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A feeling of « red »

In his attempt to give examples for every category of signs, Charles Sanders Peirce comes up with "a feeling of red" as an illustration of a qualisign, that is a sign of essence. It « denotes by virtue of some common ingredient or similarity.» (2.254) As such a qualisign is also an icon. It cannot be interpreted if it is not compared to something somehow similar to it.

Two questions pop up : How can a feeling be a sign? To feel is not necessarily to *have* a feeling. You can feel the « heat » of the vibrating red without having a feeling of « red ». And furthermore, is Peirce's « red » necessarily metaphoric? Is he referring to something the mind sees behind closed eyes, like the dots in Rimbaud's poem *Le Poète de Sept Ans*?

«...et dans ses yeux fermés voyait des points.
...and behind his closed eyes he was seeing dots»

As a qualisign, the feeling of red has no symbolic content. How do I feel? To know it, I have to put words (symbols) on a state of mind that is mostly physical. Such thinking involves feeling. Among the indexes produced by the holistic mind, a certain number can refer to the same object, if they are triggered to do so by the discursive mind. That is why the more I think over what makes me suffer, the more I trigger pain. But I can also attain great joy by concentrating on what makes me feel good.

The colour whose vibration, be it mental or actual, is *like* the light, it tends to contrast with darkness. The clear side of « things », not as clear as the sun, unless it sets on a hot summer night, nor the moon, unless it rises on a fall evening, more like flames of a fire...or blood, is the «same» colour as what is known here through recollection. But as soon as you name the vibration, and call it red, you use a symbol, a conventional bond between a sign, the phonetic utterance of the word « red », and a meaning, the mental habit of experimenting the colour red, naming all these different things and, with the help of the illustrative mind, coloring them red.

In the right brain, as the discursive mind operates the symbolization of the memorized experience of actually seeing red, the holistic mind can visualize red without sounding the word « red » or even thinking with the concept « red ». This kind of sign is devoid of symbols. But in order to explain or illustrate such a sign, Peirce had to use symbols: the letters « r », « e » and « d », and the word "red" itself.

The part of the mind operating visualization, the mental « place » where opinion (*gnomê*) is made, involves emotions. What Aristotle called the proof (*pistis*), it is the product of the *apodictic* function of thinking (*dianoia*) taking place in the left hemisphere. He called *apophantic* thinking what we know goes on mainly in the right hemisphere. Neuro-sciences have demonstrated how the right hemisphere of the human brain specializes in *spatial* tasks as well as emotional responses. And this right brain thinking, partly intra-hemispheric and partly inter-hemispheric, has an indexical ground. That is to say it produces mainly indexes, signs of existence referring to their object « by virtue of being really affected by that Object » (2.248).

The **holistic** mind, when it closes on itself and does not cooperate with the discursive mind, has an *intra-hemispheric* activity we shall call the **somatic** thinking. There is no direct contact between this intra-hemispheric activity of the holistic mind, totally devoid of symbols, and the analytical thinking of the discursive mind, dealing exclusively with symbols.

If the right hemisphere of the brain takes part in an *inter-hemispheric* activity, we shall call this activity of the holistic mind **imaginative** thinking. In the left brain, the inter-hemispheric activity is reflective thinking. And only through reflective or imaginative thinking can indexes be mixed with symbols.

Inter-hemispheric activity uses iconicity to establish a link between indexes and symbols. *Indexicalization* is the principal function of imaginative thinking. It is a second degree operation. The natural outpour of indexes in somatic thinking is the first degree operation. You don't need to have learnt anything to see something in your mind: it happens by itself and one thinking person sometimes grasp some of it to use it as a ground for constructing meaning.

Symbolization is the principal function of reflective thinking. the natural tendency to explain brings the discursive mind to an intra-hemispherical brain activity called analytical thinking. But no mentally balanced human being can use this computer type of thinking exclusively; you would have to stop the natural outpour of indexes. Some pre-recorded sub-logical signs that may well be produced by somatic thinking, find their way through reflective thinking.

Reflective thinking is the inter-hemispherical activity of the left brain. It uses indexes in the field of symbols and treats them as symbols. Logic icons, such as « person » « thing » or « colour » are used by the discursive mind to trigger the outpour of indexes from the somatic mind. The non stopping production of indexes, a constant flow, out of which some are used by the discursive mind to build the Self, is the unconscious part of thinking.

As the inter-hemispheric activity of the right brain, **imaginative thinking** uses symbols in the field of indexes, and it treats these symbols as indexes. Through the imagining activity, the holistic mind incorporates symbols in the making of images without necessarily importing their contextual settings and their semantical ties. The

law on which the conventional sign is based, does not have to be known by the imagining mind to assure the efficiency of a symbol.