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Author: Glazer, Trip
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Abstract: Charles Sanders Peirce famously distinguishes between three types of sign, depending on how the sign refers to its object. An 'icon' refers by resemblance. An 'index' refers by a physical connection. And a 'symbol' refers by habit or convention. In this paper I argue that emotional expressions-e.g. cries of sadness, laughs of amusement, and scowls of anger-refer to emotions in none of these ways. Instead, they refer to their objects by manifesting them, or by enabling the perception of them. Thus, a cry signifies sadness because an observer who hears a cry can hear sadness, a laugh signifies joy because an observer who hears a laugh can hear joy, and a scowl signifies anger because an observer who sees a scowl can see anger. Although this analysis of emotional expression challenges a common understanding of Peirce's theory of signs, I demonstrate that it is ultimately consistent with Peirce's views on signification, emotion, and perception.

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