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*Peirce's Basic Classes of Signs in a Somewhat  
Different Vein*

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Floyd Merrel

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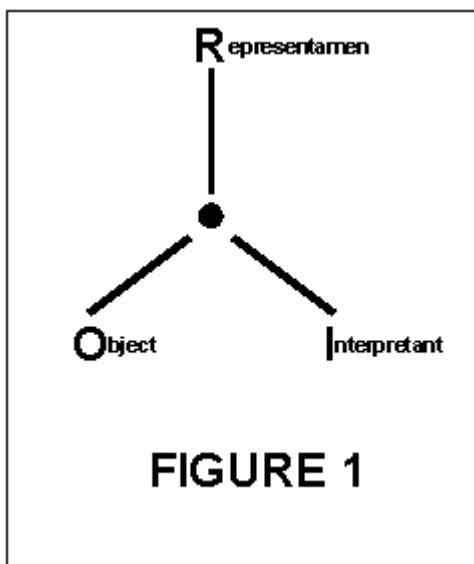
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**Abstract:**

The genuine Peircean concept of the sign is more adequately imaged by a tripod than the customary triangle. The tripod allows for three-way interaction between the three sign components, and it gives rise to Peirce's nine sign classes and the ten signs that are engendered from them.

**Keywords:** Triadicity, Three Signs, Nine Signs, Ten Signs, Emptiness

**The Enchanted Number Three**



I take it that we are in agreement regarding the inadequacy of the binary concept of the sign. Those who do not agree might consider looking for another paper in this volume, for I don't have much to say to them.

There is also a problem with the indefatigable tendency to depict the triadic concept of the sign in the form of a triangle, Ogden and Richards's (1923) pseudo-Peircean incarnation of the sign being one of the notorious examples. According to this relatively static form of triangularity, reminiscent of some sort of Hegelian formulation - or perhaps a Hegelian nightmare - there is a "sign," usually firmly perched at the apex, and an "object" and the "meaning" or "concept" at the corners of the triangle's base. One problem with the triangle is that it is two-dimensional, as if on a Cartesian plane, hence severely limited, as we shall note. The chief problem, however, lies in the form of the triangle itself. It models no more than three binary relations. The "sign" is related to

the "object," the "object" to the "concept", and the "concept" to the "sign," and vice versa. There is no legitimate set of interrelations among all three terms such that one of them is interrelated to the other two in the same way that each of them is in turn interrelated to each of its pair of partners.

For a genuine model of triadicity, take a look at Figure 1. Notice that the representamen (R) is interrelated with the object (O) in the same way that both R and O are interrelated with the interpretant (I). You simply can't have one of the sign components without the other two if you expect to be dealing with a legitimate triadic sign. Notice also that rather than a triangle or three lines with a dot in the center on a flat plane, what we actually have is the makings of a tripod. This is significant. All signs exist in three dimensions of space, of which our entire experienced universe consists. To expect any less of our signs would be taken by them as an insult, I'm sure. Signs require three dimensionality for their proper development, hence the tripod, that allows them, like the paths traced out by a "strange attractor" in chaos theory - briefly discussed below - incessantly to move in and out and in again, as I becomes R and R becomes O and O becomes I and vice versa. Anything less, and we have something other than a genuine sign. The tripod is the minimum requirement for a modicum of stability for the entire semiotic process. Four legs around the central point, and you have too much stability, and fixity threatens. Two legs, and the whole sign collapses. (Go milk a cow on a country farm - if there are any of them left [my boyhood nostalgia], that is - with a three-legged stool in your hand, and you'll see what I mean.)

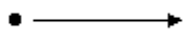
The dot in the center of Figure 1 has surely caught your eye. What does it mean? I would respectfully submit that this is a-perhaps-not-too-subtle-illustration of what Peirce called "nothingness," or "utter vagueness." In the Buddhist sense it is "emptiness." It is not the emptiness of the "empty set" of set theory, mind you. The empty set is actually the noticed absence of something, of some-thing. It is the absence of some-thing that was there and now it is not, but it could return. Or it is the absence of some-thing that was never there but could occupy it at some future moment. "Emptiness," in contrast to the empty set, has nothing to do with things at all. In fact, it has nothing to do with the concept of "emptiness," for that is just a word among words. "Emptiness" is just "emptiness," and to say it is "emptiness" is to say what it is not. However, I had to say it somehow, so I wrote "emptiness." So much for ineffables.

The important point is that the interdependent, interrelated interaction among the three sign components is not possible without the central axis holding the tripod together in Figure 1. Call it "emptiness" or whatever. It is that which makes possible the emergence

of the codependent arising of the signs components, the sign, and all signs for that matter, for "emptiness" is generality of the most absolute sort. (I'm sorry, but I still have to use words.) If I could dance the concept for you you'd likely get a better feel for it. Because the semiotic process is rhythm, as the sign components and the sign rotate, undulate, oscillate, fluctuate, scintillate, as the change partners whether we like it or not. The dance goes on, for the signs are never still, they can't stay still, even if we try to catch them they slither out of our grasp and weave their way along the semiotic stream, beyond our grasp. So much for rhythm talk. It's time for a syncopated waltz with icon, index, and symbol. <sup>1</sup>

### **What It Means to Be "Número Uno"**

An icon gives us her hand, a sign that is like some as yet unspecified semiotic object.<sup>2</sup> The icon is what it is, irrespective of anything else - that is, until it interacts with something else, and then it becomes a sign other than iconic. It is self-reflexive, self-contained, and self-sufficient. It does not enter into interrelated interaction with any other sign, object, or interpretant. It is in this sense the most genuine semiotic example of Firstness. In fact, we might depict this Firstness as the central "node" of "vortex" plus one of the three possible lines in Figure 1 leading to a representamen (R) as follows:



In its purest form that supreme image in Jorge Luis Borges's story, "The Aleph" (1970), is a small sphere about the size of a golf ball that contains the entire universe, past, present, and future. Argentino Daneri, who had the good fortune to experience the Aleph, saw it all: the slave harem of an unidentified Caliph, the fall of Rome, Jews exterminated at Auschwitz, Pancho Villa's escapades in the Mexican Revolution, Martin Luther King's assassination, and so on, virtually to infinity. The problem is that when he tried to write what he saw, he realized language was an infinitely impoverished instrument, totally incapable of the task. Language, of course, has need of an indexical interrelation between the word and its respective semiotic object, and it requires the symbolic interrelation with the interpretant of the sign, that, in proper symbolic fashion, has been set down by social and linguistic convention such that the proper word is usually evoked for the occasion. Daneri's problem is that all occasions of the universe's entire history are there, in one massive dose, and words, no matter how general their use, are simply not up to the task. Icons are most fundamental of Peirce's three signs, the other two of which are indices and symbols. Icons are absolutely essential for those

other signs' development, but, understandably, it is difficult to articulate the nature of icons, for when we think about them or talk about them, they are already signs other than icons: they have been indexicalized and symbolized. With that, I'll try to say no more about the icon, "Número Uno" of signs, and save myself the frustration and you the reading of a lot of ambiguity and some nonsense, and move on.

There has been a change of partners and we now find ourselves sashaying with an index. The Secondness of Peirce's basic trio of signs, indices are the first signs to indicate what is, without being or being like what they indicate. They are often called "natural signs," because the thrust of their indicating something else is a matter of processes of cause and effect, part for whole, container for contained, contiguity in a naturally occurring sequence of events, such as lightning as an indication of thunder, smoke indicating fire, a cup picture (an icon) signifying coffee (by indexical part-whole and contiguity interrelations), and so on. An index interdependent and interactively interrelates with something else, an other of the sign or a semiotic object. In this manner indexicality is the prime exemplification of Secondness.

Funes the Memorious, of Borges's story (1962) by the same name, is an intriguing example of indexicality. Funes can forget nothing. When he sees a tree he commits everything - each leaf and its position, the twigs and limbs, every contour of the bark on trunk, a bird's nest to the right, a blue jay up toward the top, a trail of ants up and down the left side of the trunk - to memory. Funes should be the envy of every college student. But he is not. For poor Funes can't think, can't put individual things and events into general categories, can't speak in terms of universals. Hence Funes's remarkable power of memory would be of little use to the student striving for a general grasp of her material in order to pass the next exam. Funes's problem is that his semiotic expertise cannot go beyond dyadic, indexical interrelations with respect to particulars. In philosophical terms he is a supreme supernominalist, and schizophrenically so. What is there is there now, and in the next instant there is something else: only particulars exist for him, nothing more. In other words, Funes's strictly dyadic, and excruciatingly limited perception and conception of his world could be imaged by the following interrelationship:



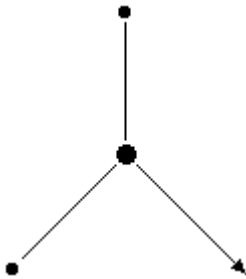
There is a First that, through the central "node" or "vortex," brings about the emergence of an other, something else, something other than the First. This other is a Second, but not a legitimate or genuine Second, not yet at least. What we need is recognition of that other as such. Such re-cognition is what is lacking in Funes. He can cognize, in however an impoverished a fashion, but he can't re-cognize, because he is incapable of establishing lines of interrelationship between something in some past moment and something else in the present moment, nor can he interrelated with something expected to emerge at some moment in the future. Full-fledged Secondness, or indexicality as it were, requires re-cognition of the object of the sign as that particular object here and now, of an object that has emerged in the past and can emerge in the future. That is, it requires some conception of the sign and its object as generalities, as particulars that belong to some class of things. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Conception of generalities is a matter properly of Thirdness. I brought it up here to make my point, however, because without that Thirdness, Secondness will remain severely restricted. Such was the case of our unfortunate Funes.

The symbol, most proper to natural and artificial languages and to signs of generalization and abstraction, presents his somber countenance for a trip around the ballroom. Whether arbitrary in the beginning or not, the symbol, after integration into the dictionaries and common everyday talk at home, at school, at work, at recreation areas, in the local bar, or in the street, has become a sign of conventionality. We use symbols the way we use them because that is pretty much the way we have used them in the past, and that's how we expect we will use them in the future. We use them in the way we use them because that is what we do. And we often misuse them and abuse them, which is actually fortunate, for therein lies our creative powers, but it is unfortunate also, because their misuse and abuse can repeatedly land both them and us in trouble.

And symbols can misuse and abuse us. Our symbols of convention allow us a remarkable capacity for communicating with one another, for sure, but when we least expect it, and whether we are aware of it or not, they can trap us, entice us, cajole us, deceive us, into using them for the purpose of deception, bigotry, domination, and slander. In such case

these signs, arbitrary and quite innocent in the beginning, became conventional, which is imperative in order for us humans to be human, and then they became tyrants, forcing us into semiotic pathways that can make us less than human - or perhaps all-too-human, however we wish to take it.

At any rate, our dance with symbols, our participatory interaction with signs and their participatory interaction with us, has reached the pinnacle of its success. Now, we have genuine tradicity, from the "vortex" to iconicity (and Firstness) to indexicality (and Secondness) to symbolicity (and Thirdness). All this can be imaged in the following diagram, where representamen and semiotic object have been realized and Thirdness has been actualized, but its complete realization remains as a potentially to be fulfilled:



There's another Borges short story, "Death and the Compass" (1962) that beautifully illustrates how symbols - in collusion with indices and icons - can lead us astray. I'll try my best to make a very detailed story short. Lönnrot, the detective, thinks he has outwitted Scharlach, the author of three homicides. The first three murders were equidistant in time during November, December, and January. After the third crime Scharlach left a note proclaiming that this was his last violation of the law. The wily Lönnrot knows better. Reality must follow symmetries, he reasons, and since the number four is symmetrical while the number three is merely bilaterally symmetrical - one half is a mirror-image of the other half - he infers that there will be a fourth crime. It occurs to him to map the three events out on a map of the city. Much as he expected, they make up an equilateral triangle. It was simply a matter of using a compass to plot the site of the expected crime, computing the number of days equal to the days between the first three crimes, and Lönnrot now has the time and place where he believes he will finally catch his criminal counterpart.

At what he thinks is the proper time, he proceeds to that point. But to his surprise he is quickly apprehended by Scharlach's henchmen. Then he is told that he had miscalculated his time, for he should have followed the Jewish calendar - there are allusions to Judaism through the narrative. Scharlach, a step ahead of Lönnrot, knew his counterpart would follow reason rather than intuition and appear on this day. And now

he reveals to the detective that he, Lönnrot, is to be the victim of the fourth crime. Then he draws his pistol and aims.

Lönnrot used his symbols of time and Euclidean geometric space along conventional pathways. That was his undoing. He failed to heed the Judaic symbols within the context of each murder and followed his Gregorian-Christian calendar. He plotted the crimes on a flat sheet, in good Cartesian fashion, as if the labyrinth he were weaving for Scharlach were of two-dimensional making. However, when he confidently entered the mansion at Triste-le-Roi where he assumed the fourth crime was to occur, he found himself in a three-dimensional labyrinth of spiral staircases, mirrors that reflected themselves to create artificial three-dimensional depth, stained glass windows that created a three-dimensional prismatic illusion, and rooms whose doors led to other rooms whose doors doubled back through other rooms in bewildering fashion. He was trapped in a three-dimensional tangle, that, given his one-dimensional trajectory from the beginning of the tale, produced a four-dimensional spacetime construct. It was as if Scharlach, with a God's-eye view from his higher spatial vantage point, knew exactly what Lönnrot was going to do and when he would do it.

All this is to say that Lönnrot used icons (geometrical figures, maps, images), indices (equidistant times and places as putative indication of crimes), and symbols (geometry, arithmetic, calendar, words) to make a prediction, but everything backfired, for Scharlach's semiotics was played out within a distinct, even incommensurable, world. Scharlach could translate his symbols into signs of Lönnrot's world but Lönnrot could not do the same with Scharlach's signs. Lönnrot found himself imprisoned within the signs of his own making. This is because he had taken his signs and symbols primarily as indicators (indices), signs of Secondness whose cause and effect nature was invariant and predetermined. He had not reckoned that there might be an entirely different world, that of Scharlach's signs and symbols, whose icons and indices were equally distinct. In other words, Lönnrot assumed the conventionality of his signs and symbols was sufficient, without entertaining the idea that there might be other possibilities of sign use regarding which he had hitherto been unaware.

Symbols as conventional signs, of course, are remarkable instruments for communication. They are equally remarkable for their ability to lead us astray. Leibniz once quipped that no animal can lie with such facility as humans. Nietzsche said much the same. Umberto Eco writes that the underlying nature of human semiotics is the ability lie. But Thomas Sebeok points out that the animals are capable of subterfuge, though without humans' malicious purposes. At any rate, lying, deceit, and deception



are one of the best acts symbols – by way of we humans – put on, given their ability so effectively to say what isn't as if it were. And we are daily duped by the show they put on for us.

The moral to the story? Don't put all your semiotic signs and symbols in one basket, and always be on guard for new possibilities and signs of deceit, subterfuge, domination and control, that can land you in deep problems.

In sum, being "Número Uno" in the semiotic dance is hardly a monopoly saved for symbols and symbols alone. Icons quite humbly and modestly take that honor, and, grateful for the recognition and embarrassed by the accolades, they meekly slip back into the semidark corridors with the indices and allow the symbols to think they control center stage in the all-too-human theater. Little do the symbols know that were it not for icons and indices, for Firstness and Secondness, they would never have seen the light of day in the first place.

### **Ten Signs From Nine Peirce's Ten Signs: Semiotic Syncope at Its Best**

This section will fly by you loose and fast. This is necessary, in order to cover the vast expanse of territory that needs to be covered. So, hang on, for we're in for a rough ride, but I'm confident that we'll all arrive, somewhere, sometime.

The representamen (R), semiotic object (O), and interpretant (I) come in three varieties, corresponding to the three categories. Thus the most basic sign would be S111, a sign sporting a Firstness of R, Firstness of O, and Firstness of I. This sign would be no more than the feeling you might have of something, say a vague feeling of greenness on a city street where a green car is approaching. The next sign is S211, of Secondness of R, Firstness of O, and Firstness of I. Such signs are typical of diagrams, schemes, and patterns before they are interrelated in the mind with anything else, with a Second. Then we have S221. Now, your mind is in the process of becoming aware of something other than the sign, since you have reached the Secondness of O. It is at this point that awareness that the sign as related to its object can be an unexpected sign. This can bring about a surprise, even a spontaneous cry, "Oh!," or some such sound. Now your mind is prepared for the next step, that includes awareness of some natural or presumably necessary connection between the sign and its object. If the shock of surprise had been a car traveling the wrong way on a one way street, quite obviously it could cause damage-collide with another car, strike a pedestrian, or whatever. This sign, S222, is the first sign that has reached at least the Secondness of R, O, and I, hence the dyadic interrelations are now firmly in place.

Now we are getting somewhere. The green car approaching you is a figure, a pattern consisting of many signs – tires, windshield, hood, and so on – compounded into one sign, a sign that can now be properly identified and hence endowed with the Thirdness of the I. This, then, is sign S311. You see the car as a car, but at this stage of the semiotic process you are not yet into language. That is to say, you do not think or say “car.” You just see the object as a car, and that’s all. Now enter sign S321. You were shocked to catch a glimpse of the green thing you saw as a car. Before the noun “car” can be forthcoming, your shock plus your instant identification of the object as a car combines to yield an emphatic pronoun, “That!,” with the expectation of possible danger, for you now notice out of the corner of your eye a child running out into the street in pursuit of a ball that rolled to the other side. You almost immediately emit a cry, a brief string of words that is quite commonplace for such situations: “Look out!” This is sign S322. The child hears your warning, and jumps back. Then you simply say: “Car!,” sign S331. But what does this simple sign, a mere noun, mean? Granted, within the particular context I have created it means quite a bit. But if uncontextualized, the sign doesn’t mean much at all. If during the night you sit up in bed and scream “Car!,” anyone that might be present would certainly give you a puzzling stare, especially if you awoke her or him. What car? Where? When? Why did you say that? A simple noun or a word (Peirce calls it a “term”), unless contextualized, carries relatively little meaning.

So let’s give the word a context. Now you run over to the child to give her some advice: “You must watch for cars when you run out into the street,” sign S332, a sentence (in Peirce’s terminology, a “proposition”). Now the noun “car” in the plural has been contextualized, and properly endowed with meaning. But not enough meaning for the young lady whose life might have been in jeopardy. To your consternation, she asks “Why?” – another sign properly contextualized. Now you must give reasons, formulate a cogent explanation, or what Peirce calls an “argument.” So you begin: “Cars are big and fast and can hurt little girls, so when you want to go out in the street ...” You continue until you feel you have convinced her, and you take your leave, quite satisfied with your development of the last of Peirce ten basic signs, sign S333. For an illustration how Peirce’s signs come about, take a look at Table 1, where the set of ten signs are engendered by a mixing, fusing, and emergence of his basic categories of nine signs.<sup>3</sup>

<b>Qualisign</b>	<b>Icon</b>	<b>Word</b>
<b>Sinsign</b>	<b>Index</b>	<b>Sentence</b>
<b>Legisign</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Argument</b>
<b>NINE SIGNS</b>		
<b>Sign type</b>	<b>Technical term</b>	<b>Common example</b>
<b>R<sub>1</sub>O<sub>1</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Qualisign</b>	<b>Vague feeling</b>
<b>R<sub>2</sub>O<sub>1</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Iconic sinsign</b>	<b>Unidentified pattern</b>
<b>R<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Rhematic indexical sinsign</b>	<b>Cry, from shock of surprise</b>
<b>R<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>I<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Dicent sinsign</b>	<b>Weather-vane</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>1</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Iconic legisign</b>	<b>Identified pattern or diagram</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Rhematic indexical legisign</b>	<b>Pronoun, indicator</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>I<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Dicent indexical legisign</b>	<b>Commonplace expression</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>3</sub>I<sub>1</sub></b>	<b>Rhematic symbol</b>	<b>Term (word)</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>3</sub>I<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Dicent symbol</b>	<b>Proposition (sentence)</b>
<b>R<sub>3</sub>O<sub>3</sub>I<sub>3</sub></b>	<b>Argument</b>	<b>Argument (text)</b>
<b>TEN SIGNS FROM NINE</b>		
<b>TABLE 1</b>		

### Ten Signs, and a Closer Look

Let us recapitulate Peirce's sign types, one more time, for good measure, so we can perhaps know as naturally as we can how we interrelate with signs and how signs become other signs. Our knowing how signs become other signs must be as second nature to us as our collaborating with signs and their collaborating with us in our becoming other signs at the same time that they become other signs. In other words, we need to be as mindfully mindless, as mindlessly mindful, of our signs as possible. Consequently, in my recapitulation of Peirce's ten signs, I will enter a personal note, that will anthropomorphize the signs, which might be risky, but the exercise may nevertheless help us to get a better feel for them.

(1) We begin with the Firstness of Firstness, the First of signs, the *qualisign* (111). There can be no awareness of sign 111 because there is not (yet) any distinction between the sign and its maker or taker. There is no *focal* awareness of this sign or any

other sign as such; there is no more than a *vague* sort of *subsidiary* awareness.<sup>4</sup> At this stage of *semiosis* the sign maker and taker, or the *semiotic self*, is one with the sign and with everything in her environment. There is no more than selflessness and a sign that is that selfsame selflessness. There is not (yet) any clear-cut distinction between subject and object, knower and known. There is just sign.

(2) At the next level, sign 211, there is still no explicit awareness *of* the sign, for there is not (yet) any distinct *focal* awareness *of* the sign, even though the representamen has reached the level of Secondness. Likewise, the semiotic *self* has no *other*, no opposition. It has neither friends nor enemies. There is neither malignant sign nor benevolent sign. There is just a sign that is beginning its becoming in the awareness of its respective semiotic self as a sign without that becoming having (yet) become what it will have been becoming when it passes into that semiotic self's purview and then slithers on. Semiotic self and sign are full of vitality, for sure. They are alive, poised and ready for the next moment of *semiosis* when they can begin interrelatedly interacting in earnest. But for now, they are just becoming. That's all.

(3) Then the self is *here* and the sign is *there*: surprise! The beginning of their moment of self-identity, of *focal* awareness, however ephemeral it may be, has begun, with sign 221. The semiotic self feels himself a *part of* the world and at the same time *apart from* the world. He is an interacting participant and at the same time a spectator. Consequently, he is now beginning to discover the making of his own self; that is, he begins his process of self-construction, at least for now, because in the next moment he will be another self, given his incessant transience. He begins to play out whatever might be his convention driven role according to his sedimented habits of behavior and of mind.

(4) Sign 222 lurches onto the scene. Here is where the semiotic self engages in serious dualistic practice, following what are perceived and conceived as linear, digital, cause-and-effect, and even deterministic sequences. Here is where what a sign indicates is what it has to indicate because there are few alternatives, and what the self interprets is cut-and-dried because that is the way she believes the world is. The Sun's rays and the crow's flight are as straight as an arrow, force equals mass times acceleration, a rolling stone gathers no moss, an idle mind is the Devil's workshop, a stitch in time saves nine, a moving object will continue moving until it is met with an equal and opposite force, haste makes waste, and all the other folk sayings and mechanistic imperatives have their roots deeply embedded in sign 222. Yet, here, the self has a chance to take a quick break and contemplate her situation. Is she really so detached, so aloof, so autonomous,

as she desires in this world of clarity and distinction? Is there perhaps no more to life within this world? But she cannot tarry. She must move on toward the unknown in search of a few answers. The signs whisk her along, in spite of her every effort to stop them in their tracks.

(5) Now there is sign 311. The representamen thinks it's the proud owner of Thirdness. That's progress for you. It's also a sign-representamen in the genuine sense of Thirdness that could pose a threat to the self's new born self she thinks is her own possession at this point - though it is the result of illusory thinking, for there is no distinct "possession" of a self, which would imply something or somebody *other* than the *self* that might be capable of "possessing" *it*. This threat could be the focus of envy, jealousy, resentment, or one of a vast number of negative sentiments that are byproducts of the egomaniacal self. But if our presumably self-made self keeps her cool, she will make it through the to next stage of *semiosis* with a sufficient level of humility and sincerity. She will make it because here, in sign 311, the pivotal sign wherein the representamen reaches the pinnacle of its success, the greatest possibility exists for a sign to become what it *is not*. The representamen of a symbol, say "men," can contain the image or schema of sign 311. Within some possible context, with neither remorse nor regret since it has no overriding commitment to its semiotic object and interpretant, this image or scheme can do a quick flip to interrelate with an image or schema of "beasts" as an alternative or *translation* of "men." A word has become a metaphor of itself. By a comparable token, a representamen, say "atom," can also remain the same while its semiotic object and interpretant do a quick change of face to become "a tiny solar system" instead of "an impenetrable sphere. Within particular contexts, sign 311 is at once the most elusive and the most vivacious of them all.

(6) The next ripple along the stream gives us sign 321. With the Third of the representamen and the Second of the semiotic object, the self is becoming quite sophisticated. At least that's what she would like to believe. If she is modest enough, without undue vanity, and if she can quite handily follow the conventional practices of her community, she should be able to construct enough indices (as pronouns in relation to absent people, places and things, indicators or pointers of all sorts, gestures that relate to something in the immediate context) to communicate with the greatest of ease. She can become a shining example and a role model for others, with herself as the sign that indicates what should be done or said. That is, she can become an example if she can keep her growing ego at bay. But the next steps along the path mitigate against such limitations of an ego that now wishes to flex its muscles at every opportunity. In

sign 321, consequently, we have as a pointer or indicator at this relatively well developed stage of indexicality, the possibility of a sign's switching from *subsidiary* to *focal* awareness. An indicator such as a pronoun implies that which it indicates. It is of *subsidiary* interest. Then the *subsidiary* can become *focal*, and the sign shifts from pronoun to the object, act, or event that was implied.

(7) True to form, egocentrism poses a definite threat with the introduction of sign 322. This sign evokes commonplace expressions, stock-in-trade or entrenched means of talking and hence of carrying out actions. At this stage one's customary habits could be guided by generosity and unselfishness or stinginess and unwillingness to share oneself and one's knowledge and material possessions. But, of course, there is not simply the extreme form of either one behavioral pattern or the other. Rather, a continuous spectrum of qualities, both good and bad, exists. Where what now appears to be our self-made self will rise or fall depends on his developed beliefs and habits. Sign 322, then, brings *focus* on the self to its maximum outside signs chiefly of symbolicity where the *self* takes on semiotic embodiment in its most explicit manifestation as "self," "I," "me."

(8) The first full-fledged symbol enters with a bound. This is sign 331, a word or term. Now things have quite specific names and attributes. We are entering into the realm of relatively explicit, *focally* directed communication; now we are in distinctively human semiotics, with inflated egos, feelings of superiority, and all. Our self now feels that urge toward self-promotion. Consequently, if her best of intentions come to the fore, she is hard pressed to maintain her composure, to avoid the smug feeling that she is somehow a cut above everything and everyone else in her surroundings. With much luck and good management, she may make it.

(9) Enter sign 332: sentences, some of which apparently want to unwind forever, proud propositions that say what is on no uncertain terms the case. If our self resists that lazy tendency to fall into these abominable practices, she will enjoy the fruits of her labors and the best of friends and associates, though she might fall short in the notoriety category, which largely goes to those of aggressive and cutthroat nature. Yet we would like to hope for the best, and we would hope that the best is yet to become. If this turns out to be the case, then ...

(10) Our self's *brainmind* is used to its fullest, and sign 333, an argument, text, or narrative, emerges. If all has gone well, creative insight and wisdom flow freely along the main channel of *semiosis*.<sup>5</sup> If the genuine sign of the Third state of representamen, semiotic object and interpretant are allowed to engulf our now proud self and wrap

itself around her entire *bodybrainmind* such that there is no telling where semiotic self begins and sign ends, they will be one. It will be as if the sign were a sign of 111 and as if our semiotic self were one with it. Her feeling for the sign will be as sedimented as her driving a car, utterance a commonplace sentence, putting on a pair of shoes in the morning, stooping down to pick up the newspaper, taking a sip of coffee, walking down the hall at work, turning on the car key to go home, handling a knife and fork at the dinner table. She will have become one with the sign, it will have become one with her. Her *bodybrain* will do what it does naturally at the *subsidiary* level, while her *brainmind* takes care of its own affairs at the *focal* level.

So much for our renewed tale of ten signs. Signs, you see, are us and we are them; they make us what we are and we make of them what we can. There are hardly any absolutely necessary distinctions between one sign and another signs in the coming and going of our everyday activities. We construct the distinctions; they are our distinctions, hence they could always have been becoming something other than what they are becoming. I would expect that we now agree that no sign is an island unto itself, for all signs, ourselves included, are interrelated, interdependent, and part of the self-organizing nature of *semiosis*.

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## Notes

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1. In much of the remainder of this paper I will engage in a quick study in taxonomies. Please keep in mind that classificatory schemes rupture and mutilate process, and semiosis is process. So the boundaries I erect between sign classes are fluid, commensurate with the semiotic process, hence one should take these boundaries as a way of conceptualizing the process, albeit at the expense of bearing false witness to it. Alas, I have no alternative in a quick summary. ↵
2. I write that the icon "is like some as yet unspecified semiotic object" because when the object it is like is specified, the icon is no longer an icon, properly speaking: it has taken on indexical qualities, since it has been interrelated with something else, that which it is like. ↵
3. I have abbreviated Peirce's technical terms, and I have provided Peirce's rendition of common examples insofar as that is possible in such schematic form. Table 1 simply gives a map of the entire, very complex, set of signs, since time and space do not allow further indulgence here. For further, see Peirce (1931-35:2.227-49), also Almeder (1980), Deely (1990), Eco (1976), Fitzgerald (1966), Greenlee (1973), Hookway (1985), Savan (1987-88), Sebeok (1976, 1994), Sheriff (1989), or, if you wish, you might consider consulting Merrell (1995a, 1995b, 1997, 2000). ↵
4. I allude to the complementary focal-subsidary modes of awareness as developed by Michael Polanyi (1958). ↵
5. I resist the entrenched Cartesian tendency to separate brain, mind, body, and signs. What I would hope is in keeping with Peirce, just as there is no body/mind distinction, so also there is no clearly specifiable line of demarcation between body, mind, and the flow of semiosis



(see Merrell 1997). ↩