

'Representamen' (pub. 18.08.13-18:39). Quote in M. Bergman & S. Paavola (Eds.), *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce's Terms in His Own Words. New Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-csps-lowell-lectures-1903-2nd-part-3rd-draught-lecture-iii-5>.

Term: Representamen

Quote: ... I confine the word *representation* to the operation of a sign or its *relation* to the object *for* the interpreter of the representation. The concrete subject that represents I call a *sign* or a *representamen*. I use these two words, *sign* and *representamen*, differently. By a *sign* I mean anything which conveys any definite notion of an object in any way, as such conveyers of thought are familiarly known to us. Now I start with this familiar idea and make the best analysis I can of what is essential to a sign, and I define a *representamen* as being whatever that analysis applies to. If therefore I have committed an error in my analysis, part of what I say about signs will be false. For in that case a *sign* may not be a *representamen*. The analysis is certainly true of the representamen, since that is all that word means. Even if my analysis is correct, something may happen to be true of all *signs*, that is of everything that, antecedently to any analysis, we should be willing to regard as conveying a notion of anything, while there might be something which my analysis describes of which the same thing is not true. In particular, all signs convey notions to *human minds*; but I know no reason why every representamen should do so.

My definition of a representamen is as follows:

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

It follows at once that this relation cannot consist in any actual event that ever can have occurred; for in that case there would be another actual event connecting the interpretant to an interpretant of its own of which the same would be true; and thus there would be an endless series of events which could have actually occurred, which is absurd. For the same reason the interpretant cannot be a *definite* individual object. The relation must therefore consist in a *power* of the representamen to determine some interpretant to being a representamen of the same object.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1903). *CSP's Lowell Lectures of 1903. 2nd Part of 3rd Draught of Lecture III*. MS [R] 465.

References: CP 1.540-542

Date of 1903

Quote:

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