdness, although it can certainly be said to contribute heavily to the phaneron's coming to presence. Essential to the most rudimentary form of a phaneral ingredient as such is the continuous *coalescence* of percepts, a coalescence which *is* the perceptual seeming and is saturated with thirdness or generality without which the phaneron would be unable to give rise to representations. The generality presenced within the phaneron is generality viewed in its firstness, and it is akin to the generality that characterized the early "Substance," which Peirce defined as "what is present *in general.*" That generality is of a kind that accompanies both the continuous coalescing of singular percepts into enduring appearances, and the indeterminacy of the manifest, which, to the extent that it is familiar, remains whole and unexamined. The continuous coalescence of percepts provokes immediately in the mind the emergence, through a "quasi-inference," of a *generalized image,* the perceptual fact or percipuum.[2] As such, the perceptual fact is, I suggest (and will develop further down), mostly an iconic *representation* of the perceptual coalescence *presenced* in the mind. Indeed, this is where we find ourselves standing on the border between the phaneral and semiotic worlds. As long as the perceptual coalescence remains unabstracted or unexcised, the phaneral stream keeps flowing undisturbed. But the moment a perceptual coalescence is transformed (coagulated or reenacted) into a perceptual fact, the moment a split occurs and representation takes place. The perceptual fact is a "*self*-representing" iconic sign in the sense that it is not essentially formally different from what is presenced in the coalescence, even though its scope is bound to be more limited. What distinguishes it from the coalescence itself is its separation: the perceptual fact is the perceptual coalescence brought to a stop, excised, and thus alienated, made *other,* and held up above the phaneral stream for further objectification—a process which goes on immediately through the uncontrollable expression of the perceptual judgment.[3]

The perceptual coalescence is represented iconically in the perceptual fact (or percipuum) and indexically in the perceptual judgment—that judgment being the product of a reaction to the percept. The connection between the phaneral coalescence of percepts and the expression of the perceptual judgment on the iconic

ground of the perceptual fact appears to be extremely tight; it is both a physical and a psychical contiguity, as indexicality suggests. Since there is no control at either side of the border, we may say that the semiotic scission that intervenes and commands the selective objectification of portions of the phaneron is not only inescapable, but also demanded by the very categorial structure of the phaneron. Indeed, the manifest cannot stand its own obscurity, what is offered in direct awareness requires greater scrutiny, and there thus arises perceptual consciousness.

As a collection of *objectifiable ingredients*, the phaneron is both the seat and the source of many possible reductions to unity, only a few of which ever come to actual emergence. The path followed by this emergence process is the passage that leads from phaneral self-presentation to semiotic alio-representation. How this passage works must now be examined: I will first present an explanation that relies both on Peirce's category theory and on his perceptual theory before passing to what can properly be called iconoscopy.

The ancient distinction between virtual and actual turns out to be quite useful for our discussion of the passage from phaneron to sign. It has very much to do with Peirce's distinction between phaneroscopy as the science of the "phaneron in its firstness" and normative science (thus including semiotic) as the science of the "phaneron in its secondness."

The phaneron in its firstness is the lived phaneron, and the phaneron in its secondness, the "objectified phaneron," that is, all the parts that have been subjected to abstraction and representation. The passage from the phaneron in its firstness to the phaneron in its secondness is, therefore, akin to the passage from self-presentation to alio-representation. To say that alio-representation is the mode of manifestation of the phaneron in its secondness is to say that the chief characteristic of this mode of manifestation is the introduction of "otherness" within the phaneron in its firstness. The effect of this introduction is to explode the phaneral conflation by establishing a distance between the two poles. This distance alienates the two poles to each other, thereby creating, at a logical level, a separation between what can then be considered a sign and its object. "Alteration" (or introduction of otherness) of the phaneron is thus what occurs when we pass from the phaneron in its firstness to the phaneron in its secondness, and indeed it is that which makes alio-representation possible.

Now, Peirce often characterizes firstness as the category of possibility or potentiality, and secondness as the category of brute fact or actuality. The passage from self-presentation to alio-representation can therefore be described in the terms of actualization of a possibility. We may use the image of a swimmer holding up an ingredient above the surface of the stream that keeps carrying him to convey the

idea that representation takes place not apart from the phaneron, but "con-current-ly" to it. No mind can ever escape the phaneron, which means that all representation processes are part of it "in their firstness," that is, in their manifestness. The actualization of an ingredient, or the alteration of the phaneron, is therefore itself phaneral: even the introduction of otherness (or secondness) is a process that can be viewed in its firstness.

As a conglomerate of possible ingredients, the phaneron is, in a sense, chaotic. The potential phaneral parts are "firsts" awaiting actualization. Let us examine this process in the possible ingredient constituted by a perceptual coalescence. Within the phaneron many perceptual coalescences emerge simultaneously, confusedly, and continuously. Only a very few of them will be separated from the confused (chaotic) conglomerate and self-represented or reenacted iconically in the perceptual fact. How does a perceptual coalescence turn into a perceptual fact? Very simply by being selected through attention to some of its formal elements (and thus neglect of others). Iconic reenactment is the process which partitions some selected portion of the phaneron into nameable ingredients. But why does selection occur at all?

The fact is that the phaneron itself demands that representation take place. Peirce's conception of the logic of the universe provides us with an explanation which supports this idea: the logic of potentiality is that it shall annul itself (*CP* 6.219, 1898). A potentiality which would not call for actualization would not be a real potentiality because its very "idleness" would reduce it to naught: potentiality and actualizability may not be exactly synonymous terms, but one implies the other.[4]

To return to the perceptual coalescence, the selection process is an act of excision and expression. What makes it possible is that a potential ingredient, before it is selected and actualized as an ingredient, "annuls itself" through its getting contrasted over against the rest of the conglomerate. Contrast stems from the inter-reaction of qualitative possibilities, an inter-reaction that would remain accidental were the ingredient not excised and expressed, and thereby "steadied." The passage from the virtual perceptual coalescence to its objectification in a perceptual fact and judgment, or the process of determination and alteration, appears thus to be the deed of an active semiotic process of perceptual generalization. The perceptual fact, or percipuum, is the result of the excision as expressed in the perceptual judgment. This process isolates some aspect of the phaneron out of the original stream and brings it into the adjacent stream of signs, endowing it with the steadiness that was lacking in the phaneral flow.

Generalization confers on the objectified ingredient of the phaneron its character of ingredient, a character which would not obtain were the phaneral transience of the

coalescence not brought to a stop, and were the latter not held up and steadied above the stream. Steadiness allows for attentive observation and analysis to take place, and from there we can argue that the continuity of representation finds its origin in the continuity of the phaneron.[5] The alteration of, or introduction of otherness within, the phaneron explodes the object-subject conflation because it establishes a discontinuity between continua: within the phaneral continuum, it creates a new continuum, that of representation. This is how we pass from the phaneron in its firstness to the phaneron in its secondness, therefore: through the continuous alteration or "discontinuation" of self-presentation.[6]

Mediation indeed arises only when some type of alteration has taken place. No such alteration mars the happy (but ignorant) flow of phaneral awareness; it is only when the latter turns onto itself that something like consciousness develops, and with it, a separation between ego and non-ego that institute the need for triadic mediatory relations.

II. Iconoscopy

The time has come to discuss what I am boldly calling "iconoscopy"[7] . I first need to reassure my colleagues specializing in Peircean scholarship, especially those who are the orthodox guardians of the doctrine: with this new word I am not intending to point out a flaw in Peirce's classification of the sciences by demonstrating that we need to add one more science between phaneroscopy and the normative sciences, especially semiotics. Indeed there is no need to do so. What I intend to do is to show that, precisely because of the nature of the connection between phaneroscopy and semiotics, and especially of the transition between phaneron and sign, one needs to surmise that there exists a type of activity that is common to both, that that activity must have to do, as already suggested, with icons and iconic signs, and that a good name for that transitional activity is iconoscopy, that is, the activity of selecting portions of the phaneron for the sake of reducing them to representational unity. Iconoscopy is not a new type of activity; it is one in which most things endowed with a sensory apparatus are engaged all the time, perhaps without being fully aware of it for the classical reason that what is obvious usually escapes inquiry. Iconoscopy is not a science, and should therefore not been confused with iconology. Being transitional, iconoscopy goes on both in phaneroscopy[8] and in semiotics, and perhaps it would be good, as far as the latter is concerned, to coin another name, "semioscopy," to refer to the general activity of detecting and describing signs.

Remembering that the suffix -scopy comes from the Greek *skopein* , meaning "to observe from a distance, from an elevated point," iconoscopy introduces the idea

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that there is something that needs to be observed from a distance, and that that something is an icon, or, to use a Latin instead of Greek word, an image. Mindful of the fact that this colloquium is about "Peirce and image" and not about "Peirce and icon," I will be using the word "image" more regularly in what follows, without trying to ignore too blatantly the fact that "image" and "icon" are not, at least in Peirce's subtle thought, synonymous terms. Exactly how not synonymous is the object of an interesting study that I shall not undertake in this paper. The fact is that Peirce often uses the word "image" in many different contexts, from the mathematical to the psychological through the logical, and that not all of his uses refer to the same thing. But the reason I am tempted to use the word "image" at this juncture rather than the word "icon" is precisely that Peirce gave the word "icon" a technical definition that removes it from the field of phaneral experience to the benefit of semiotics, while he frequently uses the word "image" in order to insist on the experiential dimension that accompanies icons, whether it be phenomenological or psychological. Since the passing from phaneral self-presencing to semiotic representation is in the first place a matter of perceptual experience before it becomes a matter of philosophical analysis, I shall beg you to bear with me and allow me to use that word, "image," *comme bon me semble.*

Our incursion into Peirce's theory of perception has brought us to the point where we understand that, at the juncture between the phaneral and the representational, lies a moving territory that may well be where the activity of "imaging" dwells. When I ventured to say that the percipuum represented the perceptual coalescence iconically, I began to let the cat out of the bag. For it is my contention that a percipuum is essentially an image. An image of what nature is what we need to find out, and we shall do so through a roundabout way.

In the first place, it is important that we keep in mind the pragmatic stance that Peirce began developing about perception already in 1868 (cf. CP 5.305). No matter the sensory guise in which perception takes place, we need to realize that to perceive is to put oneself in a particular condition or mode of being that enables us to acquire an indefinitely large amount of knowledge of the perceivable qualities that may be ascribed to elements of experience. When one sees or hears something, what matters is not that we are perceiving this or that particular individual sight or sound, but rather that we are entering a manifold of possibilities each of which may yield indefinite experiential consequences. No object of seeing is indeed ever fully determinate, if only because we are unable to become conscious at once of an infinite amount of discrete details, and it would be a phaneroscopic mistake to reduce seeing to the apprehension of some particular image or picture as though it

happened to be a slice taken away from the stream of appearance. Seeing, or more generally sensing, is in the first place being phanerally aware, not of something, not of anything, but just being aware, without any "of," that manifestation is taking place. Peirce's first lesson, learned and taught in 1868, is that there are no images. This is put a little bluntly, and I must apologize to all of you who have spoken and are still counting to speak about "Peirce and images." But the thing is, there are no images, none to be imagined, none even to be seen. And Peirce no doubt is right, at least as long as we adopt the modern conception that an image is an "absolutely singular representation."[9] But Peirce refutes that conception: neither in actual sensing nor, quite obviously, in imagination do we ever perceive anything absolutely singular; we are not even physiologically equipped to see the smallest details, and what is worse, the moment we avert our eyes we completely lose sight of the image that was supposedly present a moment before; fully determinate images don't even persist in our memory. Thus for the concept of image to retain any usefulness, we must first recognize that no naïve or precipitate theory will do unless we really want to spend the rest of our lives framing unsatisfactory ad-hoc rescuing explanations. No photograph, however high its resolution, no painting, however controlled its execution, is usefully defined as a singular representation, even if it is unique and unduplicatable. But especially important is the fact that the conception of image cannot be merely understood if it is confined to only one side of a coin. An image is not merely an external artifact, but is rather the experience it is capable of providing, whether intentionally or not. We cannot pragmatically separate images from their experiencing, potential or actual.

One important feature of an image understood as a dynamic source of potential experience is that the experience it may offer is one that it is *itself* soliciting, even while it is not being perceived. Images are what they are to the extent that they are fulfilling a mission, and that mission is principally to offer forms and invite to their contemplation and expansion. From the Peircean dictum that everything is representable follows the dictum that every form, whether visual or not, is imageable. This does not necessarily mean that every form is echoed through some visual schema in our imagination, but that every form somehow gets to be echoed, in however vague or skeletonized an appearance, in perception. Whatever is not imageable is unperceivable. To say this does not imply that we are limited to forms that can be grasped directly through our senses. On the contrary, there are many forms that are perfectly imageable even though they cannot be sensed directly but only through technical devices whose function it is to translate the unperceived into the perceived by providing an echo of it within the wavelength range we are sensitive to. Even

non-sensory forms are imageable. Take Peirce's example of the memory of a conversation he had with some person he needed to influence. Before meeting with that person, Peirce urged himself that he ought to make sure that his entire conduct throughout the anticipated conversation ought to adopt a certain tone and manner so calibrated as to convey the kind of impression most likely to bring the interlocutor into acquiescence. This was a preparation of conduct, a determination to behave in a certain way that had to permeate the entire encounter regardless of how it might unpredictably evolve, and regardless of whether Peirce would remain consciously aware of his resolution in the heat of conversation. Now, the time of the meeting arrives, Peirce has his conversation, but the interlocutor reserves his final answer. After taking his leave, Peirce wonders whether the meeting went well, and in particular whether he had been able to conduct himself throughout according to his predetermined resolution, the "mental formula" he had urged himself to apply. To answer this question Peirce must perform an iconoscopy. He must on the one hand remember the conversation, how it took place, what was said, how it was said, in what order, and with what kind of composure especially on his part. That memory, Peirce says, can be "roughly described as an image" (CP 1.595). Contemplating that image, Peirce must then examine whether it satisfies the stipulation of his earlier resolution. To do that he needs to pay attention to different segments of that general image and see whether each conveys a form that adheres to the form spelled out by the "mental formula" assigned to his future conduct. A formula is an iconic rheme constituted of any number of predicates (of different adicities), some of which may themselves be embedded in higher-order predicates (determining for instance the sequence of their fulfillment), and all of which are attached to more or less definite variables. Peirce's memory of the conduct of the conversation provides a whole set of predicates and contents for their attached variables. The iconoscopy he needs to perform consists in correlating the image of that memory with the general image of the mental formula and in perceiving whether any satisfactory mapping can be performed that shows successful bijection or surjection between one image and the other in all those segments of the first image that were especially crucial in regard to achieving the desired objective (the latter being yet another image "in the back of the mind"). This exercise in correlation and mapping is an activity of comparison that is central to the contemplation of an image. For an image cannot be conceived alone; it always solicits other images for comparison, given that an important property of images is their capacity to correspond to something else, and even to be substituted for something else to the extent of their formal correspondence.

Peirce was well aware of the mapping function of images. After all he contributed a

historically important entry to Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* on this subject, that entry being precisely named "Imaging," a translation Peirce proposed for the German *Abbildung*, a word used by Gauss for map-projection.[10] In that entry Peirce explains that one can regard "any mathematical function of one variable as an image of its variable according to some mode of imaging,"—thus if y is the result of applying a function f to variable x, then y is made an image of x through the imaging function of f. Schröder broadened the definition to the logic of relatives by noting that "any relative whatever may be considered as an imaging." At the end of the article Peirce suggests that one could narrow down the use of "imaging" to what is called today a bijective mapping, or a one-to-one correspondence between two sets in either direction. What here matters is that the most elementary conception of imaging, as is found in mathematics, implies that it promote the possibility of correspondence and substitution between a given state of things and another related to it through some operation of transformation. When Peirce performs the iconoscopy of his conversation, he must see whether he had successfully applied the imaging function represented by the mental formula of his predetermined resolution to the actual performance of the meeting so that that performance turned out to be effectively transformed by the partly conscious, partly unconscious application of that formula in such a way that the outcome was actually different from what it would have been had Peirce not sought to modify his behavior accordingly. He is therefore comparing several icons all at once: that of his resolution, that of the conversation as it took place, and that of the conversation as it might have taken place had the preliminary resolution not been formulated. These images are superimposed over one another so that similarities and differences may stand out and appear especially where one would expect them to appear if the conversation happened to have followed the desired pattern or not.

Peirce remarks that as this iconoscopy takes its course, it will automatically bring about a judgment about its outcome, a judgment that will be accompanied with a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction according as the mapping of predicates shows greater or lesser correspondence with the mental formula. Whether that formula represents a particular momentary resolution, or a more general intention, or even an ideal of conduct, doesn't change the nature of the operation: in each case a particular conduct is being mapped against a general formula, patterns will be matched against antecedent patterns, until a final diagnosis emerges that states whether a particular conduct or activity managed to inscribe itself within the larger set of pattern-compliant conducts. We learn from this that images result from imaging processes according to which certain transformations occur that are traversed by more or less general plans and purposes, such that their comparative experience brings about a

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judgment assessing the extent to which a resulting image remains or not "allied to its originating principle," as Peirce says in one place (CP 2.24, 1902). The more complex or "composite" the image, the more likely it is to bring about an informed judgment more complex than a perceptual judgment. In one passage Peirce explains the following to someone asserting of something he saw that "it is red":

"You saw an image. There was no subject or predicate in it. It was just one *unseparated* image, not resembling a proposition in the smallest particular. *It instigated you to your judgment, owing to a possibility of thought; but it never told you so.* Now in all imagination and perception there is an operation by which thought springs up; and its only justification is that it subsequently turns out to be useful." (CP 1.538, 1903; italics added)

That images instigate to judgment is a pragmatic cornerstone of Peirce's semiotic and perceptual theory. The manifold brings about its own reduction to unity, as it were. The process is teleological. Some end needs to be achieved, some purpose fulfilled, but the purpose is not itself expressed in any clear terms. If thought springs up, Peirce intimates, it is because it does something that has non-idle consequences. It responds to the image, he says, but how can that happen? When we look at something that happens to be red, we do not see that "it is red." What we see is an "unseparated image," that is, we are witnessing a phaneral manifestation, a percipuum that is just emerging from the infinitely broader phaneral stream "owing to a possibility of thought," thus owing to an embodied firstness that just happens to be prescinded from the flow perhaps thanks to some predisposition or selective habit or predetermined resolution. This percipuum is a generalized percept but not a perceptual judgment; it is rather an object of that judgment, and that judgment, being the immediate interpretation of that object, can then stand for it as a sign of it in order to instigate to further interpretants, all of it in the name of the form that needs to be communicated. The percipuum, as an imperfect report of the phaneral perceptual coalescence, is a complex rhematic iconic sign, and it provides everything that is needed for the judgment to get expressed, including the urge for it because that urge is already within the form that it conveys. In other words, the percipuum is the pivotal experiential element that allows something to emerge from the phaneron and get communicated to the semiotic continuum. It acts as the gate between the realm of manifestation and that of representation. One remembers Peirce's famous maxim,

"The elements of every concept enter into logical thought at the gate of perception and make their exit at the gate of purposive action" (EP2: 241, 1903).

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When Peirce defines signs as mediums for the communication of a form, we must notice that the form at stake is of a special nature. It is never a singular thing, but, as he puts it, the "truth of a conditional proposition."[1] A form is thus the promise of a would-be, and a promise wouldn't be a promise if it could not be fulfilled. Perception ushers forms from the phaneron into logical thought; signs convey these forms through their own continuum of interpretance, until some transformation is achieved, some action accomplished, and especially some new habit settled. At the gate of purposive action, forms have been squeezed of their available potential, their promise has been embodied and thus fulfilled, and they return to the phaneral manifold they actually never literally left, until their urge is felt again.

I will not explore in this paper Peirce's elaborate explanation of how icons and indices get bound together to form symbols. It is one of Peirce's principal contributions to have shown how judgments manage to combine iconic rhemes with indexical rhemes in order to express propositions and actually reduce the phaneral unity to the unity of a representation. Experientially speaking, however, Peirce thought that logic could not provide an account of how a symbol gets to interpret an image, for this is a step of thought that is subconscious, uncontrollable, and uncriticizable. But it was always clear to Peirce that if any proposition could be claimed to be true, it had to be the case that an image somehow got connected with a symbol (CP 4.479, c. 1903). Images in that sense offer an essential, if partial, connection to truth itself. They mediate between the untold and the told, and their mediation brings in the very possibility of inferences, from the most unsure to the most secure. Their power of evocation is part and parcel of the kind of reality they are. Images exert a deep influence because they are themselves the product of an even deeper and constantly flowing influence. Images anchor possibilities and suggest how they can get embodied. Images offer immense flexibility; they welcome additions and subtractions, they let themselves be manipulated and experimented upon, they will let themselves be stripped of every garment so as to display forms as pure and skeletal as one wishes, all to the benefit of revealing the unperceived secrets of the deeper structure forming the warp and woof of reality. Especially, images are purposes at work, purposes seeking expression and fulfillment, and it behooves us, image formers and image interpreters, to remain aware that whenever we contemplate an image, we are being formed and transformed, constantly, continuously, and if we realize that we are ourselves forms in development, we must constantly make sure that we don't commit formal mistakes, wrong substitutions, mistaken correspondences, rushes to judgments. For that we need to perform regularly an iconoscopy of our actions, detect the forms under whose influence we fell, and assess whether the judgment that is bound to arise from

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that iconic examination is accompanied with a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Only then shall we get a glimpse of whether we are fulfilling our purpose, or not.

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Notes

[1] Much of that research was condensed into the paper "Quand l'apparence (se) fait signe: la genèse de la représentation chez Peirce," in *RS/SI* 20 (2000): 95–144.

[2] An appropriate quotation in this regard is the following: "I recognize that there is a percept or flow of percepts very different from anything I can describe or think. What precisely that is I cannot even tell myself. It would be gone, long before I could tell myself many items; and those items would be quite unlike the percepts themselves. . . . I am forced to content myself not with the fleeting percepts, but with the crude and possibly erroneous thoughts, or self-informations, of what the percepts were. . . . In place of the *percept* . . . the only thing I carry away with me is the perceptual facts or the intellect's description of the evidence of the senses, made by my endeavor." (*CP* 2.141, 1902) The use of the word *self-information* is significant in that it seems to support our viewing the perceptual fact as a "self-representing" sign of the coalescence (or "flow") of the percepts.

[3] Peirce writes: "The perceptual judgment professes to represent the percept. . . But the percept cannot be a premiss, since it is not a proposition; and a statement of the character of the percept would have to rest on the perceptual judgment, instead of this on that. Thus, the perceptual judgment does not represent the percept *logically*. In what intelligible manner, then, does it represent the percept? It cannot be a *copy* of it; for . . . it does not resemble the percept at all. There remains but one way in which it can represent the percept; namely, as an index, or true symptom. . . . There is no warrant for saying that the perceptual judgment actually *is* such an index of the percept, other than the *ipse dixit* of the perceptual judgment itself." (*CP* 7.628, 1903)

[4] This entails that the potential is essentially teleological, and is that in which all evolutionary processes are rooted. Continuity and generality are rooted in potentiality, i.e. in firstness.

[5] The generalizing tendency which actualizes (or alters, or objectifies) the possible phaneral ingredients holds its continuity from the phaneral background. To get across this idea, Peirce uses the image of the blackboard and the chalk line (cf. *CP* 6.203, 1898). The blackboard is a continuum of possible points, like the phaneron is a continuum of possible ingredients. If we draw a white chalk line on the board, what appears is a sudden discontinuity within the potential. "This discontinuity is one of those brute acts by which alone the original vagueness could have made a step towards definiteness" (*ibid.*). Alteration has occurred, a possible ingredient has been actualized. What does the discontinuity consist in? It is not the line which is discontinuous; quite on the contrary, the line is continuous, and gets its continuity from the original blackboard continuum. And the blackboard continuum has not been interrupted by the line, for it supports the line. The discontinuity stems from the fact that the two continua are inter(re)acting: "the boundary between the black and white is neither black, nor white, nor

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neither, nor both. It is the pairedness of the two. It is for the white the active Secondness of the black; for the black the active Secondness of the white." (*ibid.*) The actualized ingredient of the phaneron is in active secondness with the rest of the virtual phaneron, and vice versa. Self-presentation is continuous, and alio-representation is continuous, too; the representational continuum gets its continuity from the phaneral stream, like the chalk line gets its own from the blackboard. Neither self-presentation nor alio-representation are discontinuous in themselves, nor even the passage from the first to the second continuum is. What is discontinuous is the effect created by alio-representation (or alteration) within the phaneron. As a matter of fact, the delimitation and selection of an ingredient within the phaneron (or actualization of a possible part), while it is itself a continuous process, establishes a discontinuity within the phaneron insofar as it puts two continua in inter(re)action with each other. On the one hand, we have what has not been selected but left outside the representational determination, and this is the rest of the phaneron, what has been abandoned in the cognitional obscurity of the manifest; on the other hand, we have the selected ingredient, abstracted, and thus made "other." Either side is "the active secondness" of the other.

[6] This suggests the hypothesis that the passage from phaneron to sign involves a transformation of thirdness: the thirdness of the phaneron develops into the thirdness of representation. The thirdness of the perceptual coalescence develops into the thirdness of the perceptual fact (as an iconic sign) and judgment (as indexical sign, but also as symbolical sign). The "development" of phaneral thirdness into semiotic thirdness results from the adjunction of *mediation* to its "attributes," which already included generality and continuity. In the same way as the determination of the universe grows through generalization, so does the determination (or "coagulation") of the perceptual coalescence into a perceptual fact come from generalization, that is, from the transmutation of the thirdness of a coalescence (a coalescence is a growing together of percepts through its continued experience) into the thirdness of an iconic sign.

[7] Iconoscopy is not a word found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, so that we may infer it was probably never used in reference to the art of using an "iconoscope," a binocular-parallax–suppressing instrument (invented by E. Javal in 1866) giving a three-dimensional appearance to two-dimensional images, and a flat appearance to three-dimensional objects. In the 1930s, an iconoscope was a television camera tube containing an electron-emitting gun and equipped for rapid scanning of a photoactive mosaic. It was eventually replaced by the vidicon, a device whose name was formed from "video" and "iconoscope." In 1955, *The Modern Language Journal* published an article entitled "'Iconoscopy' in Language Teaching" by Simon Chasen (v. 39, pp. 79–81). In April 1979, a letter signed by K.W. Lavers and A. Levers appeared in the *British Journal of Radiology* that was entitled "Iconoscopy" (52 (616): 334).

[8] Although phaneroscopy is not a science in the usual sense of the word, or even in Peirce's own sense of it since it does not yield a body of warrantable and verifiable truths but merely a body of descriptive propositions whose objects are non-truth-committing seemings, there is no doubt that Peirce conceived of it as an activity that was to be conducted through and through in a scientific spirit, both regarding its methods of observation and description (mathematically grounded and diagrammatic), and regarding its strenuous ethics of honest and unbiased reporting to a community of inquirers and fellow observers. Thus, the place occupied by phaneroscopy in the classification of the sciences is fully justified: it is the first of the positive science, in that its object is actually an inquiry into the very nature of positive

experience, one that is preliminary to any more particular inquiry into its myriad embodiments in the esthetic, ethical, logical, metaphysical, psychical, and physical realms. See my paper "Is Phaneroscopy as a Pre-Semiotic Science Possible" in *Semiotiche* 2/04 (2004): 15–29.

[9] Peirce tells us that it is actually impossible to conceive of any representation as being absolutely singular. Someone might object by pulling out of his wallet the photograph of his loved one or by pointing to a work of art on a wall, and claiming that here is a material artifact, utterly singular, right there and nowhere else, and that it is what is commonly called an image, and that unless we are blind or an inveterate liar we must acknowledge that we are seeing it. Some other good but not helpful soul might remark that there is no need to limit the usage of the word "image" to such artificial products, since to look at a photograph does not entail a physiological activity in any way distinct from looking at a flower on the balcony, at a natural landscape, at a stranger's smiling face, or at the night's starry sky. The moment we open our eyes in any situation we are looking at something singular and taking in its manifold minute details, no matter what it is that we are looking at. Or again, the moment we simply imagine anything, like a horse jumping over a log, we are forming a vivid image all of whose singular details we are fully in control of. But such common objections are all to be rejected as irremediably flawed, phaneroscopically speaking.

[10] James Mark Baldwin, ed. *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1901), vol. 1, pp. 518–19.

[11] From R 793 (1905); published in EP2: 544n.22.

Processi di costruzione dell'immagine e di immaginazione: verso una chiarificazione pragmatica dell'immagine*

Introduzione

Nel linguaggio ordinario un uso casuale della parola *immagine* passerà certamente inosservato. Che un termine così comune richieda un chiarimento concettuale, specialmente di matrice pragmatica, è verosimilmente uno dei primi punti da porre quando si considera Peirce e l'immagine. In ogni caso, gli scritti di C.S.Peirce ci forniscono diversi strumenti per portare a termine questo complesso compito. La sua dottrina del pragmatismo può essere rilevante per il compito quanto la teoria dei segni.

Peirce sognò un teoria del segno così comprensiva e dettagliata da fornire le risorse concettuali per esplorare innumerevoli processi naturali e pratiche umane. Mentre la sua preoccupazione principale era offrire una spiegazione normativa dell'indagine oggettiva sullo sfondo di una cosmologia evoluzionistica, il suo sforzo prodigioso andò oltre la pur ambiziosa meta. Benché abbia costruito una teoria del segno principalmente come mezzo attraverso il quale articolare una tale spiegazione, la teoria trascende di gran lunga questa applicazione. La sua immaginazione teoretica non è mai così evidente quanto nella concezione stessa di questa indagine come indagine semiotica, e nell'elaborare in maniera drammaticamente suggestiva i dettagli più salienti.

In questo saggio delineerò il mio approccio nell'interpretare la teoria generale dei segni di Peirce, sottolineando in che misura la sua teoria sia pragmatista (vedi anche Colapietro 2004a). Deriverò anche le implicazioni di questo assunto allo scopo di chiarire le immagini e la costruzione dell'immagine. Infine, l'enfasi dovrà cadere sulla semiosi più che sul segno, sulla costruzione dell'immagine e l'immaginazione più che sull'immagine, sui processi auto-trasformativi più che sugli oggetti auto-contenuti. Sottolineare il pragmatismo significa qui, almeno, che: "Gli elementi di ogni concetto entrano nel pensiero logico attraverso le porte della percezione e ne escono dalle porte dell'azione propositiva…" (*EP2*, 241). [1]

Ciò che intendo dire è che il pragmatismo di Peirce è radicato nel riconoscimento che il significato delle nostre parole e degli altri segni supera normalmente la nostra comprensione e il nostro controllo, portandoci in direzioni e complicità sorprendenti. Esse hanno una propria vita, indipendentemente dalla nostra competenza e attenzione. Se torniamo alla sua articolazione originale, il pragmatismo peirceano è il tentativo consapevole da parte di un ricercatore sperimentale di aiutare sé e gli altri

a rendere più chiare le proprie idee, cioè a rendere più chiari i propri segni. Il carattere riflessivo e ricorsivo del pensiero di Peirce non è mai così evidente quanto nei suoi sforzi di chiarire prima l'idea di idea traducendola in segno e, successivamente, la concezione stessa del segno traducendolo in un ruolo all'interno di un processo. In questo, mi avvarrò del sostegno di Peirce nell'interpretare Peirce (soprattutto userò la sua distinzione nei tre gradi o livelli di chiarezza concettuale per chiarire la sua concezione della semiosi). In aggiunta, userò l'interpretazione da ciò derivata come ausilio nel comprendere la dimensione della nostra esperienza connessa alla concezione dell'*immagine* e delle nozioni ad essa solidali. Vedremo che l'integrazione funzionale delle sfaccettature categoricamente distinte presenti nella semiosi è anch'essa evidente costruzione delle immagini e nell'immaginazione. In anticipazione del risultato finale della nostra indagine, inizieremo veramente a intravedere la forza e il carattere della funzione di costruzione dell'immagine e immaginazione, specialmente in riferimento all'opera d'arte, valutando quello che Barbara Bolt – rifacendosi a Peirce- chiama il potere performativo dell'immagine (2004). Nel capitolo conclusivo di *Art Beyond Representation*, "Working Hot: A Materialist Ontology"[2], l'autrice si appoggia prima a Deleuze e poi a Peirce "per ripensare la questione di come possiamo sperimentare un'opera [d'arte] sia come una produzione effettivamente occorrente sia come un segno." (149-50). L'uso che Bolt fa di Peirce in questo contesto è suggestivo e indubbiamente efficace, ma può trarre da ciò che segue i benefici di una più completa articolazione.

Verso una teoria pragmaticista del segno

Come il punto è un'astrazione della linea, e come la linea stessa è un'astrazione della temporalità (*NEM* IV, 20), così l'immagine è un'astrazione del processo di costruzione dell'immagine e delle pratiche di immaginazione, nei quali assume una forma isolabile più o meno determinata. Se ciò è vero, allora dobbiamo rispondere alla seguente domanda: vi sono forme prefissate che ci forniscono i principi ultimi di intelligibilità, per mezzo dei quali spiegare gli eventi e gli oggetti che incontriamo nella nostra esperienza? O piuttosto sono i processi storici in corso che ci forniscono le 'forme' di spiegazione più adeguate? Per Peirce il fissarsi di forme immutabili deve essere rimpiazzato dall'attenzione a norme in evoluzione concepite come legisegni immanenti ed esemplari emergenti (cfr. Esposito 1979, 59). Vale a dire che un'ontologia di forme pre-fissate deve essere soppiantata da un'ontologia di forme storicamente evolute e in evoluzione.

Proprio a causa dei nostri fatali coinvolgimenti e frustrazioni esperienziali come attori storici siamo sensibili a questioni come il trarre inferenze, la formazione di creden-

ze e il chiarimento di significati. In quello che è probabilmente il suo scritto più noto, "Come rendere chiare le nostre idee" (1878), Peirce distingue tre gradi di chiarezza: famigliarità tacita o inarticolata, definizione formale e astratta e chiarificazione pragmatica (*EP 1*, 126-127, 131-132; o *W 3*, 258-260, 265-266; o *CP 5*). In questo saggio Peirce sostiene che i protagonisti del discorso filosofico hanno tradizionalmente fatto poco per andare oltre il livello della definizione astratta. Sul piano propositivo, insiste sulla necessità di portare la riflessione al livello della chiarificazione pragmatica attraverso l'applicazione deliberata della massima pragmatica. L'argomento di "Come rendere chiare le nostre idee" non è comunque espresso in termini formalmente semiotici. Inoltre Peirce stesso, nel suo studio dei segni, sembra spesso accontentarsi di offrire quelle che paiono essere definizioni astratte delle sue concezioni centrali (inclusa la nozione stessa di segno).

Tuttavia, se ci atteniamo agli scritti dal 1898 alla sua morte, nel 1914, siamo in grado di vedere quanto in effetti il suo pragmatismo sia formalmente semiotico e la sua semiotica, a sua volta, sia autenticamente pragmatica. Questo è evidente al massimo grado per quanto riguarda la chiarificazione inequivocabilmente pragmatica che offre delle sue nozione centrali, inclusa la semiosi (concepita esplicitamente come un processo). In questi scritti maturi Peirce spesso caratterizza il pragmatismo come un tentativo di tradurre le nostre concezioni esplicitamente in processi e pratiche o fattori che hanno significato soltanto in riferimento a processi e pratiche (vedi a es. *EP 2*, 340). Per andare oltre il livello delle definizioni astratte e spostarsi verso quello della chiarificazione pragmatica, quindi, si dedica attentamente alle attività e, ancor più importanti, agli abiti di azione inestricabilmente connessi sia ai luoghi comuni più diffusi sia alle concezioni più tecniche. Infine correla queste questioni all'agire riflessivo (o deliberativo), cioè la forma distintiva dell'agire umano (quella in cui il 'dialogo interiore' e gli scenari immaginati giocano un ruolo centrale ed efficace).

Alla luce di queste considerazioni appare del tutto appropriato tradurre pragmaticamente le concezioni dell'immagine nei processi e nelle pratiche della costruzione dell'immagine e dell'immaginare. Questa dimensione critica è collegata alla forma distintiva dell'agire umano e al carattere obsistente dell'oggetto dinamico, pragmaticamente chiarificato da Peirce nella sua opera matura. Mentre una teoria dei segni formalmente astratta esclude sistematicamente, specialmente all'origine, qualsiasi riferimento agli emittenti e ai riceventi dei segni, una teoria veramente pragmatica rende espliciti, come risultato di descrizioni più dense, i processi, le pratiche e gli stessi praticanti coinvolti in attività quali la costruzione dell'immagine e l'immaginare (Joswick 1996).

Verso una spiegazione pragmaticista e performativa dell'immagine, la costruzione dell'immagine e l'immaginare

Il concetto di *immagine* è pre-teoretico, cioè una nozione rozza e già pronta, irriducibilmente vaga e generale, perciò adattabile a innumerevoli scopi. Si noti che, indipendentemente dal suo essere formalmente o astrattamente definita, possiamo fare un uso intelligente, efficace e indubbiamente ingenioso e innovativo di questa nozione. La maggior parte delle nostre concezioni quotidiane non ha bisogno di assicurare la sua intelligibilità o applicabilità facendo appello a simbolizzazioni formali. E' vero piuttosto il contrario. "Per scopi ordinari, [comunque,] non si guadagna nulla portando l'analisi così avanti [come si fa propriamente nella scienza]; perché questi concetti ordinari di senso comune della vita quotidiana, avendo guidato la condotta dell'uomo da quando si è evoluta la nostra razza, sono di gran lunga più affidabili di quelli più esatti della scienza; cosicché, quando non si richiede grande esattezza, sono i migliori termini di definizione" (*EP* 2, 433).

Se si ritiene che la richiesta socratica di una definizione formale implichi che il livello di chiarezza in tal modo ottenuto sia il più alto possibile, allora sotto questo aspetto è in contrasto con l'etica dell'indagine di Peirce. Peirce insiste che un più alto livello di chiarificazione è ottenibile applicando coscienziosamente la massima pragmatica a una nozione come quella di immagine. Sia le immagini sia le nostre concezioni di esse possiedono generalità e vaghezza. Sono indeterminate sotto innumerevoli aspetti, benché la natura e il grado della loro indeterminatezza raramente si riveli d'ostacolo o svantaggio. Gli sforzi di Peirce per riscattare la teoria del segno dalla morsa di nominalisti quali Occam e Berkeley racchiudono il tentativo di riscattare la nostra comprensione delle immagini, della costruzione dell'immagine e dell'immaginare dalla lettura nominalistica, e senza dubbio anche cartesiana, soggettivista e psicologista. Al primo livello di chiarezza, abbiamo allora la concezione e comprensione pre-teoretica delle immagini, della costruzione dell'immagine e dell'immaginare. Al secondo livello abbiamo definizioni formali come quelle offerte da Peirce nel testo citato così spesso in questa pubblicazione (immagine-diagramma-metafora). Tuttavia è importante comprendere che questo è solo uno dei tentativi di Peirce di definire formalmente il concetto di immagine. E' ancora più importante rendersi conto che tali definizioni non sono in ultima analisi adeguate a condurre un'indagine fruttuosa. In effetti Peirce mise in guardia i suoi lettori dalle trappole e dagli inganni delle definizioni astratte. Concepire le immagini astraendole dai processi di costruzione dell'immagine e dalle pratiche di immaginazione è innegabilmente legittimo per alcuni scopi ma in definitiva insufficiente in una prospettiva pragmaticista. I processi per mezzo dei quali le immagini vengono generate, le pratiche per mezzo delle quali

vengono formate e trasformate e, infine, i ruoli diversi (anche conflittuali) giocati dalle immagini in questi processi e pratiche sono precisamente i fenomeni ai quali un'indagine pragmaticamente orientata deve prestare la sua attenzione critica. L'immaginazione come potere nel quale e attraverso il quale tali processi e pratiche sono condotti richiede anch'essa una analoga considerazione[3]. Conseguentemente alcuni elementi nella valorizzazione di Peirce dell'immaginazione meritano di essere richiamati. Permettemi di ricordare solo i quattro più immediatamente rilevanti affidandomi per lo più alle parole dello stesso Peirce. In primo luogo, afferma che: "La semplice immaginazione sarebbe senza dubbio semplicemente superflua", ma poi aggiunge immediatamente: "solo che nessuna immaginazione è semplice" (*CP* 6.286). Secondo, Peirce asserisce che: "l'intero raziocinio, e tutto ciò che fa di noi esseri dotati di intelletto, è compiuto nell'immaginazione" (*CP* 6.286). Terzo, il ruolo dell'immaginazione nella scienza è esplicitamente enfatizzato da Peirce, che scrive: "dopotutto non vi è altro che l'immaginazione che può fornirgli [allo scienziato] un indizio di verità. Può fissare stupidamente i fenomeni, ma, in assenza di immaginazione, essi non si connettono in nessun modo razionale [o intelligibile]" (*CP* 1.46). Dichiara infatti Peirce: "Non è esagerato affermare che, dopo la passione di imparare [il desiderio di scoprire ciò che è non è ancora conosciuto], non esiste qualità tanto indispensabile a un vittorioso avanzamento della scienza quanto l'immaginazione" (*CP* 1.47). Quarto, l'immaginazione lungimirante e profonda degli esseri umani è, alla radice, parte della loro eredità biologica. In uno dei passi che preferisco in tutti gli scritti di Peirce, incontriamo la seguente congettura:

> L'istinto umano non è affatto meno miracoloso [o straordinario] di quello degli uccelli, del castoro o della formica. Soltanto che, invece di essere diretto alle azioni corporee, come cantare e volare [e costruire], o alla costruzione di comunità, il suo teatro è il mondo plastico interiore, e i suoi prodotti sono le meravigliose concezioni delle quali la più grande sono le idee di numero, tempo e spazio... (MS 318, p.44)

Un punto collaterale da esplorare a questo riguardo è la spiegazione di Peirce della percezione. Per accennare a questo argomento, mi limiterò a evidenziare che in una delle stesure di una domanda al Carnegie Institute per un finanziamento (MS L 75 [1902]), Peirce suggerisce che i giudizi percettivi sono solo un tipo di inferenza incontrollabile. Molti di questi processi non sono completamente esplicabili in termini meccanicistici ma richiedono una descrizione e una spiegazione semiotica: sono, in effetti, giudizi formati sulla base di altri giudizi (cf. Savan 1987-88, 1-3), in una parola, sono inferenze. A differenza delle istanze di ragionamento in senso stretto,

comunque, sono inferenze incontrollabili. Esse includono processi di immaginazione e, in aggiunta, processi intrecciati con quelli di immaginazione, di qui la rilevanza per l'argomento che stiamo trattando.

Mentre la prima classe di giudizi riguarda il contenuto della coscienza, soprattutto il contenuto dei giudizi percettivi e quello dei significati più fondamentali, la seconda classe riguarda le nostre disposizioni all'azione e, inseparabile da queste disposizioni, la nostra intenzione. L'ultima classe di giudizi incontrollabili riguarda niente meno che l'immaginazione stessa, poiché il riconoscimento di essa è allo stesso tempo la presa d'atto dei limiti del nostro controllo su quella che è spesso considerata una sfera in cui non vi è nessun limite (o pochissimi).

> Una terza classe di giudizi [73] non soggetta a critica è quella dei giudizi riguardanti oggetti creati dalla nostra immaginazione. Immaginiamo, per esempio, una serie infinita di oggetti. Vi saranno allora due sequenze infinite distinte: quella degli oggetti nelle posizioni con un numero dispari e quella degli oggetti nei posti con numero pari. Che sia così non si scopre analizzando soltanto ciò che uno ha in mente. Il giudizio è il risultato di un processo di sperimentazione psichica, molto simile a un'induzione. Ma differisce da qualsiasi tipo di ragionamento in quanto non è soggetto a controllo. E' vero che dopo che uno ha concepito l'idea che ci sono due serie infinite i cui membri sono così alternati, l'analisi di quell'idea mostra che sarà applicabile a qualunque serie infinita; e questa analisi potrà essere messa in forma di una prova che lo dimostri. Tuttavia questa prova si baserà su una proposizione che è semplicemente auto-evidente. [CP 8; 72-73]

Le tre classi di giudizi incontrollabili qui identificati forniscono un ricco materiale per ricostruire una spiegazione peirceana di alcuni dei ruoli più importanti giocati dalle immagini nella vita degli agenti deliberativi, in particolare perché tali giudizi aiutano in effetti a definire –o a ridefinire- i confini di ciò che è controllabile. I processi per mezzo dei quali questi giudizi vengono generati, sostenuti ed elaborati, soprattutto quelli per i quali vengono formate, trasformate e trasmesse le immagini, ci indicano il carattere temporale e storico della costruzione dell'immagine e dell'immaginare (in opposizione all'immagine presa come forma statica e verso la direzione di un ruolo –o serie di ruoli- differente in un processo continuo).

In modo molto diverso, comunque, l'artista che si interroga, si critica e si dirige da sé, il cui lavoro giunge all'asserzione di se stesso, e di più che se stesso, nella sua performatività inerente e propulsiva, illumina altri importanti aspetti della costruzione dell'immagine dell'immaginazione. Ciò sposta in parte l'attenzione dai processi alle

pratiche, da questioni sulle quali gli agenti umani hanno poco o nessun controllo a questioni in cui essi intervengono deliberatamente (Colapietro 1998). Tuttavia, come vedremo, anche pratiche in questo contesto implicano forme di abbandono, di resa a forze che con enfasi asseriscono se stesse. E' a questo tipo di processi e pratiche che ora rivolgerò la mia attenzione, soprattutto perché concentrarci su tali aspetti ci consente di mettere bene a fuoco la matrice distintamente pragmaticista della semiotica di Peirce. Lo farò avvalendomi ampiamente del lavoro di Barbara Bolt, allo stesso tempo artista e teorica. In effetti, è una teorica che si appoggia molto sugli scritti di Peirce nel suo sforzo di illuminare la propria esperienza di artista.

Le tracce leggibili della bruta materialità: gli effetti scottanti del *'lavorare a caldo'*

Nel suo *Art Beyond Representation*, sottotitolato *The Performative Power of the Image* [4], Bolt, che è anche pittrice, apre virtualmente la sua investigazione descrivendo un processo che chiama 'lavorare a caldo'. La sua comprensione interiore di questo modo artistico merita una citazione completa:

> In un momento indefinito, il dipinto prese una vita che non sembrava avere nulla a che fare con il mio tentativo consapevole di controllarlo. Il 'lavoro' (come verbo) prese il suo slancio, il suo ritmo e intensità. In questo stato intenso e furioso, non avevo più coscienza del tempo, del dolore o [perfino] delle decisioni che prendevo. Nella furia del dipingere, le regole cedono il passo alle tattiche e alle pragmatiche dell'azione. Il dipinto prende una vita sua propria. Respira, vibra, pulsa, riluce e in generale si allontana da me. Il dipinto non rappresenta o illustra più la lettura. Al contrario, performa. Nella performatività dell'immagine, la vita entra nell'immagine. (1)

Il lavoro dell'opera d'arte non è di colmare una pretesa distanza tra il segno e il referente, ma di generare intensità, flussi e connessioni (Bolt, p.156). Nel riconoscere questo dato in effetti ci muoviamo oltre quello che Bolt chiama la concezione rappresentazionalista della rappresentazione, secondo la quale l'essere umano come soggetto sovrano sta di fronte a un oggetto percettivo (l'oggetto essendo concepito dal rappresentazionalista come ontologicamente separato sia dal soggetto sia da ciò che si propone di rappresentare). Ciò che guida Bolt è in parte l'affermazione di Lucien Freud: "Vorrei che i miei ritratti fossero *delle* persone non *simili* ad esse. Non che somiglino alla persona che posa, [ma] che siano lei." (cit. in Bolt p.163). Allo scopo di rendere intelligibile questa possibilità, l'autrice si chiede: "e se ci fosse una relazione dinamica tra l'oggetto e l'immagine, invece di una semplice relazione di sostituzione e gioco?" (p.166). Usa le nozioni peirceane per mostrare che nel-

l'opera d'arte, in particolare, questa relazione è discernibile ed efficace. Afferma Bolt: "Una figura [sia un dipinto o una fotografia] emerge dentro e attraverso il gioco della materia degli oggetti (l'oggetto dinamico), la materia dei corpi, i materiali di produzione e la materia del discorso". Perciò, "non è solo un gioco di segni"; è una presenza obsistente che spinge avanti il corpo del suo oggetto dinamico [5]. Per l'autrice, le implicazioni della teoria dei segni di Peirce si accordano con la rivelazione della nostra esperienza dell'opera d'arte: "l'effetto dell'oggetto dinamico… [si insinua] nel nostro essere e di conseguenza nelle nostre presentazioni, esibizioni e manifestazioni performative" (Bolt, 176). Le "pressioni e vibrazioni" dell'oggetto dinamico "erompono *in quanto* opera d'arte".

Mi permetto di avanzare l'idea che una delle funzioni dell'arte è la ri-educazione dell'immaginazione. Ma il mutevole teatro interiore dell'immaginazione umana non è un dominio separato, isolato dalla lotta selvaggia degli effetti materiali. L'arte esegue il suo compito esplorando, in modi inevitabilmente non convenzionali, possibilità di costruzione dell'immagine, essendo questa esplorazione un'interrogazione inesausta delle possibilità inerenti la materialità, le tradizioni e i gesti, i movimenti e le immaginazioni degli artisti.

L'impegno estetico (e preferisco di gran lunga il termine *impegno* a *contemplazione*) è, per lo meno, un processo continuo di reciproca interrogazione nel quale l'identità del sé è messa in questione non meno di quella dell'opera d'arte. L'ontologia dell'opera d'arte, nelle sue forme distintivamente moderne e specialmente postmoderne, supera la tensione irrisolvibile tra le maniere disparate dell'opera, prima di tutte la sua immediatezza qualitativa, l'insistenza bruta e l'ineliminabile intelligibilità. Forse questo significa che l'opera d'arte è, nella sua primità, niente meno che un qualisegno, sinsegno *e* legisegno; in quanto segno la sua identità è di per sé instabile, una presenza brutalmente insistente che si dissolve in configurazioni di qualità ineffabili e intimazioni di connessioni intelligibili. L'opera d'arte è, in altre parole, una congerie di funzioni, nella quale il coinvolgimento dinamico e materiale dell'artista, mezzo e 'oggetto', è preso in carico e portato avanti in processi unicamente configurati in qualità sensoriali, anch'esse unicamente istanziate in un presente obsistente, dinamicamente intelligibile nei modelli del rispondere, dell'interpretazione e dell'ispirazione che sono inerenti alla sua bruta materialità (cfr. Ransdell 2002).

Conclusione

Per parafrasare l'importante intuizione di Joseph Esposito di una svolta decisiva nel pensiero maturo di Peirce, Peirce arrivò a vedere il pragmaticismo non soltanto come un metodo per mezzo del quale i segni vengono chiarificati nella pratica del-

l'indagine, ma più adeguatamente come un metodo per mezzo del quale gli indagatori divengono soggetti in modo crescente all'influenza controllante dei segni 'viventi' (specialmente i legisegni) (1979, 60) [6]. Il dinamismo della costruzione dell'immagine e dell'immaginazione visiva è un esempio di come la forma non segue soltanto la funzione, ma è essa stessa un modo essenzialmente dinamico di funzionare, la natura, le varietà e la forza del quale sono intelligibili solo in riferimento ai processi e alle pratiche nei quali esse emergono, si sostengono e ineluttabilmente si dissolvono. Il principio di serialità (di ciò che possiamo identificare come un continuum storico) è succintamente formulato da John Dewey in "Time and Individuality". In accordo a questo principio, "ciò che viene dopo spiega ciò che è venuto prima con la stessa verità con cui il precedente spiega il successivo." (102; cfr. 103). Nella storia l'emergente (il conclusivo, il conseguente e il posteriore, e infinite altre maniere di esprimerlo) possiede sempre un potere retroattivo, la capacità di definire o riconfigurare in qualche misura ciò che lo ha preceduto. Detto in modo più forte, la storia *è* il processo in cui questo è vero; qualsiasi serie di transizioni in cui il successivo semplicemente ripete il precedente è *temporale* senza essere *storica*, nel senso che questi termini possiedono in questo contesto.

A mio parere, il significato è per Peirce una funzione della storia nel senso appena definito. "Un Segno ha necessariamente per il suo oggetto" –suggerisce Peirce in un manoscritto inedito– "un qualche frammento di storia, cioè di storia delle idee" (R 448, p.10; cfr. Colapietro 2004c). Il suo significato è, inoltre, realizzato nella generazione di una serie di interpretazioni, effetti attuali di attualizzazioni efficaci. In ogni caso, continuamente e ineluttabilmente, benché spesso solo impercettibilmente e tacitamente, rivediamo ciò che sentiamo, facciamo e immaginiamo. Uno dei ruoli dei processi di costruzione dell'immagine e della pratiche di immaginazione è di sconvolgere le frontiere dell'effettivo, anche per interrogare la tirannia spesso non riconosciuta di ideali apparentemente ammirevoli. In particolare, l'ideale di essere padroni dei nostri significati ha bisogno di essere interrogato in riferimento al significato della nostra insistenza su una tale padronanza.

Se –per usare la frase di Barbara Bolt– lavoriamo *a caldo*, come Peirce tipicamente faceva, certamente avremo una base sperimentale per porre in questione qualsiasi convalida di padronanza non abbastanza qualificata. Indubbiamente la sovranità su sé stessi richiede, a dire dello stesso Peirce, l'arrendevolezza del sé a ciò che è essenzialmente ammirevole. La vita di Peirce offre, in tutta la sua umana complessità, un'immagine di una tale arrendevolezza. Indubbiamente, l'immagine di un genio così tragicamente isolato e non riconosciuto, impegnato in un eroico sacrificio di sé, specialmente dopo aver dissipato le prerogative e le opportunità dei privilegiati (spe-

cialmente dopo aver compreso in quale misura le sue circostanze personali fossero il risultato dei suoi stessi fallimenti e vizi), scrivendo furiosamente parole senza fine su pagine senza fine (lottando disperatamente con quella specie di simboli che trovava così aliena alle inclinazioni della sua mente), è probabilmente quello in cui la parola *immagine* offre il suo più pregnante e commovente significato. Concludo così con *Peirce come immagine*, l'immagine dell'indagatore infaticabile, le cui tendenze vanagloriose e irascibili sono decisamente subordinate a sentimenti più encomiabili, a qualità più ammirevoli. Qui è veramente l'immagine di un uomo che ha lavorato *a caldo* al servizio della scoperta di ciò che non era ancora conosciuto.

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Note

* (translated by Giampaolo Proni)

[1] Percezione e azione (o, più precisamente, condotta) non sono categorialmente così distinte come una lettura superficiale di questo testo potrebbe suggerire. Da una parte, la percezione è essa stessa almeno una pratica rudimentale. Dall'altra, la condotta incorpora in sé la percezione dei cambiamenti conseguenti all'esercizio di uno sforzo e all'intervento.

[2] NdT: *L'arte oltre la rappresentazione*; "Lavorare a caldo: un'ontologia materialista".

[3] Questo è uno dei luoghi in cui l'influenza di Kant sul pensiero di Peirce è evidente. Nella prima *Critica*, Kant precisa: "La sintesi... è il mero risultato del potere di immaginazione, una funzione cieca ma indispensabile dell'anima, senza la quale non dovremmo avere nessuna conoscenza, ma della quale siamo sempre poco coscienti." (p. 112; cfr. Eco).

[4] NdT *Il Potere Performativo dell'Immagine*

[5] *Obsistenza* è uno dei termini di Peirce per secondità (o bruta opposizione, 'opposizione attiva'). Vedi *CP* 2.89-91; vedi anche *CP* 8.291.

[6] "Quando Peirce iniziò a vedere il pragmatismo non come un metodo per mezzo del quale le idee vengono chiarificate nella pratica dell'indagine ma come un metodo per mezzo del quale gli indagatori diventano soggetti all'influenza controllante delle idee 'viventi', divenne evidente che il pragmatismo dovrà avere una fondazione profonda quasi quanto la metafisica."

Representations of imaginary, nonexistent, or nonfigurative objects

1. Objects, the Object of the Sign, and the Referent

In everyday usage, the word *object* denotes a solid, visible, tangible, and inanimate thing; the notion of a nonexistent or merely imaginary object must appear as a contradiction in terms. In its philosophical origin, by contrast, the concept of *object* did not really mean an object of material existence but rather a *mental object*. The scholastics, who introduced the term to the vocabulary of Western philosophy, did not conceive of an object as something that had to belong to physical reality; instead, an object was an object of thought, knowledge, or cognition, and 'to be objectively' meant 'to be in the mind' (cf. Ferrater Mora 1975: 311).

When Charles S. Peirce uses the concept of the *object of a sign* in the sense of something 'perceptible, or only imaginable, or even unimaginable in one sense' (CP 2.230, 1910), his concept of object is quite in accordance with the medieval usage of the concept. In fact, Peirce's usage of the term *object* was directly influenced by 13th century scholastic terminology, where, as he reminds us, *objectum* meant 'a creation of the mind in its reaction with a more or less real something [...] upon which cognition is directed" (MS 693A: 33; Pape 1996: 115).

Peirce has a very broad concept of the object of the sign (cf. Santaella 1988, 1990, 1994, Joswick 1996, Pape 1996). The object of the sign is certainly not a 'thing,' and it need not be an existent at all. The sign does not *refer to*, it *represents* its object. Only genuinely indexical signs *refer* in the sense that they *indicate* their object, since only their objects are 'existent individuals (whether things or facts)' (CP 2.283, 1902); other indices, symbols, and icons do not refer, they represent, for example 'something of a general nature' or even something 'believed formerly to have existed or expected to exist' (CP 2.232, 1910). Above all, the object of the sign is that information, knowledge, or experience which an observer of the sign must have in order to be able to interpret the sign. The study of signs (words or pictures) referring to 'imaginary objects' is hence a natural branch of the tree of semiotic inquiry. In Peirce's semiotics, *all* signs have objects, even the word *and*. The object of this symmetrical conjunction, for example, is the idea as well as the practical experience of how entities (terms or things) are combined to form a whole (cf. Savan 1994: 189).

In the reductionistic framework of 20th century positivist semantics of reference, the concept of object (e.g., Quine 1960), sometimes called the *referent* (Ogden and

Richards 1923), or *denotatum* (Carnap 1942, Goodman 1978), became largely restricted to real and material objects with the result that the study of words or pictures referring to imaginary or otherwise nonexistent objects either had to be excluded from analysis or resulted in analytical aporias left to be resolved in a dualistic semantics distinguishing between reference to concrete objects (denotation) and sense as the ideas associated with the sign (signification). The present paper intends to discuss some of these aporias and to contrast the views of the logical positivists on the semiotic dualism between existent vs. nonexistent objects to Peirce's holistic theory of the object of verbal and pictorial representation.

2. Goodman's Cartesian and Positivist Views of Pictorial Representation
The distinction between sense and reference (or signification and denotation) drawn by 20th century logical semanticians, following Frege (1892), has been used to account for the difference between expressions such as *horse* or *dog* on the one hand and *unicorn, dog with three heads*, or *the first woman who landed on the moon* on the other (cf. Kempson 1977: 13-14). The former expressions have both sense, which can be described by means of paraphrases or definitions, and reference or referents in the form of objects which can be pointed out in the world of existing things. The latter expressions, by contrast, which do not refer to anything that really exists, are without *reference* although they have *sense*, since their meaning, despite their semantic anomalies, can be imagined, paraphrased, or translated into another language.

This Fregean model of analysis implies a split theory of semantics according to which there are expressions with, and expressions without, a fully developed semantics, that is, expressions with both sense and reference, e.g., *horse* or *dog*, expressions with sense but without reference, e.g., *winged horse* or *dog with three heads*, and finally expressions with reference but without sense, such as proper names designating individuals, e.g., *George Washington*. Ultimately, this semiotic split has a Cartesian foundation, since it takes for granted that the cognitive world is divided into two, on the one hand, a material world of perceptual objects which serve as referents of signs and on the other hand a mental world of ideas which constitute the realm of sense or signification. Below, we will see how Peirce's anti-Cartesian semiotics is free of this dualism, but first some of the aporias of the still prevailing Cartesian model will be expounded with special reference to Nelson Goodman's views of pictorial representation.

Goodman's pictorial semiotics extends the positivist semanticians' approach to sense and reference in language to pictures, especially to paintings. In his paper 'Routes of

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reference,' Goodman draws the following parallels between verbal and pictorial signs (in his terminology: 'symbols') to conclude that both verbal and pictorial signs of fictional and imaginary objects are empty signs without referents:

Some names and descriptions and pictures – such as 'Robinson Crusoe' or 'winged horse' or a unicorn-picture – denote nothing although each belongs to a system along with other symbols that denote one or many things. To hypostatize a realm of nonactual entities for these empty symbols to denote seems to me pointless and confusing. When we speak of a picture as depicting a unicorn, even though there are no unicorns to depict, what we are saying in effect is rather that the picture is a unicorn-picture; we are saying not that the picture denotes anything but rather that it is denoted by the term 'unicorn-picture.' And we can distinguish unicorn-pictures from centaur-pictures, as we distinguish desks from tables, with no regards to their denoting anything. (Goodman 1981: 125)

Goodman's argument is not only that words and pictures depicting imaginary objects are empty signs ('symbols') without denotation; with his parallelism between chairs, desks and unicorn-pictures, he moreover suggests that the real semiotic function of the empty sign of a unicorn-picture is to be the referent (denotatum) of another sign, the verbal expression 'unicorn-picture.' The logocentrism of this argument is blatant, and the chain of referents thus established testifies to the priority given to verbal logic over of visual semiosis: the metasemiotic verbal expression *unicorn-picture* is recognized as a fully developed symbol, while the object-semiotic picture of the unicorn to which it refers and which gives rise to the idea metasemiotically expressed is reduced to the function of an 'empty' symbol.

Symbol, representation, denotation, and reference are the key terms in Goodman's semiotic vocabulary. A *symbol*, in Goodman's philosophy of art and literature, can be verbal or nonverbal, a word or a picture. In the terminology of Peirce's general semiotics, what Goodman calls 'symbol' is a *sign*, a term which Goodman does not use once. A *representation*, according to Goodman (1978: 20) is something that is a sign of, refers to, stands for, or symbolizes, a denotatum. A painting which depicts nothing but a composition of colors and forms, such as a Mondrian, is hence a 'nonrepresentational picture which says nothing, denotes nothing, pictures nothing.' Despite this claim that such pictures neither denote, represent, nor 'picture,' Goodman goes on to conclude that nonrepresentational paintings are symbols and have a 'referential function.' This conclusion sounds enigmatic, for, how can something be a symbol, but 'say nothing,' and what can a picture refer to if it does not represent anything?

Goodman's terms *representation* and *denotation* designate the relation of signs or symbols to their object (denotatum), but Goodman's positivist concept of the denotatum is very narrow: a symbol can only *denote* or *represent* something that exists in a world that is 'external or extraneous' (ibid.: 60) to this symbol. The semiotics behind this argument is based on a sharp dualistic distinction between semiotic phenomena intrinsic to symbols and nonsemiotic phenomena extrinsic to them, i.e., between a semiotic and a nonsemiotic world. A symbol denotes or represents either uniquely or generally. For example, 'names and such pictures as individual and group portraits denote uniquely, while predicates and such pictures as those in an ornithologist's guide denote generally' (ibid.: 103), but symbols of fictional or imaginary objects do not denote at all. Hence, Goodman concludes that 'painted or written portrayals of Don Quixote, for example, do not denote Don Quixote – who is simply not there to be denoted' (ibid.), or that 'Bosch's paintings of weird monsters, or the tapestry of a unicorn, represent nothing; for there are no such monsters or demons or unicorns anywhere but in such pictures or in verbal descriptions' (ibid.: 60). The 'axe of dualism' (CP 3.570) which Goodman swings with such reductionistic distinctions between the real and the imaginary blocks his view to more subtle inquiries into the roots of imagination not only in cultural traditions, but also in real life experience. For example, representations of weird monsters are not only representations of nonexistent beings, they are also transformed representations of the real fear which humans have experienced in the face of really existing dangerous animals in the wild.

If imaginary beings can neither be *represented* nor *denoted* by a picture and unicorn- or sphinx-pictures are hence nonrepresentational, nonfigurative paintings of pure forms and colors are even clearer examples of nonrepresentational pictures, according to Goodman. However, under these premises, the important distinction drawn in the traditional semiotics of painting between figurative vs. nonfigurative pictures (unicorn-pictures vs. monochrome pictures, e.g.) gets lost, and this seems to be unsatisfactory even to Goodman himself, since he admits the necessity of introducing an additional distinction between these two kinds of pictures: 'Let's agree,' he argues in his comment on unicorn pictures (ibid.), 'that such pictures, though they represent nothing, are representational in character, hence symbolic [...]. All the same, we must note in passing that their being representational involves no representation of anything outside them.' Goodman's extended argument is that pictures of imaginary creatures, in their figurative form, are indeed similar to pictures which represent real objects against a ground, especially when the imaginary creatures are inserted in a figurative scene such as a landscape. The words designating these creatures are like other words

(and therefore 'representational in character') since they are phonetically and morphologically constructed like other verbal symbols, with the exception that they are devoid of reference. To call unicorn-pictures 'representational in character' is thus a concession to their undeniable figurativity, but the argument that the picture of a unicorn represents nothing 'outside the representation' suffers from a blatant reductionism. Not only does the picture of a unicorn represent iconically a white horse with a long straight horn growing on its head but also does it represent iconically innumerable other unicorns well known from the history of Western painting and mythology. All of these elements represented in the unicorn picture represent certainly something from 'outside' the picture.

In sum, Goodman distinguishes three main modes of pictorial representation. The first can be exemplified by a portrait of myself; it is a symbol which represents, denotes, and refers to me. Let us call it a *picture of an existent object*. The second example is a picture of Don Quixote or of a unicorn; both are symbols, have reference, represent nothing, denote nothing, but are 'representational in character.' Let us call such pictorial representations *pictures of imaginary* (or *fictional*) *objects*. The third kind of picture may be exemplified with a Mondrian or a monochrome painting; it is a symbol which has reference but is not representational in character, does not represent, and does not denote. Pictures of this kind are often called *abstract* or *nonrepresentational*, but the former term is inappropriate because it still suggests figurativity (one which merely 'abstracts' from details), and the latter is inappropriate in this context, since Goodman describes pictures of imaginary objects as equally nonrepresentational (whereas according to Peirce, as we shall see below, every picture 'represents'). Table 1 gives a summary of the criteria and examples discussed so far.

Goodman's criteria / Type of picture; example	is symbol and refers; has referential function	is representational in character	represents and denotes (in 'external' existence)
Picture of existent objects; Photographic portrait	+	+	+
Picture of imaginary (fictional) objects; Unicorn, Don Quixote	+	+	−
Nonfigurative picture; Monochrome painting	+	−	−

Table 1. Three kinds of pictures according to Goodman.

Let us now try to solve the enigma why a picture which does not represent can nevertheless be a symbol. Goodman develops his argument with examples from pictures of the third kind, nonfigurative pictures which 'represent nothing' and are

not 'representative in character' either. A Mondrian, he says, is a symbol because it 'exemplifies,' 'stands as a sample of,' 'makes manifest, selects, focuses upon, exhibits, [or] heightens in our consciousness' properties which it possesses itself (ibid.: 65). Describing nonfigurative paintings in these terms, Goodman evidently means pictures that are signs insofar as they refer (and therefore 'have reference') to themselves. In other words, his topic is *self-referential* pictures, a term which Goodman does not use, but with which he could not disagree, since, in his words, 'exemplification is surely to symbolize [...], and it] is a form of reference. A work of art, however free of reference and expression, is still a symbol even though what it symbolizes be not things or people or feelings but certain patterns of shape, color, texture that it shows forth' (ibid.).

Reference is hence a category in Goodman's semiotics besides representation and denotation; it is that criterion which makes a visual phenomenon a symbol. Whether they represent or not, my portrait, the unicorn, and the Mondrian pictures all evince reference and are symbols for this reason. The difference between my portrait and the Mondrian picture is that the former refers to a person who is 'extrinsic' to the picture, living in a world other than the world of pictures, whereas the unicorn and the Mondrian pictures refer to something which is 'intrinsic' to the picture.

3. Peirce on Signs of Imaginary Objects
Let us now turn to Peirce's semiotic answers to the above discussed enigmas of pictorial semiosis. For the sake of brevity we must omit Peirce's analyses of pictures of really existent objects, which have been much discussed in the context of the theory of pictorial iconicity and indexicality (cf. Nöth 2000, 2003; Santaella and Nöth 2003). Instead, we will restrict the discussion to pictures of imaginary and nonfigurative objects.

According to Peirce, every picture is a sign. In this respect, Peirce and Goodman agree, except for their terminology (Goodman's term is 'symbol'). To define pictures in general as signs (or symbols) is by no means a generally accepted premise; aestheticians based in phenomenology have often claimed that pictures are not signs but phenomena *sui generis* (cf. Nöth 2005).

Peirce did not elaborate a semiotics of painting let alone of nonfigurative art, of which he could hardly have any knowledge until his death in 1914. However, his general theory of signs and his many comments on pictures, photos, images, and icons provide a unified framework for pictorial semiotics applicable to figurative and nonfigurative pictures as well as to pictures of imaginary beings. His theory of the

object of the pictorial sign dispenses with many of the aporias of the positivists whose dualist theory of sense and reference is only fully applicable to pictures representing 'really' existing objects.

The most important difference in comparison with the positivists is that Peirce rejects the Cartesian distinctions between sense and reference on the one hand and between the sign and the nonsemiotic world 'extraneous' to the sign on the other. The *object* of a sign can be a 'real' thing of practical experience, a mere sign, a mental representation, an abstract notion, or an idea of something purely imaginary. Peirce says nothing about the 'reality' of the object at all and describes it as something 'perceptible, or only imaginable or even unimaginable in one sense' (CP 2.230, 1910) and even goes so far as to speculate that 'perhaps the Object is altogether fictive' (CP 8.314, 1909). Hence, imaginary or fictional beings, such as a unicorn or Don Quixote are naturally among the objects of verbal or pictorial signs. By conceiving of the object of the sign as something that may be a sign itself, but a sign which precedes the actual sign, Peirce manages to avoid many of the pitfalls and semiotic aporias of the positivists.

The distinction between representational and nonrepresentational pictures would have been a contradiction in terms for Peirce, since in his semiotics, sign and representation are quasi-synonyms (cf. Nöth 1997). Every sign 'represents' (instead of 'refers to') an object. In contrast to the positivist position, according to which only 'real' in the sense of existent objects can be *represented*, the object of a pictorial sign, according to Peirce, can be another sign, another picture, the mere memory of the experience of an object, a mental image, the sensation of a color, or, in the case of synaesthesia, even the sensation of a nonvisual sense impression, a smell, a sound, or a taste.

This is why signs can *represent* and even *denote* merely fictional beings, for example, a phoenix or a centaur, two examples discussed by Peirce. A picture of a phoenix has an object, says Peirce in 1910, 'for although no phoenix really exists, real descriptions of the phoenix are well known' (CP 2.261), and since the object of the sign is that which is known about it, the sign of a phoenix has evidently an object. But what is the nature of such an object that does not 'really exist'?

Peirce distinguishes two kinds of object, the *immediate* and the *dynamical* object. The *dynamical object* is the reality behind the sign, 'the Object outside of the Sign' (EP 480, 1908). It belongs to a reality which is independent of its representation in the sign, a reality to which the interpreter of the sign has no full access, since only 'unlimited and final study could reveal' its nature (CP 8.181, 1903) at the end of an

endless series of its representations (CP 1.339, 1893). Of this object we have to assume that it 'by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation' (CP 4.536, 1906), which means that the dynamical object must precede the sign which it determines to its representation (see below).

The *immediate object*, by contrast, is 'the object as the sign represents it' (CP 8.343, 1910) and 'whose Being is thus dependent upon the Representation of it in the Sign' (CP 4.536, 1906), which means that it is an object only incompletely presented by the sign (CP 4.536, 1906; CP 8.183, 1903). This description of an incomplete presence of the dynamical object in the immediate object fits well with another requirement, familiarity or presupposed knowledge. The immediate object is that which we know about the object, and familiarity and previous knowledge can never be complete knowledge of the object. The argument that the object 'is itself of the nature of a sign or thought' (CP 3.538, 1903) is equally compatible with the notion of the 'object of the sign as the sign represents it.' As an incompletely represented object, the immediate object may be vague, opaque, false, erroneous, or otherwise affected by prejudice, bias, or cultural ways of seeing the things. The immediate object contains an index, a 'hint' indicating the dynamical object to which it corresponds (EP 480, 1908).

The difference between the immediate and the dynamical object seems relatively clear in signs referring to physical facts and our knowledge of them. The word 'electricity,' for example, had a different and less evolved immediate object present to Benjamin Franklin's mind. The knowledge which physicists of our times have about the same phenomenon has grown, and the immediate object of the sign has changed over the centuries. The dynamical object, by contrast, has remained unchanged in the course of time, since this object is the sum total of all physical facts which cause experts and lay persons likewise to denote electricity by its verbal sign (cf. Santaella 1995: 53-66), and it will remain the same if the future should reveal more or other facts about the physical processes involved with the object of this sign.

Another term by which Peirce used to designate the dynamical object was *real object*, and if the dynamical object of the sign is the reality behind the sign, the example of the word 'electricity' exemplifies well the idea that the real object is something inaccessible but unchangeable, determining each individual sign of it while more and more knowledge is being gathered about its reality. The concept of reality which Peirce proposes reveals the nature of the dynamical or real object, too. 'I define real,' explains Peirce in 1906 (CP 6.495) 'as that which holds its characters on such a tenure that it makes not the slightest difference what any man or men may

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have thought them to be, or ever will have thought them to be, here using thought to include, imagining, opining, and willing [...]; but the real thing's characters will remain absolutely untouched.'

But what about the dynamical object of thought-signs, fictions, myths, and mere imaginations? Can ideas as dynamical objects of signs 'remain absolutely untouched' by the thoughts people have had about them? What is the dynamical object of an imaginary being in a picture which represents something that does not exist? Since the dynamical object of a sign is that which determines the sign to its representation, the dynamical objects of myths, fictions, ideologies, or imaginations are evidently to be found in the system of ideas, myths and imaginations rooted in a culture insofar as it precedes a particular representation in a specific sign, and the immediate object of such a cultural representation is the imaginary or fictional object as it presents itself in an incomplete way to the mind considering the specific sign.

Peirce gives the example of a picture of a phoenix (MS 318: 41, cf. Pape 1996: 109). Although it represents a fictional being, he argues, it is certainly a sign, not only with an immediate but also with a dynamical object. According to the above premises, its immediate object is our familiarity with the image of a phoenix, which is not only rooted in some usually incomplete knowledge of ancient mythology but also in our knowledge of the real world of birds and fire, life and death. According to ancient Greek mythology, a phoenix is a magic bird born from fire. The dynamical object of this sign is hence the ancient mythological construct which has determined and will determine all past and future representations of phoenixes. It is the sum total of what has been known about these magical birds. However, the complex mental construct of this (mental) dynamical object does not only consist of magical and unreal archaic imaginations. Insofar as ideas such as 'fire,' 'large bird,' or 'resurrection (after a defeat)' are part of the idea of a phoenix, fragments of present-day real world experience are part of the cultural construct, too.

In 1908, Peirce calls the dynamical object the 'really efficient but not immediately present Object' (CP 8.342). The archaic (and hence not 'immediately present') complex of cultural and natural ideas, images, and anatomical details associated with the figure of a phoenix which have determined (have been 'really efficient' with respect to) innumerable of its narrative or pictorial representations since antiquity are their dynamical objects in this sense; in their complexity and our historical distance from its origin and evolution, these objects are never fully present to the mind of an observer of an individual picture of a phoenix. What is present and plays a role in the viewer's understanding of the picture of a phoenix is the immediate object, which

consists of the observer's partial knowledge based on an incomplete familiarity with the dynamical or real object. There are always further details from the broader horizon of culture and nature, the dynamical object of the picture, of which the viewer has insufficient knowledge or awareness but which are likely to determine and at the same time limit the possibilities of future interpretations.

Peirce's typology of possible dynamical objects is triadic, as all of his categories are. In 1908, he writes that the sign may represent its dynamical object as a mere possibility, an existent, or a necessity. Only the second of these categories is applicable to representations of 'real' existents and facts. His examples of signs determined in this way by their dynamical object are a barometer and 'a written narrative of any series of events.' Fictional narratives, myths, or imaginary creations, by contrast, due to their lack of realism, are determined by mere possibilities, since 'a Possible can determine nothing but a possible' (EP 480-81). However, insofar as they also represent historical contexts, as Shakespeare's Hamlet, they may also be determined by the universes of existents and necessities, such as historical facts which cannot be denied.

Tellingly, in 1903, Peirce exemplifies his semiotic category of the iconic sign not with the example of a picture of some existent object, but with the example of a representation of the statue of a centaur. Peirce's argument why such a statue is an icon although it represents a merely imaginary being is the following: 'The statue of a centaur is not, it is true, a representamen if there be no such thing as a centaur. Still, if it represents a centaur, it is by virtue of its shape; and this shape it will have, just as much, whether there be a centaur or not' (CP 5.73, 1903). Hence, the statue of the centaur is an iconic sign because its features correspond to those of other representations of a centaur which are equally determined by the cultural prototype of this mythological creature with its mixture of features of a human and of an animal being.

One of the aspects of the dynamical object of a mythical creature is its fictional anatomy. A centaur, for example, is a fictional creature from Greek mythology with the head, chest, and arms of a man and the body and legs of a horse. These anatomical characteristics are features of the dynamical object which determine any pictorial representation of a centaur. For example, with reference to these features we can decide that an appropriate picture of a centaur cannot have a bird's head. A representation which has the typical features of a centaur is therefore an icon of the dynamical object of this ancient mythological creature, although no real creature of this kind exists in nature. Iconicity, too, does not necessarily require correspondence

with something really existing; it is rather based on the correspondence of the features of one mental image with those of another.

4. Thought-Signs, the Object in the Mind, True and False Representations

The object of a sign need not exist in reality, but in order to understand a sign, its observer must be familiar with this object, which is not contradictory, since familiarity does not presuppose existence; we are not only familiar with facts, but also with ideas, fictional beings, errors, or even lies. Familiarity presupposed, the object of the signs is a feeling, experience, or cognition which is antecedent to the sign. Nothing can be a sign if the object is completely unknown, although the object may be nonexistent, imaginary, or even false (e.g., CP 2.230, 1910).

Since 1868, Peirce describes thoughts as examples of signs, which he calls *thought-signs* (CP 5.283, W 223; cf. Short 2004: 215). In 1896, he argues that the first of a representation can be exterior or interior to the interpreting mind and that there can be an 'outward or inward' mediation 'between an object and an interpreting thought' (CP 1.480; 1896). Signs can hence be mental representations, and mental representations are signs, according to Peirce. As new as this projection of the mental into the chain of signifiers may seem, its roots are in medieval semiotics (cf. Tabarroni 1989).

The thesis that silent and invisible mental representations are signs seems counterintuitive from the commonsensical point of view according to which signs serve as instruments in human communication and must therefore be perceptible to an addressee. However, the purpose of a sign, according to Peirce is not necessarily to be an instrument for the communication of ideas to others. The purpose of a sign is rather to 'be interpreted in another sign' (MS 1476, 1904 [in Peirce 1991]), and such interpretations of the sign in a subsequent sign begin in the flow of ideas in a mind addressing itself only to itself (CP 5.284, 1868).

The flow of ideas is a flow of signs in which 'every thought-sign is translated or interpreted in a subsequent one' (ibid.) so that each actual thought has its object in an antecedent thought-sign and its interpretant is the subsequent thought in the flow of thought-sign. With this account of semiosis in the flow of ideas, Peirce gives a radical solution to the structuralists' alleged dilemma of the semiotic abyss between the sign and its object (the signifier and the signified). By projecting the object of the sign into the chain of signifiers (alias representamens), Peirce semioticizes the object of a sign in the most radical way. What is a thought-sign in the present moment will be one of the objects of the subsequent thought-sign which it triggers. However, the

difference between the sign and its object in this flow of thought-signs is not merely one of the sequence in time, but also one of determination of the subsequent sign by the antecedent object and in the reverse perspective one of representation of the antecedent object in the subsequent sign.

In 1903, Peirce sets up the requirement that any object of a sign be a thought: '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' (CP 3.538, 1903). The argument does not mean that Peirce turned mentalist, but it has to do with the requirement of familiarity with the object, which can only be a familiarity in a mind. In 1871, Peirce specifies: 'To say that an object is in the mind is only a metaphorical way of saying that it stands to the intellect in the relation of known to knower' (CP 8.18).

The sign 'can only represent the Object and tell about it,' but it 'cannot furnish acquaintance with or recognition of that Object' (CP 2.231, 1910), since it would be a contradiction in terms to furnish acquaintance with something whose acquaintance is presupposed in the first place. On the other hand, the sign does *not only* represent something with which we are already acquainted; at the same time, its function is to 'convey some further information concerning' the object (ibid.).

There are two opposite directions of relation between the sign and its object; the sign *represents* its object, and it is at the same time logically *determined* by it (Parmentier 1985, Pape 1996). Determination means that the object as the antecedent information presupposed by the sign, the necessary familiarity with it, the so-called collateral knowledge of what is represented in the sign, exerts a semiotic influence in the way the sign is interpreted.

How can a sign be determined by something that does not exist, is merely imaginary, or even erroneous? Peirce offers an example from literary fiction, the statement, 'Hamlet was insane.' Even though this dicent sign is about a merely fictional man, it has an object, namely that which we know about Hamlet as the protagonist of Shakespeare's drama before we hear the sign. The object is the information necessary to understand this sign; Peirce paraphrases it as the 'Universe of Shakespeare's Creation so far as it is determined by Hamlet being a part of it' (ibid.). In fact, the object of a fictional sign is a special kind of object, one about which Peirce says that it is 'created by the sign' itself (CP 8.178, 1903), but at the same time, it is not completely created by the statement about Hamlet, since to understand the sentence about Hamlet's insanity, we must have some collateral knowledge of what insanity is, what a young man is like etc.

How even false or erroneous signs can represent an object is the topic of an illustration given by Peirce in 1903 concerning the object of the historically false proposition 'Napoleon was a lethargic man' (CP 8.178). According to Peirce's analysis, this sentence has several objects determining the mind of the one who utters it. The first object is Napoleon, the historical figure, of which we must have heard if we want to understand the message. The second partial object is lethargy, since the sentence cannot 'convey its meaning unless collateral experience has taught its Interpreter what Lethargy is' (ibid.). The truth missing in this dicisign, namely the fact that Napoleon was by no means a lethargic man, is equally one of the objects of this sign, since truth, as Peirce defines it in 1904 and 1906, is 'the conformity of a sign to its object' or simply 'the *object* of the sign' (EP 380, 304) and determines its interpretation in its resistance to its falseness in the long run.

With Peirce, we must conclude that any false sign has at least two dynamical objects, which determine it as if in a dispute, as he writes in 1906: 'So, then, a sign, in order to fulfill its office, to actualize its potency, must be compelled by its object. This is evidently the reason of the dichotomy of the true and the false. For it takes two to make a quarrel, and a compulsion involves as large a dose of quarrel as is requisite to make it quite impossible that there should be compulsion without resistance' (CP 5.554).

5. Peircean Foundations of a Semiotics of Nonfigurative Pictures
If pictures are signs, and all signs represent an object, what does a nonfigurative picture represent, and what is the object of such a picture? The answers to these questions that can be derived from Peirce's semiotics are several, and each will focus on a different aspect of pictorial representation.

The first can be found in Peirce's theory of iconicity, more specifically Peirce's theory of the *pure icon*. This is Peirce's semiotic concept that comes closest to the self-referential sign postulated in semiotic aesthetics and also in Goodman's theory of nonrepresentational art. In contrast to the hypoicon, which is a sign by similarity, the pure sign is a sign which is so much like its object that it seems indistinguishable from it. According to a manuscript of 1903, it is a sign that 'does not draw any distinction between itself and its object [....] an affair of suchness only' (CP 5.74, 1903), or 'a representamen of what it represents [...] by virtue of [...] characters which belong to it in itself as a sensible object, and which it would possess just the same were there no object in nature that it resembled, and though it never were interpreted as a sign' (CP 4.447, 1903).

Peirce illustrates the notion of a pure icon with the example of a painting into which the viewer becomes so immersed that he or she begins to see the representation becoming indistinguishable from what it represents: 'In contemplating a painting, there is a moment when we lose the consciousness that it is not the thing, the distinction of the real and the copy disappears, and it is for the moment a pure dream [...]. At that moment we are contemplating a [pure] icon' (CP 3.362, 1885). In the moment of contemplative immersion described here, the picture no longer fulfills its usual sign function of representing something else. Instead, it represents only itself and has thus become a self-representing or self-referential picture.

It is true that Peirce could not have meant a nonrepresentational picture in this quote of 1885, but as far as the object relation is concerned, Peirce's description of a picture that becomes indistinguishable from its object to the contemplating mind is rather congruent with Goodman's interpretation of nonrepresentational pictures as symbols referring to qualities 'intrinsic' only to themselves. What is different in the two descriptions of aesthetic perception apart from the terminology is that Goodman speaks of the picture that symbolizes by *showing forth* its own 'patterns of shape, color, texture,' whereas Peirce describes a picture that becomes a matter of 'mere suchness' while it merges with its object in the process of contemplation. Goodman apparently conceives of the self-referential nature of a nonfigurative painting that 'shows forth' its own qualities as a matter of *indexical* semiosis, whereas Peirce conceives pictorial self-reference as a matter of pure *iconicity*. Below, we will see that, in fact, both aspects of pictorial semiosis can coexist in one and the same painting.

Nonrepresentational paintings are complex signs, and their aesthetic features cannot be reduced to their referring to their own qualities, which is a general description equally valid for all nonfigurative works of art. In addition to self-reference, other sign relations are relevant to the analysis of nonrepresentational art. Let us consider the example of Kazimir Malevich's painting *Red Square and Black Square* of 1914 or 1915 (see for example http://www.artchive.com/artchive/M/malevich/blk_red.jpg.html). It shows, as the title says, nothing but a red and a black square on a white ground, and in this radical reduction of figures and forms, the painting seems to be a prototypical example of a self-referential sign, a pure icon, that represents nothing but its own qualities. Being an approximation to pure iconicity, the painting, like all icons, is a phenomenon of firstness, the category of mere possibility and of suchness without any relation to anything else. In their abstraction, the red and black squares offer indeed an unlimited potential of representing real things in addition to the self-referential showing of its own qualities. The pictorial sign is

referentially open to the possibility that the two squares might not only *be* red and black squares but also *represent* an indefinitely large number of red and black square forms in the world of existing objects. For example, it could be the representation of two square pieces of red and black paper on top of a sheet of white paper used in a classroom to illustrate the geometry of squares. To the degree that the possibilities of representation are unlimited and open, the pictorial sign is a pure icon, a sign about which Peirce wrote that it 'can convey no positive or factual information; for it affords no assurance that there is any such thing in nature' (CP 4.447, 1903).

In addition to its self-referential character and its openness to many hypoiconic interpretations, there are other respects, in which the semiotic potential of Malevich's painting is more determined in its message. On the one hand, it is not completely without 'positive or factual' information; on the other hand, it is not utterly devoid of some general meaning. To the degree that the painting evinces factual information, it is an index, to the degree that it conveys some general message, it is a symbol.

Malevich's painting is not complete without its title *Red Square and Black Square* which adds a verbal interpretation to the visual signs. In contrast to the equally possible alternative title with articles, *A Red Square and a Black Square*, at least in the English translation of the title, which would be indexical, pointing to the specific squares of this particular picture, the title without articles suggests generality in its lack of any reference to the specific pair of squares shown in this painting. Generality is a feature of symbolic signs. Thus, insofar as the title suggests the more general idea of a red and a black square, the two squares evince an element of symbolicity, too.

In other respects, the picture also evinces indexicality. For example, it conveys positive information insofar as the two squares are precisely determined in their size, shape and chromatic quality. Furthermore, the geometrical and chromatic forms constitute oppositions, such as the ones between small and large, chromatic and nonchromatic forms in horizontal or nonhorizontal, straight or oblique orientation. The resulting composition constitutes a net of internal relations consisting of indexical references from element to element: the chromatic red, a color that has a certain inherent indexicality insofar as it is the natural color of alarm, points to its nonchromatic black counterpart; the large square draws attention to the small square and its different size; the black square arranged in parallel with the outlines of the rectangular frame draws attention to the obliquely arranged red square, creating, by its formal opposition still another indexical tension in the pictorial equilibrium.

The title *Red Square and Black Square*, in addition to its aspect of symbolicity discussed above, suggests also an indexical reading of the painting. Apart from the

indexicality inherent in its being the name of an individual object, which makes any title an index of the picture it refers to, it is indexical because it selects from the three colors of the picture, red, white, and black, only two, thus focusing the viewers' eyes selectively to the red and the black squares in the picture. Furthermore, it also focuses selectively insofar as it abstracts from the size and position of the square by not mentioning this detail.

Malevich's picture with the red and black squares has two different titles, the second being *Suprematist Composition*. This title is indexical, too, in its selection of the name of a style of painting and its identification of the painting as an example of this school of art. Even without this second title the painting, like any painting characteristic of a historical style, is an indexical sign of this style.

Let us conclude these considerations on the objects of nonfigurative paintings with a second look at the topic of pictorial self-reference and pure iconicity. No real painting can be absolutely self-referential and a pure icon in every respect. Only approximations to pure iconicity are possible. To the degree that nonrepresentational paintings are self-referential in their lack of figurative reference to the world of objects, Malevich's painting seemed to be an approximation to pure iconicity with its lack of figurative referents. However, to restrict our attention to the aspect of the mere suchness in the contemplation of the picture, as the contemplator described above by Peirce did, who, as if in a pure dream, lost the consciousness of the fact that the painting was not the object represented by it, would have obscured our view of many other semiotically relevant features of this picture. As works of art, nonrepresentational paintings are complex signs. The plurality of descriptions, interpretations, and categorizations to which they give rise testify to their semiotic complexity. After all, pictures which refer to nothing but to themselves cannot become the object of critical and aesthetic discourse about these pictures. Our analysis brought forth many indexical and symbolic features of Malevich's suprematist composition. Peirce has always emphasized that signs are rarely of one kind only and has even claimed that 'the most perfect of signs are those in which the iconic, indicative, and symbolic characters are blended as equally as possible' (CP 4.448, 1903). The multiplicity of signs of all three kinds which we found in Malevich's suprematist composition may, in the end, testify to its aesthetic perfection.

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A

Semiotica, linguistica, semantica
Sémiotique, linguistique, sémantique
Semiotics, Linguistics, Semantics

B

Semiotica narrativa e discorsiva. Retorica
Sémiotique narrative et discorsive.
Rhétorique.
Semiotics of narrative and discourse.
Rhetoric

C

Socio-semiotica (socio- ed etno-lingui
Socio-sémiotique
(socio- et ethno-linguistique)
Socio-Semiotics (Socio- and Ethno-
Linguistics)

D

Semiotica letteraria: mitologia e folklore:
poetica
Sémiotique litteraires: mythologie et folklore:
poétique
Literary Semiotics:
Mythology and Folkloristics: Poetics

E

Semiotiche auditive.
Sémiotiques auditives
Audio Semiotics

F

Semiotiche visive e audio-visive
Sémiotiques visuelles et audio-visue
Visual and audio-visual Semiotics