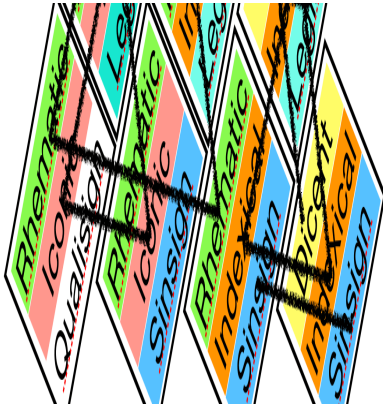




Semiotic shock

Description

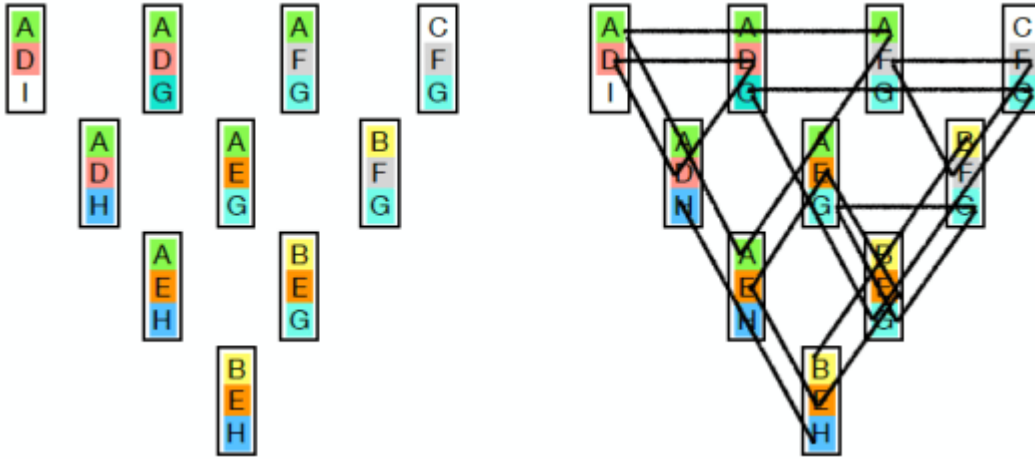
In his 1903 article "Nomenclature and divisions of triadic relations, as far as they are determined," C.S. Peirce outlined 10 classes of signs based on 3 combinations of 3 terms. Whatever his classifications tell us about categories of signs and meanings, there's a seductive geometry to his formulation, and some anomalies. His three semiotic terms are

1. Rheme, Dicent, Argument
2. Icon, Index, Symbol
3. Qualisign, Legisign, Sinsign

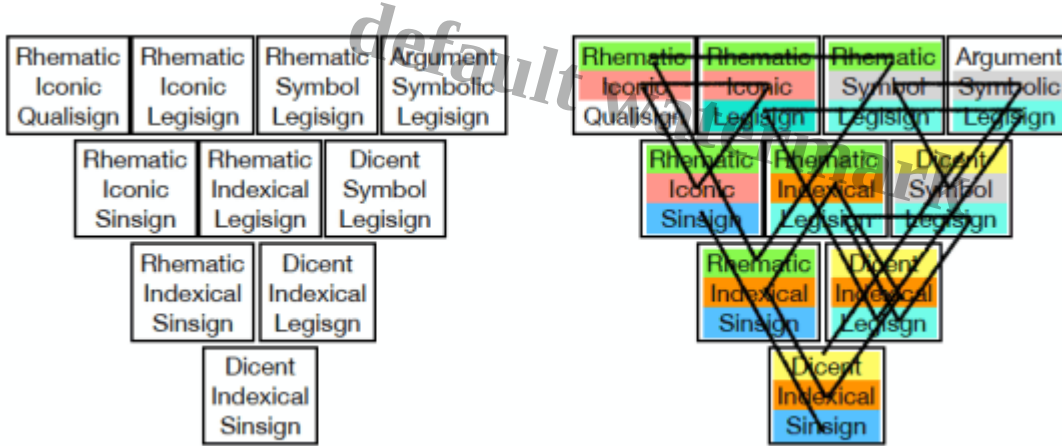
In terms of his classification geometry they could just as well have been labelled

1. A, B, C
2. D, E, F
3. G, H, I

There are 27 Different ways the 3 sets of terms can be combined: ADG, ADH, ADI, etc. Peirce only considers 10 of these combinations. Here's the pattern he chooses: an inverted pyramid. I've coloured the letters to show the construction of the pyramid. Next to it I've duplicated the pyramid and drawn lines connecting the terms (A, B, C, etc).



C and I are outliers and don't have any connections. Here's his actual classification system, with the lines drawn as well.



Starts (or ends) with a bang

The apex of the inverted pyramid (Dicent Indexical Sinsign) is a kind of shock â?? I mean, it is about signs that communicate as a shock. According to Peirce, â??a Dicent Sinsign is any object of direct experience in so far as it is a sign, and, as such affords information concerning its Object. This it can only do by being really affected by its Object; so that it is necessarily an Indexâ?• (294). See [previous post](#) about indexicals.

Here's my understanding of the three terms that make up that category of sign.

- Dîcent = a complete qualitative expression (e.g. it's bright, sad, loud, melancholic)
- Indexical = a sign that does not resemble its source (object) but appears to be caused by it
- Sînsîgn = a singular non-linguistic event.

Added together a loud bang from an obvious source would qualify.

For an intriguing expansion of Peirce's diagram see the interactive website: [Minute Semeiotic](#). The site also explains each of the squares. For example, Drawing on Peirce, the Minute Semeiotic site explains the sign category {Dicent Indexical Sinsign} thus:

the final shocking effect produced by an unexpected and strident sound communicating that some existent thing nearby is emitting such sound; in the above example, it is the interpreter understanding the assertion 'There is here and now an unexpected and strident sound' and reacting accordingly to the asserted; the final product of mechanical communication among the pieces of a machine (the movement produced by the energy transmission); the final effect produced by the transmission of a pulse (the starting up of a computer, for instance).

Its positioning on the pyramid puts this class of sign as something raw, immediate, sudden, emanating from the object, with an obvious cause, with immediately accessible qualities, and that doesn't look or sound like its source: a flash of light from a faulty circuit, an explosion from a firecracker, the sound of a tray of dishes crashing to the floor – that kind of thing.

References

- Peirce, Charles Sanders. 1992. Nomenclature and divisions of triadic relations, as far as they are determined. *The Essential Peirce, Selected Philosophical Writings Volume 2 (1893-1913)*: 289-299. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Romanini, Vinicius. 2009. The periodic table of classes of signs. *Minute Semeiotic*. Available online: <http://www.minutesemeiotic.org/home.php?id=1> (accessed 2 December 2017).

Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. classification
2. Peirce
3. semiotics

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