Term: Index

Quote: … if the triple relation between the sign, its object, and the mind, is degenerate, then of the three pairs

sign   object
sign   mind
object   mind

two at least are in dual relations which constitute the triple relation. One of the connected pairs must consist of the sign and its object, for if the sign were not related to its object except by the mind thinking of them separately, it would not fulfill the function of a sign at all. Supposing, then, the relation of the sign to its object does not lie in a mental association, there must be a direct dual relation of the sign to its object independent of the mind using the sign. In the second of the three cases just spoken of, this dual relation is not degenerate, and the sign signifies its object solely by virtue of being really connected with it. Of this nature are all natural signs and physical symptoms. I call such a sign an *index*, a pointing finger being the type of the class.

The index asserts nothing; it only says "There!" It takes hold of our eyes, as it were, and forcibly directs them to a particular object, and there it stops. Demonstrative and relative pronouns are nearly pure indices, because they denote things without describing them; so are the letters on a geometrical diagram, and the subscript numbers which in algebra distinguish one value from another without saying what those values are.

Source: Peirce, C. S. (1885). On the Algebra of Logic: A Contribution to the Philosophy of Notation. *American Journal of Mathematics*, 7 , 180-202.

References: W 5:162-3

Date of Quote: 1885

URL: http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-algebra-logic-contribution-philosophy-notation-0