Barthes, Deleuze and Peirce: pragmatism in pursuit of the sign[1] [most recent draft]

Introduction

In this chapter I will investigate three pragmatic approaches to the sign and three associated kinds of pragmatism. I aim to demonstrate that the disruptive nature of the encounter with the sign raises problems for its practical reception. The wider objective is to suggest critical points against Deleuze's apprenticeship to signs and Peirce's triadic definition of the sign. Barthes plays an important role in preparing for this critique for two reasons. First, his longstanding enquiry into signs and semiology allows my discussion to connect to the traditional structuralism of the sign Barthes departs from. Second, his hyperaesthetic and fragmentary practice presents an extreme kind of practice towards signs, perhaps no more so than in the late essays I will be studying here.

The critical argument to be set out in more detail is that Barthes, Deleuze and Peirce develop practices towards signs relying on different functions for theoretical structures. Barthes gives a minimal and fragmentary role to theory, to the point where theories are undone and successively abandoned in his aesthetics of the sign. Deleuze is close to Barthes in the severe testing of theory and knowledge through the encounter with the sign. However, it will be argued that the idea of an apprenticeship to signs and the theoretical frame required to explain it provide a minimal sense of theoretical continuity in the basis for comparison between stages of practice and in the possibility of the definition of progress at the level of theory. This is neither linear progress nor consistent practice; for instance, apprenticeship might involve going through incompatible stages around types of knowledge and learning might involve a positive role for setbacks and falsification. Nonetheless, when compared to Barthes, a theoretical system and set of terms offer restrictions on the disruptive effects of signs on theory, even if this is at the meta-theoretical level governing the nature of an apprenticeship.

For Peirce, it will be argued that this restriction on the disruptive effect of the sign on theory is extended such that a technical and artistic skill with respect to signs allows for a perfectible route towards knowledge which remains fallible in relation to practical tests. Again, the critical argument is that the meta-theory around knowledge, technical art and sign restricts the radically disruptive nature of the encounter with the sign as described by Barthes and Deleuze. The distinction drawn between systematic theory about signs and practice towards them means that the terms 'pragmatic' and 'practical' are used in different senses. The systematic theories provide definitions of forms of pragmatism, defined as philosophies that are fallibilist through the role assigned to practice, though differing in the scope, mode and place given to fallibility in relation to signs. In turn, a practical approach to signs is a practice guided by the pragmatic theory, but not necessarily in a manner directly related to its aims and commitments. For instance, though Deleuze's pragmatic theory allows for a sense of stage-based progress through apprenticeship, practical experience can have dramatic setbacks and shifts in focus such that in any given application it can seem very far from allowing a continuous improvement.

The chapter unfolds according to the following plan. Once Barthes' extreme position has been described and its justification and problems are raised, I move on to a reading of the first part of

Deleuze's work on Proust and signs, making connections to later work. The main argument is Deleuze's apprenticeship is a response to the fluid and difficult nature of signs, as described by Barthes, but the context of apprenticeship requires a narrower definition of the sign. This is because of the need to support evolution through time for apprenticeship, in relation to a form of pragmatism based around the idea of different stages of apprenticeship. This means the progressiveness assigned to apprenticeship can lead to a mistaken account of accuracy and fidelity to signs, because of the restriction of the definition of the sign. Deleuze's pragmatism is committed to greater effectiveness for practice as defined by his theory. The theory also has greater persistence over time than Barthes' creative destruction of his own theoretical systems. However, if we follow Barthes' lead, effectiveness and persistence come at a cost in terms of the definition of the sign, since it becomes more restrictive than it should be.

After defining the main problem of restriction in the definition of the sign, I pass on to a study of a version of Peirce's complex definition of the sign. This has to be a selective approach due to the many different definitions to be found in his manifold and incomplete works. The critical work on pragmatism and signs in Barthes and Deleuze leads to two areas of divergence with Peirce around the nature and place of the encounter with signs: in the difference between Deleuze's apprenticeship, Barthes' creative art and Peirce's technical art in the reception of the sign; and in the constitution of truth by and following the sign. Taken together these allow for distinctive types of pragmatism to be identified and distinguished in a precise manner. In each of the areas, Peirce offers a contrast to Barthes and Deleuze. The scope and place of the encounter with the sign is limited in his practice, it comes first but only in a restricted form and only then to lead into relatively secure knowledge.

Aiming at truth, Peirce's technical art is a perfectible skill across three fields: logic, grammar and rhetoric. This art remains empirical in its approach to the sign and is therefore fallible, rather than rationally secure. It is less experimental and creative than Deleuze's apprenticeship or Barthes' aestheticism around notions such as perfectibility, criteria for practice and truthful knowledge as goal for pragmatism. For Peirce, truth is in knowledge garnered thanks to a technical art of the sign, rather than something inherent to the encounter with signs. This means that truth is the external aim of his pragmatism, rather than an inherent property of the encounter with the sign. Truth is not in the encounter. It follows from work after the encounter that departs from the encounter by refining it. To different degrees in Barthes and in Deleuze, the encounter with signs constitutes truth in a fundamental way. This truth-making is not present in the same way in Peirce because the sign provides a necessary source for truth, but it does not constitute truth itself because that requires a subsequent technical art, where the qualifier 'technical' indicates a prior and independent model for the practice of art, for instance, in terms of Peirce's triadic distinctions.

Barthes : fragmentation in signs

> ... *dans une certaine mesure (qui est celle de nos balbutiements théoriques)...* (Barthes 1982,

59)

In the collection of mostly late or posthumous essays <u>L'obvie et l'obtus</u> Roland Barthes returns to signs and semiology. The essays are remarkable as studies of the sign since they push Barthes' taste for sensitive and tentative description of cultural and aesthetic signs to a fragile limit where theory gives way to forms of fascinated equivocation. In a refusal to break down signs into categories and settled definitions, he lingers among them, seeking to do justice to their sensual charge.

This restless and inquisitive commitment to the value of each sign, while it defines Barthes as lover of signs, also restrains his capacity as theoretician, since emerging theoretical distinctions are put into question and shown to be lacking in the pursuit of a beloved sign. His constructions become 'theoretical babbling': a measure of the failure of theory and of the elusive quality of signs. This disruption contributes to the forward movement of the essays. Each tells of a hunt where theoretical tools are turned to and discarded as Barthes moves closer to his quarry. He is an incomparable reader of signs: an artist of the subtle depiction of individual and group complexity. Signs become unplumbed depths and unsolved mazes, where daring plunges and turns alter combinations and vistas.

This power to bring signs alive in more accurate yet unexpected scenes, words and ideas restricts Barthes' ability to offer us a systematic theory. Despite this, or because of it, his writing communicates many fragmentary layers of the sign. This leaves us with puzzles around an appreciation avoiding common systems but achieving contact around shared signs. Why can there be no theory of signs to underpin his technique? In the absence of any such theory, why is this writing on signs successful at conveying the elusive qualities of signs?

A first answer is Barthes is an artist and curator of signs. He creates a work alongside them to enhance, explain and renew them. The individual sign escapes repeatable theory and demands novel words, phrases and settings. His style of creation around each sign draws on a sensual idea of accuracy, closer to individual passions and desires in its uncompromising commitment to signs and to art as inviting a difficult balance between private emotion and public communication. The encounter with the sign is a coming together of drives and affects sustained by the sign. The sign responds to desires. It answers to them. Yet it also forms those desires in alliance with passions. The drives and affects constitute the privacy of the sign: the search for *his* signs. The flailing attempts at written description and theory of the sign constitute its fragmenting public space.

Barthes struck this balance most movingly, while mourning his mother, in a search for the private *punctum* in photography, the emotional connection and puncture through time, against the public *studium*, a shared but superficial synchronous social meaning (Barthes, 1980). The paradox of writing about this piercing of the public by the private draws new questions. Is the crumbling

theoretical frame necessary for his art? Which aspect of this art allows for shared communication and how does it achieve agreement across readers?

Barthes is dedicated to the critique of current theory and of commonplace views in the name of the work seen anew and differently. His practice as critic brings him close to theory through constant debate with its terms and practices, to its repeatable structure applied across different signs. In his studies we witness a burgeoning and experimental theoretical vocabulary: a practice in rapid formation and decline. Alongside curtailed development, we experience failure and slow decline of theory in repeated demands for corrections. These changes are generated by each sign, as if they say 'Lover, you will never catch or deserve me with such crude technique'. This impatient turn away from theories culminates in events and encounters which seem to depend on an essential closure to conceptual approaches, to formulae and to cunning strategies.

I describe Barthes as fragmentary lover of signs to evoke his unparalleled study of love in Fragments of a Lover's Discourse and his poignant late diary entries. (Barthes 1977; Barthes 2007) He refuses to define lovers' shared passions simply; offering us instead many fragments gesturing towards the affect in multiple moments, from the private glimpse of flesh or posture, to the high art of Goethe. The fragments are irreducible to one another and this resistance halts any emerging theory of love. So the fragments on the sign stress 'the uncertainty of signs'. In ideas that will take on greater importance when I discuss Deleuze and Peirce on truth later, Barthes insists on the impossibility of finding signs that verify the truth of love: 'Strong and vivid images never appear to whoever seeks truth, but only images that become ambiguous, floating, as he seeks to transform them into signs: as in any divination, the consulting lover must make his own truth.' (Barthes 1977, 254, my translation)

Barthes responds to love with wariness about measurable effects. He avoids reducing the event to general phenomena, preferring instead to communicate across inventive and accurate depictions, imposing no lasting definition or fact. His prose coheres in disparate moods and figures. The material is alive because it is fleeting. This raises another more precise puzzle around his work on the sign. How does Barthes retrace signs and love accurately without depending on a system of capture and representation of the sign, capable of justifying and supporting claims to general truth over time and across signs?

It would be a mistake to assume that the fragments have no relation to one another. Rather, in place of a seamless and one-dimensional argument, they offer us outlooks over the same events but with no overarching representation or logic articulating them, other than Barthes' reaching out to new facets and values before old ones can cohere and establish the sign. I will show in later sections of this argument that the resistance to logical articulation and representative meditation are important in drawing a critical contrast with Peirce. The lack of finality and structure of argument, as well as the moving quality of loving attempts, is replicated in Barthes' later essays on signs and art. Though

the essays can appear to be divided into paragraphs and sections, they are better taken as shattered and unfinished pieces where he draws breath again and departs in new directions, which nonetheless respond to failures and possibilities discovered in earlier passages.

Reminiscent of his work on photography, the late essays exercise an art of the sign in order to counter the fall into cliché. Barthes multiplies ideas and vocabulary across his intricate fragments. His essay on Arcimboldo is explicit in its push back against banal metaphor. The painter is at risk of thin and formulaic reception due to the apparent simplicity of his device of the substitution of natural objects for planes and features of the face. Barthes rescues him in nested remarks, each one more unexpected than the last, yet all the more enticing for that:

> Arcimboldo thus alerts us to the productive, transitive, character of metaphors; in any case his are not simple notifications of affinity. They do not register virtual analogies existing in nature and that the poet would have the responsibility to make manifest. They undo familiar objects in order to make new and strange ones through a veritable coup de force (one more) that is the *work* of visionaries (and not only their ability to capture resemblances). (Barthes 1982, 130)

The processes identified by Barthes beneath the apparent simplicity of Arcimboldo's metaphorical associations point to the necessity of thinking the sign as becoming. The sign is production, transition, novelty, estrangement and work. The injunction to make new and strange objects carved from the familiar might well be Barthes' commentary on his own essays on signs. His pragmatic approach seeks to force the sign, to break it apart into many new works, each one in unstable relation to all other attempts at 'one more'. He extends Arcimboldo's metaphors with layers of signs which slip into one another. The single articulation of metaphor (carrot-nose) is questioned by the discovery of a profusion of underlying, mysterious and faintly remembered narratives, multiple articulations of signs and language. There is an expansion of metaphor to metonymy, allegory, allusion, antanaclasis and annomination.

Barthes discovers 'hesitation between encryption and decryption' the skilled work of the 'visionary' artist, where a rapid glance might only see simple swaps and crude puns. This hesitation is carried by incomplete and open networks of articulations. Encryption is achieved through successive reversions where relations are never carried through from layer to layer. There is instead mobility and fleetingness of meaning. At the limit, this is an encryption of death and decomposition where the sign becomes a barrier or collapse rather than an access to hidden meaning: 'Everything happens each time as if the head trembles between marvellous life and horrible death. These composed heads are heads in decomposition.' (Barthes 1982, 134)

Hesitation before a trembling work is the undoing of theory. In his essay on Eisenstein and 'the third

sense', Barthes speaks of the sterilisation of theory by an obtuse sense: 'In sum, obtuse sense troubles and sterilises metalanguage (critique)'. (Barthes 1982, 55) There are several reasons for this effect. Obtuse sense is discontinuous, indifferent to history and indifferent to signification. This discontinuity explains the movements and jumps of the sign as it floats free of historical sense and natural signification, as it cuts loose from secure referents guaranteed as ideal or natural, or as set by convention. There is a depletion of the signified and fullness of the signifier, because any given significance is unsatisfactory and yet the signifier calls for significance through its discontinuous restlessness.

What do this trembling, discontinuity and hesitation teach us about signs? This question is posed badly if not accompanied by the challenge to theory made by the sign. It is not that a subset of signs falls outside common definition. It is rather that Barthes' later works reveal something essential about all signs in their resistance to theory. The signs of love are not a special subset of signs. They reveal qualities of all signs: ambiguity, fleetingness and movement. The sign is in movement such that any appreciation free of hesitation misses something. When the sign is captured and fixed, even on a fallibilist basis, the sign has been missed, because signs do not tremble between known options. The discontinuity is not between settled states or even uncertain ones, or ones corresponding to different stages in the reception of the sign. Barthes' deepest insight is that the sign undoes whole fields of reference and signification.

The problem is not about uncertainty between known referents and meanings. They all enter into movement in the sign, because signs are altering before and while they are given known associations. Any identified connection of signifier and signified is insufficient and false determination of the sign which always appears as becoming. This movement is primary and knowledge of components is secondary to it. When Barthes describes hesitation, it is not uncertainty between options, but rather a more primordial hesitancy in touch with a deeper truth about signs. They induce hesitation because they cannot be situated satisfactorily in any way. This explains the restlessness of his style and approach to the sign. The pursuit of the sign must be an incessant creative movement that only alights on the sign fleetingly and in fragments because the sign is itself in motion.

Deleuze : the apprenticeship to signs

'*La déception est un moment fondamental de la recherche ou de l'apprentissage…*' (Deleuze 1993, 46)

Like Barthes, Deleuze studies love, art and disintegration in the guises of jealousy and death. Is it correct therefore to think of their approaches to the sign as belonging together, or are there significant differences? Can Deleuze's longest reflection on the sign, in his Proust and Signs, be

seen as sharing Barthes' example of the creative hesitation and invention before the sign, where theories are undone and replaced by fragmentary and loving attention? Is Deleuze's selection of disappointment to characterise the apprenticeship to signs parallel to Barthes' sense of the trembling induced by the sign?

To answer these questions I will turn to the first part of <u>Proust and Signs</u>, the part corresponding to the original first edition before the addition of later sections on the multiplication of signs and on art and madness.[2] A first difficulty must be considered at this point. <u>Proust and signs</u>, like many of Deleuze's studies of artists and philosophers, adopts a descriptive and interpretative stance. Are we then reading Deleuze's philosophy of signs or his particular interpretation of Proust's use of signs in <u>In Search of Lost Time</u>?

There is conclusive textual evidence that neither of these alternatives is correct. The book gives us Deleuze's philosophy of signs as developed in a reading of Proust. It can be taken as Deleuze's view on the sign given its adoption in later works such as <u>The Logic of Sense</u> and <u>Difference and Repetition</u>. Ideas such as the 'image of thought', the 'apprenticeship to signs' and the essential role of the violent 'encounter' with the sign for thought took on vital roles in the structure of Deleuze's system after the Proust book. This leads to the crux of the argument about the correspondence between Barthes and Deleuze on the sign. Given that the work on Proust reappears in the later systematic metaphysics, is there an opposition between Deleuze's *system* of the sign and Barthes' *fragments*?

To show that things are nowhere near as clear-cut as this rhetorical question might suggest, it is helpful to turn to another idea Deleuze takes from Proust: the critique of the presupposition of good will on the part of the thinker (a key moment, later, in <u>Difference and Repetition</u>).[3] There is a passage where Deleuze draws friendship and love, art and philosophy together in a lesson that could be taken straight from Barthes: 'A mediocre love is worth more than a great friendship, because love is rich in signs and nourishes itself of silent interpretation. A work of art is worth more than a philosophical effort, because what is enveloped in the sign is deeper than all explicit significations.' (Deleuze 1993, 41)

Deleuze sets love over and above friendship due to the richness in signs of the former. Friendship is about open and shared community, but love runs deeper for two reasons. First, it shows the falsity and limits of that openness and sharing. The signs of love operate around encounters and subsequent jealousy undoing the illusion of perfect communication and shared endeavours. In <u>Difference and Repetition</u>, this revelation will be developed into a full critique of the idea of the trustworthiness of the good will of the thinker.[4] Second, love demonstrates the limits of good will as the way to the sign. The sign works sensuously and secretly beneath conceptual representation and understanding. The thinker's good will is therefore also methodologically unreliable. So when philosophies claim access to the world through representation, understanding and good will,

according to Deleuze they commit a dangerous stupidity. They enjoin us to trust and rely upon methods and dispositions, whereas the encounter with the sign in love hits us with the duplicity of both.

The idea of the forceful encounter brings Deleuze's philosophy of the sign close to Barthes' aesthetics. The sign acts sensually in relation to desire and creativity. This sensual force is disruptive and revelatory. It requires creative work in following it and in attempting to be worthy of the event of the sign. Here is Deleuze's sensitive and moving description of the role of signs in forcing lost time upon us. It is suggestive of similar passages of love, loss and nostalgia in Camera Lucida: 'There are signs that force us to think lost time, that is the passage of time, the annihilation of what was; the annihilation of beings. It is a revelation to see again those who were once familiar to us, because their faces, no longer habitual, carry the signs and effects of time in a pure state. Time has modified some traits. It has lengthened, softened or compressed other ones.' (Deleuze 1993, 27)

Barthes took this lesson about passing away and elusiveness to the higher level of a lesson about how to live with signs. Deleuze does the same. The encounter with signs becomes a higher truth in his reading of Proust and in his later philosophy. This then calls for an experimental creativity in response to intense encounters which becomes the leading idea of activity within Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. In the Proust book, though not necessarily later, art is the highest of such signs because it reveals the multiple essences of encounters, as fleeting, immaterial and individual; as a matter of truth in difference defined as becoming rather than in sameness and representation. The practice of signs becomes a restless and destructive creativity answering to sensual events.[5]

Nonetheless, for Deleuze, this practice takes on a particular shape: apprenticeship. So the question remains whether something is lost in the transition from Barthes' submission to the fragmentation of signs in Deleuze's apprenticeship, since fragmentation seems removed from the stages of training and learning. Could it be that sensitivity and creative responsiveness to signs are diminished when they are taken within the ambit of a learning practice? Might the philosophical structure given by Deleuze, as a wider speculative and metaphysical frame for signs and events, impose a set of ideas and relations around the sign that prevent it taking on its full power as an undoing of thought? On the other hand, against the fragility, individual aestheticism and tentativeness of Barthes' experimentations, might it not be better to include the sign in a practice of apprenticeship and a wider structure in order for that practice to develop and become more secure, for instance, against moments of despair and confusion or misuse, as witnessed in the sad and ignominious scenes of Barthes' notebooks?

It is important to separate two critical points in this concern about signs and structure. We should reject the criticism that Deleuze's ideas about apprenticeship and wider philosophy prejudge the nature of signs. In Proust and Signs, he is careful to follow Proust's lead in a meticulous and free

investigation of the nature and essence of the sign. This allows Deleuze to arrive at the radical position of submitting thought to signs such that prior ideology, objectivism, epistemology and ontologies fall away in the encounter with the sign. The sign carries through sensual shock above ideological prejudice. It separates the object from its immaterial effects. It replaces cognitive truths with differential experiences. Ontologies and categories lose their boundaries as signs cross them.

The experience of the sign shapes the philosophy, rather than the opposite, and a number of the features of the philosophy of time as set out in Difference and Repetition follow from Deleuze's careful attentiveness to what signs can teach us about time. For instance, the idea that there is an eternal time outside the ordinary experience of the unfolding of time follows from the sign in art as traced in Proust and Signs: 'Art has the highest signs whose meaning is situated in a primordial complication, eternal truth, original absolute time.' (Deleuze 1993, 60) When Deleuze reflects later on virtual time, freed from actual subjective and objective time, it is this kind of insight that he adopts in order to justify the primary, multiple and absolute nature of virtual times.

However, it is with this notion of time that a higher order critical point comes in. The problem does not lie with presuppositions about the sign but rather with the theory supporting apprenticeship in relation to time, or more precisely apprenticeship over time. So the problem becomes a theoretical one where Deleuze passes from signs to a theory around the sustaining of practice over time and around ways of comparing stages of apprenticeship. Signs, time and apprenticeship come together in a form of progress: 'Proust's work is not turned towards the past and the discoveries of memory, but towards the future and the progress of apprenticeship. What is important is that the hero does not know certain things at the beginning, then progressively learns them, and finally receives a last revelation.' (Deleuze 1993, 36) These sentences might seem innocuous but they commit Deleuze to a theoretical model for apprenticeship based around progress from past to future across stages organised around lack of knowledge, learning and revelation.

The originality of this model comes from the role of signs in apprenticeship. However, the notion of progression based round stages and types of knowledge lends a formal frame to Deleuze's practice that allows for a set of useful features around continuity and progression of learning, understanding of stages and roles of different kinds of experience. Philosophers of education have adopted this combination of signs and apprentice-like development in a pragmatic approach to learning, often alongside other pragmatist approaches to education, for instance with Dewey.[6]

The problem is that there is a tension between Deleuze's radical presentation of the encounter with the sign and the appeal to progression and to stages of knowledge in the apprenticeship. What are we to make of cases where events occur and force anomalies, setbacks, or complete disasters in notions of progression towards higher states of apprenticeship? For instance, there have been many cases of disastrous effects on life-long and wise apprenticeship, including in art-making and appreciation, in the devastating experience of new forms of technology or new creative ideas. This

kind of destructive event seems much better-suited to the definition of the sign than it is to the definition of apprenticeship. It is this refusal to settle on a model and to remain in a fragmentary and attentive experimental state that makes Barthes' last essays convincing in their enactment of theoretical collapse.

It could be objected to this critical conclusion that Deleuze's points about apprenticeship follow from the same careful reading of Proust and reflection on phenomena as his descriptions of signs. It could also be objected that a valuable philosophy of education has come about because of the way in which Deleuze builds on the tensions inherent to his study of apprenticeship and that this demonstrates his understanding of problematic grounds for thought requiring creative solutions, such as the uneven progression of learning. Finally it could also be pointed out that he is aware of the disruptive role of the sign in the progress of apprenticeship, as shown by his study of disappointment.

I agree with the first two remarks. The tension inherent to Deleuze's advocacy of the forcefulness of the sign alongside an idea of pragmatic progression in apprenticeship has deep roots in a careful reading of Proust and reflections on the sign and learning. It is nonetheless a problematic tension where the solution of attentive progression prone to disappointment leaves two difficulties. There is a risk that this attention to the sign will fall short of Barthes' more tentative and fragmentary approach as faithfulness to the sign. Progression and stages in apprenticeship, as attentiveness to signs, can become illusory or a form of bad faith as confidence grows in overcoming each disappointment or setback and reaching higher stages as set out in the theory of apprenticeship: 'In Search of Lost Time has rhythm, not simply through the gains and sediments of memory, but also through the series of discontinuous disappointments, and by the means set to work to overcome them in each series.' (Deleuze 1993, 36-7)

Peirce: signs and truth in pragmaticism

'The art of reasoning is the art of marshalling such signs, and of finding out the truth.' (Peirce 1998, 10)

On the one hand, Barthes provides us with the fragmentation and tentativeness of a restless experimentation with signs that always escape and undo us. On the other hand, while very close to Barthes' sensitivity to the sign, Deleuze advocates stages in apprenticeship as a model for a pragmatics in relation to the sign. Barthes offers a radical sign-oriented practical creativity, which constantly undoes any emerging theoretical underpinning, Deleuze counters with an uneven progression around the definition of apprenticeship over time. It is instructive to situate Peirce in relation to this, not only because his pragmaticism is a practice towards signs, but also because it involves sensitivity to signs consistent with Barthes' approach, with the hope for a practice and

learning with respect to signs that we find in Deleuze's.

Over his vast output of published and unpublished texts Peirce multiplies definitions of the sign. Each time trying to come closer to a definition or set of definitions that allow for a more successful practice. However, where Barthes openly embraces fragmentation and the thwarting of theory, Peirce exhibits a more hopeful perfectionism. There is always a sense that it will be possible to come closer to getting it right and to be able to adjudicate between right and wrong answers in given cases.

This perfectionism in relation to theories of the sign also allows for contrasts with Deleuze, since although Peirce gives many attempts at the correct definition of signs and practice towards them, he does not share many of the deepest facets of Deleuze's sense of the sign or account of apprenticeship.[7] I want to draw special attention to three of them. First, when Deleuze speaks of the encounter with signs, he conveys a sense of a shock to thought and of a forceful interruption. For Peirce, signs are inherent to the working of thought such that the expression 'We think only in signs' (Peirce 1998, 10) could stand as banner statement for Peirce's pragmaticism of the sign. Though signs can certainly have strong effects on thought and operate sensuously as well as cognitively, and though the interpretation of signs is at the core of reasoning for him, there is not the same radical sense of violent disruption right up to the theory of the sign within fallibalist pragmatism.

Second, for Peirce, the practice of thought in relation to signs is not an apprenticeship but rather a technical art that I have defined as an art governed by a method and a set of techniques. We could draw a distinction here between the technical art of the engineer, working artistically and aesthetically, for instance on aerodynamics within a set of physical laws, objectives and engineering constraints, and the art of the sculptor whose practice is often to bring all of these into question in the search for a more open creation of the new and the unexpected. Peirce and Deleuze share an experimental approach to the sign. Their philosophies are not forms of rationalism which could lead to reliable approaches to the sign. Instead, experimentation, responsiveness and looseness pervade both approaches. However, for Peirce, the development of the technical art of signs is more linear in relation to knowledge, method and truth than Deleuze's apprenticeship, which not only incorporates an ebb and flow of progress and disappointment, but also involves more mysterious and esoteric moments in its development, due to the necessity of more radically violent encounters with the sign and to the congruent necessity of an artistic experimentation responsive to those encounters.[8]

Third, the place of truth in Deleuze and Peirce's philosophies of the sign is subtly different. For Deleuze, truth is *in* the encounter with the sign. This means that the event of the sign and its accompanying effects reveal truth as troublesome and transformative encounter. Two forms of truth can therefore be defined. There are secondary truths which are determined by their quality of being about something. Such truths can be captured in truthful propositions about the world. There is also, though, primary truth which is determined as the disturbance of secondary truths: their sundering

and transformation. In this real truth we experience the dissolution of our secondary, propositional truths in the encounter with the sign. A higher truth then emerges: there can be no stable truths outside encounters revealing truth as becoming, as a ceaseless encounter with difference rather than any confirmation of any truthful representation of the sign or of the world. This is the powerful fallibilism implicated in Deleuze's apprenticeship. Our truths are not only subject to revision, they are perpetually called into question in a fundamental way.

In contrast to Deleuze's definition of truth in signs as becoming and as disturbing encounter, Peirce's pragmaticism aims at truth *after* the sign such that the right handling of signs allows us to arrive at settled truths across a range of types of truth. For Peirce, as argued in 'Of reasoning in general', the sign takes its place in a 'trivium' of approaches to truth and reason. Each arrives differently, but in a complementary manner, at the best way to reason. There is the logic of the sign tasked with ascertaining 'whether given reasonings are good or bad, strong or weak' (Peirce 1998, 18). There is a speculative grammar which 'should study modes of signifying in general' (Peirce 1998, 19). And there is a speculative rhetoric adding to the last two 'an art of thinking' which can 'recommend such forms of thinking as will most economically serve the purposes of Reason' (Peirce 1998, 19).

It is important to stress that each of these is also experimental and fallible, in the sense of having to try out different models on empirical evidence. Different logics, grammars and kinds of rhetoric are to be tried out. However, the deep contrast with Barthes and with Deleuze comes from the criteria emerging from each of the practices of the trivium. For logic, these criteria are about good and bad reasoning, and its strength and weakness. Is the logic sound? Does it allow for secure conclusions? For grammar, the criteria are empirically tested against linguistic usage. Does the grammar conform to the way language is used? Does it provide a model as to how it should be used? For rhetoric, the criteria are more flexible and concern the efficiency of reasoning. Does this rhetorical style and practice allow for an efficient use of reason as on-going and open-ended practice?

The criteria therefore have a double role in Peirce's approach to signs. They provide the guidelines for reasoning with signs. They orientate the practice of thinking with the signs we encounter. They are also, though, the goal for our reflection about signs in general, which should aim to provide the criteria. This approach is very familiar to modern thinkers about style, for instance, where we do not find hard and fast rules but rather guidelines about logical forms, correct grammar and good rhetorical approaches; for instance and where rhetoric alone is concerned, as set out loosely and pragmatically by Orwell in his famous essay 'Politics and the English Language': 'Afterward one can choose - not simply accept - the phrases that will best cover the meaning, and then switch round and decide what impressions one's words are likely to make on another person. This last effort of the mind cuts out all stale or mixed images, all prefabricated phrases, needless repetitions, and humbug and vagueness generally.'[9]

Peirce gives a threefold definition of signs similar to the tripartite division of logic, grammar and rhetoric. It might seem right to map each of those definitions (Icons, Indices, Symbols) on to one or other of the forms of reasoning, but that would not be correct for two reasons. First, the division of the sign into types is not into independent categories. Icons, indices and symbols contain one another and interact with one another. Second, each form of reasoning has to work with all of the subdivisions of the sign. The general definition of the sign as a representation that connects an object to an 'interpretant' or idea covers gradations which go from degrees of natural resemblance (Icon), degrees of real connection (Indices) and degrees of attachment of sets of objects and groups of Indices (Symbols) (Peirce 1998, 20-21).

It is beyond the scope of this work on pragmatics and signs to analyse this complex definition of the sign in depth, but an example is helpful to understand its implications for a pragmatic approach and for the truthful art of signs.[10] Let's imagine that I want to convince you of the evil of a despised colleague. I show you a short video clip of Professor R doctoring marks on exam scripts. The image of the professor is an Icon, a resemblance. The effaced 'A' superposed by a 'B' is an Index; it should have a real connection to the changed mark in the university computer system and on the student's degree papers. The whispered 'Evil, to do such wrong' that I repeat as I show the clip forms the Symbol. The verb 'to do wrong' brings the object corresponding to 'Professor R's doctoring of marks' together with other 'evil' objects and associates them with other Indices, other cases of wrongdoers. The Symbol makes the case for me by asserting something, but it can only do so by working with Icons and with Indexes (Peirce 1998, 21-2). A judgement and other consequential signs about the correctness of the resemblances, the strength of the real connections and the validity of the association are then Interpretants of the Symbol.

Each of the subtypes of sign can fail independently. For instance, when it is shown that it is but a mask of R in the clip, the Icon fails as correct resemblance. When the mark changing turns out to have been only a stage in R's marking process that eventually led into a return to 'A' marks, the Index is a weak relation to changes in degree classification. When it is shown that I misuse a loaded verb about an innocent act in repeating 'Evil, to do such wrong', the validity of the assertion is called into question and the Symbol falls apart. The types can also fail together, for instance, when the Icon does not belong to the groups united by the Symbol, for instance, when it is pointed out that R is patently not an evil person, or when the Index does not imply a conclusion required for the symbol to work.

If we follow Peirce, we need the technical art of reasoning and of finding out the truth because of the nature of signs: 'But it is now time to draw attention to three different tasks that are set before teacher and learner of the art of reasoning.' (Peirce 1998, 18) The components of the sign, the Icon, Index and Symbol require well-regulated forms of reasoning that can detect errors, flawed implications and lies. The pragmatic art of signs is a technical and artistic skill leading towards truth thanks to carefully chosen logics, grammars and rhetoric. The contrast with the halting and tentative practice of Barthes or Deleuze does not come from a simple rejection of logic or grammar, or pragmatic method in general. They also allow a place for such modes of communication and

argument. The difference is that the sign has the power to interrupt not only any logic and method through a different kind of truth, but also call into question the overarching theory that allows for, for instance, Peirce's distinction into triads and his description of guiding criteria. For Barthes, and to a lesser extent for Deleuze, fallibilism strikes at the heart of the theory of signs, rather than at subsequent knowledge and models which need to be refined or changed due to the encounter with signs.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has not been to decide between three practices towards the sign, as proposed by Barthes, Deleuze and Peirce. Nor has it been to decide between three versions of pragmatism, loosely defined as a kind of fallibilism with respect to the encounter with the sign. Instead, my aim has been to show how it is possible to have different degrees of theoretical restriction on the definition of the sign. With Barthes, theoretical command over the sign is reduced to a minimum, to the point where theory passes with the sign and is eroded and fragmented. This fragmentation becomes part of an aesthetic practice which comes closer to the sign because it allows theory to fail. In insisting on the truth of the encounter with the sign as shock and disruption, Deleuze nears Barthes, yet he retains a meta-theoretical frame for the sign in relation to stages of apprenticeship such that this introduces a minimal restriction on the definition of the sign. Peirce increases this restriction through triadic definitions of the sign in relation to knowledge, truth and technical art of the sign. The critical importance of these contrasts comes from their lessons for a balance between theoretical consistency about practices towards the sign and the creative pursuit of the sign which tests theories to destruction. At least three as yet unanswered questions arise from this: Should we divide signs into categories according to how well they fit each approach, for instance, reserving the signs of love for Barthes, but technological signs for Peirce's approach? How practicable is the limit case of a fragmentation of theory, when we require repeatable courses of action, whether apprenticeship or technical art? Should we tailor approaches to the sign to each instance according to some kind of pragmatic test, and if so, what are our criteria for success?

James Williams, June 2014

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on earlier versions of this chapter.

[2] Note that this focus on Proust is limiting in relation to the full role of signs in Deleuze's thought. For example, in her <u>Deleuze et l'art</u>, Anne Sauvagnargues stresses the Spinozist background to the encounter with signs as a transformation of our powers to be affected and to have effects (Sauvagnargues 2006, 59-62)

[3] Daniel S. Smith connects the sign to good will and to the image of thought in his <u>Essays on Deleuze</u>. It is particularly important for this chapter that he does so in the context of a discussion of a critique of truth in Deleuze (Smith 2012, 90-92)

[4] For a helpful discussion of signs and jealousy, see Stivale 2008, 125

[5] Anne Sauvagnargues describes apprenticeship as 'sensitivity to signs' and points out that this must always involve an element of 'prescience' (Sauvagnargues 2009, 145-6). This prescient quality of apprenticeship is pushed further and along original lines by Joshua Ramey in connecting the art of signs in Deleuze to thinkers such as Cusa and Bruno (Ramey 2012, 82-9)

[6] See Semestky, 2006 and Cole, 2011

[7] Deleuze works on Peirce and signs in depth in <u>Cinema 2</u>. Given this connection I will work mainly on that text. Note though that Deleuze is indebted to Peirce in other ways, for instance, for the discussion of the concept of the diagram in <u>The Logic of Sensation</u>. See Daniel S. Smith's comments on the diagram in Peirce and Deleuze in his introduction to his English translation of <u>Francis Bacon: logique de la sensation</u>: <u>Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation</u> (Deleuze 2003, pp xxiii-xxiv)

[8] According to Deleuze, in his reading of Peirce in <u>Cinema 2</u> following Deledalle, the role assigned to signs by Peirce is to add to knowledge: '… to add new elements of knowledge as a function of the interpretant' (Deleuze 1985, 46, 30). This allows the sign to take its place in the art of reasoning. Therefore, for Deleuze, Peirce does not go far enough in tracking the reality of the sign because he imposes the triadic categories of the sign and their hierarchical structure rather than deducing it (Deleuze 1985, 47). This leads to a stark statement of divergence: 'We therefore take the term "sign" in a wholly other way to Peirce: it is a particular image that refers to a type of image, either from the point of view of its bipolar composition, or from the point of view of its genesis.' (Deleuze 1985, 48) To understand the stakes of this claim, it is helpful to take account of the wider strategy of Deleuze's critical argument. It is two-fold. First, he disagrees with the strict application of Peirce's methodology to a definition of the sign; second, he disagrees with the boundaries put on types of sign.

[9] Orwell, George 'Politics and the English Language', consulted at
http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit/ [26/7/2013]

[10] For a comprehensive study of Peirce's work on signs see Short 2007