

A Dramatic Reading in Three Voices:

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# A Sign is *What?*

## A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A SEMIOTIST AND A WOULD-BE REALIST

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**T**he first voice in this dialogue is the semiotist, commenting to himself on the overall situation as the discussion moves along. The second voice belongs to an acquaintance who fancies himself a thorough-going philosophical realist, and who interrogates the semiotist on the whole matter of signs. The third voice is the outer speech of the semiotist responding to the questions, interjections, and comments the 'realist' makes as the dialogue unfolds.

Thus:

Voice 1 = the inner discourse of the semiotist

Voice 2 = the outer speech of the realist

Voice 3 = the outer speech of the semiotist

Voices 1 and 3 are so marked in the text, while Voice 2 could be simply marked "REALIST", since confusion is difficult or impossible to explain so far as such thinkers are concerned.

- 1 SEMIOTIST, inner voice Everyone knows that some days are better than others.  
 2 (= Voice 1): I was having one of those “other” days, when a  
 3 colleague approached me to express interest in the  
 4 forthcoming Annual Meeting — the 26th, as it hap-  
 5 pened — of the Semiotic Society of America.  
 6
- 7 REALIST (= Voice 2): “Come on. Tell me something about this semiotics  
 8 business.”
- 9 SEMIOTIST, outer voice  
 10 (= Voice 3): “What’s there to say?”  
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- 12 Voice 1: I said, not in the mood for this at the moment.  
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- 14 Voice 3: “Semiotics is the study of the action of signs, signs  
 15 and sign systems.”  
 16
- 17 Voice 1: I knew it would not help to say that semiotics is the  
 18 study of semiosis. So I let it go at that. But inwardly  
 19 I cringed, for I could see the question coming like an  
 20 offshore tidal wave.  
 21
- 22 REALIST: “Well, what do you mean by a sign?”  
 23
- 24 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: Who in semiotics has not gotten this question from  
 25 colleagues a hundred times? In a way it is an easy  
 26 question, for “everyone knows” what a sign is. How  
 27 else would they know what to look for when driving  
 28 to Austin? All you have to do is play on that, and turn  
 29 the conversation elsewhere.  
 30 Maybe it was a change in mood. Maybe it was the  
 31 fact that I liked this particular colleague. Or maybe I  
 32 wanted to play *advocatus diaboli*. Whatever the reason,  
 33 I decided not to take the easy way out, not to play  
 34 on the “common sense” understanding of sign which,  
 35 useful as it is and not exactly wrong, nonetheless ob-  
 36 scures more than it reveals, and likely as not makes  
 37 the inquirer cynical (if he or she is not such already)  
 38 about this “new science” of signs.  
 39 You know the routine. Someone asks you what  
 40 a sign is. You respond, “You know. Anything that

41 draws your attention to something else. Something  
 42 that represents another.” And they say, “You mean  
 43 like a traffic sign?” And you say “Sure. Or a word. Or  
 44 a billboard. Anything.” And they say, “Oh. I think I  
 45 get it.” And life goes on.

46 But this time I decided to go against the grain, and  
 47 to actually say what I thought a sign was. So I looked  
 48 my colleague in the eye for a few moments, and finally  
 49 said , not averting my gaze in the least:

50

51 Voice 3: “OK. I’ll tell you what a sign is. A sign is what every  
 52 object presupposes”.

53

54 Voice 1: My colleague’s eyes widened a bit, the face took on a  
 55 slightly taken-aback expression, and my ears detected  
 56 an incredulous tone in the words of reply:

57

58 REALIST: “A sign is *what?*”

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60 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “What every object presupposes. Something presup-  
 61 posed by every object”.

62

63 REALIST: “What do you mean? Could you explain that?”

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65 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: The colleague seemed serious, and I had no pressing  
 66 obligations or plans for the moment, so I said

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68 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Sure, but let’s go outside.”

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70 VOICE 1: I opened my office door and indicated the stone table  
 71 and bench at my disposal in the private fenced area  
 72 at the end of the driveway that comes to the outer  
 73 door of my office.

74

75 My colleague had no way of knowing, but in my  
 76 private semiosis of that moment I could only recall  
 77 the SSA Presidential Address given some seventeen  
 78 years previously by Thomas A. Sebeok, wherein he  
 79 compared the relations of semiotics to the idealist  
 movement with the case of the giant rat of Sumatra,<sup>1</sup>

80 “a story for which, as Sherlock Holmes announced,  
81 the world is not yet prepared.”

82 In that memorable speech, Sebeok had taken  
83 the occasion “to indulge in personal reminiscences,  
84 comment on the institutionalization of our common  
85 cultural concerns, and then to prognosticate about  
86 the direction toward which we may be headed.”<sup>2</sup>  
87 Now, some seventeen years later, this mantle of SSA  
88 President had fallen to me; and the institutional status  
89 of semiotics in the university world, healthy and  
90 promising as Sebeok then spoke, had in American  
91 academe become somewhat unhealthy and parlous  
92 in the succeeding years, even as the interest in and  
93 promise of the intellectual enterprise of semiotics  
94 had succeeded beyond what any of us in the 80s  
95 could have predicted in the matter of the contest as  
96 to whether the *general conception* of sign study should  
97 be conceived on the model of Saussurean semiology  
98 or (picking up the threads and pieces in this matter  
99 left by the teachers common to Peirce and Poinso<sup>3</sup>)  
100 Peircean semiotics.<sup>4</sup>

101 It is true enough that I was in a position, as an as-  
102 sociate of Sebeok’s since the late 60s, and particularly  
103 as the only living SSA member who had personally  
104 attended every Executive Board meeting since the  
105 founding of the Society in 1976 (and before that in  
106 the 1975 preparatory meeting<sup>5</sup>), to indulge in personal  
107 reminiscences illuminating how this passage from  
108 promising to parlous had been wrought, but the exer-  
109 cise would only be for my expectant colleague across  
110 the stone table hugely beside the point of anything  
111 reasonably to be expected in the present discussion.  
112 Far better, I thought, to imitate the example set by  
113 Phaedrus the Myrrhinusian in responding to Eryxi-  
114 machus the Physician at the symposium in the House  
115 of Agathon. The present occasion called for nothing  
116 less than a furthering of the abductive assignment  
117 that our then-elected medicine man proposed as  
118 the main mission of semiotics: to mediate between

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reality and illusion.<sup>6</sup> Such was my private semiosis of the moment.

I needed no further inducement. For the public semiosis of the occasion in which I found myself I decided then and there to test the interest, intelligence, and patience of my inquiring colleague, and to plunge us together at once into the “illimitable array of concordant illusions”<sup>7</sup> semiotics is centrally preoccupied in bringing to light.

The first illusion under which I was sure my colleague suffered, and which every standard loose answer to the question of what a sign is serves only to further, is the impression that some things are signs while others are not — in other words, that the world of experience can be adequately divided among particulars which are signs and particulars which are not signs. Right away, the situation called for an exorcist rather than a shaman. The ghost of William of Ockham is always present at the outset of these discussions, and, not to under-rate his importance or power, at the outset, at least, it is best to exorcise him. Later on, he can be recalled to further the spirit of the discussion and, indeed, will be essential therefor; but at the outset he mostly causes trouble.

SEMIOTIST, Voice 3:

“Look around you”,

Voice 1:

I urged my colleague,

Voice 3:

“and, like a good phenomenologist, give me a brief inventory of the main types of object that fall under your gaze.”

Voice 1:

Of course, I had already taken into account my colleague’s angle of vision, and knew that it fell directly on something that I could see only by turning, something that would be a key to the course of our conversation.

158 REALIST: "Well, of course there is this side of the build-  
159 ing itself whence we exited with its doors and  
160 windows; and there is the portico of the driveway  
161 with its pillars, the driveway itself, this marvel-  
162 lous tree which gives us shade, and this fence that  
163 gives us privacy. How did you get such a setup for  
164 your office?"  
165

166 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Stick to the point, and tell me if you see for your  
167 inventory anything which could be called a sign."  
168

169 REALIST: "Of course. Out there, beyond the driveway and over  
170 toward the sidewalk, is the sign that identifies this  
171 building as Monaghan House."  
172

173 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Yes",  
174

175 Voice 1: I said,  
176

177 Voice 3: "there is so located a sign. But",  
178

179 Voice 1: I counselled,  
180

181 Voice 3: "you should read it more with your eyes than with  
182 your memory, my friend. Take a closer look."  
183

184 REALIST: "Of course",  
185

186 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague said, hand to forehead, squinting and  
187 abashed.  
188

189 REALIST: "The sign has been changed to say 'Sullivan Hall'"  
190

191 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Indeed it has",  
192

193 Voice 1: I agreed.  
194

195 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Are there any other signs in your inventory?"  
196

- 197 REALIST: “No. From here, that is the only sign as such that  
198 appears.”  
199
- 200 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Ah so”,  
201
- 202 Voice 1: I said.  
203
- 204 Voice 3: “But in your preliminary inventory you concluded  
205 by asking how I had managed such a setup for my  
206 office. So what you saw around you, even before you  
207 misidentified the sign for the building, led you to think  
208 of something not actually present in our perception  
209 here, namely, my office.”  
210
- 211 REALIST: “What do you mean? Your office is right there” (point-  
212 ing to nearest door).  
213
- 214 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “To be sure. But for that door to appear to you as  
215 ‘Deely’s office door’ presupposes that you know about  
216 my office; and it is that knowledge, inside your very  
217 head, I dare say, that presents to you a particular door,  
218 which could in fact lead to most anything, as leading  
219 in fact to my office. So one door at least, among those  
220 you noted in this side of the building, even though  
221 you did not inventory it as a sign, nonetheless, func-  
222 tioned for you as a sign of my office” (the office, after  
223 all, which cannot be perceived from here, being an  
224 object which is other than the door which indeed is  
225 here perceived).  
226
- 227 REALIST: “I see what you mean. So any particular thing which  
228 leads to thought of another may be called a sign.”  
229
- 230 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Perhaps”,  
231
- 232 Voice 1: I said,  
233
- 234 Voice 3: “but not so fast. Tell me first what is the difference  
235 between that former Monaghan House sign and my

236 office door, insofar as both of them function in your  
 237 semiosis as representations of what is other than  
 238 themselves?"

239

240 REALIST: "Function in my semiosis?"

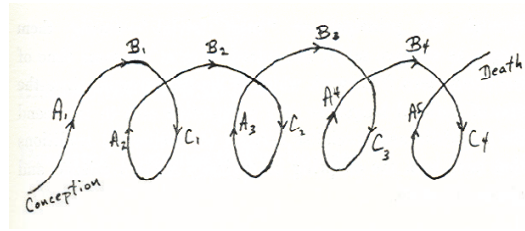
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242 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Forgive my presumption in bringing in so novel  
 243 a term. 'Semiosis' is a word Peirce was inspired to  
 244 coin in the context of work connected with his Johns  
 245 Hopkins logic seminar of 1883,<sup>8</sup> from his reading  
 246 in particular of the 1st century bc Herculanean  
 247 papyrus surviving from the hand (or at least the  
 248 mind) of Philodemus the Epicurean.<sup>9</sup> Cognizant no  
 249 doubt of the reliable scholastic adage that action is  
 250 coextensive with being,<sup>10</sup> in the sense that a being  
 251 must act in order to develop or even maintain its  
 252 being, with the consequent that we are able to know  
 253 any being only as and insofar as we become aware  
 254 of its activity, Peirce considered that we need a term  
 255 to designate the activity distinctive of the sign in its  
 256 proper being as sign, and for this he suggested the  
 257 coinage 'semiosis'. So whenever in your own mind  
 258 one *thought* leads to another, it is proper to speak  
 259 of an action of signs, that is to say, of a function of  
 260 semiosis private to you, of the way signs work, the  
 261 associations that occur, if you like, in 'your particular  
 262 semiosis'. In fact, the whole of your experiential life  
 263 can be represented as a spiral of semiosis, wherein  
 264 through the action of signs you make a guess (or  
 265 'abduction'), develop its consequences ('deduction'),  
 266 and test it in interactions ('retroduction'), leading  
 267 to further guesses, consequences, and tests, and  
 268 so on, until your particular semiosis comes to an  
 269 end. So"

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271 Voice 1: — and here I sketched for him on a scrap of paper  
 272 a Semiotic Spiral representing our conscious life as  
 273 animals:  
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The Semiotic Spiral, where A = abduction, B  
= deduction, C = retroduction

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continued, Voice 1: Now my colleague is remarkable in a number of ways, one of which is in possessing an excellent knowledge of Greek. So I was horrified but not surprised when my colleague expostulated:

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REALIST:

“Aha! An excellent coinage, this ‘semiosis’, though perhaps it should include an ‘é’ between ‘m’ and ‘i’! For probably you know that the ancient Greek term for ‘sign’ is precisely σημεῖον.”

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SEMIOTIST, Voice 3:

Horrified was I, for not having expected so soon to be confronted with what is surely one of the most incredible tales the contemporary development of semiotics has had to tell. It was my turn to deal with the tangled web of a private semiosis, my experience in particular on learning through my assignment to team-teach a course with Umberto Eco,<sup>11</sup> that there in fact was no term for a general notion of sign among the Greeks. I remember vividly my own incredulity on first hearing this claim. On the face of it, the claim is incredible, as any reader of translations of ancient Greek writings from the Renaissance on can testify. At the same time, the credibility of Eco as a speaker on the subject equalled or surpassed the incredibility of the claim. The evidence for the claim has since been developed considerably,<sup>12</sup> and I have been forced to deem it now more true than incredible. But how should such a conviction be briefly communicated to a colleague, particularly one more knowledgeable of

- 314 Greek than I?  
 315 There was nothing for it.  
 316
- 317 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Not exactly so. In truth the term σημεῖον in the Greek  
 318 age does not translate into ‘sign’ as that term functions  
 319 in semiotics, even though the modern translations of  
 320 Greek into, say, English, obscure the point. For the term  
 321 σημεῖον in ancient Greek names only one species of  
 322 the things we would single out today as ‘signs’, the species  
 323 of what has been called, after Augustine, *signa naturalia*,  
 324 natural signs.”<sup>13</sup>  
 325
- 326 Voice 1: Looking perplexed, my colleague avowed:  
 327
- 328 REALIST: “I am not so sure that is true. Are you trying to tell me  
 329 that the word ‘sign’ as semioticians commonly employ  
 330 it has a direct etymology, philosophically speaking,  
 331 that goes back only to the the 4th or 5th century  
 332 ad? And to Latin, at that, rather than to Greek? To  
 333 Augustine’s *signum* rather than to the σημεῖον of  
 334 ancient Greece? Surely you jest?”  
 335
- 336 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “The situation is worse than that”,  
 337
- 338 Voice 1: I admitted.  
 339
- 340 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “I am trying to tell you that the term ‘sign’, as it has  
 341 come to signify in semiotics, strictly speaking does not  
 342 refer to or designate anything of the sort that you can  
 343 perceive sensibly or point out with your finger, even  
 344 while saying “There is a sign.””  
 345
- 346 Voice 1: Flashing me a glance in equal proportions vexed and  
 347 incredulous, my colleague said:  
 348
- 349 REALIST: “Look. I wasn’t born yesterday. We point out signs all  
 350 the time, and we specifically look for them. Driving  
 351 to Austin, I watch for signs that tell me I am on the  
 352 right road, and what exit I should take. Surely you

353

don't gainsay that?"

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355 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3:

"Surely not."

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357 Voice 1:

I sighed.

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359 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3:

"Surely not. But semioticians, following first Poin-  
sot<sup>14</sup> and, more recently, Peirce,<sup>15</sup> are becoming ac-  
customed to a hard distinction,<sup>16</sup> that between signs  
in the strict or technical sense and signs loosely or  
commonly speaking, which are not signs but ele-  
ments so related to at least two other elements that  
the unreflecting observer can hardly help but take  
them as signs among other objects which, at least  
comparatively speaking, are not signs. Let me explain  
the distinction."

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370 REALIST:

"Please."

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372 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1:

The giant rat of Sumatra was veritably on the table,  
a problem in a culture for which rats are not consid-  
ered palatable; a problem compounded by my own  
situation in a subculture about as not yet prepared to  
entertain considerations of idealism as the world was  
in the time of Sherlock Holmes to consider the case of  
the very giant rat now sitting, beady-eyed, on the table  
between me and my colleague. Fortunately for me, or  
unfortunately for my colleague, it happened that the  
stare of those beady eyes was not fixed upon me, so  
it could not unnerve me so long as I kept control of  
my imagination.

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Now you must consider, in order to appreciate  
the turn our conversation takes at this point, that the  
department in which I teach is affiliated with a Center  
for Thomistic Studies, and probably you know that  
the late modern followers of Thomas Aquinas pride  
themselves on "realism", a philosophical position that  
holds for the ability of the human mind to know  
things as they are in themselves, prior to or apart from

392 any relation they may have to us. To refute idealism,  
 393 these fellows generally deem it sufficient to affirm their  
 394 own position, and let it go at that, their puzzlement  
 395 being confined to understanding how anyone could  
 396 think otherwise.<sup>17</sup>

397 But semiotics cannot be reduced to any such  
 398 position as a traditional philosophical realism, even  
 399 if Peirce be right in holding (as I think he is right<sup>18</sup>)  
 400 that scholastic realism is essential to if not sufficient  
 401 for understanding the action of signs. In other words,  
 402 the conversation had come to such a pass that, in order  
 403 to enable my companion to understand why every  
 404 object of experience as such presupposes the sign,  
 405 I had to bring him to understand the postmodern  
 406 point enunciated by Heidegger to the effect that<sup>19</sup>  
 407 “as compared with realism, idealism, no matter how  
 408 contrary and untenable it may be in its results, has  
 409 an advantage in principle, provided that it does not  
 410 misunderstand itself as ‘psychological’ idealism”. Best,  
 411 I thought, to begin at the beginning.

412  
 413 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “You would agree, would you not”

414  
 415 Voice 1: — I put forward my initial tentative —

416  
 417 Voice 3: “that we can take it as reliable knowledge that the  
 418 universe is older than our earth, and our earth older  
 419 than the life upon it?”

420  
 421 REALIST: “So?” my colleague reasonably inquired.

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 423 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “So we need to consider that consciousness, human  
 424 consciousness in particular, is not an initial datum  
 425 but one that needs to be regarded as something that  
 426 emerged in time, time being understood<sup>20</sup> simply as  
 427 the measure of the motions of the interacting bodies  
 428 in space that enables us to say, for example, that some  
 429 fourteen billion years ago there was an initial explosion  
 430 out of which came the whole of the universe as we know

- 431 it, though initially bereft of life, indeed, of stars and of  
 432 planets on which life could exist.”
- 433
- 434 REALIST: “Surely you’re not just going to give me that evolution  
 435 stuff? And what has that got to do with signs being  
 436 something that objects presuppose, a proposition  
 437 that doesn’t exactly leap out at you as true, or even as  
 438 particularly sensible?”
- 439
- 440 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Actually it is not evolution, but something more basic  
 441 that I have in mind. I want to suggest that semiosis is  
 442 more basic than evolution, and perhaps explains *better*  
 443 what has heretofore been termed evolution.<sup>21</sup> But, I  
 444 admit, that is a bit much to ask at this point. Perhaps  
 445 indeed I cast my net too wide. Let me trim my sails a  
 446 bit, and ask you to agree only to this much: there is a  
 447 difference in principle between something that exists  
 448 in our awareness and something that exists whether  
 449 or not we are aware of it?”
- 450
- 451 REALIST: “What are you getting at?”
- 452
- 453 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “A distinction between objects and things, wherein  
 454 by ‘object’ I mean something existing as known,  
 455 something existing in my awareness, and by ‘thing’  
 456 rather something that exists whether or not I have  
 457 any awareness of it.”
- 458
- 459 REALIST: “But surely you do not deny that one and the same  
 460 thing may be one time unknown and another time  
 461 known? This is merely an accident of time, an occur-  
 462 rence of chance, hardly a distinction in principle.”
- 463
- 464 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Ah so. But surely you do not deny that an object of  
 465 experience as such necessarily involves a relation to  
 466 me in experiencing it, whereas a thing in the envi-  
 467 ronment of which I have no awareness lacks such a  
 468 relation?”
- 469

- 470 REALIST: "Well anyone can see that."  
471
- 472 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "And surely you concede that an object of experience  
473 need not be a thing in the same sense that it is an  
474 object?"  
475
- 476 REALIST: "What do you mean in saying that?"  
477
- 478 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Consider the witches<sup>22</sup> of Salem."  
479
- 480 REALIST: "There were no witches at Salem."  
481
- 482 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Then what did we burn?"  
483
- 484 REALIST: "Innocent women."  
485
- 486 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Innocent of what?"  
487
- 488 REALIST: "Of being witches."  
489
- 490 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "But the people at Salem who burned these women<sup>23</sup>  
491 thought they were burning witches."  
492
- 493 REALIST: "They were wrong."  
494
- 495 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "So you say. But surely you see that, if the burners  
496 were wrong, something that did exist was burned  
497 because of something that did not exist? Surely you  
498 see that something public, something objective in my  
499 sense — the being of a witch — was confused with  
500 something that did exist — the being of a female hu-  
501 man organism — and that something existing was  
502 burned precisely because it was objectively identified  
503 with something that did not exist?"  
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- 505 REALIST: "I think I am beginning to see what you are getting at;  
506 but what does this have to do with signs?"  
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- 508 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Every mistake involves taking something that is not

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511 REALIST: "True enough", said my colleague.  
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513 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "So every mistake involves an action of signs."  
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515 REALIST: "Yes, I see that to see a witch you have to be mistaken;  
516 but to see a woman you only need eyes, not signs. It is  
517 the truth I am interested in. By your account, all that  
518 signs account for is the possibility of being mistaken.  
519 What about the possibility of being right? Are you a  
520 realist or aren't you?"  
521  
522 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "If you grant me that an object necessarily, whereas  
523 a thing only contingently, involves a relation to me  
524 as cognizant, then, in order to advance my argument  
525 that every object presupposes sign, I need to ask you  
526 to consider the further distinction between sensation  
527 and perception, where by the former I understand  
528 the stimulation of my nervous system by the physi-  
529 cal surroundings and by the latter I understand the  
530 interpretation of those stimuli according to which  
531 they present to me something to be sought (+),  
532 something to be avoided (--), or something about  
533 which I am indifferent (∅)."  
534  
535 REALIST: "I see no problem with that."  
536  
537 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Then perhaps you will grant further that, whereas  
538 sensation so construed always and necessarily involves  
539 me in physical relations that are also objective in their  
540 termini, perception, by contrast, insofar as it assim-  
541 ilates sensation to itself, necessarily involves physical  
542 relations that are also objective, but further involves  
543 me in objective relations that may or may not be physi-  
544 cal, especially insofar as I may be mistaken about what  
545 I perceive. In other words, sensations give me the raw  
546 material out of which perception constructs what are  
547 for me objects of experience, such that these objects

- 548 have their being precisely as a network of relations  
 549 only some of which are relations independently of the  
 550 workings of my mind — and which relations are which  
 551 is not something self-evident, but something that  
 552 needs to be sorted out over the course of experience  
 553 insofar as experience becomes human experience.”
- 554
- 555 REALIST: “Why do you say insofar as it becomes human ex-  
 556 perience?”
- 557
- 558 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Because, for reasons we can go into but which here  
 559 I may perhaps ask you to assume for purposes of  
 560 advancing the point under discussion, the notion of  
 561 a difference between objects and things *never occurs* to  
 562 any other animal except those of our own species.”
- 563
- 564 REALIST: “Huh?”
- 565
- 566 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Well, you’re a ‘realist,’ aren’t you?”
- 567
- 568 REALIST: “Of course.”
- 569
- 570 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “What do you mean by that?”
- 571
- 572 REALIST: “Simple. That the objects we experience have a being  
 573 independent of our experience of them.”
- 574
- 575 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “But you just admitted that we experience objects  
 576 which are not things.”
- 577
- 578 REALIST: “Yeah, when we make mistakes.”
- 579
- 580 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “But not only when we make mistakes.”
- 581
- 582 REALIST: “How do you figure?”
- 583
- 584 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Is there a boundary between Texas and Okla-  
 585 homa?”
- 586

- 587 REALIST: "Is the Pope Catholic?"  
588
- 589 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "I take that to be a 'Yes.'"  
590
- 591 Voice 1: I let pass that the Pope at the moment was Polish:  
592 *transeat majorem.*  
593
- 594 REALIST: "Of course there is a boundary between Texas and  
595 Oklahoma. I'm no Okie."  
596
- 597 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "But look at the satellite photographs. No such  
598 boundary shows up there. Would you say that the  
599 boundary exists objectively rather than physically, but  
600 nonetheless really?"  
601
- 602 REALIST: "That's a funny way of talking."  
603
- 604 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Not as funny as thinking that social or cultural reali-  
605 ties, whether involving error or not, exist inside your  
606 head as mere psychological states. Consider that what  
607 sensations you have depends not only on your physi-  
608 cal surroundings but just as much upon your bodily  
609 type. Consider further that how you organize your  
610 sensations depends even more upon your biological  
611 heredity than it does upon the physical surroundings.  
612 If you see that, then you should be able to realize that  
613 the world of experience, not the physical environment  
614 as such, is what is properly called 'the objective world';  
615 and you cannot avoid further realizing that the objec-  
616 tive world of every species is species-specific."  
617
- 618 REALIST: "Species-specific objective worlds? I thought the ob-  
619 jective world was the world that is the same for every-  
620 body and everything, the world of what really is."  
621
- 622 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "On the contrary, the world that is 'the same regardless  
623 of your species' is merely the physical environment,  
624 and it is, moreover, a species-specifically human  
625 hypothesis rather than anything directly perceived.

- 626 Because sensation directly and necessarily puts us in  
 627 contact with the surroundings in precisely something  
 628 of their physical aspect of things obtaining independ-  
 629 ently of us, we can from within experience conduct  
 630 experiments which enable us to distinguish within our  
 631 experience between aspects of the world which exist  
 632 physically as well as objectively and aspects which exist  
 633 only objectively. That, my friend, is why ‘realism’ is a  
 634 philosophical problem, not a self-evident truth. After  
 635 all, ‘reality’ is a word, and needs to be learned like any  
 636 other. You need to read something<sup>24</sup> of Peirce.”
- 637
- 638 REALIST: “You seem to be veering into idealism.”
- 639
- 640 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague frowned mightily, hardly in sign of  
 641 approval.  
 642
- 643 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Not at all. I thought you liked to acknowledge what  
 644 is? And certainly an objective world shot through  
 645 with emotions and the possibilities of error, which is  
 646 specific to humans and even subspecific to different  
 647 populations of humans is the reality we experience,  
 648 not just some physical environment indifferent to  
 649 our feelings about it? The indifferent physical envi-  
 650 ronment is a hypothetical construct, a well-founded  
 651 guess, which science confirms in some particulars  
 652 and disproves in others. For surely you don’t think  
 653 it was science or philosophy that disproved witches,  
 654 do you? Haven’t you read the old papal decrees on  
 655 the subject, or the theological treatises on how to  
 656 discriminate between ordinary women and women  
 657 who are witches?<sup>25</sup> It behooves you to do so if you are  
 658 married or even ave a girlfriend.”
- 659
- 660 REALIST: “But all you are talking about is mistakes we have  
 661 made, psychological states disconnected from  
 662 objectivity.”
- 663
- 664 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “On the contrary, there are no such thing as psycho-

- 665 logical states disconnected from objectivity. Objectiv-  
 666 ity precisely depends upon psychological states which  
 667 give the subjective foundation or ground for the rela-  
 668 tions which terminate in the publically experienced  
 669 interpretations that are precisely what we call objects.  
 670 The key to the whole thing is relation in its unique  
 671 being as irreducible to its subjective source always  
 672 terminating at something over and above the being  
 673 in which the relation is grounded.”  
 674
- 675 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I could not help but think of the two main texts in  
 676 Poincot<sup>26</sup> which had so long ago first directed my  
 677 attention to this simple point made quasi-occult  
 678 over the course of philosophy’s history by the obtuse  
 679 discussions of relation after Aristotle.<sup>27</sup>  
 680
- 681 REALIST: “But I thought knowledge consisted in our assimila-  
 682 tion of the form of things without their matter.”  
 683
- 684 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: Now I knew for sure my colleague was indeed a closet  
 685 Thomist at least, versed in the more common Neotho-  
 686 mist version of ideogenesis, or theory of the formation  
 687 of ideas through a process of abstraction.  
 688
- 689 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Well”,  
 690
- 691 Voice 1: I ventured.  
 692
- 693 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “In the first place, that is not a self-evident proposi-  
 694 tion, but one highly specific medieval theory of the  
 695 process of abstraction; and further, absent the context  
 696 of a full-blown theory of relations as suprasubjective  
 697 links<sup>28</sup> to what is objectively other than ourselves with  
 698 all our psychological states, affective as well as cogni-  
 699 tive, such a theory is finally incoherent. For any ‘form’,  
 700 with or without ‘matter’, if and insofar as it is ‘in me’, is  
 701 part and parcel of my subjectivity, except and insofar  
 702 as it mayhap gives rise to a relation to something over  
 703 and above my subjectivity, which is by definition what

- 704 is meant by 'terminating objectively.'  
 705
- 706 REALIST: "Could you state clearly your meaning of 'subjectivity'  
 707 here", asked my colleague.  
 708
- 709 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Indeed. Subjectivity is the sum total of everything  
 710 that distinguishes me from the rest of the universe,<sup>29</sup>  
 711 and relations are whatever ties over and above my  
 712 subjectivity link me to anything other than myself,  
 713 be that other physical as well as objective or merely  
 714 objective."  
 715
- 716 REALIST: "Merely objective?" my colleague queried with eye-  
 717 brows raised.  
 718
- 719 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Merely objective: existing as known and insofar  
 720 publically accessible but not as such existing physi-  
 721 cally in the environment<sup>30</sup>, like the border of Texas  
 722 with Mexico or the office of President of the United  
 723 States, and so on. Subjective existence is physical  
 724 existence, including the whole of one's private psy-  
 725 chological states. Objective existence, by contrast, is  
 726 public in principle, in the way that any two otherwise  
 727 isolated subjectivities can yet be in relation to a com-  
 728 mon third."  
 729
- 730 REALIST: "But this 'common third', as you put it, surely must be  
 731 something real?"  
 732
- 733 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Not at all, if by 'real' you mean existing indepen-  
 734 dently of the workings of mind, something subjective,  
 735 a physical entity. It suffices that it 'exist' as the terminus  
 736 opposed to the foundation or ground in subjectivity  
 737 of some relation, which relation as a relation exceeds  
 738 the subjectivity in which it is grounded by terminat-  
 739 ing at something over and above subjectivity as such,  
 740 something 'other' than that subjectivity. This 'other'  
 741 may indeed also exist independently of the cognitive  
 742 or affective relation terminating thereat, in which case

- 743 it will be a thing as well as an object. Subjectivity, you  
 744 can see, is what defines things as things. Objectivity,  
 745 by contrast, obtains only in and through relations,  
 746 normally a whole network of relations, which give even  
 747 the things of the physical environment their status as  
 748 experienced and whatever meaning they have for the  
 749 lifeform experiencing them. Since objectivity always  
 750 includes (through sensation) something of the sub-  
 751 jectivity of things in the environment, this objective  
 752 meaning is normally never wholly divorced from the  
 753 subjective reality of the physical world, but it is never  
 754 reducible to that reality either.”
- 755
- 756 REALIST: “Surely you are not saying that every object is merely  
 757 the terminus of some relation?”
- 758
- 759 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Exactly so — some relation or complex of relations,  
 760 a ‘semiotic web’, as we like to say in semiotics. Except  
 761 your use of ‘merely’ here seems hardly appropriate,  
 762 when one considers that the terminus of cognitive and  
 763 affective relations normally involves something of the  
 764 subjectivity of things in their aspects as known, even  
 765 though the terminus of every relation as terminus  
 766 owes its being as correlate to the fundament to the  
 767 suprasubjectivity distinctive of the being peculiar to  
 768 and definitive of relation.”
- 769
- 770 REALIST: “And where does sign come in?”
- 771
- 772 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “At the foundation, my friend; but not *as* the founda-  
 773 tion. That was the mistake the scholastics made<sup>31</sup> in  
 774 trying to divide signs into ‘formal’ and ‘instrumental’  
 775 signs without realizing that our psychological states  
 776 are no less particulars than are physical objects we  
 777 point to when we single something out as a ‘sign.’”
- 778
- 779 REALIST: “You are losing me.”
- 780
- 781 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Go back to the σημεῖον. Consider the howl of a

- 782 wolf. Would that be a σημεῖον?”  
 783
- 784 Voice 1: My colleague pondered, consulting within the pri-  
 785 vacy of self-semiosis a knowledge of ancient Greek. I  
 786 awaited the result of this consultation.  
 787
- 788 REALIST: “I am not so sure. The σημεῖον were always sensible  
 789 events, to be sure, and ones deemed natural at that.  
 790 But they were primarily associated, as I remember,  
 791 with divination, wherein the natural event mani-  
 792 fested a will of the gods or a destined fate, or with  
 793 medicine, wherein the natural event is a symptom  
 794 enabling prognosis or diagnosis of health or sickness.  
 795 No, I am not so sure the howl of a wolf would fall  
 796 under σόησιμὲν αἰβοῦνι, or at least I don’t see how  
 797 it would.”  
 798
- 799 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “All right then”,  
 800
- 801 Voice 1: I suggested.  
 802
- 803 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Let us consider the howl of a wolf first just as a  
 804 physical event in the environment, a sound or set of  
 805 vibrations of a certain wavelength propagating over  
 806 a finite distance from its source within the physical  
 807 surroundings.”  
 808
- 809 REALIST: “I see no difficulty in that”.  
 810
- 811 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Now let us suppose two organisms endowed with  
 812 appropriate organs of what we call hearing, situated  
 813 within the range of propagation of that sound. What  
 814 would you suppose?”  
 815
- 816 REALIST: “I would suppose they would hear the sound, if they  
 817 are not asleep or too distracted.”  
 818
- 819 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Let us suppose they hear the sound, the one organ-  
 820 ism being a sheep and the other another wolf. Now

- 821 the sound occurring physically and subjectively in the  
 822 environment independently of our organisms' hear-  
 823 ing of it enters into a relation with each of the two  
 824 organisms. The sound not only exists physically, it now  
 825 exists also objectively, for it is heard, it is something  
 826 of which the organisms are respectively aware. It is a  
 827 kind of object, but what kind? For the sheep it is an  
 828 object of repulsion (–), something inspiring fear and  
 829 an urge to hide or flee. For the other wolf, a male wolf,  
 830 it happens — heeding the advice of St. Thomas to use  
 831 sexual examples to make something memorable — let  
 832 us say that the howl reveals a female in heat. Such a  
 833 sound, no different in its physical subjectivity from  
 834 the vibrations reaching the frightened sheep, inspires  
 835 in the male an attraction, as it were (+), what former  
 836 President Carter might call 'lust in the heart.'  
 837
- 838 REALIST: "What are you saying?"  
 839
- 840 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "That one and the same thing occurring in the en-  
 841 vironment gives rise in awareness to quite different  
 842 objects for different organisms, depending on their  
 843 biological types. Sensations become incorporated into  
 844 perceptions of objects not merely according to what  
 845 things are in the surroundings but especially accord-  
 846 ing to how the sensations are interrelated within the  
 847 experience of the perceiving animal as part of its total  
 848 objective world."  
 849
- 850 REALIST: "So this is what you meant when you said that objec-  
 851 tive worlds are species-specific?"  
 852
- 853 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Exactly so. Every organism in its body is one subjec-  
 854 tivity among others, a thing interacting physically with  
 855 other things in the environment. But if the organism  
 856 is a cognitive organism, its body has specialized parts  
 857 suited to a psychological as well as a physiological  
 858 response to those physical environmental aspects  
 859 proportioned to the organ of sense. The psychological

- 860 response in those cases is no less 'subjective', no less  
 861 'inside the organism', than the physical effects of the  
 862 interaction; but the psychological effect gives rise to a  
 863 cognitive relation, a relation of *awareness* of something  
 864 in the environment. But what is that 'something'? The  
 865 organism, according to its own nature and past experi-  
 866 ences, attaches a value to the stimulus and relates that  
 867 stimulus to its own needs and desires. In other words,  
 868 the mere stimulus of sensation becomes incorpo-  
 869 rated objectively into a whole network of experience  
 870 wherein it acquires a meaning."
- 871
- 872 REALIST: "But that is subjectivism!"
- 873
- 874 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague blustered indignantly.
- 875
- 876 REALIST: "Values are real, objective, not subjective. You are  
 877 making them subjective."
- 878
- 879 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Pay attention",
- 880
- 881 Voice 1: I pleaded.
- 882
- 883 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Of course the values are objective. Anything existing  
 884 within awareness is objective. They are also bound  
 885 up with the subjectivity of the physical environment,  
 886 both in the being proper to whatever is the source  
 887 of the stimulus and in the being of the cognizing  
 888 organism. Insofar as the subjectivity of the physical  
 889 world bespeaks a being independently of whatever I  
 890 may know, feel, or believe, the values *partake* of that  
 891 being. But, as values, they reveal *more* the being of  
 892 the organism evaluating than the subjective nature  
 893 of the stimulus in the environment. They belong as  
 894 values to the species-specific objective world of the  
 895 experiencing organism."
- 896
- 897 Voice 1: My colleague alleged:
- 898

- 899 REALIST: "This is troubling."  
900
- 901 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I offered,  
902
- 903 VOICE 3 "Let me put you at ease. In order for an organism to be  
904 aware of something outside itself, there must be inside  
905 itself a disposition or state on the basis of which it is  
906 related cognitively (and, I would add, affectively<sup>32</sup>) to  
907 that outside other. If the outside other has an existence  
908 of its own quite independent of the cognition of the  
909 cognizing organism, then it is a thing, indeed. But in-  
910 sofar as it becomes known it is an object, the terminus  
911 of a relation founded upon the psychological states  
912 inside the organism. Neither the relation nor the thing  
913 become object are inside the knower. All that is inside  
914 the knower is the disposition or state presupposed  
915 for the thing to exist as known.<sup>33</sup> And the relation is  
916 inside neither the knower nor the known but is over  
917 and above both of them. Compared to the subjectiv-  
918 ity of either the knower or the known the relation  
919 as such is suprasubjective. But as related cognitively  
920 to the knower the thing known is the terminus of a  
921 relation founded in the knower's own subjectivity.  
922 As terminating the relation it is an object. That same  
923 object if and insofar as it has a subjective being of its  
924 own is not merely an object but also a thing."  
925
- 926 REALIST: "But what if the object has no subjectivity proper  
927 to it?"  
928
- 929 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague probed, thinking, as I suspected from  
930 his nonverbal signs, of Salem and witches.  
931
- 932 Voice 3: "Then it is only an object, what the scholastic realists  
933 used to call a 'mind-dependent being.'<sup>34</sup> So do pay at-  
934 tention: every mind-dependent being is an objective  
935 reality or being, but not every objective reality is a  
936 mind-dependent being. Some objects are also things,  
937 in which case they are mind-independent beings<sup>35</sup> as

- 938 well as objective realities.”
- 939
- 940 REALIST: “But I thought an *ens rationis*, what you call a mind-
- 941 dependent being, was a mere mental reality, a psycho-
- 942 logical state like error or delusion.”
- 943
- 944 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Hardly. Surely you recall that, according to the scho-
- 945 lastic realists so beloved of Peirce, logical entities all are
- 946 *entia rationis*? And the relations of logic are supremely
- 947 public, binding upon all? Now it is true that logic
- 948 reveals to us only the consequences of our beliefs, of
- 949 our thinking that things are this way or that, not neces-
- 950 sarily how things are in their independent being. But
- 951 the fact that logical relations are public realities, not
- 952 private ones, that logical relations reveal *inescapable*
- 953 consequences of this or that belief, not private whims,
- 954 already tells you that they belong to the Umwelt, not
- 955 to the Innenwelt, and to the Umwelt as species-specifi-
- 956 cally human at that.”
- 957
- 958 REALIST: “Umwelt? Innenwelt? Where does that come from?”
- 959
- 960 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Sorry. Umwelt is shorthand for objective world. In
- 961 the case of the species-specifically human objective
- 962 world it is often called rather a *Lebenswelt*; but please,”
- 963 I pleaded, “let us not get into that particular right now
- 964 or we will never get to the bottom of the question you
- 965 have raised as to why a sign is best defined at this stage
- 966 of history as what every object presupposes.”
- 967
- 968 REALIST: “But,”
- 969
- 970 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague interjected,
- 971
- 972 REALIST: “why in the world do you speak of the definition we are
- 973 seeking to plumb as best ‘at this stage of history’? Surely
- 974 you know that a real definition tells what something is,
- 975 and is not subject to time? Are species not eternal?”
- 976

- 977 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Surely you will allow for more subtlety than that as  
978 regards definitions?”  
979
- 980 Voice 1: I replied hopefully.  
981
- 982 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “After all, even when we try to express in words what  
983 thing is, it is our understanding of the thing that we  
984 express, not purely and simply the thing itself? And  
985 this is true even when and to the extent that our  
986 understanding actually has some overlap, identity, or  
987 coincidence with the being of the thing — even when,  
988 that is to say, our definition partially expresses a thing  
989 objectified, a thing made object or known?”  
990
- 991 REALIST: “I see what you mean. Even a definition supposed real  
992 expresses only our best understanding of some aspect  
993 of real being, and insofar as this understanding is not  
994 exhaustive it may admit of revision or of being sup-  
995 planted through subsequent advances or alterations  
996 of understanding”, my colleague allowed.  
997
- 998 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “I am glad you see that, for, in the case of the sign,  
999 there have been at least three, or even more (depend-  
1000 ing on how you parse the history) revisions of the  
1001 definitory formula generally accepted,<sup>36</sup> and I expect  
1002 more to come.”  
1003
- 1004 REALIST: “Don’t discourage me”, my colleague pleaded. “Let us  
1005 at least get clear for now about this new formula you  
1006 deem best at ‘our present historical moment’. I get  
1007 your meaning of Umwelt. What about this Innenwelt  
1008 business?”  
1009
- 1010 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Innenwelt is merely shorthand for the complexus of  
1011 psychological powers and states whereby an organ-  
1012 ism represents to itself or ‘models’ the environment  
1013 insofar as it experiences the world. So Innenwelt is  
1014 the subjective or private counterpart to the objective  
1015 world of public experience comprising for any species

- 1016  
1017  
1018 REALIST: "That helps, but I fail to see what all this new terminol-  
1019 ogy and idiosyncratic way of looking at things has to  
1020 do with signs, let alone with signs being presupposed  
1021 to objects."  
1022
- 1023 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: "Then let me introduce at this point the great dis-  
1024 covery of semiotics, actually first made in the 16th  
1025 century, or early in the 17th at the latest,<sup>37</sup> although  
1026 never fully marked terminologically until Peirce  
1027 resumed the Latin discussion around the dawn of  
1028 the 20th century.<sup>38</sup> Signs are not particular things  
1029 of any kind but strictly and essentially relations of a  
1030 certain kind, specifically, relations irreducibly triadic  
1031 in character."  
1032
- 1033 REALIST: "But surely you are not denying that *that*,"  
1034
- 1035 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague said, pointing to the physical structure  
1036 renaming the building beside us as Sullivan rather  
1037 than Monaghan,  
1038
- 1039 REALIST: "is a sign?"  
1040
- 1041 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "No, I am not exactly denying that; what I am denying  
1042 is that what makes what you are pointing to a sign is  
1043 anything about it that you can point to and directly  
1044 see with your eyes or touch with your hands. What  
1045 makes it a sign is that, within your Umwelt, it stands  
1046 for something other than itself; and because it *succeeds*  
1047 (in your Umwelt) in so standing it is for you a sign. But  
1048 *what makes it thus succeed* is the position it occupies in a  
1049 triadic relation; and, strictly speaking, it is *that relation*  
1050 *as a whole* that is the being of sign, not any one element,  
1051 subjective or objective, within the relation."  
1052
- 1053 REALIST: "I don't understand",  
1054

- 1055 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: the colleague confessed. But there was interest in the  
 1056 voice, not impatience or indifference. So I was encour-  
 1057 aged to continue.  
 1058
- 1059 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “I suppose we usually think of a relationship dyadi-  
 1060 cally, as a link between two things”  
 1061
- 1062 REALIST: “Sure, like the relation between a sign and what it  
 1063 signifies. Why don’t you just accept Jakobson’s famous  
 1064 formula for defining sign,<sup>39</sup> *aliquid stat pro aliquo*, one  
 1065 thing standing for another?”  
 1066
- 1067 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “I am delighted you are familiar with that essay by  
 1068 Jakobson, which has become a classic,<sup>40</sup> one of the  
 1069 landmarks in the semiotic development of the last  
 1070 century”, I said, pleasantly surprised again by my  
 1071 colleague’s learning. “It took me almost nineteen  
 1072 years to realize a major flaw in that formula, in that  
 1073 the *aliquo* allows for a misunderstanding along Car-  
 1074 tesian lines, wherein objects are reduced to ideas in  
 1075 the subjective or psychological sense. I made a major  
 1076 address to the Semiotic Society of America on this  
 1077 point in 1993,<sup>41</sup> showing, or attempting to show, that  
 1078 this classic formula should be revised to read rather  
 1079 *aliquid stat pro alio*, in order to leave no doubt that  
 1080 the sign, unlike an object,<sup>42</sup> stands never for itself but  
 1081 always for another than itself.”  
 1082 “But since you have brought up Jakobson’s for-  
 1083 mula, let me remind you that he intended the formula  
 1084 to express the relation distinctive or constitutive of  
 1085 sign, a relation Jakobson felicitously characterized  
 1086 as *renvoi*.”  
 1087
- 1088 REALIST: “I had forgotten that expression *renvoi*, but I don’t see  
 1089 how it helps us here.”  
 1090
- 1091 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Well, I am slow, proof of humanity. Since my initial  
 1092 proposal for revision of Jakobson’s formula eight more  
 1093 years have passed before a second revision occurred

- 1094 to me as necessary.”
- 1095
- 1096 REALIST: “A second revision?”
- 1097
- 1098 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes. If you will recall, *renvoi* for Jakobson was not
- 1099 merely the relation of sign to signified, insofar dyadic,
- 1100 as you have suggested. *Renvoi* was a relationship
- 1101 wherein the so-called sign manifested its significare
- 1102 to or for someone or something. So the formula in
- 1103 fact not only needs to be so revised as to preclude the
- 1104 typically modern epistemological paradigm wherein
- 1105 signs as other-representations can be confused with
- 1106 objects as self-representations, as I manifested in my
- 1107 1993 Sebeok Fellowship inaugural address, it needs
- 1108 also to be revised to include a Latin dative expressing
- 1109 the indirect reference to the effect wherein an action
- 1110 of signs achieves its distinctive outcome.”
- 1111
- 1112 REALIST: “You raise two questions in my mind.”
- 1113
- 1114 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague here with spoke some agitation.
- 1115
- 1116 REALIST: “You say that the sign manifests ‘to or for someone or
- 1117 something’. How is ‘to’ equivalent with ‘for’? And how
- 1118 is ‘someone’ equivalent with ‘something’? But before
- 1119 you respond to these two queries, please, tell me how
- 1120 would you have the classic formula finally read.”
- 1121
- 1122 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “*Aliquid alicuique stans pro alio*, one thing represent-
- 1123 ing another than itself to yet another’, although the
- 1124 impersonal verb form *stat* would work as well as the
- 1125 participial *stans*. Only with a final revision like this
- 1126 could it be said finally, as Sebeok said (as I now see)
- 1127 a little prematurely,<sup>43</sup> that by the term *renvoi* Jakobson
- 1128 had ‘deftly captured and transfixed each and every sign
- 1129 process conforming to the classic formula’; for if a rela-
- 1130 tion is not triadic, it is not a sign relation. Whence the
- 1131 truly classic formula: ‘*Aliquid stat alicuique pro alio*.’”
- 1132

- 1133 REALIST: "Very interesting",  
1134
- 1135 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague allowed that much.  
1136
- 1137 REALIST: "Now could you answer my two questions?"  
1138
- 1139 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Your questions cut to the heart of the matter. Con-  
1140 sider the bone of a dinosaur which is known as such.  
1141 It functions in the awareness of the paleontologist as  
1142 a sign. He recognizes it, let us say, as the bone of an  
1143 Apatosaurus. Consider that same bone chanced upon  
1144 by a Roman soldier in the last century bc. Whatever it  
1145 signified, if anything, to the soldier, it did not signify  
1146 an Apatosaurus. Agreed?"  
1147
- 1148 REALIST: "Agreed. In those circumstances it was more an object  
1149 than a sign, not a fossil at all, so to speak."  
1150
- 1151 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: "And yet it *was* a fossil, waiting to be seen through the  
1152 right eyes. It was not an Apatosaurus sign *to* someone  
1153 there and then, in that last century, but it remained that  
1154 it was prospectively such a sign for a future observer."  
1155
- 1156 REALIST: "Yes",  
1157
- 1158 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: the colleague conceded,  
1159
- 1160 REALIST: "but that prospective signification was to *someone*,  
1161 not to *something*."  
1162
- 1163 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: "You raise the difficult question of whether the 'to or  
1164 for which' of a sign need always be a cognitive organ-  
1165 ism or not. Let me acknowledge the difficulty of the  
1166 question, but not try to answer it now. Suffice it to  
1167 say, for the moment at least, that when an organism  
1168 interprets something as a sign, that interpretation is  
1169 required to complete the sign's signification as some-  
1170 thing actual here and now."  
1171

- 1172 REALIST: "I can see that. A sign requires an interpretation if  
 1173 it is to succeed as a sign and not just be some dumb  
 1174 object. But I don't see how an inorganic substance can  
 1175 provide an interpretation. Come on!"  
 1176
- 1177 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "So",  
 1178
- 1179 Voice 1: I continued, proposing to steer the discussion more  
 1180 directly to the point at hand,  
 1181
- 1182 Voice 3: "pay attention: what you call a sign, which I will  
 1183 shortly manifest is a loose rather than a strict way of  
 1184 speaking, doesn't just (dyadically) relate to what it  
 1185 signifies, it signifies what it signifies (triadically) *to* or  
 1186 *for* something else. Always hidden in the sign-signi-  
 1187 fied dyad is a third element, the *reason why* or *ground*  
 1188 *upon which* the 'sign', as you call it, signifies whatever  
 1189 it does signify and not something else."  
 1190
- 1191 Voice 1: I didn't not see the point, unless my colleague fastened  
 1192 upon it, which happily did not happen, in pointing  
 1193 out here the important distinction between "ground"  
 1194 in the technical Peircean sense redolent of the old  
 1195 *objectum formale* of scholastic realism and "ground" in  
 1196 the scholastic realist sense of *fundamentum relationis*.<sup>44</sup>  
 1197 Instead, my colleague called for a concrete illustra-  
 1198 tion, much simpler to provide. I secretly breathed a  
 1199 sigh of relief.  
 1200
- 1201 REALIST: "Give me an example."  
 1202
- 1203 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: There was demand in his voice.  
 1204 I hastened to comply, before the absolute point so  
 1205 pertinent here might occur to my interlocutor (inex-  
 1206 plicably, my friend Joe Pentony, since deceased, came  
 1207 into my mind).  
 1208
- 1209 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "I make a noise: 'elephant'. It is not just a noise, but  
 1210 a word. Why, hearing the noise 'elephant' do you not

- 1211 think of a thin-legged, long-necked, brown-spotted  
 1212 animal that nibbles leaves instead of a thick-legged,  
 1213 large gray animal with a prehensile proboscis?”  
 1214  
 1215 Voice 1: Since my colleague fancied to be a ‘realist’, it was not  
 1216 difficult to anticipate the reply about to come. Nor  
 1217 was I disappointed.  
 1218  
 1219 REALIST: “Obviously because ‘elephant’ means elephant and  
 1220 not giraffe.”  
 1221  
 1222 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: Now my colleague spoke with a touch of impatience.  
 1223  
 1224 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes, of course”,  
 1225  
 1226 Voice 1: I granted,  
 1227  
 1228 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “but is that not only because of the habit structures  
 1229 internalized in your Innenwelt which make the noise  
 1230 ‘elephant’ a linguistic element in our Lebenswelt on  
 1231 the basis of which we are habituated to think first, on  
 1232 hearing the noise, of one particular animal rather than  
 1233 another? So in the experience of any signification is  
 1234 there not only the ‘sign’ loosely so-called and the signi-  
 1235 fied object, but also the matter of the basis upon which  
 1236 the sign signifies this object rather than or before some  
 1237 other object? You see that?”  
 1238  
 1239 REALIST: “I do.”  
 1240  
 1241 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Then you see that the relation making what you with  
 1242 your finger point out as a ‘sign’ to be a sign is nothing  
 1243 intrinsic to the so-called sign, but rather something  
 1244 over and above that subjective structure; to wit, a  
 1245 relationship, which has not one term but two terms,  
 1246 to wit, the signified object for one and, for the other,  
 1247 the reason why that rather than some other is the  
 1248 object signified?”  
 1249

- 1250 REALIST: "I think I do see that. I think. But please explain  
1251 further, so I can be sure."  
1252
- 1253 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: Realists like to be 'sure'. Infallibility is their ideal goal,  
1254 as it were, the modern variety at least (rather more  
1255 naive in this than their Latin scholastic forebears, I  
1256 might add), ironically the final heirs of Descartes, who  
1257 prized certainty, in the end, above 'realism'.  
1258
- 1259 VOICE 3: "Well, here, history can be a great help. Animals,  
1260 including human animals, begin with an experience  
1261 of objects, and objects normally given as outside of or  
1262 other than themselves. In order to mature and survive,  
1263 every animal has to form an interior map, an Innen-  
1264 welt, which enables it sufficiently to navigate its sur-  
1265 roundings to find food, shelter, etc. This 'sufficiently' is  
1266 what we call an Umwelt, and it contrasts in principle  
1267 with, even though it partially includes something of,  
1268 the things of the physical environment."  
1269
- 1270 REALIST: "I think",  
1271
- 1272 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: now the demand and impatience gave way to marvel,  
1273
- 1274 REALIST "I begin to understand your ironic manner whenever  
1275 the subject of 'realism' in philosophy arises. Realists  
1276 assume our experience begins with things as such,  
1277 whereas now I see that our experience directly is only  
1278 of things as subsumed within objects and the species-  
1279 specific structure of an objective world! If *entia realia*  
1280 and *entia rationis* are equally objective within our  
1281 experience, then the sorting out of which-is-which is  
1282 a problem rather than a given!"  
1283
- 1284 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Exactly so",  
1285
- 1286 Voice 1: I was delighted at this sudden burst of light from my  
1287 colleague.  
1288

- 1289 Voice 3: “Now if only I can get you to see how object presup-  
1290 poses sign, perhaps we can get some lunch.”  
1291
- 1292 REALIST: “Please do so, and, now that you mention it, the  
1293 quicker the better, for I am getting hungry.”  
1294
- 1295 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Permit me an *obiter dictum*, nonetheless, for I think  
1296 it will facilitate our progress to a successful outcome  
1297 of the main point before us.”  
1298
- 1299 REALIST: “By all means”,  
1300
- 1301 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague allowed, drawing an apple from a bag  
1302 and taking a bite.  
1303
- 1304 REALIST: “Even though you have heretofore deemed yourself  
1305 a ‘realist,’”  
1306
- 1307 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I ventured,  
1308
- 1309 VOICE 3: “I have noticed from earlier conversations that you  
1310 have a definite partiality to phenomenology, even  
1311 though Husserl himself conceded that his position  
1312 in the end proved but one more variant in the char-  
1313 characteristically modern development of philosophy as  
1314 idealism.<sup>45</sup>  
1315 “So notice two points. First, the phenomeno-  
1316 logical idea of the ‘intentionality’ of consciousness<sup>46</sup>  
1317 reduces, within semiotics, to the theory of relations,<sup>47</sup>  
1318 and expresses nothing more than the distinctive  
1319 characteristic of psychological states of subjectivity  
1320 whereby they give rise necessarily to relations triadic  
1321 rather than dyadic in character. But second, and more  
1322 fundamentally, recall the question with which (among  
1323 others) Heidegger concluded his original publication  
1324 of *Being and Time*:<sup>48</sup>  
1325 “Why does Being get ‘conceived’ ‘proximally’ in  
1326 terms of the present-at-hand *and not* in terms of  
1327 the ready-to-hand, which indeed lies *closer* to us?”

- 1328                   Why does this reifying always keep coming back  
1329                   to exercise its dominion?"
- 1330                   Within semiotics we can now give an answer to this  
1331                   question."
- 1332
- 1333   REALIST:                   "We can?"
- 1334
- 1335   SEMIOTIST, Voice 3:       "Indeed. Ready-to-hand is the manner in which  
1336                   objects exist within an animal Umwelt. Human  
1337                   beings are animals first of all, but they have one spe-  
1338                   cies-specifically distinct feature of their Innenwelt or  
1339                   modeling system, a feature which was first brought to  
1340                   light in the postmodern context of semiotics, so far  
1341                   as I know, by Professor Sebeok,<sup>49</sup> namely, the ability  
1342                   to model objects as things. That is to say, the human  
1343                   modeling system or Innenwelt includes the ability to  
1344                   undertake the discrimination within objects of the  
1345                   difference between what of the objects belongs to  
1346                   the order of physical subjectivity<sup>50</sup> and what belongs  
1347                   wholly to the order of objects simply as terminating  
1348                   our awareness of them.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps you recall from your  
1349                   reading of Thomas Aquinas that he identified the  
1350                   origin of human experience in an awareness of being  
1351                   prior to the discrimination of the difference between  
1352                   *ens reale* and *ens rationis*?"
- 1353
- 1354   REALIST:                   "Actually I don't recall any such discussion in St.  
1355                   Thomas."
- 1356
- 1357   SEMIOTIST, Voice 1:       "Fair enough, and we don't want to get completely  
1358                   off the track. Later on you might want to look up the  
1359                   point in Aquinas and give some consideration to its  
1360                   implications; for it seems to me that what he is saying  
1361                   is that our original experience includes something of  
1362                   the world of things but definitively cannot be reduced  
1363                   to the order of *ens reale*. Comparative realities and un-  
1364                   realities alike are discovered from within, not prior to,  
1365                   objectivity.<sup>52</sup> The experience of that contrast, indeed, is  
1366                   what transforms the generically animal Umwelt into a

- 1367 species-specifically human *Lebenswelt*<sup>53</sup> wherein even  
 1368 witches can be mistaken for realities of a definite type,  
 1369 and wherein it may be hard to realize that the mind-  
 1370 independent revolution of the earth around the sun  
 1371 is not unreal whereas the mind-dependent revolution  
 1372 of the sun around the earth is not real.”  
 1373
- 1374 REALIST: “What about Heidegger’s objective distinction be-  
 1375 tween the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand?”  
 1376
- 1377 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague pressed hard.  
 1378
- 1379 Voice 3: “Simple. This is a distinction that does not arise for  
 1380 any animal except an animal with a modeling system  
 1381 capable of representing objects (as such necessarily  
 1382 related to us) according to a being or features not  
 1383 necessarily related to us but obtaining subjectively in  
 1384 the objects themselves (mistakenly or not, according to  
 1385 the particular case) — an animal, in short, capable of  
 1386 wondering about things-in-themselves and conduct-  
 1387 ing itself accordingly. Now, since a modeling system so  
 1388 capacitated is, according to Sebeok, what is meant by  
 1389 language in the root sense, whereas the exaptation of  
 1390 such a modeling in action gives rise not to language but  
 1391 to linguistic communication,<sup>54</sup> and since ‘language’ in  
 1392 this derivative sense of linguistic communication is the  
 1393 species-specifically distinctive and dominant modality  
 1394 of communication among humans, we have a difficulty  
 1395 inverse to that of the nonlinguistic animals, although  
 1396 we, unlike they, can overcome the difficulty.”  
 1397
- 1398 REALIST: “And what difficulty is that?”  
 1399
- 1400 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Within an *Umwelt*, objects *are* reality so far as the  
 1401 organism is concerned. But without language, the  
 1402 animals have no way to go beyond the objective world  
 1403 as such to inquire into the physical environment in  
 1404 its difference from the objective world. Within a *Leb-*  
 1405 *enswelt*, by contrast, that is to say, within an *Umwelt*

- 1406 internally transformed by language, the reality so far  
 1407 as the organism is concerned is confused with and  
 1408 mistaken for the world of things. Objects appear  
 1409 not as mixtures of *entia rationis* with *entia realia*, but  
 1410 simply as ‘what is,’ ‘real being,’ ‘a world of things.’”  
 1411
- 1412 REALIST: “That is the general assertion of ‘realists.’ It also reminds  
 1413 me of Reid’s ‘philosophy of common sense.’”  
 1414
- 1415 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “As well it might.<sup>55</sup> “Descartes and Locke confused  
 1416 objects as suprasubjectively terminating relations with  
 1417 their counterposed subjective foundations or bases in  
 1418 the cognitive aspect of subjectivity, thereby reducing  
 1419 Umwelt to Innenwelt; Reid, in seeking to counter them  
 1420 and, especially, Hume after them, confused public ob-  
 1421 jects with things, *ens primum cognitum* with *ens reale* (in  
 1422 the earlier terms of Aquinas), thereby reducing Umwelt  
 1423 to physical environment. But the physical universe of  
 1424 things is distinguished from within the world of objects  
 1425 as the sense of that dimension of objective experience  
 1426 which reveals roots in objects that do not reduce to our  
 1427 experience of the objects. Reality in this hardcore sense  
 1428 of something existing independently of our beliefs, opin-  
 1429 ions, and feelings is not ‘given’ to some magical faculty  
 1430 of ‘common sense.’ There is no ‘gift of heaven’ facilely  
 1431 discriminating ‘the real’ for our otherwise animal minds  
 1432 — a gift such as Reid avers<sup>56</sup> which only bias or ‘some  
 1433 mistaken religious principle’ can mislead.”  
 1434
- 1435 REALIST: “So you are saying that the reality of objects within  
 1436 experience, for any animal, is a confused mixture of  
 1437 *entia realia* and *entia rationis*, but that this confusion  
 1438 only comes to light in the experience of human ani-  
 1439 mals by means of a species-specific modeling of the  
 1440 world which you call language?”  
 1441
- 1442 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “That is what I am saying.”  
 1443
- 1444 REALIST: “Well, it makes sense, I think; but it is a strange way

- 1445 of speaking. I need to digest this a bit before I can  
 1446 decide where to agree and where to differ. Enough  
 1447 of your *obiter dictum*. I want to get to the bottom  
 1448 of this objects presupposing signs business, and get  
 1449 some lunch.”
- 1450
- 1451 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Back, then, to history. You can see right off that  
 1452 every animal will use what it senses perceptually to  
 1453 orientate itself in the environment. Among these ele-  
 1454 ments sensed some therefore will come to stand for  
 1455 something other than themselves. The most impressive  
 1456 of such sensory elements would be those manifesting  
 1457 the powers that hold sway over human existence, na-  
 1458 ture, on the one hand, and gods, on the other. So in  
 1459 the ancient consciousness arose the idea of *σημείον*,  
 1460 a natural event which generates in us the expectation  
 1461 of something else, an element of divination in the case  
 1462 of the gods, a symptom in the case of medicine.<sup>57</sup> This  
 1463 idea permeates the ancient Greek writings. But, at the  
 1464 beginning of the Latin Age, Augustine unwittingly  
 1465 introduces a radical variant upon the ancient notion. I  
 1466 say ‘unwittingly’, not at all to disparage Augustine, but  
 1467 to mark the fact important in this connection that his  
 1468 ignorance of Greek prevented him from realizing what  
 1469 was novel about his proposal, and how much it stood  
 1470 in need of some explanation regarding its possibility.
- 1471 “Augustine spoke not of *σημείον* but rather of  
 1472 *signum*. And instead of conceiving of it as a natural  
 1473 sensory occurrence or event he conceived of it simply  
 1474 as a sensible event whether natural or artificial. At a  
 1475 stroke, by putting the word ‘natural’ under erasure, Au-  
 1476 gustine introduced the idea of sign as general mode of  
 1477 being overcoming or transcending the division between  
 1478 **nature and culture**. Specifically (and incredibly<sup>58</sup>), for  
 1479 the first time and ever after, human language (more  
 1480 precisely, the elements and modalities of linguistic  
 1481 communication) and culture generally came to be  
 1482 regarded as a system of signs (*signa ad placita*) inter-  
 1483 woven with the signs of nature, the *σὸς ἡμῶν αἰβῶν*

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or, in Augustine's parlance, *signa naturalia*.

"To a man the Latins followed Augustine in this way of viewing the sign. But, gradually, problems came to light. In particular, at least by the time of Aquinas, if not a century earlier in Abaelard,<sup>59</sup> question arose as to which is the primary element in the being of sign: being sensible, or being in relation to another? For, the Latins noticed, all of our psychological states, the *passiones animae*, put us into a relation to what they themselves are not, and present this 'other' objectively in experience.<sup>60</sup> Is not this relation of one thing presenting another than itself in fact more fundamental to being a sign than being a sensible element, whether natural or cultural? And if so, should not the passions of the soul, which, as effects of things necessarily provenate relations to what is objectively experienced, be regarded veritably as signs, even though they are not themselves directly sensible or, indeed, even outside of ourselves, outside of our subjectivity?

"So at another stroke was overcome the distinction between **inner and outer** as regards the means of signification, a landmark event paralleling Augustine's overcoming of the divide between nature and culture. The states of subjectivity whereby we cathect<sup>61</sup> and cognize objects, the scholastics proposed, are themselves a type of sign, even though we do not access them by external sensation. Call them 'formal signs,' they proposed, in contrast to the signs of which Augustine spoke, which they now proposed to call rather<sup>62</sup> 'instrumental' signs.

"But by now the discussion was no longer exclusively in the hands of the scholastic realists. The key distinction this time came rather from the nominalists after Ockham; and they were thinking exclusively of particular things, alone, according to their doctrine, belonging to the order of *ens reale*, in contrast to every relation which is as such an *ens rationis*.<sup>63</sup> Out of some two centuries of obscurity in which other issues held the center stage,<sup>64</sup> the Latin discussion of the 16th

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century took a turn in Iberia which was richly to vindicate Peirce's later thesis that an essential difference separated his Pragmaticism from the varieties springing up under his earlier label of Pragmatism, in that to the former scholastic realism is essential, while the latter remains compatible with nominalism.

"The decisive realization came cumulatively in the 16th and 17th centuries through the work of Soto (1529), Fonseca (1564), the Conimbricenses (1607), Araújo (1617), and finally Poinot (1632), in whose writing the decisive realization approximates unmistakable clarity.<sup>65</sup> This realization was twofold. One part<sup>66</sup> lay in the insight that not relation as such, but relation as triadic, constituted the being of the sign, while the sensible element (or, in the case of the formal sign, the psychological element) that occupied the role of other-representation is what we call a 'sign' in the common, loose way of speaking.<sup>67</sup> The other part<sup>68</sup> lay in the insight that it is not anything about relation as suprasubjective that determines whether it belongs to the order of *ens reale* or *ens rationis*, but wholly and solely the circumstances of the relation.<sup>69</sup> Whence one and the same relation, under one set of circumstances *ens reale*, by change of those circumstances alone could pass into an *ens rationis* without any detectable objective difference in the direct experience of the animal.

"Then came the virtual extinction of semiotic consciousness that we call modernity, a dark age that did not really end until Peirce returned to the late Latin writings and resumed the thread of their developing semiotic consciousness, first by explicitly naming the three elements or terms grounding the triadic sign relation, and then by shifting the emphasis from being to action with the identification of semiosis. The foreground element of representation in the sign relation Peirce termed the *representamen*.<sup>70</sup> This is what is loosely called a sign, but in reality is a sign-vehicle conveying what is signified to some individual or com-

- 1562 community, actual or prospective. The other represented  
 1563 or conveyed by the sign-vehicle Peirce traditionally  
 1564 termed the *significate* or *object signified* (in this two-  
 1565 word expression, to tell the truth, the first word is  
 1566 redundant). Whereas the prospective other to which  
 1567 representation is made (emphatically not necessarily  
 1568 a person, as Peirce was the first to emphasize<sup>71</sup> and  
 1569 later semiotic analysis was to prove<sup>72</sup>) Peirce termed<sup>73</sup>  
 1570 the *interpretant*, ‘the proper significate outcome’ of the  
 1571 action of signs.”  
 1572
- 1573 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague interrupted my historical excursus at  
 1574 this point.  
 1575
- 1576 REALIST: “Do you really mean to call the period between Des-  
 1577 cartes and Peirce the semiotic dark ages? Isn’t that a  
 1578 little strong?”  
 1579
- 1580 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Well”,  
 1581
- 1582 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I half apologized.  
 1583
- 1584 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “The shoe fits. Nor do the semiotic dark ages simply  
 1585 end with Peirce, I am afraid. They extend into the  
 1586 dawn of our own century, though I am confident  
 1587 we are seeing their final hours. After all, a darkness  
 1588 precedes every full dawn.”  
 1589
- 1590 REALIST: “I saw an ad for a new book of yours comparing  
 1591 today’s philosophical establishment with the judges  
 1592 of Galileo. That’s not likely to get you job offers at the  
 1593 top”, my colleague admonished.  
 1594
- 1595 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes”,  
 1596
- 1597 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I sighed;  
 1598
- 1599 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “the ad drew on the *Aviso* prefacing my history of  
 1600 philosophy.<sup>74</sup> It was calculated, well or ill, to sell the

- 1601 book to those disaffected from the philosophical side  
 1602 of modernity, its 'dark side,'<sup>75</sup> as distinguished from  
 1603 the glorious development of ideoscopic<sup>76</sup> knowledge  
 1604 that we call science."
- 1605
- 1606 REALIST: "Idioscopic?"
- 1607
- 1608 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I was sure my interlocutor spelled the term in ques-  
 1609 tion with an "i" rather than an "e" after the "d", given  
 1610 expertise in Greek. But since our exchange was not  
 1611 visual on the point, I escaped a demand to account for  
 1612 my deviation from correct Greek-derived orthography.  
 1613 Instead, I was able simply to explain:
- 1614
- 1615 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Knowledge that cannot be arrived at or verified  
 1616 without experimentation and, often, the help of  
 1617 mathematica formulae."
- 1618
- 1619 REALIST: "As opposed to what? Common sense?"
- 1620
- 1621 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "No, as opposed to cœnoscopic<sup>77</sup> knowledge, the  
 1622 systematic realization of consequences implied by the  
 1623 way we take 'reality' to be in those aspects wherein  
 1624 direct experimentation, and still less mathematiza-  
 1625 tion, is of much avail. In semiotics,<sup>78</sup> this distinc-  
 1626 tion has been explained as the distinction between  
 1627 *doctrina* and *scientia* as the scholastics understood  
 1628 the point prior to the rise of science in the modern  
 1629 sense. Peirce himself<sup>79</sup> characterized the distinction  
 1630 as 'cœnoscopic' vs. 'idioscopic', borrowing these terms  
 1631 from Jeremy Bentham."
- 1632
- 1633 REALIST: "More strange terminology. Why can't semioticians  
 1634 talk like normal people? And by the way, is Peirce's  
 1635 usage faithful to that of Bentham, and is Bentham  
 1636 actually the originator, the coiner, of these terms?"
- 1637
- 1638 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Normal is as normal does",
- 1639

- 1640 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I said with mild exasperation.  
1641
- 1642 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “How can you develop new ideas without new  
1643 words to convey them? Of course old words used in  
1644 unfamiliar ways can also serve, but tend to mislead  
1645 in any case. Surely you won’t deny that new insights  
1646 require new ways of speaking? Perhaps you’ve been  
1647 an undergraduate teacher too long.  
1648
- 1649 REALIST: “Point taken”,  
1650
- 1651 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague allowed ruefully.  
1652
- 1653 REALIST: “But what about the reliability of Peirce’s usage vis-  
1654 à-vis Bentham’s coinage of these terms, if he did coin  
1655 them?”  
1656
- 1657 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “As to the exact relation of Peirce’s appropriation to  
1658 the sense of Bentham’s original coinage, I can’t help  
1659 you there. I have never looked into Bentham directly.  
1660 But I find the distinction in Peirce useful, even cru-  
1661 cial, to understanding the postmodern development  
1662 of semiotics.”  
1663
- 1664 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague, returning abruptly at this point to  
1665 my interrupted historical excursus, said:  
1666
- 1667 REALIST: “You said just now that what I would call the ‘common  
1668 sense’ notion of sign, a particular thing representing  
1669 something other than itself, Peirce called technically  
1670 a *representamen*, and that this is not the sign itself  
1671 technically speaking but what you rather termed a  
1672 ‘sign-vehicle,’ functioning as such only because it is  
1673 the foreground element in the three elements whose  
1674 linkage or bonding makes up the sign technically or  
1675 strictly speaking.”  
1676
- 1677 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes”,  
1678

- 1679 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I allowed,  
1680
- 1681 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “you have followed me well. What makes something  
1682 appear within sense-perception as a sign in the com-  
1683 mon or loose sense is not anything intrinsic to the  
1684 physical subjectivity of the sensed object as a thing  
1685 but rather the fact that the objectified thing in ques-  
1686 tion stands in the position of representamen within a  
1687 triadic relation constituting a sign in its proper being  
1688 technically and strictly. So that physical structure  
1689 before the building in your line of vision that tells  
1690 you this is no longer Monaghan House is a sign not  
1691 strictly but loosely. Strictly it is the element of other-  
1692 representation within a triadic relation having you  
1693 with your semiotic web of experience and private  
1694 semiosis as a partial interpretant, and this building  
1695 here housing my office among other things as its signi-  
1696 fied object. Moreover, note that the physical structure  
1697 of the particular thing appearing in your Umwelt as  
1698 a sign may be subjected to ideoscopic analysis, but  
1699 that that analysis will never reveal its sign-status as  
1700 such. The recognition of signs as triadic relations in  
1701 contrast to related things as subjective structures is a  
1702 strictly cœnoscopic achievement, although of course  
1703 the semiosis of such things can well be developed  
1704 ideoscopically by the social sciences, and philosophy  
1705 will then be obliged to take such ideoscopic develop-  
1706 ments into account if it wishes to keep up with the  
1707 reality of human experience as a whole.”  
1708
- 1709 REALIST: “Now that is amazing.”  
1710
- 1711 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague seemed delighted.  
1712
- 1713 Voice 3: “What is amazing?”  
1714
- 1715 REALIST: “That I now see what you mean in saying that a sign  
1716 is what every object presupposes. You mean that every  
1717 object as an object depends upon a network of triadic

- 1718 relations, and that precisely these relations constitute  
 1719 the being of a sign strictly speaking. Hence without  
 1720 objects there would be isolated sensory stimuli, but  
 1721 no cathexis,<sup>80</sup> no cognition, establishing a world of  
 1722 objects wherein some appear desirable (+), others  
 1723 undesirable (−), with still others as matters of indif-  
 1724 ference (∅).”
- 1725
- 1726 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “That is only part of it.”
- 1727
- 1728 REALIST: “Part of it?”
- 1729
- 1730 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes. Every sign acting as such gives rise to further  
 1731 signs. Semiosis is an open process, open to the world  
 1732 of things on the side of physical interactions and open  
 1733 to the future on the side of objects. Thus you need to  
 1734 consider further that sign-vehicles or representamens,  
 1735 objects signified or significates, and interpretants can  
 1736 change places within semiosis. What is one time an  
 1737 object becomes another time primarily sign-vehicle,  
 1738 what is one time interpretant becomes another time  
 1739 object signified, and what is one time object signified  
 1740 becomes another time interpretant, and so on, in an  
 1741 unending spiral of semiosis, the very process through  
 1742 which, as Peirce again put it, ‘symbols grow.’”
- 1743
- 1744 REALIST: “So signs have a kind of life within experience, in-  
 1745 deed provide experience almost with its ‘soul’ in the  
 1746 Aristotelian sense of an internal principle of growth  
 1747 and development! One man’s object is another man’s  
 1748 sign, and an object one time can be an interpretant  
 1749 the next.”
- 1750
- 1751 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Now you’re getting the idea. Be careful. Next thing  
 1752 you know you’ll claim to be a semiotician.”
- 1753
- 1754 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: “So signs strictly speaking are invisible.”
- 1755
- 1756 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Yes, and inaudible and intactile, for that matter. By

- 1757 contrast, a sign *loosely speaking*, the an element occu-  
 1758 pying the position of representamen in a renvoi rela-  
 1759 tion vis-à-vis significate and interpretant, can indeed  
 1760 be seen and pointed to or heard. A great thinker of  
 1761 the 20th century once remarked,<sup>81</sup> perhaps without  
 1762 realizing the full depth of what he was saying, that  
 1763 animals other than humans make use of signs, but  
 1764 those animals do not know that there are signs. The  
 1765 vehicles of signs can normally be perceived (as long  
 1766 as they are ‘instrumental’ rather than ‘formal’) and  
 1767 can become rather interpretants or signifieds; but  
 1768 the signs themselves are relations, like all relations ir-  
 1769 reducibly suprasubjective, but unique too in being ir-  
 1770 reducibly triadic. Signs, in short, strictly speaking can  
 1771 be *understood* but not *perceived*; while ‘signs’ loosely  
 1772 speaking can be *both* perceived *and* understood, but  
 1773 when they are fully understood it is seen that what  
 1774 we call signs loosely are strictly representamens,  
 1775 the foreground element in a given triadic relation  
 1776 through which alone some object is represented to  
 1777 some mind, actually or only prospectively.”  
 1778
- 1779 REALIST: “What do you mean ‘prospectively?’”  
 1780
- 1781 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I sighed.  
 1782
- 1783 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “You bring up another story for which the world is  
 1784 not yet prepared.”  
 1785
- 1786 REALIST: “I do?”  
 1787
- 1788 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague looked worried, perhaps seeing lunch  
 1789 disappearing in a cloud of verbiage, and having had  
 1790 enough of the case of the giant rat of Sumatra on the  
 1791 table between us, still staring beady-eyed his way.  
 1792
- 1793 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Indeed you do. Remember a little while ago when  
 1794 the subject of evolution came up?”  
 1795

- 1796 REALIST: "Indeed I do, and I can tell you that I am happy you  
1797 didn't insist on going into it."  
1798
- 1799 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Nor will I now, except to say this. Up to the present  
1800 evolution has been understood mainly as a *vis a tergo*,  
1801 building up from below through individual interac-  
1802 tions structures increasingly complex and far-flung.<sup>82</sup>  
1803 I have a suspicion that this picture is incomplete in  
1804 just the way that requires semiosis. For the action of  
1805 signs is distinctive as compared with the action of  
1806 things in that the action of things takes place only  
1807 among actual physical existents, whereas semiosis  
1808 requires at any given time only that two out of the  
1809 three related elements actually exist. In physical  
1810 interactions always the past shapes the future, but  
1811 in semiotic interactions there is an influence of the  
1812 future upon the present and even upon the past as  
1813 bearing on the present, so to speak. My suspicion is  
1814 that wherever you have evidence of such an influence  
1815 you have semiosis, an action of signs. And since we  
1816 can see from the semiosis of animal life that the very  
1817 possibility of semiosis in general is rooted in the in-  
1818 difference of relation to its subjective ground on the  
1819 one side and to the physical unreality of its object  
1820 on the other side,<sup>83</sup> I venture to guess that a *physiose-*  
1821 *miosis*, prior to and surrounding even the biosemiosis  
1822 of which Sebeok speaks,<sup>84</sup> with its phytosemiosis,  
1823 zoösemiosis, and anthroposemiosis as parts, will  
1824 prove to be at the heart of what has heretofore been  
1825 called, *faut de mieux*, evolution."  
1826
- 1827 REALIST: "Sebeok?"  
1828
- 1829 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: my colleague queried.  
1830
- 1831 REALIST: "This is the second time you have spoken his name  
1832 in this discussion. Who is he? And is he important  
1833 for semiotics?"  
1834

- 1835 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I could not but chuckle at the relativity of fame.  
1836
- 1837 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Of the three most important figures in the later twen-  
1838 tieth century development of semiotics, Sebeok is the  
1839 second most famous and the first in importance. He  
1840 is to semiotics today what Mersenne was and more to  
1841 philosophy in the time of Descartes. I am astonished  
1842 you have not yourself heard of him or read something  
1843 of his work, if not in semiotics then at least in linguis-  
1844 tics, anthropology, or folklore.”  
1845
- 1846 REALIST: “Does he accept your notion of sign as presupposed  
1847 to object?”  
1848
- 1849 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Well, I am reasonably confident that he would, al-  
1850 though I have never put the question to him in just  
1851 that way. After all, it is a formula I have stumbled upon  
1852 only recently,<sup>85</sup> and have not had a chance for extended  
1853 discussions with Sebeok in quite some time, although  
1854 I had hoped to arrange a visit this past summer. My  
1855 main disagreement, if it can be called that, with Se-  
1856 beok concerns not so much the question of objects  
1857 in the sense we have discussed but concerns rather  
1858 the bearing of semiosis upon the very idea of things  
1859 in the universe. Over the last decade of the twentieth  
1860 century and into this one,<sup>86</sup> Sebeok has envisioned a  
1861 ‘cosmos before semiosis’. In this way of thinking, the  
1862 idea of ‘nonbiological atomic interactions’ as well as  
1863 ‘those of inorganic molecules’ prior to the origin of  
1864 life being ‘semiosic’ appears as ‘surely metaphorical’, as  
1865 Sebeok puts it.”<sup>87</sup>  
1866
- 1867 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: My colleague frowned.  
1868
- 1869 REALIST: “Surely this Sebeok is right. Inorganic substances do  
1870 not interpret signs, or involve themselves in *renvoi!*”  
1871
- 1872 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: It was my turn to frown.  
1873

- 1874 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "I am not so sure. I think that here Sebeok has been  
 1875 uncharacteristically hasty in his dismissal of a semio-  
 1876 sis virtually active in the world of things. The whole  
 1877 question of the 'anthropic principle' is one that implies  
 1878 semiosis from the very beginning of the universe."  
 1879
- 1880 REALIST: "An action of signs in the universe *prior even to the*  
 1881 *advent of life?* If that's not to indulge in metaphor I  
 1882 don't know what is."  
 1883
- 1884 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "There is another alternative, a third way between  
 1885 metaphor and organic semiosis, a way suggested, in  
 1886 fact, by the father of systematic semiotics, if we may  
 1887 so speak of the first thinker theoretically to unify the  
 1888 notion of sign under the rubric of triadic relation or,  
 1889 as we are now inclined to say, 'renvoi'. According to  
 1890 Poincot,<sup>88</sup> it suffices to be a sign virtually in order to  
 1891 actually signify. By this formula, even in the *prima*  
 1892 *facie* dyadic interactions of things relations are born  
 1893 sufficient to constitute a semiosis at work in the inor-  
 1894 ganic no less than organic layers of nature, and prior  
 1895 even to the advent of the organic layers — indeed  
 1896 anticipatory of that advent. This is an argument I  
 1897 began in 1990<sup>89</sup> and have continued to develop since  
 1898 under the rubric 'physiosesemiosis.'<sup>90</sup>  
 1899
- 1900 REALIST: "Semiosis, signs at work in physical nature as such?  
 1901 That sounds crazy. No wonder some people regard  
 1902 semiotics as an imperialistic development!"  
 1903
- 1904 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: "Well, it is only a guess. But others besides me,<sup>91</sup> to say  
 1905 nothing of Peirce before me,<sup>92</sup> have made analogous  
 1906 suggestions. Time will tell!"  
 1907
- 1908 REALIST: "A discussion for another time. I hate to end a good  
 1909 discussion on a note of shibboleth, but let us go to  
 1910 eat."  
 1911
- 1912 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: I nodded in agreement and started to rise, when my

- 1913 friend raised his hand to stay me.
- 1914
- 1915 REALIST: “One last question, to be answered in the briefest of
- 1916 terms.”
- 1917
- 1918 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Go ahead.”
- 1919
- 1920 REALIST: “Are you saying that to know signs in the strict sense,
- 1921 to thematize sign, as it were, requires a species-specific-
- 1922 cally human *Innenwelt*?”
- 1923
- 1924 SEMIOTIST, Voice 3: “Just so. For the imperceptible distinction between
- 1925 subjectivity and between relations and related things,
- 1926 is at the heart of linguistic communication so far as
- 1927 it does not reduce to perceptible elements.<sup>93</sup> And it
- 1928 is the point of departure for anthroposemiosis in its
- 1929 difference from all zoösemiosis.<sup>94</sup> All animals are
- 1930 semiotic beings, but only human beings can become
- 1931 semiotic animals — animals, that is to say, that both
- 1932 use signs and know that there are signs.”
- 1933
- 1934 REALIST: “I like that. ‘*The semeiotic animal*’: a new definition
- 1935 for humanity as the postmodern age opens. Let us
- 1936 say goodbye to the *res cogitans*, even as Descartes said
- 1937 goodbye to the *animal rationale*; and, like good semi-
- 1938 otic animals, let us set out in search of sign-vehicles
- 1939 which can lead us to objectified things pleasant to eat.
- 1940 How about the Black Lab?”
- 1941
- 1942 SEMIOTIST, Voice 1: Now my colleague rose. I rose with him and together
- 1943 we set out in search of food. We had not far to go,
- 1944 for the Black Labrador is a rather good restaurant
- 1945 not two full blocks from the place of our discussion
- 1946 where my colleague’s initial incredulity gave way to
- 1947 the conviction that, while there is yet more to be said,
- 1948 yet at least this much is certain even now: the sign is
- 1949 what every object presupposes.
- 1950 Since what is last in discovery becomes first in
- 1951 exposition, the last discovery of the moderns in the

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person of Peirce has become the first theme postmodern philosophy and intellectual culture must come to terms with (since it defines them). It is not a bad discovery, even if compared to the late Latins it was only a rediscovery. Small wonder that, all thought being in signs, the objective universe is perfused with them. It remains to see if even the physical universe may not as giving rise to us consist exclusively of signs. But after lunch . . . .

## Notes on the Text

1. Sebeok 1984a: 18.
2. *Ibid.*: 3.
3. Beuchot and Deely 1995; Deely 1994a
4. See Petrilli and Ponzio 2001: 4–11, esp. 6 and 10. The mistaking of “a part (that is, human signs and in particular verbal signs) for the whole (that is, all possible signs, human and non-human)” that lay at the heart of this contest had already been identified as a *pars pro toto fallacy* and made the subject of a landmark anthology of the period: see Deely 1986; Deely, Williams, and Kruse eds. 1986.
5. The First North American Semiotics Colloquium, convened July 28–30, 1975, “at the University of South Florida for the purpose of founding a Semiotic Society of America”, as the jacket of the volume memorializing the colloquium (Sebeok ed. 1977) announces.
6. Sebeok 1984a: 21: “the central preoccupation of semiotics, I now hold, is . . . to reveal the substratal illusion underlying reality and to search for the reality that may, after all, lurk behind that illusion.”
7. as Sebeok put it in 1984a: 21.
8. Cf. Peirce Ed. 1883.
9. Philodemus i.54–40bc.
10. “*Agere sequitur esse*”, in the original. Extended commentary in Deely 1994.
11. Eco and Deely 1983.
12. At the time, the main evidence in the public record (at least within the intellectual community of semioticians) traced back to 1983, as summarized in the “Description of Contributions” for Reading 6 in Deely, Williams and Kruse 1986: xix. Since then, the substantial work of Manetti 1987 has been added from within semiotics, and the earlier independent confirmation of the original point by Markus 1972 bears consultation. A survey of the point both in its evidence in the ancient Greek context and in its more general import for the Latin Age and for the understanding of semiotics today is found in Deely 2001, referred to throughout note to this dialogue as the *Four Ages*.
13. See the Index entries for ΣΗΜΕΙΟΝ and for NATURAL SIGN in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 838 and 939).
14. Poinset 1632: Book I, Questions 1 and 3. Commentary in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 432–33, 433n58).
15. Cf. Peirce 1897 and after; commentary in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 433n58, 639–40, 641n90).
16. See the Index entry sign in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 993–94), esp. the subentry “strict sense of being of sign . . . distinguished from loose sense”, p. 994.
17. See the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), pp. 740–41, text and note 9.
18. Peirce 1905: CP 5.423, and c.1905: CP 8.208; commentary in Deely 2001: 616–628.
19. Heidegger 1927: 207.
20. See the re-definition of “The Boundary of Time” and “Time and Space” in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: xxix–xxxiii, 70–72).
21. Deely 1996, in *fnem*.
22. Witches: women (usually women) who (according to the official views promulgated in medieval and renaissance church documents), in exchange for their worship, were endowed by Satan with supernatural powers. To paradigmize a huge literature: see the gloss on Kramer and Sprenger 1487 in the References.
23. Actually, the witches at Salem were hanged rather than burned, I am told, “death for witchcraft” being the result in either case. My colleague apparently was familiar, as I at the time, only with the more ‘colorful’ version of the Salem trials.
24. I had in mind the modern distinction between primary and secondary qualities of sensation, and the very different ways in which the scholastic realists of Latin times and Peirce

at the end of modern times himself resolved the distinction to the common end of vindicating the transcendental equivalence of truth with being C that “communication and being coincide”, as Petrilli and Ponzio (2001: 54) put it. See the Index entries qualities given in sensation, and transcendentals, in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 973).

25. See Kramer and Sprenger 1486.

26. Poinset 1632: *Treatise on Signs*, Second Preamble, Article 2, 93/17–96/36; and Book I, Question 1, 117/18–118/18.

27. See the summaries of the matter essayed by Grote 1872, as learned as the confusion gets. Cf. the discussion in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), pp. 72–78, 226–231, and 423–427.

28. See the Index entries for sign and suprasubjectivde being in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 993–94, 1001–2).

29. See the Index entry subjective being, subjectivity in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 1000–1001), in contrast with the entry for intersubjective being, intersubjectivity.

30. See the Index entry object, objective being in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 944–45).

31. See chapter 8 of the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: esp. 388–391)

32. See the discussion below of “cathexis” and “cathecting”: p. n.; and p., n.

33. See the Index entry formal sign in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 893–94).

34. *Ens rationis*. See the Index entries ens rationis and mind-dependent being in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 883–84 and 934–35, respectively).

35. *Entia realia*. See the Index entries ens reale and mind-independent or physical in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 884–85 and 935–37, respectively).

36. See the Index entry for definition of sign in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 874–75).

37. See the Conimbricenses 1607, especially in the bilingual edition by Doyle 2001.

38. See the Index entry interpretant in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 914–15).

39. Jakobson 1974.

40. See Eco 1987.

41. Deely 1993, the SSA Thomas A. Sebeok Fellowship Inaugural Lecture.

42. Poinset 1632: *Tractatus de Signis*, Book I, Question 1, 116/14–117/17; Deely 1986a.

43. Sebeok 1984: 9.

44. See the Index entry for ground, senses a and b, in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 900–903).

45. See Husserl 1929; Spiegelberg 1965: I, 155.

46. From Brentano 1874. Brief notice in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 404 and 561n38); extended comment in Deely 1978.

47. Deely 1971, 1975, 1978.

48. Heidegger 1927: 437.

49. See, *inter alia*, Sebeok 1984.

50. *Entia realia*.

51. *Entia rationis*.

52. In the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), see the whole of chapter 7, but esp. 341–357, and the Table on p. 354.

53. This term is from Husserl 1936 in particular; in Aquinas’s own manner of speaking, he calls the focus or “starting point” of species-specifically human awareness *ens primum cognitum*, which then subdivides over the course of experience into *ens reale* and *ens rationis*. See the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), chap. 7.

54. This distinction, taken from Sebeok, is one of the bases upon which the history of philosophy as a whole needs to be rewritten: see the *Four Ages*, chapter 1.

55. See “What to do with common sense?”, in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 547–48).

56. Reid 1785: 604–5. A useful C if still presemiotic C discussion of “Thomas Reid and the Signs of the Times” is essayed in McNerny 2001: 52–56.

57. See Sebeok 1984b on the latter point, Manetti 1987 on the former.

58. See the discussion of Markus 1972 in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 218–20, and esp. 406n95).

59. See “The So-Called Dark Ages”, chapter 6 of the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: esp. 243–247).

60. See the Index entries passions of the soul and formal sign in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 950 and 893–94, respectively).

61. Though my interlocutor raised no question about this term, and later in our discussion (see p. below) manifested a thorough mastery of its usage as pertaining to semiotics, nevertheless, the term is important to the future of semiotics and sufficiently unfamiliar to most readers at the time this transcript was made to warrant a note of explication. An organism responds to an object not only by cognizing it but, at the same time, by *cathecting* that object as desirable, undesirable, or ‘neutral’, as we have said. The former relation arises from the cognitive representations (or ‘ideas’), the latter from the emotional representations (or ‘feelings’) accompanying or evoked by the ideas. Thus cognition and cathexis are twin processes within zoö- and anthropo-semiosis, “simultaneously given and only analytically separable”, as (Parsons, Shils, and Olds best noted (1951: 68–69; see also their 1951a: 110).

The centrality of this idea for semiotics, particularly as regards the concept of Umwelt, appears from the following (Parsons, Shils, *et al.* 1951: 10n13): “A distinction between *affect* and *cathexis* is desirable for present purposes. *Affect* refers to a state of an organism C a state of euphoria or dysphoria or qualitative variants thereof. *Cathexis* refers to a state of an organism C a state of euphoria or dysphoria C in relation to some object. Thus the term *cathexis* is broader in its reference than the term *affect*; it is *affect plus object*. It is *object-oriented affect*. It involves attaching affective significance to an object; although it involves attachment to one or more properties of the object, as used here it does not itself refer to a property of the object, but to a *relation* between actor and object. Furthermore, there is no connotation either of activity or passivity in the actor’s relation to the object implied in the concept.” On the specifically Innenwelt side, see Murray 1951: 453n. (The distinction Kluckhohn 1951: 395 attempts to draw between cathexis and valuation amounts to no more than the difference between cathexis within a generically animal Umwelt and a species-specifically human Lebenswelt.)

62. See the discussion of this terminology in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 390n71).

63. See chapter 8 of the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: esp. 385–393).

64. “The Thicket”, in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), pp. 394–408).

65. The *Four Ages*, chapters 9 and 10. In particular, see the Index entry semiotic consciousness (Deely 2001: 988–89).

66. Poinset 1632: *Treatise on Signs*, Book I, Question 3 (that the relation of sign to signified and the relation of sign to power are one single relation, thus irreducibly triadic).

67. See note , p. above.

68. Poinset 1632: *Treatise on Signs*, Book I, Question 2 (that the physical status of the sign to signified component of sign relations is determined by the context in which the sign functions).

69. See “The Problem of the Nose of Wax” in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001), chapter 8, esp. 369–372 text, and note 24 to p. 370.

70. Latin derived, this term should be pronounced “rep-re-sen-táá-men”, not “rep-re-séént-a-men”, as the Anglophile Peirceans would have it.

71. Peirce 1904.

72. Krampen 1981; Deely 1982, 1989, 1993.

73. Peirce c.1907: CP 5.473.

74. “Aviso”, pp. vii–viii of the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001).

75. See “Synthesis and Successors: The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”, chapter 13 in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 540–589, esp. 565–572).

76. Also spelled “idioscopic”. See the Index entry in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 910).

77. Also spelled “cenoscopic”. See the Index entry in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 865).

78. The discussion began with Sebeok 1976, and was picked up in Deely 1976 and 1978a (the former an essay review of Eco 1976, the latter an essay review of Sebeok 1976). The point became an Appendix in Deely 1982a: 127–130, an encyclopedia entry in Sebeok *et al.* 1986: I,

214, and is hardly regarded as controversial any longer among those cognizant of the discussion, as Petrilli and Ponzio have remarked (2001: *passim*).

79. Peirce c.1902: CP 5.424.

80. In connection with our earlier note on this term (note , p. above), we may add here that the importance of introducing this term into semiotics is to provide a marker for Peirce's seminal idea (c.1907: 00035–36) that, within the life of animals, "every sign whatever that functions as such must have an emotional interpretant".

81. Maritain 1957: 55: "So far we have spoken of genuine language. Let us point out that the word 'language,' when referring to animals, is equivocal. Animals possess a variety of means of communication but no genuine language. I have observed that animals use signs. But, as I also pointed out, no animal knows the relation of signification or uses signs as involving and manifesting an awareness of this relation." See this important article on the point *passim*.

82. Dennett 1995.

83. Poincaré 1632: Second Preamble, Article 2, esp. 95/18–96/36; and Book I, Question 1, esp. 117/28–118/18.

84. Sebeok 2001a. But see also Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok 1992, Hoffmeyer and Emmeche 1999, and Hoffmeyer 1996.

85. "A New Definition of *Signum*" in the *Four Ages* (Deely 2001: 434–35). But cf. Deely 1996.

86. "The Evolution of Semiosis", in Sebeok 1991: 83–96; reprinted in Sebeok 2001: 17–30.

87. Sebeok 1991: 84, 2001: 18.

88. Poincaré 1632: *Tractatus de Signis*, Book I, Question 1, "Resolution of Counter-Arguments", esp. 126/3–4, 9/22.

89. Deely, *Basics of Semiotics*, chapter 5.

90. On the term physiosemiosis, then, see Deely 1990, 1991, 1993, 1997, 1998, and 2001b.

91. E.g., Prodi 1977; Koch 1987; Kruse 1994; Corrington 2001. See the umbrella symposium convened by Nöth 2001 to open the new century.

92. Besides my own analysis of what I termed "Peirce's Grand Vision" (Deely 1989), Nöth 2001: 16, observes that renowned Peircean scholars, such as Helmut Pape (1989), Klaus Oehler (1993), and Lúcia Santaella-Braga (1994, 1996, 1999), affirm that the origins of semiosis, according to Peirce, begin before life."

93. Deely 1980, 2001a.

94. Such was the argument of Deely 1994, sharply focused in Deely 2001a.

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subdivisions and rearrangements have been made since. Originally an untitled letter-article to the editor of *The Nation*, this ms. has several partial draft endings signed “Charles Santiago Peirce”, but no single, consecutive, complete draft as a whole.

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