

On the Identity and Meaning of Names

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- (P1) A common mode of estimating the amount of matter in a MS. or a printed book is to count the number of words. There will ordinarily be about twenty *the*'s on a page, and of course they count as twenty words. In another sense of the word "word", however, there is but one word "the" in the English language; and it is impossible that this word should be visible on a page or be heard in any voice, for the reason that it is not a Single thing or Single event. It does not exist; it only determines things that exist. Such a definitely significant Form, I propose to term a *Type*. A Single event which happens once and whose identity is limited to that one happening or a Single object or thing which is in some single place at any one instant of time, such event or thing being only significant just when and where it does, such as this or that word on a single line of a single copy of a book, I will venture to call a *Token*. (*Collected Papers*, paragraph 4.537, 1906.)
- (P2) A Symbol is a Representamen whose Representative character consists precisely of its being a rule that will determine its Interpretant. All words, sentences, books, and other conventional signs are Symbols. We speak of writing or pronouncing the word "man"; but it is only a replica, or embodiment of the word, that is pronounced or written. The word itself has no existence although it has a real being, consisting of the fact that existents *will* conform to it. It is a general mode of succession of sounds or representamens of sounds, which becomes a sign only in the fact that a habit, or acquired law, will cause replicas of it to be interpreted as meaning a man or men. The word and its meaning are both general rules; but the word alone of the two prescribes the qualities of its replicas in themselves. Otherwise the "word" and its meaning do not differ, unless some special sense is attached to "meaning". (CP 2.292, 1902.)
- (P3) All general, or definable, Words, whether in the sense of Types or of Tokens, are certainly Symbols. That is to say, they denote the objects that they do by virtue only of there being a habit that associates their signification to them. As to Proper Names, there might perhaps be a difference of opinion, especially if the Tokens are meant. But they should probably be regarded as Indices, since the actual connection (as we listen to talk), of Instances of the same typical words with the same Objects, alone causes them to be interpreted as denoting those Objects. (CP 4.544, 1906.)

- (P4) A Symbol [...] cannot indicate any particular thing; it denotes a kind of thing. Not only that, but it is itself a kind and not a single thing. You can write down the word “star”, but that does not make you the creator of the word, nor if you erase it have you destroyed the word. The word lives in the minds of those who use it. Even if they are all asleep, it exists in their memory. So, we may admit, if there is reason to do so, that generals are mere words without at all saying, as Ockham supposed, that they are really individuals. (CP 2.301, 1895.)
- (P5) [A legisign (i.e., a type)] has a definite identity, though usually admitting a great variety of appearances. Thus &, and, and the sound are all one word. (CP 8.334, 1904.)
- (P6) A proper name, when one meets with it for the first time, is existentially connected with some percept or other equivalent individual knowledge of the individual it names. It is *then*, and then only, a genuine Index. The next time one meets with it, one regards it as an Icon of that Index. The habitual acquaintance with it having been acquired, it becomes a Symbol whose interpretant represents it as an Icon of an Index of the Individual named. (CP 2.329, 1902.)