

'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>.

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**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:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-csps-lowell-lectures-1903-2nd-part-3rd-draught-lecture-iii-5>