

## Perception, Dreams, Films: Iconicity and Indexicality in Peirce's Theory of Perception

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Article abstract

Chronologically speaking, Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) *could* have mentioned the technique of film in the context of his phenomenological, or as he called them, *phaneroscopic* theories. But when he compared the human percepts to “moving pictures accompanied by sounds and feelings” in 1905 (MS 939 : 24), Peirce did not speak of the cinema. However, his investigations in the fields of cognition and phenomenology show relevant intersections with major concepts and problems of filmic perception theory. The present article aspires to investigate Peircian philosophy and film theory through some of their common concepts. The question will be raised as to whether the filmic viewing situation can be understood as a *genuine* perceptual situation in the Peircian sense. In a first step, I will give an analysis of Peirce's theory of perception. In contrast to the majority of interpretations of the latter, which emphasize its iconic character, I shall argue for a perceptual process where iconicity is not the starting point but rather the outcome of it. This will imply an analysis of the roles of iconicity and indexicality in perception and of their relation to cinema's “impression of reality”. Despite the phenomenological realism of cinematic images, the nature of what the viewer actually *perceives* is not as obvious as one might be tempted to think. Finally, an interpretation of filmic images as “diagrams of perception” will open up to some pedagogical dimensions of film viewing.

# Perception, Dreams, Films : Iconicity and Indexicality in Peirce's Theory of Perception

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It is very doubtful that there is any veracity to the well-known story of how early audiences of 1896 reacted to the projection of Lumière's *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*. The legend is that members of the audience had been so scared by the moving image of a life-sized train hurtling directly toward them that they ran screaming to the back of the hall. Could the totally "unaccustomed" viewer have really been so overwhelmed by the phenomenological realism of the moving images that her pragmatic sense of reality vanished? After all, the film was silent, in black and white, and audiences knew they were sitting in a hall without train tracks, etc. Surely it is not typical of the filmic viewing situation to see the viewer in a fully physically active or reactive state. Factors such as the darkness of the screening room and the physical passivity of the spectator sitting immobile in a comfortable chair (at least in the Western tradition of movie watching) seem to induce a "regressive", almost "oneiric" state. Indeed, many film theorists drawing on psychology, sociology or aesthetics have described the spectatorial condition as (para-)oneiric. With thinkers like Henri Agel, Ricciotto Canudo, Jean Epstein, Edgar Morin, Jean Mitry, Christian Metz, but also André Breton and René Clair, the dream metaphor has a long history in film theory. However, neither in the dreaming state nor during filmic viewing, the physical immobility is accompanied by a psychical stasis. Neurocinematic researcher Pia Tikka has argued that : "[C]inema could be claimed to complement the same evolutionary task of threat simulation [...] as dreams" (2006 : 154-155). Does the perception of films and dreams share certain pragmatic dimensions with non-filmic and non-oneiric perception, given their evolutionary-cognitive functioning?

One thinker who conceived of perception in a radically pragmatic(istic) way was Charles Peirce. On the issue of pragmatism, he wrote :

Pragmatism makes thought ultimately apply to action exclusively – to conceived action. [...] Pragmatism makes thinking to consist in the living inferential metaboly of symbols whose purport lies in conditional general resolutions to act. (CP 5.402, Fn P3 Para 2/3 : 260)

And on perception Peirce states :

[T]he conformity of action to general intentions is as much given in perception as is the element of action itself, which cannot really be mentally torn away from such general purposiveness. (CP 5.212)

Perception, Peirce argues, is not merely “a passing of images before the mind’s eye, much as if one were walking through a picture gallery” (CP 4.540). Rather than being an affair of iconicity, perception is, for Peirce, an affair of Secondness : “[T]he perceiver is *aware of being compelled* to perceive what he perceives. Now existence means precisely the exercise of *compulsion*” (CP 4.541, [emphasis mine]). There are two major concepts in Peirce’s theory of perception, the percept and the perceptual judgment. A percept is the highly fugitive and a-cognitional instance that initiates a perception. But the perceiving mind has no cognitional access to the percept except through the perceptual judgment, which immediately follows the occurrence of the percept and professes to represent it. If you like to consider an example, imagine you are wandering the fields somewhere and suddenly perceive something moving on the horizon (a percept) that you quickly manage to judge : “There is a herd of cows running toward me” (a perceptual judgment). Peirce was asking himself how such a perceptual judgment comes into existence. His answer implies indexicality, but not iconicity. He denies any *logical or iconic* relation between the predicate of the perceptual judgment (here : “running toward me”) and the sensational element of the percept. Between the percept and the perceptual judgment there are only “forceful connections” (CP 7.634), Peirce states. The perceptual judgment is “the cognitive *product of a reaction*”. (CP 5.156, [emphasis mine]). Note that for Peirce, reaction is first in perception, with cognition being the product of that reaction. Perception presents itself to be first and foremost a coercive existential relation between the perceiver and the perceived object. The perceiver is *forced* to acknowledge the external reality acting upon her, and this raises an explaining cognition. Now, coercion can only be acknowledged *qua* an index, there being a “logical affiliation of the Proposition, and the PHEME generally, to coercion” (CP 4.541). Peirce’s pragmatic maxim says something very close to this pragmatic or existential interpretation of the perceptual process, namely that any conception a person can have of any object intimately depends on how the person conceives the object’s effects, or practical bearings. The 1878 statement of the pragmatic maxim says :

Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we

conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (CP 5.402)

If we pick up the whole grammatical logic of the pragmatic maxim and transpose it to the perceptual process, it would add up to the following : *Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the percept to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our perceptual judgment.* Could this be a warranted transfer, given the preponderance of Secondness in the perceptual process? But is it justified to talk of “conceptions” here, since the process between the percept and the perceptual judgment is completely uncontrollable and unconscious? At CP 2.27 Peirce states : “Our logical account of the matter has to start from a perceptual fact, or proposition resulting from thought about a percept”. There seems to be a paradox in Peirce’s statement, the percept being described as an *object of thought*<sup>1</sup> and as an *object that lies outside the sphere of our logical account* at the same time. In order to reconcile these apparently contradictory accounts it is important to acknowledge that Peirce explicitly differentiates between two sorts of thought : on the one hand, there is instinctive thought, or instinctive mind, which is unconscious and uncontrollable, and on the other hand, there is logical thought, or reasoning, which is conscious and deliberate.<sup>2</sup> According to Peirce the fundamental operation of perception is not “worthy to be called reasoning”, since it is not “deliberate, critical, self-controlled” (CP 4.476).<sup>3</sup> Thus, what cognitively happens on the basic level of perception is not reasoning but in Peirce’s own terms, the mind’s “instinctive adaptation to the Outer World” (CP 4.157).<sup>4</sup>

The “percept” should not be understood as a singular object with a mind-independent ontological status but as a forceful moment of dyadic acquaintance between an Ego and a Non-Ego. (*cf.* CP 7.621 ff.). Thus, perceptual cognition (the formation of the perceptual judgment) totally depends on that forceful, dyadic moment. In the percept, a Non-Ego acts upon an Ego, the latter being thereby urged to produce instinctive inference, which results in a perceptual judgment. Peirce considers perception to be through and through an affair of secondness (CP 7.625)<sup>5</sup> :

- 1) The way the percept appears is typical for secondness-phenomena. It is something that in its vividness is “resisting us” : “The vividness with which a percept stands out is an element of secondness; because the percept is vivid in proportion to the intensity of its effect upon the perceiver.” (CP 7.625);
- 2) The relation between the percept and the conceptualisation of it (perceptual judgment) is indexical. The perceptual judgment is a *symptom* of the percept. They are contiguous. Just as a weathercock is an index of the wind direction, caused by its object (the wind direction) with which it shares physical contiguity, the perceptual judgment is an index of its object, the percept, sharing *phenomenological or physical contiguity* with it. An example for a percept is a slap in my face that remains, in the very first split second,

shocking, unexpected and totally a-significant. This perceptual experience provokes a cognitive activity : it automatically-indexically causes an interpretation that would enable me to react (at least cognitively) to it. As Peirce notes : “[...]reaction is existence and the perceptual judgment is the cognitive product of a reaction.” (CP 5.156);

- 3) Consequently, the perceptual judgment is a phenomenon of Secondness as well. On the one hand, from a grammatico-logical or semiotic point of view, since it is an indexical Dicisign. And on the other hand, the perceptual judgment is characterized by a phenomenologico-epistemological Secondness, inasmuch the interpretation or pretended factual information it conveys *springs up* in consciousness with almost the same *surdity, force and unreasonableness* as the percept : “[...]there is no appeal from it. Thus, the forcefulness of the perceptual judgment falls short of the pure unreasonableness of the percept [...]” (CP 7.628). As in all indexical Dicisigns, the logico-grammatical Secondness and the epistemological Secondness of the perceptual judgment are intimately linked, insofar as it professes *qua its syntax* that it is a genuine index of a percept : “There is no warrant for saying that the perceptual judgment actually *is* such an index of the percept, other than the *ipse dixit* of the perceptual judgment itself” (*Ibid.*). Consider the following dicisign that Peirce quotes as an example for a perceptual judgment : “That chair is yellow”. First, it must be acknowledged that without the indexical link of this perceptual judgment to its object, represented by the demonstrative “that”, the whole semantic of this sentence would be senseless and purportless. Only *qua* the existential relation, the perceptual judgment can profess to represent the percept as containing a subject-part (chair) and a predicate-part (is yellow). These two parts are *syntactically represented as standing in a factual relation* of “blind Secondness” (not shown as rational). At CP 7.635 Peirce states that the sentence “That chair is yellow” is merely a “translation” of the perceptual judgment which “would be more accurately represented thus”.

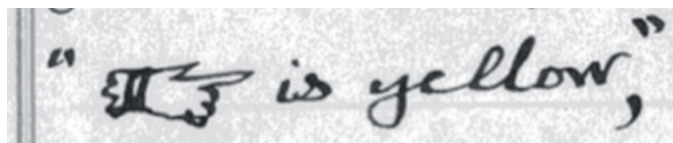


Fig. 1 - Charles S. Peirce : Detail from MS 881, *Telepathy*, 1903.

Here “a pointing index-finger [is] taking the place of the subject” (CP 7.635). This illustration reveals an important aspect of Peirce’s theory of perception, because this perceptual judgment clearly shows the existential conflation or indexical relation between the percept and the perceptual judgment. This pictorial representation of the perceptual judgment does neither illustrate a perceiver nor an objectified perceived world. Instead of that, the pointing finger highlights the contiguous conflation of the perceiving Ego and the perceived Non-Ego. In that sense it is almost diagrammatic; diagrams much more definitely representing the relations between the correlates represented (*cf.* NEM IV : 316).<sup>6</sup> This structure characterizes both perceptual judgments and other Dicsigns :

[...] the Dicsign’s Interpretant represents an identity of the Dicsign with a genuine Index of the Dicsign’s real Object. That is, the Interpretant represents a real existential relation or genuine Secondness, as subsisting between the Dicsign and its real Object. But the Interpretant of a Sign can represent no other Object than that of the Sign itself. Hence this same existential relation must be an Object of the Dicsign, if the latter have any real Object. (CP 2.310)

And in terms of perception:

The perceptual judgment is a proposition of existence determined by the percept, which it interprets. (CP 4.539 Fn 1 added by the editors of CP)

Peirce underlines that in Dicsigns, the “real Object” cannot be but indirectly represented, namely as the directly represented *existential relation* : “[T]he represented existential relation, in being an Object of the Dicsign, makes that real Object, which is correlate of this relation, also an Object of the Dicsign” (CP 2.310). This means that first and foremost, the perceptual judgment always refers to the existential relation between itself and the percept. *Qua this operation*, the perceptual judgment also refers to the percept as interpreted in “Common Sense, which makes the real things in this world blind unconscious objects working by mechanical laws together with a consciousness as idle spectator” (CP 7.559). As in every index, the independent factual existence of the object is merely inferred. This two-fold-character of the percept brings about what Peirce calls a “considerable difficulty” in distinguishing between the two epistemological types of percept-representations in the perceptual judgment :

the Perceptual Judgment [...] is a PHEME that is the direct Dynamical Interpretant of the Percept, and of which the Percept is the Dynamical Object, and is with some considerable difficulty (as the history of psychology shows), distinguished from the Immediate Object, though the distinction is highly significant. (CP 4.539)

In order to understand why for Peirce this distinction is so “highly significant”, we need to shed some light on the terms “Dynamical Object” and “Immediate Object”. It was probably in order to reconcile two apparently conflicting truths, that Peirce felt he had to introduce the

distinction of the Immediate and the Dynamical Object. As he states 1906 in a letter to Lady Welby :

The Form (and the Form is the Object of the Sign), as it really determines the former Subject, is quite independent of the sign; yet we may and indeed must say that the object of a sign can be nothing but what that sign represents it to be. (EP2 : 477)

[...] [B]y the way, the Dynamical Object does not mean something out of the mind. It means something forced upon the mind in perception, but including more than perception reveals. (EP2 : 478)

Peirce wanted to account for the co-presence of two different epistemological moments or data : the independent, determining, compelling reality on the one hand and the revealing, representative but epistemologically relative perception on the other hand. The percept, in its function as *dynamical* object of the perceptual judgment, is that part which is “really efficient but not immediately present” (CP 8.343) *through* the perceptual judgment. But the perceptual judgment is unable to “express” the *dynamical* object-percept (EP2 : 498). The percept, in its function as *immediate* object is the percept as analytically represented in the perceptual judgment<sup>7</sup> :

The judgment, ‘This chair appears yellow,’ separates the color from the chair, making the one predicate and the other subject. The percept [as dynamical object], on the other hand, presents the chair in its entirety and makes no analysis whatever. (CP 7.631)

The percept, being called a “construction” (CP 2.141), “a double consciousness at once of an ego and a non-ego, directly acting upon each other” (CP 5.52), has evidently a relational character for Peirce. However, since humans show a strong tendency towards perceptual objectification, meaning a “realistic hypostatization of relations” (CP 1.383), we regard the percepts in our perceptual judgments as if they were mind-independent, singular objects. Perfectly in line with his pragmatism is Peirce’s reasoning about that “double” character of the percept and its connection to the perceptual judgment:

How is it that the Percept, which is a Seme, has for its direct Dynamical Interpretant the Perceptual Judgment, which is a PHEME? For that is not the usual way with Semes, certainly. [...] My opinion is that a pure perceptual Icon – and many really great psychologists have evidently thought that Perception is a passing of images before the mind’s eye, much as if one were walking through a picture gallery – could not have a PHEME for its direct Dynamical Interpretant. (CP 4.540)

On the one hand, Peirce attributes a Seme-character to the percept (“[...]the Percept, which is a Seme”). In Peirce’s classification of Signs the Seme is related to the Rheme, which is one of the categories of the sign’s way of denoting its object *as represented in the Interpretant*. A Seme is “a simple sign” (CP 8.373), not necessarily in structure, but insofar as it “serves for any purpose as *a substitute* for an object” (CP 4.572). On



the other hand, Peirce comes to the conclusion that the percepts cannot *function* as Semes *in direct perception* because if they did the perceiver would not spontaneously and automatically translate them under the more complex form of Phemes (propositional perceptual judgments). At CP 4.538 Peirce states that a PHEME is as “a Sign which is equivalent to a grammatical sentence, whether it be Interrogative, Imperative, or Assertory. In any case, such a Sign is intended to have some sort of compulsive effect on the Interpreter of it”. Thus, whereas a percept, in its undifferentiated, unintentional and unrepresentative nature, differs from a PHEME, in its effect on the perceiver it undoubtedly has the compulsiveness, which characterizes phematic signs. Against the background that for Peirce the difference between the Seme and the PHEME is “by no means a difference of complexity, and does not so much consist in structure as in the services they are severally intended to perform” (CP 4.572), Peirce explicitly refrains from defining the direct dynamical Interpretant of the percept in iconic terms. By taking the percept’s existential, dyadic and dynamic relation to be responsible for the formation of what Peirce interchangeably calls the perceptual judgment and perceptual fact, Peirce makes the perceptual relation (=the percept as appearing to the perceiver) the “dynamical object” of the perceptual judgment. The fact that the prior semiotic mission of the perceptual judgment is the communication of a “form of relation”, namely an existential, pragmatic relation (the percept), is, according to Peirce, applying to all signs.<sup>8</sup> Since the purpose of a perceptual judgment consists most importantly in setting up a pragmatically useful hypothesis about the *experienced fact (the percept)*, it can be said that the “judicative knowledge” it conveys is more prominent than in other signs, and much more prominent than the “apprehensive knowledge” it transmits.<sup>9</sup> Peirce’s alternative term “perceptual *fact*”, I think, substantiates my interpretation, given his definition of “fact” as a relation<sup>10</sup> :

In reality, every fact is a relation. Thus, that an object is blue consists of the peculiar regular action of that object on human eyes. [...]

Not only is every fact really a relation, but your thought of the fact implicitly represents it as such. Thus, when you think “this is blue”, the demonstrative “this” shows you are thinking of something just brought up to your notice; while the adjective shows that you recognize a familiar idea as applicable to it. Thus your thought, when explicated, develops into the thought of a fact concerning this thing and concerning the character of blueness. (CP 3.416-3.417).

I think that the insistency with which Peirce underlines the overall Secondness-character of the process of perception should not be abrogated in favor of generalizing or iconizing moments.

2.

As I tried to show, not only is the apparition of the percept predomi-



nantly a phenomenon of Secondness, but the perceptual process as a whole is also explicitly Secondness-laden. Perception is a collateral experience of inner and outer world, which entails an instinctive cognitive adaption to it, consisting in an uncontrollable, automatic formation of a perceptual judgment. Now let us come back to the example of the herd of cows running toward you. Consider the following : two seconds after the completion of the perceptual judgment “there is a herd of cows running toward me”, you wake up and realize that this was not a *real* herd of cows running toward you, but just a realistic dream of a herd of cows. What does that change in terms of perception and cognition? At first sight it could suggest itself that the ingredient of *genuine* indexicality, presupposing “existent individuals” (CP 2.283), is not given in the case of dreams or radical hallucinations. Perhaps it is not quite appropriate to speak of a “percept” at all here. Peirce compares consciousness to a bottomless lake substantially consisting of the medium of ideas (CP 7.553). Whereas hallucinations and dreams originate from that lake of consciousness, “percepts alone are uncovered by [it]” :

We must imagine that there is a continual fall of rain upon the lake; which images the constant inflow of percepts in experience. All ideas other than percepts are more or less deep, and we may conceive that there is a force of gravitation, so that the deeper ideas are, the more work will be required to bring them to the surface. Or we may see that the [...] depth [...] represents the degree of energy of attention that is requisite to discern the idea at that depth. But it must not be thought that an idea actually has to be brought to the surface of consciousness before it can be discerned. To bring it to the surface of consciousness would be to produce a hallucination. (*Ibid.*)

Dreams, hallucinations and genuine percepts all force themselves upon our recognition, and the difference between them seems to be a difference of degree only. Because even if only the percepts must be considered as being, at least partially, outside the world of conscious ideas, they nevertheless share, in Peirce’s watery metaphor, the same *substance* with consciousness. Percepts being described as “a continual fall of rain upon the lake [of consciousness]” amounts to saying that despite their having a different form than consciousness, percepts and consciousness still share the basic substance, namely the substance of ideas (water).<sup>11</sup>

Percepts are so *vivid*, because they come to us via the *surface* of consciousness, where attention is unintentionally high and dense. The deeper an experience lies in the depths of consciousness, the more attention must be applied to discern it in these depths. To bring an idea from the depths of consciousness to the surface of consciousness, would amount to producing a hallucination. The same could probably be said for a great many dreams, at least if they appear undeliberated, vivid and realistic. Thus, the vividness, insistency and involuntariness that hallucinations and dreams share with genuine perceptions can be explained, in Peirce’s image, in terms of “attentional substance” :

since the perceptual judgments happen to be made at the surface of the lake of consciousness, it follows as a habit that whenever an idea or event causes motion or action on that surface we believe it to emanate from a percept. Almost like in Pavlovian conditioning, the excited consciousness-surface rings a bell that makes us stand to attention with regards to external reality. We never know anything about the percept “otherwise than by testimony of the perceptual judgment” (CP 7.643; cf. CP 2.141), so we are inherently unable to immediately discern between inward and outward events. As Susan Haack puts it :

[O]ne is not aware of any process of perceptual presentation – quasi-abduction – judgment, only of a spontaneously-formed belief.[...]. According to Peirce, then, percept and perceptual judgment are *distinguishable*, but not *separable*. It is the inseparability that motivates the straddling term “percipuum”. (1994 : 19)

In order to become aware of the hallucinatory, illusory or oneiric character of a percipuum, we have to wait, at least, for a subsequent percipuum that contradicts it. Peirce states that “we have no intuitive power of distinguishing between one subjective mode of cognition and another [...]” (CP 5.302). Perception then, in its elementary form, is first of all a matter of “belief”, as Haack states<sup>12</sup>, and not a matter of factual knowledge. Peirce goes so far as to say that, in regard to its relation to knowledge and belief, “the percipuum is nothing but an extreme case of the fancy” (CP 7.646).<sup>13</sup> The percipuum is, one could say, ontologically blind. Peirce further claims that the conclusion of the percipuum is not “abstractly thought but actually seen” (CP 8.65), wherein “seen”, in my view, should not be understood as within the meaning of apprehension of the visual world through the eyes, but in terms of apprehension of evidence. The percipuum is *evident* to the extent that what seems to seem really seems (cf. CP 7.36 Fn 13 : 27). It “forces itself upon your acknowledgment, without any why or wherefore, so that if anybody asks you why you should regard it as appearing so and so, all you can say is, “*I can’t help it. That is how I see it*” (CP 7.643). Thus, the percipuum approaches the character of iconicity insofar it is not able to afford “assurance that there is any such thing in nature” (CP 4.447). In her article “From Pure Icon to Metaphor : Six Degrees of Iconicity” Lucia Santaella argues that iconicity plays a fundamental role in the percipuum :

[T]he iconic ingredient is exactly that which lends support to the process of perception, functioning as a substrate of the illusion, which underlies all perception, that the object, as it is perceived, is the object itself. (1995 : 210)

But how exactly are we to understand this? Santaella attributes two functions to the “iconic ingredient” in perception : 1) it “lends support” to perception and 2) it “functions as a substrate of the illusion” that the object, as it is perceived, is the object itself. Could the illusion Santaella points to be what Peirce speaks of as the “incautious Common-sense-assumption” that “it is one thing to look red or green and another thing

to see red or green” (CP 7.561)? Given that, for Peirce, the object as it is perceived never is the “object itself” (but always a relational percept), Santaella’s term “illusion” suits it very well. And what is more, this interpretation of Santaella’s term “illusion” also perfectly covers her term “support”; the human tendency to consider the percept as if it were a singular, mind-independent thing is not only strictly speaking an illusion, but also a support in the sense of a cognitive faculty essential for survival. But how does Santaella come to the conclusion that *iconicity* is responsible for the formation of that ontological belief? This, I would argue, is not so evidently put forward in Peirce’s thought. Quite contrary to an iconic interpretation of the perceptual process, Peirce points out that “the perceptual judgment is *not a copy, icon, or diagram of the percept, however rough*” (CP 7.635, [emphasis mine]). Thus, according to him, there is no logical relation between the predicate of the perceptual judgment and the sensational element of the percept, “except forceful connections” (CP 7.634). This brings us back to the Secondness that characterizes the perceptual process. In order for a percept to seem genuine and not oneiric, Peirce argues, a “sense of externality, of the presence of a non-ego” (CP 1.332) is needed. Without “the blow of it, the reaction of it against us” (CP 7.643), we have difficulty to take the perception for “real” (in opposition to dreams and hallucinations). Hence, an impression of indexicality is required in perception in order to “distinguish it from dreaming” (CP 1.332). Evidently, that impression of indexicality is not an absolute distinctive feature : we can be totally convinced that we are about to genuinely perceive in a waking state although we are still asleep and dreaming, as well as we can have an impression of irreality being wide awake. But in any case, “perceptual realism” seems to be intimately connected to the indexical ingredient of perception.

Iconicity, being the semiotic function of resemblance or putting-into-analogy, rather seems to be at odds with the dualistic features of realistic perception. In any seemingly real perception we think that the object as it is perceived *is* the real object itself, and not that the object as perceived is *like or similar to* the real object. There is no mediating image between the percept and the perceptual judgment, no feeling of conflation, analogy or resemblance, but a feeling of directness of the Other, the Non-Ego, that gives the perceiver the impression of being immediately implied in the action of a perceptual universe. Thus, iconic signs as signs that refer to their objects by virtue of resemblance do not seem to play the principal role in the impression of reality. The concept of “pure” or “mental” iconicity, a cognitive operation of our minds, has the power to abolish the distinction between the copy and the real (CP 3.362). Pure iconicity is, in Peirce’s terms, “of the nature of an appearance, and as such, strictly speaking, exists only in consciousness” (CP 4.447). According to Joseph Ransdell, this concept of “pure iconicity”, the cognitive operation of putting-into-analogy, plays a crucial role in

Peirce's theory of perception. For Ransdell, the real object "can be said to be *immediately perceived*, in the sense that [...]the relevant features of the represented object are *just as immediately present in consciousness as* are the features of the representing object" (Ransdell 2005). Trying to follow Ransdell's perspective, one possible explanation would be that iconicity in perception consists of the resemblance between the way the percept appears and the way the perceptual judgment presents itself, both being brought to consciousness immediately and with almost the same insistency. Having said that, Ransdell also alludes very strongly to the quasi-simultaneity of the apparition of the percept and the perceptual judgment, which suggests a sort of conflating moment of the percept and the perceptual judgment where the representation of the object and the real object are presented as being one and the same thing – or iconic : An icon "does not draw any distinction between itself and its object. It represents whatever it may represent, and whatever it is like, it in so far is. It is an affair of suchness only" (CP 5.74; EP2 : 163; MS 308). However, Ransdell does not say explicitly what makes him opt for an "iconic moment" in perception, and in my understanding Ransdell's interpretation omits the dualistic character of the indexical relation between the percept and the perceptual judgment.

In perception the perceiver is so affected by the perceived Non-Ego that she reacts cognitively to it. Under the insistency of the percept, the perceiver is externally piloted or controlled like the weathercock is by the wind. But the pure reactivity with its subject does not render it a sign yet. The moment the perceptual judgment turns into a sign is the moment it is interpreted in an Interpretant that in turn becomes a subsequent sign. But what is that moment like? Let us consider the opposite case and imagine an overwhelmingly a-significant perceptual situation, a completely new situation where all the predicates which a perceiver can resort to, do not apply to the percept, and where the formation of the perceptual judgment does not succeed, or, at the utmost, amounts to a fragmentary judgment of the type : "I perceive something", or, "This...", or again in Peirce's drawing terms :

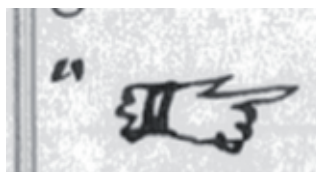


Fig. 2 - Charles S. Peirce : Detail from MS 881, *Telepathy*, 1903.

Can we speak of a perceptual sign, of a perceptual representation or perceptual semiosis at all here? Would it not be tempting to say that the impossibility to produce an Interpretant is an a-semiotic moment?

Yet, for Peirce, the Non-semiotic, “the Immediate (and therefore in itself unsusceptible of mediation – the Unanalyzable, the Inexplicable, the Unintellectual) runs in a continuous stream through our lives; it is the sum total of consciousness” (CP 5.289). The Non-representative is, so to speak, the material of our consciousness, which enables us to connect ourselves to the world *qua* perception. It is the phenomenological material we actively employ but cannot reflect.

The percept is the starting point in Peirce’s theory of perception, being a “mental construction” of what is collected by the senses. But despite its mental nature (mental is unlike *psychical* for Peirce), the percept nevertheless “appears under a physical guise” (CP 1.253). Even if the term “physical guise” implies, again, the brute and forceful way with which the percept presents itself, it also alludes to a qualia-character of the percept. Given that Peirce defines an icon as a sign which is determined by its object by virtue of its own internal nature, could we conclude from this that the qualitative, or material, part of perception brings with it the fundament for iconicity?<sup>14</sup> But an icon is a sign, it stands for something. The nature of the Object of an iconic Representamen is, according to Peirce, the mental effect, or thought it produces (*cf.* EP2 : 277). In other words, an icon is not a sign caused by an outward object, but a sign caused by the possibilities of mind. This seems to be at odds with the characterization of the percept as Non-Ego. Yet, Peirce seems to associate qualities, perceptions and icons when he says :

Such [being of the nature of an icon] is any qualisign, like a vision, – or the sentiment excited by a piece of music considered as representing what the composer intended. (CP 8.335)

Then, in the moment of a cognitively unsuccessful perception as expressed by the Figure 2, the only sign-outcome would probably be an icon of perception or thought, which, as a matter of course, would be completely uninformative :

[...] the methods of thinking that are living activities in men are not objects of reflective consciousness. They baffle the student, because they are a part of himself. “Of thine eye I am eye-beam,” says Emerson’s sphinx. (CP 3.404)

For Peirce, “no present actual thought (which is a mere feeling) has any meaning, any intellectual value” (CP 5.289). Representation needs time. To put it differently, to be immediately conscious or to perceive immediately does not amount to produce meaning or signs. Signs presuppose semiosis, which comes along with continuity. The point I want to make here is that the qualitative part of perception does not directly render perception iconic, since an icon, as sign, requires an interpretation *qua* mind that refers to a past experience (CP 4.447).

Genuine, meaningful perceptions then surely include iconicity, not, however, primarily in their qualitative-sensorial part, but chiefly in their dualistic-indexical character : the perceptual judgment and the percept

are as separate and as fundamentally different as the wind and the weathercock. Peirce explains that a genuine index can only be understood as representing its object with the help of an iconic ingredient. In the example of the weathercock, in order to fully understand it as an indexical sign of the wind direction, one part of it must be represented “as such a sort of Representamen (or to represent such a sort), as can have its Object and its Interpretant the same” (CP 2.311). In Peirce’s example of a weathercock, the Interpretant shares with the Object the feature “direction of movement through space”. The movement and orientation of the weathercock in one of the four directions of the compass, which is caused by the wind, is the necessary “icon” in the Interpretant of the weathercock, being at the same time the weathercock’s object. Transferred to the perceptual process, the perceiving Ego would be the measuring device (like the weathercock or a thermometer), our perceptual judgments presenting a “stenographic report” of the collected data given in the “dumb” percepts (CP 7.622) under the logically usable form of a – not necessarily linguistic – PHEME. Only because perceptual experience is primarily indexical can perception be an informational process. Peirce clearly points out that the perceptual judgment professes to represent the percept *indexically* :

There remains but one way in which it can represent the percept; namely, as an index, or true symptom, just as a weather-cock indicates the direction of the wind or a thermometer the temperature. (CP 7.628)

The iconic ingredient that enables us to understand our perceptions as *indexes* of an external reality, stems, on the one hand, from our senses : “If the continuity of our inward and out sense be not real, still it proves that continuity there really is, for how else should sense have the power of creating it?” (NEM IV : S. 344) And on the other hand, it is only through time that continuity can be *seen*. As Catherine Legg points out,<sup>15</sup> the percipuum is not a temporal *particular*, and that is why the percept can itself become a sign – in time. The percipuum considered as a “moving window”, through which the percept translates itself within the perceptual judgment permits us to regard the percept from another angle than that of its brute appearance. The most important aspect of Peirce’s theory of perception is, in my view, the “event-character” of it. Peirce says, “we perceive objects brought before us; but that which we especially experience – the kind of thing to which the word ‘experience’ is more particularly applied – is an event” (CP 1.336). Our percepts can be ascertained in time and communication only. Only over time, can the percept be regarded as standing for something, namely in a phenomenologico-ontological way : the percept is “understood by the perceiver as the result of the action of the universe on the perceiver” (CP 4.539 Fn 2). “[W]ithout reflection” (*Ibid.*), that is, instinctively, we attribute a larger ontological background to our percepts. In other words, the percept is itself considered as being a symptom, namely a symptom of a “Perceptual Universe” :



[L]et us go on to note that while the Immediate Object of a Percept is excessively vague, yet natural thought makes up for that lack (as it almost amounts to), as follows. A *late* Dynamical Interpretant of the whole complex of Percepts is the *Seme* of a Perceptual Universe that is represented in instinctive thought as determining the original Immediate Object of every Percept. (CP 4.539, emphasis mine)

And so it is through a “*late* Dynamical Interpretant” that comes into being after some time of interactivity between the perceiver and the perceived world, that the “whole complex of Percepts” functions for the perceiver as a *Seme*, serving as a substitute for the Perceptual Universe that it represents “after the manner of an Icon, by mere agreement in idea” (CP 4.572). The testability of the validity of our perceptual judgments in the space-time of experience makes us believe that our percepts are true images of that experiential universe – yet, this firm belief in the analogy between our percepts and the perceptual universe is not first in perception but requires time, being based on the principle of experience, and, falsification.<sup>16</sup>

I think that readings of Peirce that stress an iconic moment at the basis of perception fail to take into account Peirce’s realism. Following his definition of iconicity, we’d find ourselves in a moment of “pure dream” (CP 3.362), if we were to perceive predominantly in an iconic way. Yet, the belief in the external reality of a percept presupposes something very different from the feeling of a “pure dream”, namely a “direct consciousness of hitting and of getting hit” (CP 8.41). External reality is for Peirce “independent of how you or I think”, and in that sense is completely different from a dream, which, like an icon, “retains its peculiarities by virtue of no other fact than that it was dreamt to possess them.” (CP 5.405). This Peircian definition of external and internal realities is very semiotic in nature : signs with an indexical predominance are more likely to be part of an external reality, whereas the experience of signs that are predominantly iconic or symbolic usually feels less “singular”.

### 3.

In *Essais sur la signification au cinéma*, Christian Metz points to an important peculiarity of the phenomenological character of filmic images :

[...]le film enveloppe dans le même segment une instance perçue et une instance percevante. Bien des mouvements d’appareil consistent à livrer un objet invraisemblable à un regard vraisemblable. (2003 : 79, [emphasis mine])

Metz underlines a too often neglected characteristic of filmic images : namely that their visual material expresses at the same time perceptual and perceived qualities. The perceptual part of filmic images is, of course, many times greater than in photographic images precisely because film implies time and, along with time, also movement. In that respect the “moving pictures accompanied by sounds and feelings etc.”



that Peirce calls “our percepts”<sup>17</sup> (MS 939 : 24) can evoke filmic images. As described by Metz however, filmic images exceed the status of a percept not only due to their materialized character but also, and more importantly, because they imply something like a perceptual judgment. In my understanding, Metz even alludes to a preponderance of the judgment properties of filmic images when stating that camera movements have the power to express a plausible vision of an implausible object, thereby attributing credibility to the object. Yet, this preponderance of the perceptual judgments is not something exclusively “filmic”. It seems almost impossible to imagine anything consciously “seen” without its being seen *somehow*, in some way, or in Peirce’s own terms :

If one sees, one cannot avoid the percept; and if one looks, one cannot avoid the perceptual judgment. Once apprehended, it absolutely compels assent. Its defect in forcefulness is thus excessively slight and of no logical importance. (CP 7.627)

Nevertheless there seems to be a difference between Peirce’s statement on the connectedness of the percept and the perceptual judgment and the “*a priori* automatic connection” between the filmic technique (framing, camera movements, editing, lightning etc.) and the filmed objects. According to Peirce, photographic (and consequently filmic) images dispose of a “syntax”, which consists in the connection of the print with the section of the rays, the print being the “quasi-predicate of the photograph”, and the section of the rays its “quasi-subject”. Their connectedness *in* the photograph is for Peirce tantamount to “the Syntax of the proposition [which is] a fact concerning the Dicisign considered as a First, that is, in itself, irrespective of its being sign” (CP 2.320). This brings us back to the definition of the perceptual judgment as indexical Dicisign that, first and foremost, represents the existential relation between the perceiver and the perceived. Seen from the angle of Peirce’s semiotics of the photograph, the subject of the filmic images taken in their function as Dicot (Indexical) Sinsigns must be “an Index of a Second existing independently of its being represented” (CP 2.312). But whereas photographic images usually can be understood as indexical signs only if one *knows* about the indexical technique of photography, the indexicality of filmic images seems to be more intelligible insofar the implication of movement and time allows for a much higher degree of iconicity of the perceiving instance. Obviously the iconic representation of the *forms* of human audiovisual perception in filmic art brings along, or transcribes, the “Common-Sensist-transparency” that characterizes our real perceptions, where the real things in this world are seen like “blind unconscious objects working by mechanical laws together with a consciousness as idle spectator” (CP 7.559). In other words, the film spectator’s usual tendency to eliminate the perceptual forms from her attention and to focus on the perceived object-world as independently existent is not a genuinely filmic phenomenon (called for example “immersion”, or “identification with the camera’s point of view”) but a common feature of real perception. “It is [...] extremely difficult to bring our atten-

tion to elements of experience which are continually present” (CP 1.134).

Yet, a crucial difference between filmic perception and real perception resides in their degrees of pragmaticity. While in real perception we can “feel the blow of” our percepts, being existentially integrated in and tied to them, the film spectator is not existentially connected to the viewed (filmed) world. In other words, the segregation of spaces through the screen implies a wide-ranging depragmatization of the spectators’ position in front of the film. Peirce says that in real perception we *experience* events – in filmic perception it would probably be more adequate to say that we *perceive* events given the fact that the spectator in front of a film always perceives a ‘perceiving’ (framing, camera movements, montage) *and* a perceived dynamism (filmed objects). Yet, the filmic spectator does not “adopt” the filmic point of view to the extent that she re-experiences a perfect and authentic perceptual situation. If she did, there would probably be no doubt about the veracity of the audience’s reaction in front of *L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat*. Therefore, rather than experiencing an event, is the filmic spectator not *studying* something like a phenomenological map? Maps being nothing else than diagrams of existent relations, they serve, like any other diagrammatic situation or object, as a meta-language, creating an analogy of forms of relations in a pragmatically different but structurally similar system.

The (analogical) relation holding between the systems is that of similarity. Because systems are relations exemplified by their parts, it follows that analogy is a *metarelation*, i.e. a relation holding between relations. In analogy, therefore, similarity is more abstract than, because building upon, contiguity. This is precisely why we speak of structural (rather than material) similarity. (Itkonen 2005 : 1)

The system of a map of Paris, for example, excludes the pragmatics of the system “real city of Paris”. If “its parts are really related to one another in forms of relation analogous to those of the assertions they represent” (MS 514 : 15), the map of Paris offers us what Peirce calls a “truly diagrammatic syntax” (*Ibid.*). A map of Paris may guide me if I’m lost in the city providing that the following three properties of diagrammaticity are given in it : 1) Icons of forms of relations analogous to those of the assertions represented, 2) usage of indexes, and c) depragmatization (simplification) with respect to the represented system (*cf.* Dymek 2013). In the same way, insofar as filmic images 1) exhibit icons of the actually existing forms of relations of (audio-) visual perception, 2) make use of the indexicality of these relations, and 3) depragmatizise (simplify) the perceptual situation, they could be put under the semiotic and iconic category of diagrams rather than under that of *images*.<sup>18</sup> Viewed in this manner, could filmic images be understood as diagrams of the *forms of human audiovisual perception*? The filmic spectator would then perceive a perceptual diagram – showing how our being and perceiving in time and space functions. Having said that, a diagrammatic approach to the filmic media could reveal unseen pedagogical and psychological dimensions of

filmic perception, given that icons are, in Peirce's terms, "of the utmost value for enabling [their] interpreter[s] to what would be the character of such an object in case any such did exist" (CP 4.447). In studying a diagrammatic syntax of filmic images then, may we be assured that we are studying the real relations of perception? Which is the exact semiotic relation between filmic perception and natural perception? Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of cinema was fundamentally motivated by the need for such a definition of filmic perception. In 1981, in one of his lectures at Paris 8, Deleuze went so far as to say :

The cinema has invented a perception. This perception, once again, is definable, it will have to be defined, how is it proceeding by comparison with [*par différence avec*] perception in natural conditions. (1981)

Attributing to the cinematographic medium the power to *invent* a perception is tantamount to considering it as an independent ontological entity, if not with a meta-ontological dimension. By contrast, if we speak of human perception as it proceeds in "natural conditions", we could never evoke the possibility of an invention. There is no such human power over perception, quite the opposite is the case : we are very much subject to our perceptual condition. However, Deleuze attributes a phenomenological-pedagogical power *only to the good, modern* cinema (and not to cinema in general or to the cinema of the moving camera) : he considers it as being of the utmost value to study the world and man's connection to it : "Restoring our belief in the world – this is the power of the modern cinema (when it stops being bad)." (2010 : 172). Although Deleuze initially aspired for a technical-universal definition of cinematographic perception, he here seems to consider it from a more stylistic point of view (good *vs* bad, old *vs* modern cinema). In short, the cinematic power to restore man's belief in the world, for Deleuze, does not principally stem from the fact that *any* spectator in front of *any* film perceives a "perceiving dynamism" (framing, camera movements, montage) and a "perceived dynamism" (filmed objects). In other words, Deleuze does not link the cinema's phenomenological-pedagogical power to its basic mechanical and technological body. In this regard, Deleuze's position differs from that of film scholar Vivian Sobchack who writes :

Enabled by its mechanical and technological body, each film projects and makes uniquely visible not only the objective world but the very structure and process of subjective, embodied vision – hitherto only directly available to human beings as the invisible and private structure we each experience as "my own". (1992 : 298)

This quotation recalls Emerson's Sphinx cited by Peirce : "Of thine eye I am eye-beam" (CP 3.404). But can cinema externalize iconically our perceptual process, which, in natural perception, is completely inaccessible for reflective consciousness? For Sobchack, filmic images become phenomenological diagrams because they are icons of the indexical structures of our perceptions. Yet, what Deleuze seems to want to point out is the scope

of cognitive possibilities given by the various stylistic devices of filmmaking, which function, if not quite *as* perceptual judgments, then at least as premises to them. But percepts cannot be a premise, since they do not have a propositional “syntax”; this is why, in Peirce’s terms “a statement of the character of the percept would have to rest on the perceptual judgment, instead of this on that” (CP 7.628). This implies that filmic images could be regarded as something existing *between* percepts and perceptual judgments. Take for instance the use of focus : according to how it is used, the filmic image has the power to determine which perceptual features will be brought into relief. Another example is the stylistic device of the cutaway shot that consists in a brief shot that momentarily discontinues a continuously filmed action, by inserting an image or a sequence of a related action. It is mostly used to provide that kind of additional information, which in the process of real perception cannot but stem from the perceiver’s *thought*. In other words, filmic montage here creates a visual representation not only of basic perception but also of thought. Walter Benjamin even goes so far as to attribute a capacity of “subjectal abstraction” to filmic perception :

The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. (1968 : 237)

If we understand the “unconscious optics” as applying like unconscious predicates to our perceptions and interpretations of the world, the filmic camera, according to Benjamin, has the power to convert the applicability of these predicates from being a way of unconsciously perceiving something to being themselves subjects of perception, and consequently (at least potentially) of thought (*cf.* CP 4.332). Yet, the stylistic device of the “flash frame” (used for example at the end of Hitchcock’s black and white *Spellbound* [1945], see Figs. 3-4) consists in a single color frame that is inserted between two black and white frames, so that it can barely be perceived, giving the appearance of a flash, being used particularly in order to produce a sudden dramatic effect or a shock.



Figures 3 - 4 : Flash Frame in Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945) : A Hand-Tinted Red Close-Up of a Gun That Fires Directly at the Camera.

Regarding the briefness and quasi-imperceptibility of a flash frame, it is doubtful if such an image can serve as a diagram of anything else than of a pure percept. Consider the following passage where Peirce explains that the perceptual judgment requires time :

Now let us take up the perceptual judgment "This wafer looks red". It takes some time to write this sentence, to utter it, or even to think it. It must refer to the state of the percept at the time that it, the judgment, began to be made. But the judgment does not exist until it is completely made. It thus only refers to a memory of the past; and all memory is possibly fallible and subject to criticism and control. The judgment, then, can only mean that so far as the character of the percept can ever be ascertained, it will be ascertained that the wafer looked red. (CP 5.544)

It is quite revealing, in my opinion, to confront this quotation with the example of a flash frame : as the film continues a spectator might produce a perceptual judgment professing to represent the flash-frame-percept. The judgment thus "only refers to a memory of the past", and to know if the spectator judged correctly or not can only be ascertained by rewinding the film, or else, using current viewing devices, by pressing the "Pause" button at the right moment in order to examine the flash frame in detail. But reiterated perceptions of one and the same object are not, of course, reiterations of the same percept, a percept being a *moving* picture (CP 5.115), and totally converse to a representative image (CP 7.619). Such a way of proceeding would momentarily suspend genuine perception by approaching perception with conscious thought. In his analysis of perceptual illusions Peirce explains that perception can be analyzed and efficiently trained with brief processes of perceptual education (*cf.* CP 7.647), the percipuum not being "so persistent and thing-like as one is apt to think" (*Ibid.*). This does in no way conflict with the fugitive character of a percept. Even when Peirce writes that in the perceptual experience of the Schröder's stairs, "the perceptive judgment, and the percept itself, seems to keep shifting from one general aspect to the other and back again" (CP 5.183), he is not talking of one and the same percept but of different ones, all related to the same object and to the same Ego. Percepts must be understood as phenomenological facts in the sense of dyadic relations between an appearing Non-Ego and an Ego acted upon. In that sense it is questionable whether filmic images can truly represent the perceptual process given that the filmic apparatus is certainly not in the same way as the mind a "sign-creatory in connection with a reaction-machine" (MS 318 : 18, cited in Pietarinen 2005 : 30). Yet, to the extent that filmic images really contain a phenomenologico-diagrammatic syntax, they can at least be used for observation of some parts of our perceptions, thoughts and existence in this world. Peirce's hope, however, for the pheno-pedagogical dimensions of diagrams is undoubtedly strong : "The Phaneron being itself far too elusive for direct observation, there can be no better method of studying it than through the Diagram of it" (MS 293 : 23-24).

The proposed diagrammatic-pedagogical approach to filmic perception seems also to be very much in line with Pia Tikka's (2006) claim that the cinema's task is "threat simulation", filmic perception having the pedagogical power to optimize our survival capacities. Seen from the angle of the pedagogical quality or usefulness of cinematic perception for our societies, I would now like to give an open conclusion by confronting the Deleuzian requirement of a "good" cinema to a last quotation by Peirce: "After all, any analogy, however fanciful, which serves to focus attention upon matters which might otherwise escape observation is valuable" (CP 3.470).

## Notes

1. Cf. CP 8.153: "[...] every object of thought is either a percept or a generalization, that is, an inference from percepts".
2. Peirce makes use of the term "conception" as applying to both instinctive and reasonable thought. (Cf. CP 6.418; CP 6.496; CP 7.409).
3. Cf. CP 5.212: "Some elements we can control in some limited measure. But the content of the perceptual judgment cannot be sensibly controlled now, nor is there any rational hope that it ever can be".
4. Cf. CP 5.212: "But the sum of it all is that our logically controlled thoughts compose a small part of the mind, the mere blossom of a vast complexus, which we may call the instinctive mind [...]".
5. More precisely, Peirce thinks that "our only direct knowledge of [Secondness] is in willing and in the experience of a perception." (CP 1.532).
6. Quoted from: <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/diagram>
7. "Namely, we have to distinguish the Immediate Object, which is the Object as the Sign itself represents it, and whose Being is thus dependent upon the Representation of it in the Sign, from the Dynamical Object, which is the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation". (CP 4.536).
8. The relation is always first, for Peirce, in every sign: "That which is communicated from the Object through the Sign to the Interpretant is a Form. It is not a singular thing; for if a singular thing were first in the Object and afterward in the Interpretant outside the Object, it must thereby cease to be in the Object. The Form that is communicated does not necessarily cease to be in one thing when it comes to be in a different thing, because its being is a being of the predicate." (EP2: 544; MS 793).
9. The apprehensive part of the perceptual judgment is even almost reduced to Secondness: "...there is no relation between the predicate of the perceptual judgment and the sensational element of the percept, except forceful connections." (CP 7.634).
10. "Not only is every fact really a relation, but your thought of the fact implicitly represents it as such." (CP 3.417).
11. That sheds a new, synechistic, monistic (?) light on the relation between perception and consciousness, or between the percept and perceptual judgment.
12. This is, at least partially, in line with Peirce who speaks of the percipuum and the perceptual judgment in terms of belief at CP 5.442; CP 5.542; and CP 7.646.
13. By pointing to examples of visual illusions such as Schröder's stairs, Peirce shows that it is possible, by means of short exercise only, to turn an initially uncontrollable percipuum into a controllable imagination.



14. "An *icon*, *likeness*, or image is a representamen whose representative force depends solely upon characters which it possesses *materialiter*\* and which it might equally possess though its object had no existence". (MS 491 : 1-2). Cited on : <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/term/icon> (Accessed July 1st 2015).
15. "It [the percipiuum] occurs across a time-span, which has at its 'back end' a memory of the immediate past (which Peirce calls the ponecipuum) and at its 'front end' an expectation of the immediate future (which he calls the antecipiuum). This time-span – which is of effectively infinitesimal duration – forms a 'moving window'". (Legg 2014 : 13).
16. To come back to Santaella's two functions of iconicity in perception, it may be doubted if an iconic illusion really underlies every perception, given that "illusion" is a concept that presupposes the concept of truth, and truth for its part needs the concept of reality : "There would not be any such thing as truth unless there were something which is as it is independently of how we may think it to be. That is the reality [...]" (CP 7.659). Reality can never directly appear, since reality is linked to the future, to Thirdness, Mediation, regularity (CP 5.121) and therefor needs time. Peirce states : "The difference [between real perceptions and hallucinations] is that rational predictions based upon the hallucination will be apt to be falsified, – as for example, if the person having the hallucination expects another person to see the same thing; while truly sound predictions based on real perceptions are supposed never to be falsified [...] But for logical purposes, that is, in regard to their relations to knowledge and belief, which is the concern of this whole paper, they should be regarded as one and the same phenomenon, in themselves". (CP 7.644).
17. "Our percepts approach closely to the character of pictures, moving pictures accompanied by feelings and sounds etc." (MS 939 : 24).
18. Whereas images dispose of simple, monadic qualities, diagrams represent dyadic forms of relation.

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## Abstract

Chronologically speaking, Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) *could* have mentioned the technique of film in the context of his phenomenological, or as he called them, *phaneroscopic* theories. But when he compared the human percepts to "moving pictures accompanied by sounds and feelings" in 1905 (MS 939 : 24), Peirce did not speak of the cinema. However, his investigations in the fields of cognition and phenomenology show relevant intersections with major concepts and problems of filmic perception theory. The present article aspires to investigate Peircian philosophy and film theory through some of their common concepts. The question will be raised as to whether the filmic viewing situation can be understood as a *genuine* perceptual situation in the Peircian sense. In a first step, I will give an analysis of Peirce's theory of perception. In contrast to the majority of interpretations of the latter, which emphasize its iconic character, I shall argue for a perceptual process where iconicity is not the starting point but rather the outcome of it. This will imply an analysis of the roles of iconicity and indexicality in perception and of their relation to cinema's "impression of reality". Despite the phenomenological realism of cinematic images, the nature of what the viewer actually *perceives* is not as obvious as one might be tempted to think. Finally, an interpretation of filmic images as "diagrams of perception" will open up to some pedagogical dimensions of film viewing.

## Résumé

D'un point de vue historique, Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) *aurait pu* parler de la technique cinématographique dans le contexte de ses théories phénoménologiques, ou, pour reprendre son propre terme, *phanéroscopiques*. Mais en comparant, en 1905, les percepts humains à des "images en mouvement accompagnées par des sons et des sentiments" (MS 939 : 24), Peirce ne parlait pas du cinéma. Ceci dit, ses investigations dans le champ de la cognition et de la phénoménologie présentent des intersections importantes avec des concepts et problématiques majeurs de la théorie de la perception filmique. Cet article aspire à examiner la théorie peircienne et

la théorie filmique à travers quelques uns de leurs concepts communs. En outre, il sera question de déterminer si regarder un film constitue une situation perceptuelle *authentique* au sens peircien. Dans un premier temps je donnerai une analyse de la théorie peircienne de la perception. Contrairement à la majorité des interprétations de cette dernière, qui soulignent principalement son caractère iconique, je vais argumenter pour un processus perceptuel où l'iconicité n'est pas le point de départ mais plutôt le résultat. Cela impliquera une analyse des rôles de l'iconicité et de l'indexicalité dans la perception et leur relation avec l'effet d'"impression de réalité" au cinéma. Or, malgré le réalisme phénoménologique des images filmiques, la nature de ce que *perçoit* le spectateur n'est pas aussi évidente qu'on pourrait le croire. Enfin, une interprétation des images filmiques comme des "diagrammes de perception" ouvrira vers une dimension pédagogique du visionnage de films.

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