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**Abstract:** In recent years, scholars have come to recognize certain affinities between Peirce's Speculative Rhetoric and the rhetorical tradition. Yet, they have not offered a comprehensive account of how they are related. In the first section of this essay, I show that Peirce is linked to the rhetorical tradition partly because he gives new expression to two major insights of the tradition, namely (i) that discourses are bridges between an orator and an audience and (ii) that the efficacy of a discourse depends not only on the orator's intention, but also on the audience's prior knowledge. In the second section, I suggest that certain key distinctions developed by Peirce—most notably his distinction between icon, index and symbol, and between the various classes of interpretants—can account for the concerns of the rhetorical tradition, while at the same time explaining the efficacy of signs in contexts, like scientific inquiry, that have remained largely overlooked by this very tradition.

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