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Wherefore Psychosemiotics?

Stephan Packard

Lucidity and desire

- 1 Semiotics' failure is in its success.
- 2 Whatever happens, be it an immanent part of communication, its reference to the world, or any act of cognition in its production or reading; be it an individual's action, a mechanical chain of events, or a static universal: an advanced concept of signs will describe it as a semiotic process, and rightly so. By self-similarity, real connection or mediation; as firstness, secondness or thirdness; in icons, indices or symbols, it has its logical place in Charles Sanders Peirce' pansemiotic philosophy. This is the strength and philosophical virtue of its universal approach: Cognition, affect and communication are all open to its single comprehensive explanation.
- 3 The key to this all-encompassing claim is the representation of the world as a series of cognitive events: Rather than dividing the world, its interpretation and its explanation into three different semantic levels, or introducing paradoxical relations through the unity of their difference, these complexes can be conceived as secondary divisions within a continuous primary chain of signifiers. The world's representation then no longer appears as a reduplication, negation or metaphysical other to the world, but as a consequent and coherent part of its ongoing semiosis. The distinction of epistemological subject and object does not occur at one general border of knowing, but is reintroduced and overcome in each sign in that continuum as the thin abyss between signs.
- 4 As a literary theorist's tool for analyzing media, a humanities scholar's method for modelling human behaviour, and a baffled individual's rosetta stone to some of philosophy's thorniest problems, Peirce' trichotomic conception deserves any praise it has received, and more. His claim to

make a philosophy like that of Aristotle, that is to say, to outline a theory so comprehensive that, for a long time to come, the entire work of human reason, in philosophy of every school and kind, in mathematics, in psychology, in physical

science, in history, in sociology, and in whatever department there may be, shall appear as the filling up of its details¹,

- 5 is as courageous as it is accurate. And yet, some applications of his theory pay a foreseeable price for this monomania. By conceiving of anything as always already explicable, they turn everything into the always already explained. The sequence of signs does not so much continue for ever, but has ever been ultimately continued; the encompassing knowledge to which Peirce' cognition pretends appears thus to be always already outrun, depriving cognition of its direction. As an activity, it depends upon the motivating unbalance of surprise or doubt² to drive reasoning – and yet by explaining everything that happens as a semiotic process, it threatens to become blind for the fact that some things do not happen. Each new possible reference can be understood, but because none are necessary, it is impossible to predict which semioses will become reality. Psychological and cognitive phenomena elude such semiotics, as the theory renders any movement of the soul plausible and misses the character of any cognition, in as much as that character signifies that *this*, and not any number of other semiotic relations, is explored.

- 6 In this manner, any text would be utterly indistinguishable from its context and any interpretation would yield to all interpretations. But that is not the case. Pragmaticism distances itself from the naïve determinist view which, in William James' words, would demand

that the world shall be a solid block, subject to one control, – which temper, which demand, the world may not be found to gratify at all. In every outwardly verifiable and practical respect, a world in which the alternatives that now actually distract your choice were decided by pure chance would be by *me* absolutely undistinguished from the world in which I now live.³

- 7 In such a model, the selection of specific references and continuations of reading beyond the boundaries of one text, even the syntactic segmentation of signs within that text, become inconceivable; hierarchies and preferences for specific sequences and asymmetrical dependencies are lost. For Peirce' general design of reasoning – as opposed to the pragmaticist treatment of freedom –, this would pose only a few problems, as semiosis eventually grows to incorporate whatever happens, including any specially marked preferences; and its one unique path is determined by deliberate and aware reasoning⁴ rather than by all humanly possible inference. But in the analysis of individual pieces of art, this would deprive us of any special instantiation of specific logical places; uninterested free aesthetic judgement presupposes semiotic liberty. As Kant reasoned, the faculty of cognition needs to be mediated via pleasure and displeasure by a faculty of *desire*.⁵
- 8 It is desire that can re-introduce opacity into the terminally lucid world of semiotics, preserving its lucidity even by subverting its universal translucency; it can re-introduce objects, their transience a testimony to semiotics' explanatory power, their occurrence a remedy towards its reason. It addresses the problem of semiology that Foucault called its theme of universal mediation:

Le thème de l'universelle médiation est encore, je crois, une manière d'élider la réalité du discours. Et ceci malgré l'apparence. Car il semble, au premier regard, qu'à retrouver partout le mouvement d'un logos qui élève les singularités jusqu'au concept et qui permet à la conscience immédiate de déployer finalement toute la rationalité du monde, c'est bien le discours lui-même qu'on met au centre de spéculation. Mais ce logos, à dire vrai, n'est en fait qu'un discours déjà tenu, ou

plutôt ce sont les choses mêmes et les événements qui se font insensiblement discours en déployant le secret de leur propre essence. Le discours n'est guère plus que le miroitement d'une vérité en train de naître à ses propres yeux ; et lorsque tout peut enfin prendre la forme du discours, lorsque tout peut enfin prendre la forme du discours, lorsque tout peut se dire et que le discours peut se dire à propos de tout, c'est parce que toutes choses ayant manifesté et échangé leur sens peuvent rentrer dans l'intériorité silencieuse de la conscience de soi.⁶

- 9 This mere game of constant exchange⁷ touches upon semiotics and *sémiologie* alike, and its solution, or rather: realization, can be found at the intersection of both traditions. The formal virtues of semiotics' mathematical classification and study of signs and the self-reflexive, consciously antithetical and interminable discourse of *sémiologie* can be connected where they both organize trichotomies and temper plausibility with *désir*: In Lacan's psychosemiology.
- 10 The admittedly syncretistic intent to connect Charles Sanders Peirce' and Jacques Lacan's theories obviously threatens to introduce irreconcilable differences, leading to confusion and ultimately to a synthesis of contradictory statements yielding any explanation possible by *ex falso quodlibet*. If this is to be avoided, the resulting psychosemiotics needs to be justified not only by its expediency and convenient practicability in facing the described limits of limitless semiotics, but by a demonstrated compatibility for an explicitly delimited set of concepts, and by a retained straightforward formalizable logic worthy of Peirce as well as an analytical self-predicated irreducibility and constraint that preserves the tenets of psychoanalytical practical comportment. The compatibility starts with the triadic foundation of either theory, but goes beyond that to include the descriptive and productive commitment to identifying signs within and those without human cognition, while implementing semiotic knowledge to facilitate their mutual illumination. Peirce' concept of psychology goes well beyond that of aware and deliberate reasoning:

For if psychology were restricted to phenomena of consciousness, the establishment of mental associations, the taking of habits, which is to say the very market-place of psychology, would be outside its boulevards. To say of such departments of psychology, – from every point of view, the most essential parts of it, – that they are studies of phenomena of consciousness, is as if an ichthyologist were to define his science as the study of water.⁸

- 11 It is in this attention to the media environment of conscious reasoning that Peirce' concept of the continuum as the essential mode of signs becomes approachable to the interminable shifting of signifiers, from which distinct logos emerges in a first passage towards inevitable exteriorisation:

Mais bien sur, Freud nous dit là que les paroles, c'est ce qui caractérise le passage dans le préconscient. Mais le passage, justement, de quoi ?

De quoi ? sinon des mouvements en tant qu'ils sont ceux de l'inconscient. Les processus de la pensée, nous dit Freud, ne nous sont connus que par des paroles [...] L'inconscient, nous ne le saisissons en fin de compte que dans son explication, dans ce qui en est articulé de ce qui se passe en paroles. C'est de là que nous avons le droit – et ce, d'autant plus que la suite de la découverte freudienne nous le montre – de nous apercevoir que cet inconscient n'a lui-même pas d'autre structure au dernier terme qu'une structure de langage.⁹

- 12 Moving past this universally binding and compliant exteriority, Lacan's will to formalization is obvious but never completely realized; and yet his conception of psychological processes as continuations of indefinitely reconnected metonymies crosses Peirce' elaborate and consequent model of existential graphs at the precise place where

media analysis intersects and emerges, allowing for a set of connecting concepts that includes not only graphical syllogistics, but also the interminable string of signifiers, the contextually variable basal structure of signification, the genuinely triadic conception of its fundamental unit, its temporal and logical deference, and the combination of trichotomies with the binary opposition of similarity and contiguity.

- 13 In lieu of a complete demonstration,¹⁰ for the current limited context I propose to showcase the logical feasibility as well as the greater explanatory power of combining both triadic conceptions in one trichotomy of the psychological sign by outlining in psychosemiotic terms the sign type of the *cartoon*. It is central to comics and yields a perfect example for tracing the medial and literary insights of psychosemiotic media analysis. In the course of the argument, the potential and the limits of Peircean semiotics will become obvious, and their completion by recourse to the Lacanian mirror stage can be illustrated.

The Cartoon

- 14 The cartoon¹¹ is a strange kind of sign that dominates comics to a great extent. Scott McCloud, in *Understanding Comics*, famously explained cartoons as reduced representations of human faces or bodies that involve readers in ways more detailed depictions cannot: Departing from realistic or quasi-photographic iconicity, they develop a different resemblance to characters' features, settling somewhere mid-way between a photographer's optics and an ultimately reduced smiley that consists of nothing but dots and lines.¹²
- 15 But why and how does this strange icon work? What is it that the cartoon does? It creates involvement, and McCloud offers several possible explanations on how it achieves that; but involvement is not an absolute value in and of itself. Involvement is always involvement *in* something, and this target of involvement is usually something more specific and likely something more dynamic than simply the comic text or the comic story's world or plot as a whole. The question: In what exactly does the cartoon involve us? then becomes: What specific textual function does this involvement fulfil? Which condition for the possibility of comics is guaranteed by means of this cartoony involvement? What question does the cartoon answer?
- 16 In Peircean terms, we may distinguish the various significant relations in which the cartoon, like any other sign, engages. *Icons* are signs that refer to their objects by similarity, as a painting might look similar to the depicted landscape. Icons encompass all kinds of images and show likenesses of things regardless of their existence or truth; they are open to any kind of fancy and demonstrate only the *possibility* of their objects. It has often been argued that all aesthetic functions are, by necessity, iconic; it will soon become clear that this is an overstatement. *Indices* refer to their objects by means of contiguity, a connection in the real world, such as smoke being a real consequence of fire; they demonstrate that their object *exists*. Truly indexical signs are rare in literary texts, as fictional objects seem to forbid any real connection between them and their signifiers; after all, fictions don't share the same reality as the texts that talk about them. Finally, *symbols* refer to their object by some arbitrary convention, a learned rule, such as governs all words in all natural languages – which is exactly why we must and can learn a language, its arbitrary rules, before we can use it. Thus, we can define the realm of

symbols as identical with the realm in which translations are necessary, but also the realm in which translations become at all possible. In comics, this separates one set of symbolic signifiers, those that need to be or could be translated when a comic is republished for readers in another country or language, from those iconic signs that can remain the same. Typically, the written text in speech balloons and box-outs will be translated, and when a manga is introduced to a Western market, we face the question of printing it flipped left to right or making readers learn new rules about the directions of reading. In both these cases, we are dealing with symbolic signification. It might seem, then, as if comics are made up of these two semiotic dimensions: Symbols that can be translated, and icons that cannot. But in this view, indices do not appear at all.

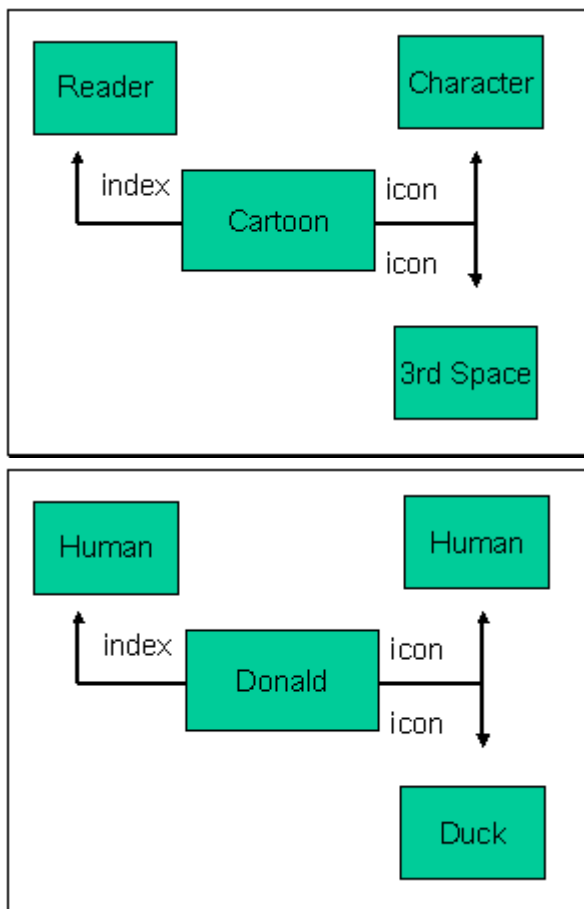
- 17 Now here's the crux: Although it is often overlooked in over-simplified accounts, Peirce points out clearly that only symbols can represent propositional entities, and thus declarative statements. They do so by combining a general idea of something that could be, an icon, with indexical pointers to the part of the world where that idea is realized. For instance,¹³ in the statement *Joe loves Jill*, the generally possible idea of *love* is connected with indexical pointers to existent individual objects, Joe and Jill, to form a regular symbolic whole. This is one of several reasons why Peirce insisted that most paintings are not, in fact, purely (albeit dominantly) iconic: For a mere image depicts nothing but a possibility, a predicate that could be applied to something, but currently is not. Icons depict a likeness and so they point to all possible individual entities that are alike in the depicted aspects. In other words, any given panel from a Barks comic that includes a cartoon of Donald Duck is not, when taken as a merely iconic sign, a picture of Donald. Rather, it is a sign that points to the combined possibilities, the whole set, of all anthropomorphic ducks with sailor suits, engaged in a specific gesture, speaking certain words, and so on. Obviously, that does not correspond with our interpretation of the panel; we complement the missing indexical elements and make our own symbolic unity. If we did not, we would never arrive at the kind of declarative content necessary for telling a story, necessary to point out one fictional fact after another after another in the development of the plot. Reading comics, then, is among other things about mending the indexical lack of graphic signs.
- 18 To mend that lack, we must infer a reference to an individual existing object. In the world of the always already completed semiotic continuum, this endeavour cannot fail. We might draw that inference by *deduction* from some conventional rule about reading comics: We might have already learned that this is Donald, or we might generally be convinced that comic panels tend to depict individual scenes rather than abstract possibilities. Similarly, we might close the indexical gap by means of *induction*: Recognizing that the same possible object is repeated over and over again in a panel sequence, we come to believe that an individual and not a general idea is referenced here. When we suddenly recognize similarities to a comic strip in an ancient wall painting, this is typically the inference we use: Look, there is the same guy here and here and here – not just any peasant then, but a specific peasant, and this tells a story about him! And so, the problem is already and doubly solved. Though theoretically possible, there is no immediate methodological cause to consider complementing the icon by means of an *abduction*, the kind of hypothesis that directly introduces a new individual into our discursive universe, filling up the gap that the mere icon leaves. And yet the cartoon, as I will try to show, is one sign that draws its operative power exactly from this kind of conclusion.

- 19 « You give me life », says McCloud's cartoon representative in *Understanding Comics*, « by reading this book and by 'filling up' this very iconic (cartoony) form. Who I am is irrelevant. I'm just a little part of you.¹⁴ » This « You » that the cartoon participates in, the reader, can conceivably anchor the iconic sign in reality: As opposed to the fictional signified objects of most signs in literary texts, the reader does share one reality with the sign he interprets, and so the connection between the two is potentially indexical. But although Peirce considered the extension of transcendental idealism's binary subject-objectivism, its « I » and « it », by a third entity of « thou » even as early as 1861,¹⁵ the universal greediness of his semiotics would make it next to impossible to discover, and implausible to explain, its epistemological and aesthetic relevance for the cartoon. For that, we need to introduce the *désir* that marks the emergence of the you that is an *autre*: By recognizing the power of a repeated *stade du miroir*.
- 20 Because cartoons, by definition, reduce their depiction of the faces and bodies they present, their elements become recognizable less because of their resemblance to the referenced objects, but rather because of their diagrammatic layout: The image of an eye is recognized as an eye not so much because it looks like one, but because the relations to the other parts of the signifying complex that stands in for a face are similar to those between a realistic eye and the other parts of a realistic face. In this diagram, some very few elements are picked from reality, while others – such as the texture of the cheek, the color of the throat, and so on, are omitted. But as McCloud emphasizes, the elements chosen for representation by the cartoon are typically those that serve primary functions in communicative dialogue: In talking to or listening to other persons, we focus on mouths, eyes and eyebrows rather than skin tones or nose shapes. We are most aware of these facial features both in ourselves and in people we speak with, because these are the parts that we use in our facial communication. Often, we might copy an expression found in another's face, or impress a strong mimical grimace in hopes that it will be copied: We smile in response to a smile, cannot help but yawn when faced by a yawn, and raise our eyebrows when our communicative partner does so.
- 21 In McCloud's chapter on the cartoon, panels abound that present two relief faces in communication with each other. There is a specific kind of identification process going on here, one in which the correspondence between elements marked as own and other is used to constitute elements on both side of the divide, by allowing a partial and imaginary equation between the two. In this, the situation can be understood as an instance of the imaginary *stade du miroir*, the mirror stage, as Jacques Lacan has defined it:¹⁶ A preliminary and non-empirical prequel to the fully developed psychic apparatus, this mirror stage has a child first produce its concept of its own subjective self and that of other subjects as mirror images, mythically triggered by the gaze into a mirror that fascinates infants at a certain age, beginning around the sixth month. This introduces the logical spaces of the small other, a designation that applies both to one's neighbor and one's own self in the imaginary state. This binary confusion then drives the introduction of the symbolic function that transcends the indecisive ambiguity of the mirror stage by creating symbolic markers that can choose one side over the other while introducing lingual and ethical rules to talk about and to cooperate with other people.
- 22 The mutual gaze between the two depicted persons in such mirror panels repeats the gaze of the reader that meets that of the cartoon. Of course, the small other in the cartoon is merely imaginary; but then so is the small other of the mirror stage when taken as a pure psychological function, as Lacan insists we do. These imaginary functions

are not, by definition, real; they are what divides the real into fragments that can be desired by one another and that can be indicated by symbols. They take the role of immediate rather than dynamic objects. In this way, the small other is indeed nothing but < a small part of > the developing subject, and so is the newly created self of that subject. We might then understand the cartoon as *a specific kind of sign that complements its iconic form with an indexical reference to the recipient's imitative bodily imagination*. Let's see where this definition will take us.

- 23 By recognizing the Lacanian gaze in the cartoon's indexical power, we can apply the descriptions and distinctions that Lacan suggests for graphic art to comics, introducing several different domains for elements appearing in panels that are ordered by the symbolic power that interrelates the cartoon with its others. The basic opposition that Lacan, following Sartre, proposes¹⁷ for graphic art is that between *pièges à regard*, that lure the beholder into a communicative situation where she expects only the readily defined and passively indicated world of objects; and several kinds of the *dompte-regard*, all functioning as more typical renditions of geometrically dominated perspective imagery that allows the gaze to rest, as Lacan puts it, and to entertain the illusion that our vision is no communicative confrontation with the borders between ourselves and other personal subjects, but rather an ideal means of epistemological understanding and order. The latter is what Lacan sees in most conventional paintings, artifacts that seem to say to the beholder: « *Tu veux regarder? Eh bien, vois donc ça!* »¹⁸ Landscapes, still lifes, but also highly detailed and realistic human imagery fall into this category, readily identified with the symbolic function. We can recognize this function in those parts of the panel that do not belong to strongly cartoonized bodily representations, those that make up the background of objects and spaces in which the characters move. The former, the disquieting, disturbing power of the gaze, is one that Lacan recognizes in modern, expressive paintings, their imaginary function always prepared to throw the beholder back into a recreation of the mirror stage. It is this gaze trap that we recognize in the function of the cartoons.¹⁹ In the most typical examples of cartoonized comics as pointed out by McCloud, gaze deposits in the objective background and expressive gaze traps in the form of cartoonized story agents combine as two aesthetically clearly separated domains in each panel.²⁰
- 24 However, this simple division of panels into cartoons and backgrounds deserves some further scrutiny as far as objects are concerned. While an objective world can be defined in Lacanian terms as that epistemologically controlled world that does not gaze back, there are two ways in which the imaginary category of the small other can be applied to inanimate things. One is by introducing them as the desired objects, the stand-ins for the personal small other who owns them, controls them or rivals the self for possession of them. As desired objects, parts of the general gaze deposit that is the panel's background can be focused by the cartoon's gaze lines or by an even greater attention to detail. At the other extreme, rather than be gazed upon, the objects might themselves be subsumed as parts of the small other's subject, engaged in the cartoon's bodily imagination of movement, gesture, or grimace. In the latter case, as McCloud shows, the reduced and exaggerated forms of the cartoon apply to the moved objects as well.²¹
- 25 Dividing panels into these domains as ordered by the gaze of the cartoon, we can analyze and describe structural features of panel sequences, their discursive movements in each domains and from domain to domain as well as their initial and closing signals, with some greater clarity than before, leaving us with leads towards a rhetorical or content analysis

for comics. Some of the most interesting examples draw our attention to the strange influence that cartoony signifiers have on the *histoire* of comics in which they appear. The plethora of masks in superhero tales is only one instance of the sometimes absurd power of disguises in comic books: Whether Clark Kent becomes unrecognizable even to close friends once he takes off his glasses, or Scrooge is indistinguishable from Donald once he combs his whiskers, the reduced imagery of the cartoon seems to have left a clear trace on the lives of many of its characters, limiting their bodily traits to so few characteristics that changing them easily changes their whole appearance. This is remarkable, as it transgresses the formal layout of the text and applies its grammatical rules to the logic of the stories that the text tells. It is but one illustration of what is probably the most important dimension of the cartoon sign, namely that the cartoon opens a *third signifying space*, discernable only by its separation from the cartoon's own abductive semiosis. As the iconic function of the cartoon that resembles the character is so greatly reduced, depositing much of its signifying responsibility onto the shoulders of its indexical relation to the reader, this strange sign can develop a second iconic function in addition to its primary reference. It is, then, a likeness that is like two different, unlike things. This frees up an enormous poetic or aesthetic power, and it is worthwhile to look for the different ways in which highly successful comics and cartoons have made use of those additional possibilities.



- 26 Barks' ducks, for instance, are quite definitely not ducks but humans, and yet intermittently refer back to their existence as ducks in such slogans as that of the richest duck in the world. They are not fable creatures that endow animals with man-like reason, nor are they, in their story world, anthropomorphized creatures or chimeras. Instead,

Donald is a man, and in a second, different way, he is also a duck. What happens here is that the reduced iconic similarity to humans is complemented by the indexical reader investment: The drawing on the page need only be iconically similar to the human character it represents up to a point, because it is also engaged in an indexical reference to the human bodily imagination of its reader. This allows the same sign to add a second likeness without disturbing its human reference: And that second reference, the duck, while primarily restricted to the aesthetic qualities of the textual surface and the shape of its signifiers rather than its signified world, can then begin to constantly invade that world with obscure and ambiguous references, as the old man Scrooge is also a poor old duck – in that third signifying space that only the cartoon can afford.

- 27 A purely psychoanalytical approach might well recognize the import of the cartoon's gaze, and the social implications of its character constitution. But in a quick recognition, it would know the power of this imagery as a direct instantiation of the imaginary; without semiotic reflection, it would be impossible to clearly outline the different functions and semantic relation into which the various comic signs enter. On the other hand, a purely semiotic explanation could not discover the gazing potential of the cartoon: It would gloss over the relevant question by having always already explained the functionality of the reduced body image, thus making it unlikely that its true function ever becomes relevant. More importantly, it would completely fail to reconstruct the specific imaginary relation established by cartoons, observing only the causal contiguity of secondness and accepting it by habit. Only once we understand the mutual limitations and dependencies of both approaches can we describe a *sign* such as the cartoon in the full meaning of that word, as a body of relations: Where the body is made translucent by semiotic understanding, while its relations become opaque by virtue of desire.

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NOTES

1. Charles Sanders Peirce, « A Guess at the Riddle », *Writings of Charles S. Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, vol. 6, ed. Nathan Houser et al., Bloomington, Indiana UP, 2000, pp. 165-210, here p. 168-169.
2. Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce, « The Fixation of Belief », *Writings of Charles S. Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, vol. 3, ed. Max H. Fisch et al., Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1986, pp. 242-257, here pp. 248-249.
3. William James, « The Dilemma of Determinism », *The Will to Believe and other essays in popular philosophy*, New York, Dover, 1956, pp. 114-140.
4. Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce, « Short Logic », *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 2, ed. N. Houser et al., Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1998, pp. 11-26, here § 3.
5. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, Frankfurt/Main, Suhrkamp, 1995, pp.18-21.
6. Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p. 50-51.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 7, ed. A.W. Burks, Cambridge Mass., Belknap, 1958, 7.367.
9. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VII. L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (1959-1960), ed. J.-A. Miller, Paris, Seuil, 1986, p. 42.
10. For a more complete reconstruction of these connections and a justification for the combination of semiotics and psychoanalysis, cf. Stephan Packard, *Anatomie des Comics. Psychosemiotische Medienanalyse*, Göttingen, Wallstein, 2006, esp. pp. 27-66; for the philosophical

relevance of combined triadic models of the sign, cf. also Nina Ort, *Reflexionslogische Semiotik. Zu einer nicht-klassischen und reflexionslogisch erweiterten Semiotik im Ausgang von Gotthard Günther und Charles S. Peirce*, Weilerswist, Velbrück, 2007, as well as Nina Ort's essay in this issue of *TRANS*. Some basic problems and solutions are discussed by Vincent Colapietro, « Notes for a sketch of a Peircean theory of the unconscious », I. Rauch and G.F. Carr (eds.), *Semiotics around the World: Synthesis in Diversity. Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies, Berkeley 1994*, Berlin and New York, de Gruyter 1997, vol. 2, pp. 1065-1068.

11. For the following, cf. Stephan Packard, « Reflections of the Cartoon », *International Journal of Comics Art* 8.2, 2006, pp. 113-125.

12. Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art*, 2nd. ed. New York, Harper Collins, 1994, pp. 27-39.

13. Cf. Peirce, « Short Logic », § 6 and *passim*.

14. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, pp. 36-37.

15. Cf. Charles Sanders Peirce, « I, IT and THOU. A Book Giving Instruction in some of the Elements of Thought » (outline), *Writings of Charles S. Peirce. A Chronological Edition*, vol. 1, ed. Max H. Fisch et al., Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1982, pp. 45-46.

16. Cf. Jacques Lacan, « Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je », *Écrits*, Paris, Seuil 1966, pp. 93-100.

17. Cf. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, ed. J.A. Miller, Paris, Seuil, 1973, esp. pp. 93-95.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

19. As a third domain, we might identify the canvas with the real, but I won't dwell on that in this context. In his *Cutting Up Again* texts, Donald Ault has given a brilliant description of how the real of the canvas is cut up and emerges into panels and panel elements. Cf. Donald Ault, « 'Cutting Up' Again Part II. Lacan On Barks On Lacan », Anne Magnussen and Hans-Christian Christiansen (eds.), *Comics & Culture. Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*, Kopenhagen, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000, pp. 123-140.

20. Cf. McCloud, *Understanding Comics*, p. 42.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

ABSTRACTS

Immediately subsuming any cognitive relation as a sign reference, the Peircean view is able to explain any act of semiosis in theory, and thus unable to explain preferences and omissions in practice. To include these phenomena, we may combine semiotics and psychoanalysis, introducing objective opacity into semiotics, and straightforward formalization into psychoanalysis. To showcase the explanatory power of the resultant psychosemiotics, an outline on comics' central sign type, the cartoon, is presented.

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