

'Symbol' (pub. 05.03.18-16:11). Quote in M. Bergman & S. Paavola (Eds.), *The Commens Dictionary: Peirce's Terms in His Own Words. New Edition*. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-existential-graphs-2>.

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**Term:** Symbol

**Quote:** Now what is a symbol? An icon represents its object as a mere dream, sufficient for itself. An index represents its object as an active, existent, thing, that insists on making me its other. A symbol represents its object as a manifestation, as a representamen having on the one hand a capacity of being *indicated* and on the other hand a capacity of being *iconized*. The object not only exists but has a regularity, a general nature, a reason. It has parts, aspects, continuity, bounds. All signs are more or less symbolic. Take a picture, for example. Here are a lot of colors doubled on a canvas. But I know that they are intended to represent something unlike the canvass in having three dimensions, and the colors represent quite different colors in the object, to which they are proportionate by a scale of values. This is one of the reasons why I must be a connoisseur in order to judge of a painting. The object represented may not exist in the world of sense-experience; but it has an existence in the creation of the artist. It forces itself upon my apprehension much as an object of outward experience would do. Thus, the picture has an indexical nature, and as representing that its indicated object has steady and general characters it is symbolic. It represents its object as something which *manifests*, or represents, an occult *Ding an sich* behind it. Again, I am crossing the street rather abstractedly when I am startled by a sharp shout of "Hi!" It is difficult to imagine a sign more purely indexical, more exclusively calculated to rouse my attention to experience of the moment. Yet, after all, this cry has a meaning. I do not dodge as I might instinctively do if it were the whiz of a bullet. I instinctively jump forward, because the cry means that I should do so. Thus, a particular *quality* of the things about me is asserted in the explanation. Thus, every sign whatever is more or less symbolic. It recognizes its object as manifesting in some grade or manner of existence some general nature which may vary continuously, but not beyond more or less vaguely thought limits. It is a conventional or quasi-conventional sign, which represents its object as conforming to some general rule of representation. Beggars are said to make marks at the entrances of estates which not merely direct attention to those estates, but also classify the families which inhabit them. These marks are *symbols*.

**Source:** Peirce, C. S. (1898). *On Existential Graphs*. MS [R] 484.

**References:** MS [R] 484:5-7

**Date of** 1898

**Quote:**

**URL:** <http://www.commens.org/dictionary/entry/quote-existential-graphs-2>