
Problem Set 2: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness

This is a model!

Abstract

This problem set pertains to Peirce's classification of knowledge in terms of **firstness**, **secondness**, and **thirdness**. The first task of the problem set is to find song lyrics which reflect these concepts. The second task is to find movie stills which embody these concepts. The third task is to identify sonic events which make meaning in accord with these concepts. Thus, the three tasks pertain to the consideration of signs in the form of **words**, **images**, and **sound**, respectively.

Task 1: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness in Song Lyrics

Firstness, secondness and thirdness in the lyrics of three songs. (These songs were all written by the same person – but that was certainly not on constraint for this task.)

1. First song ...

- Title/Artist: Loving Her Was Easier / Kris Kristofferson
- **I have seen the morning burning golden on the mountain in the skies**
Aching with the feeling of the freedom of an eagle when she flies
- The first line suggests seeing “the color gold”, which is a form of **isolated perception**. The second line suggests **feeling** “the freedom of an eagle when she flies” - albeit tinged with loss. These are the two defining characteristics of firstness.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aYv_9QfXw8 Waylon Jennings

2. Second song ...

- Title/Artist: Me and Bobby McGee / Kris Kristofferson
- Well, I'd trade **all my tomorrows** for **one single yesterday**
To be **holdin' Bobby's body next to mine**
- The first line compares the future (all my tomorrows) with the past (one single yesterday), thus highlighting a **temporal relation**, which is a characteristic of secondness. The second line is a **spatial** manifestation of secondness, with **the two bodies** being perceived in close proximity, which falls under the “differences in perceived facts” characteristic of secondness.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfjon-ZTqzU> Janis Joplin

3. Third song ...

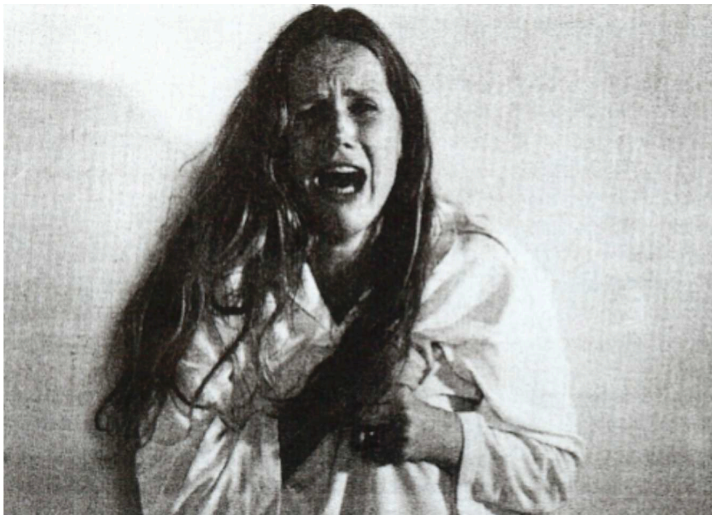
- Title/Artist: Here Comes That Rainbow Again / Kris Kristofferson
- Ain't it just like a human?
Here comes that rainbow again
- At some point, most people learn that rainbows express various positive emotions, such as happiness, feelings of togetherness, hope, and good fortune. Learning this is pure thirdness.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWpxuHDZrLU> Johnny Cash
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ej1I-IrHWCc> Kris Kristofferson

Task 2: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness in the Movies

Firstness, secondness, and thirdness are featured, respectively, in the generation and comprehension of meaning for the following **movie stills** from three different movies.

1. First movie still ...

- Film/Director: Face to Face / Ingmar Bergman
- The image ...



- Liv Ullmann is expressing **unfiltered feeling**, which is a defining characteristic of firstness.

2. Second movie still ...

- Film/Director: North by Northwest / Alfred Hitchcock
- The image ...



- Cary Grant and the crop duster – **two distinct objects** that interact (**relate**) in a way to make us experience fear. Thus, fear (the meaning) is engendered by secondness.

3. Third movie still ...

- Film/Director: Hunger Games / Francis Lawrence
- The image ...



- The meaning of the three finger salute changed over time in the movies, from an old gesture of respect/love in District 12, to a sign of resistance from the Capitol, to the symbol of the pro-democracy rebellion lead by Katniss. Clearly, all of this is **learned**, and hence falls within the scope of thirdness.

Task 3: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness within the Sonic Realm

Find three different “**sonic events**” (e.g., natural sound, conventional sound, piece of music) that you will be able to use to advantage in performing the following subtasks:

1. Sonic event 1 ...

- Prelude in E Minor by Frederic Francois Chopin
- This short piano piece is widely recognized as one which transports people to a pure emotional state, keeps them there, and often doesn't let go until well after the final resolution of the piece. This sort of **pure feeling** is a hallmark of firstness.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90wBhBZjAUQ>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDZ_DlNfsWk

2. Sonic event 2 ...

- La Cumparsita (a classic tango), to mark the end of milonga (Argentine social dance party)
- Part of the code of milonga is the playing of some version of La Cumparsita as the last song of the night. In other words, La Cumparsita is an indexical sign that the milonga is wrapping up.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=un9tx8r0l0k>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkfzK_nX-QM

3. Sonic event 3 ...

- Mockingjay whistle (Rue's song) from the Hunger Games movies.
- The meaning of this very short musical figure morphed from “if we hear that, it means we are ok” in the arena, to a “clear but subtle anthem” during the rebellion.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pIago6ylKpc>