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- Author:** Andacht, Fernando
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- Abstract:** The paper discusses some notions related to iconicity in the writings of Joseph Ransdell. In scholarly publications on Peircean semiotic one finds a detailed account of the functioning of signs whose signification depends on their inherent features. In this paper some consequences are drawn from the distinction between the purely qualitative possibility (the icon proper) and its material embodiment (the hypoicon). Also the relevance of iconicity for the human imagination is considered. Ransdell discussed many of these themes under the heading of the 'epistemic' value of the sign of likeness. Far from being a lesser actor of semiotic, when compared with symbols, Ransdell made a cogent case for considering symbols as a means of transporting icons, which makes meaning perceptible and allows us to discover new knowledge about their objects. Lastly, I consider an example from the media in light of the freewheeling power of iconicity, of 'materialized dreams', in contrast with the part played by symbolic signs, so as to observe the distinctive and cooperative functioning of signs. Despite the importance of convention in the work of hypoicons, which Peirce pointed out in an oft-quoted description of being engrossed in the contemplation of a painting, the autonomous and complementary work of the different kinds of signs preserves the triadic functioning of semiosis. As Ransdell argued, the blurring or fusion of the iconic and the conventional properties of semiosis accounts for both the lure and the fear of iconic signs, not only in mundane matters but also in philosophical reflection.
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