HOW TO MAKE OUR IDEAS OBSCURE, IN ART AND DESIGN::
EDUARDO CÔRTE-REAL

Abstract:
From the three conditions of clarity expressed by Charles Sanders Peirce in How to Make Our Ideas Clear; the paper proposes and provides guidelines for making ideas obscure in opposition to those conditions. From Peirces pragmatic proposals, the paper raises questions about Thought from the ethical point of view. Obscurity opposed to clarity is worked under an ironic approach. The reader will experience difficulties on deciding what the target for irony is.
Methodoxy and Designology are examples showing both its clarity and obscurity features.
The paper is divided in three main sections: Mystery, Multiplication and Fatal Truth.
Mystery refers to processes in which ideas are covered with a foggy veil that enhances their importance.
Multiplication refers to the possibility of growth of multiple obscure thought from an original thought and the confusion between the quality of sensibility and sensible qualities.
Fatal Truth refers to a possible dialogue between Peirce positions through. The Fixation of Belief" and Heideggers positions through Building Dwelling Thinking.
The paper concludes with an argument about authority as a quality of authors.

Note:
How to Make Our Ideas Obscure in Art Design Theory is a re composition of a paper published in January 2001 in *Arq./A, Revista de Arquitectura e Arte*, under the title: "Como tornar as Nossas Ideias Obscuras (em Arquitectura Arte e Ciencia). It is not a mere translation but a total rewriting exercise focusing on Art & Design Theory. The basic concepts on this paper where also broadcast through the discussion list: PhD Design List.

How to Make our Ideas Obscure, in Art & Design Theory.
Charles Sanders Peirce, at the end of the nineteen century, launched the basis of what would come to be known as the American Pragmatism. On "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", Peirce promotes a critique of Classical Logic as a way of clarifying our ideas, condition that he considered to essential to the Science of Logic. Peirce argued that method of defining, in itself, contributed with nothing to make our ideas clear, just produced a distinctive character among ideas. Assuming that all thought has the fixation of belief as a goal, determined by the existence of doubt, the action of thought ceases when belief is achieved (Peirce 1878). By assuming that thought may cease Peirce connects it with action and, therefore, places human thinking

clearly to the realm of Ethics. (The popular interpretation of Ethics seldom confuses it with Moral, which is also under the realm of Ethics, but it is not the Ethics. Ethics deal with decisions upon human actions. Ethic is not confined to Good and Bad but also to Wrong and Right, Rational and Irrational, etc). This paper must be read having in consideration that Ethical Dimension.

Mystery
Obscurity is a mighty adversary of thinking as action or active thinking. Peirce tried to identify the obscurity mischief proposing, by opposition, conditions of clarity.

The first mischief occurs when we take obscurity itself for a characteristic of the thought object. This makes virtually impossible to recognize the object when presented in a clear way (Peirce 1878).

So, my first advice to who desires to make ideas obscure is to confuse the formulation of an idea with the idea. It is very probable that a formulation of an idea is slightly or strongly more complicated than the idea.

Take the idea of;square. Although very clear as an idea when we start to formulate it can be rather confusing, especially if you are determined to formulate it in the most accurate way. Say: A square is a closed geometric figure with four sides equal and parallel, two by two, forming at the vertices 90º angles. The words *closed, geometric, side, equal, vertices* and *angle* are very problematic. The accuracy of the formulation would have to contain, also, definitions of those words as ideas. Each one of them and especially: *closed, side* and *equal* are plausible pasture for endless interrogations. Formulations of ideas are simply more complicated than ideas. The mischief occurs when we take the formulation for the idea. The idea of square may function as square without formulation. If we choose to use the formulation instead of the idea where the idea is required we are bound for mysterious regions where obscurity takes the place of clarity. There is a strong possibility that many other people would value an obscure idea, since the though object is enhanced by a mysterious quality determining a sensation of unintelligibility, of null ethical value, but capable of generate more obscure thoughts, thus perpetuating its validity.

Another example came to me in a class, a few years ago, resulting in an intellectual conflict with a student about Utopia.

I was saying that Utopia was a neologism of Greek origin invented by a XVI century English thinker, Thomas More, which meant, literally, without place. But, in a more elaborate way, considering the meaning of *topos,* also meant without spatial organization (without hierarchy or position relations between parts). I concluded, therefore, that Utopian City was an oxymoron, an expression contradictory in its terms like freezing fire or blackness of light, since the idea of city contradicted the idea of U-Topia. We all can guess why Thomas More created that name: simply to say that the place didn't exist but it was cool if existed.

The student was outraged by that simplistic view and thrown at my general direction all the political, social, poetic meanings the she had gathered for the past years through reading and conversations. It is fair to say that her argumentation was just and the attitude justifiable. It was difficult to explain her that all the concepts and judgments that she was unfolding came from the simple poetic ambiguity that the name of the Island contained at the time More had invented it. The proposed clarity appeared to dry out the complexity of the idea of Utopia and, therefore, she didn't recognize it. Expressed simply as an oxymoron, the idea had no mysterious qualities at all. On the students argumentation it was implicit that the professor was being simplistic.

I suggest, therefore, to whom wants to make his/hers ideas obscure that refuse all formulations that is able to fully understand because they can probably be abusively simplistic.

Multiplication

The second mischief is determined by the inconstancy of the grammatical interpretations that seldom conduce to the distinction of ideas that are really the same idea.

My second advise to whom wants to make his/hers ideas obscure is, if the first advise was followed, to promote the multiplication of ideas proposing new formulations for those that were sufficiently clear, introducing the mysterious character of new interpretations parallel to the first.

An example of this kind of obscurity also came from a lecture.

During a theoretical lecture about drawing we collided with the designation for "quick observation drawing".

While in PortoArchitecture School *esquisso* is the word used for "quick observation drawing" in the Lisbon Architecture School the word used is *croquis*. Both words are not of Portuguese origin. *Esquisso* cames from the Italian *Schizzo* and *Croquis* is just the plain French word. At Porto *esquisso* means the same as sketch referring both to quick observation drawings as to quick conceptual project drawing. In Lisbon *esquisso* refers only to conceptual project drawing. While in Porto the word *croquis* is almost not used, in Lisbon croquis designates quick observation drawings.

For Esquisso (Schizzo) we have Vasari's definition that invented the word referring, only, to conceptual drawing. The justifications for the use of both designations would be endless. If you think that when you are observing something you are, in fact, making a mental sketch of it, *esquisso* would be valid not only to conceptual drawing as to quick observation drawing. My wife, lecturing also to the same students, suggested that we should put an end to the discussion by inventing a neologism "*croquisso*" capable of encapsulate both meanings.

The fact was that the idea of quick observation drawing was clear in both schools from the practical point of view. Students with more or less ability and effort achieved the same goals and technical results for different names of same ideas.

We could identify, clearly, a clear active meaning of both *esquisso* and *croquis*, corresponding to the same idea that through different regional designations appeared to be a conceptual problem. To pursuit the path of the differentiation would enhance the mysterious qualities of an otherwise clear idea. The same multiplication power occurs when a sole word reveals itself of being capable of a multiple meaning.

Design Multiplication Design

Being both a noun and a verb, Design has been a rich pasture for this kind of mischief.

The idea of Design, worldwide valuable, refers to objects deliberately, produced according to a process in which their cultural value is evaluated. Design is also committed with authorship, individual or collective. The idea of Design is so clear that lots of schools and companies are named after Design. At least, it is clear enough for that.

The idea of design as verb includes also a particular longing value or vicious intentions. The plural of the noun is even terrifying: "I have designs for you…"

Although not totally pacified, the international idea of Design seems something relatively clear. For a Croatian, Japanese, a Portuguese and all non-English language natives, Design is not related to the verb that in common conversation we can use as a   planned desire for something, for instance. So, globally, Design refers to objects, systems of objects, fancy stores and exhibitions and to the process of producing it.

When a Government states that Design is a strategic goal for the economy, is stating that enhancing the communicational/organisational factors within the process of production should be achieved. Normally this means that companies should hire the services of Design companies and Engineering Schools should change part of the names of their courses to Design of Something or Something Design. Normally it means also that will be more money for fancy objects exhibitions in Art and Science Museums. Although sadly partially wrong the governments and the public ideas of Design are clear.

One of the ways of determining the real meaning of ideas is to put Hermeneutics in action. But we will go to that path later on.

The fact that Design is a neo-Latin word inside a non-neo-Latin language enhances its multiple possibilities of meaning. The existence of "sign" inside it also produces structuralist and post-strucuralist temptations hard to resist. Functioning as a verb and inherently human, existentialist anxieties can also emerge from it.

Both from the noun side as the verb side the idea of method stands in the way of the idea of design. Foresight, required for project activities, needs methods, otherwise they would be simply prophecies or wild guesses.
The idea of method elevated to the power of science through Methodology is also clear. The idea of method is very clear before failure. Errors inside a process clearly can be related to failures. And clearly correcting errors adds or alters steps inside methods.

Secretly and paradoxically, being a process of decision making, method's goals are to eliminate decisions. For this a Science of methods was created. Those are clear ideas: Method = process of organizing processes in order to achieve results and control errors and Methodology = the science that studies and proposes methods. Currently we use the word methodology instead of the word method. "There are a lot of methodologies to assure energy conservation in buildings". "O, you have made a check list.

Have you made it according to which methodology?" These are common expressions we hear. We will not run into the rat trap of correcting these liberal uses of the word methodology. We all know that methodology is used as method when the method used was presented or described theoretically and not just achieved by traditional repetition.

Having that in mind we can say that, due to its social impact, Design requires an affidavit on the activities that carry the name.

Sound methodologies legitimise actions. Society can bare Art as the sole activity with the core of their methods hidden inside personal inspiration. Surgery, Engineering, Law would be unbearable without certified methods. The point of a Methodology as a governing Science would be a metaphysical one, understanding what invisible governing laws are ruling the physics of structured decision making.

Methodology in Design acquired the meaning of a set of identified design methods being really a modelling device for decision-making processes. In fact, this modelling frenzy, by setting limits to phases, by "algorithming" different actions, by connecting circles and squares with names with names inside by arrows, bold or narrow, are nothing more than, at a limit, imposing an opinion. Any experienced designer would tell us that methodologies act as menu for controlling some parts of the decision making process from which you choose a la carte. Therefore I proposed that the word that better defined methodology in Design was *Methodoxy* from the Greek word doxos(opinion). We could, therefore speak of the Third Bauhaus methodoxy, the Ulm methodoxy, the post-modern methodoxy, William Morriss methodoxy, etc, etc. On this enunciation we can identify gradients:

Methodoxies as proposals (Leon Battista Alberti, First Bauhaus, William Morris)

Methodoxies as Orthomethodoxies (Neo-Classicism, Third Bauhaus)

Methodoxies as Methodoxologies (Christopher Alexander, John Chris Jones)

And, as an emergent fact: Methodoxies as Philomethodoxsophies. The later resulting from the global wide online discussions, mainly through the PhD Design List.

The participation of a large number of Design scholars on such a List based on a quick response system provides discussion about topics that due to the medium tend to argumentative. Most of the "performers" on the List are trained or experienced scholars or PhD students that come to have arguments very handy. Dialogue becomes, like in ancient academia, a research in itself. Thinkers that we usually find under the Philosophy's entry in libraries seldom are quoted or referred as being "worked" on design research.

All this research work and discussions about research work will hopefully lead to a Designology, a science of design, more or less interdisciplinary. The limits of such science will be established and, although this is not the place to define it, it is at least a contribution to define its mood, motto or style.
So, although eagerly kin of those words and sincerely feeling that they describe more clearly ideas related to methods and truly believing that Designology will be defined at methods camp fire, they likely would add more mystery and obscurity to the idea of methodology.

Anyhow, my advise to whom wants to make obscure his/hers ideas is to always doubt of the correctness of the formulations that seem referring clear ideas, searching for new ones, grammatically and etymologically more correct, especially if it will put the clarity of the idea at stake. I propose strongly the creation of neologisms, mainly when incorrect designations are already peacefully accepted. The candidate to make his/hers ideas obscure will be able to mesmerize the "audience" with the ability of introducing a new seed of obscurity, evolving under a mysterious veil the otherwise clear idea since he is the only one that knows the true meaning of the neologism.

Fatal Truth
The third mischief occurs when we confuse a sensation of thinking as a part of thought itself.

According to Peirce, ideas of things are ideas of thing's sensible effects. "Our idea of anything *is* our idea of its sensible effects; and if we fancy that we have any other we deceive ourselves, and mistake a mere sensation accompanying the thought for a part of the thought itself"(Peirce 1878). We shouldn't confuse it with the thing neither with the sensation of thinking different from the sensible effects. Peirce points out the practical effects of those sensible effects putting us on a path towards the validation of a scientific method capable of build and fixate beliefs.

Naturally, my third advise to whom wants to make its ideas obscure is self-contemplation instead of observation, promoting a confusion between his/hers quality of sensibility and the sensible qualities of objects.

Of course that Peirce, concerned with thought as action, underestimates the power of confuse and obscure thought. Peirce's mischief lies on the fact the he believes that people think in order to act or act while thinking when, in fact, some think to justify inaction and being inactive made them able to think. By making obscure thoughts out of clear ideas, the thinker legitimises the possibility of going on thinking.

On The Fixation of Belief, Peirce postulates that the goal for reasoning is to discover, starting with what we know, something that we don't know. Reading Martin Heidegger's conference text "Building Dwelling Thinking", we understand that the process of thinking is on the opposite pole without being non-reasoning.

Heidegger concludes that the true crises of housing lies on the fact that mortals are always in the search for the being of dwelling, missing, therefore, firstly, to learn how to dwell:

"We try to fill the need by providing houses, by promoting the building of houses, planning the whole architectural enterprise.

However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the *real plight of dwelling* does not lie merely in a lack of houses. The real plight of dwelling is indeed older than the world wars with their destruction, older also than the increase of the earth's population and the condition of the industrial workers." (Heidegger 1951)

We must remember that this conference was on the problems of housing after the Second World War. Or shouldn't we remember?

It all comes clear: *The fourfold* and the common origin of *bauen* and *bin*, building and being, correspond to reasoning about the conclusion previously known. This is hermeneutics. Through Peirce's eyes we cannot help to be suspicious about such hermeneutics that, at the end, lighten the responsibility burden on the destructive power of the Third Reich, when beholding a destroyed Europe, the problem of re-housing is presented as a false problem since the essential question of dwelling stood persistent. Heidegger's sensation of thought commands his elaborations. We cannot experience doubt about his conclusions, which are also his premise. Heidegger presumes and feels that all the post-war re-housing problems didn't reach the brim of the gown of dwelling. Building, dwelling and thinking can't be dissociated and constitute the being condition on the mortal's world that is a part of *the fourfold* along with the other three: heaven, earth and gods. In between the lines we can read that the unsolved underlying questions that conducted to two "world" wars in Europe wouldn't be resolved by the "architectural enterprise".

At the first "chords", Heidegger manages German language as a palimpsest. He removes layers that reveal connections that justify his feelings. The common origin of *Bin* and *Bauen*, which, I imagine could work for English with Being and Build collapses in neo-Latin languages with *edificare e essere*, or *edifier et être*, or *edificar e ser*. Aedificare, Edifier, Edificare, Edificar or any other kind of connections could be found like the colloquial "I live at number X, street B, City A. The confusion between living and dwelling is rich in English in the same way that *viver* and *habitar* in Portuguese. "Dwelling", that was used for the last time in English language by Tolkien referring to Hobbiton or Moria, I imagine, had to be used by the translator. Besides being specifically German at the start, I can't help to say that Heideggers's text goes into the third Peirce's mischief but, without that mischief, the wonderful formulations about *the fourfold*, original unity in which no element can be understand without the others, wouldn't be possible.

At this point, the question that arises is how would Peirce deal with the same problem?

But first, we must stress that Heidegger's position is an historical one. The deepest conditions of being related to built and dwell are rooted on profound timeless problems and, therefore, persistent throughout History. The visible contemporary housing problem persists because historically the deepest relations present in the problem were disrupted. Pretending to address the problem philosophically, Heidegger feels the incompleteness of common knowledge about the problem since it appears to be not enough timely rooted. He must return to almost mythical ages, to a language and existential primeval soup, where *the fourfold* can be found. This place is where his feelings are confirmed.

So, how Peirce would deal with the same problem? In order to answer that question we must resume to what he considers to be reality. Starting with a definition that he considers being incomplete and, therefore, not clearing enough: "Thus we may define the real as that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be" (Peirce 1879). Understanding that the investigation progress, by external forces similar to Fate, leads to unified conclusions, he arrives to the definition: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately

agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real." (Peirce 1879) This notion of reality is rooted on a research method proposed by Peirce that was opposed to the authoritarianism that he pointed out, for instance, to Scholastics. The authority of scholastics was the result of a hermeneutic process that searched for the harmony between Aristotle and S. Paul. The rhetorical hermeneutical process proposed admitted the possibility of a rational victory of Christianity. The correction of the logical scholastic constructions didn't allowed any fracture that only the scientific research method would came to brake as a version of truth.

No one will also be able to break the logical construction of "Building dwelling thinking", unless the same philological self-contemplating rigour is used over an antagonist feeling. Peirce's reality does not contemplate *the fourfold*. We cannot observe it.

It is a prêt-a-porter belief but not in fits-all size. But, although we can't deny it, we have already denied Dalton's atomic model substituted by Rutherford's substituted by Bohrs, etc, all confirmed by experimental and research hard work. Peirce does not elude this question when he writes:

"Do these things not really exist because they are hopelessly beyond the reach of our knowledge? And then, after the universe is dead (according to the prediction of some scientists), and all life has ceased forever, will not the shock of atoms continue though there will be no mind to know it? To this I reply that, though in no possible state of knowledge can any number be great enough to express the relation between the amount of what rests unknown to the amount of the known, **yet it is unphilosophical to suppose that, with regard to any given question (which has any clear meaning), investigation would not bring forth a solution of it, if it were carried far enough.** (Peirce, 1879)

This declaration comprises also the acknowledgment that any real truth obtained by research is impermanent regardless of its timely validity.

How would Peirce address, finally, the problem of dwelling?

Accepting that History is the source pool for addressing the problem, Peirce's method would focus upon the sensible effects of dwelling, rather than focusing on our sensitiveness on the fact. Being impossible to conduct experiments on the fact, like Heidegger, he would have to face History as if Time had itself conducted the experiment. In a way, recorded past events may function as a scientist's journal or notebook. The experiment chooses the facts. From the endless series of recorded events some are connected to the problem of dwelling. Fewer are connected to it directly (and, by all means, tons of bombs dropped in people's houses all over Europe have to do something with it!).

What we must stress is that any solution presented by a Peircean History would be formulated with the perfect notion that such reality, meanwhile expressed, fixed as an opinion transformed in belief is always bound to be altered by further research.

In this sense a methodology is always a methodoxy if we think of it from the meta-methodological point of view. From this point of view we can also see that History and short term history are crucial for Design Theory (bound to be a Designology). No methodology or methodoxy is able to endure without the test of performance. Results are only available after the performance.

Methodoxy is also the assumption that science and theory in general only generate opinions. The way in which the opinions are fixed as beliefs may divert. The curiosity about Heidegger and the rigorous work done on his work by design theorists clearly shows that Heidegger left a heritage of thoughts that enable the multiplication of thought even concerning such a simple thing as simply producing simple technical objects. Although served by architects since Imnohtep, according to Heidegger, architecture failed and was still failing in 1951 to solve the problems of dwelling. Looking at the *fourfold* either we decide to clearly state that this

man is a raving lunatic or we do accept the poetical-philological-philosophical digression that conducts to such entity. In fact, nothing more than Heidegger and his philosophical authority stands between the *fourfold* and the suspicion of one being *fourfooled.* This is a problem of authority. Heidegger is the **author** of such entity. That's why we usually say that Einstein discovered the Theory of Relativity and not that he is its author. Scientific Knowledge is not author's knowledge. In that sense it can be made clear and therefore perceived by many as clear. This does not means that everyone is able to perceive and understand the Theory of Relativity, but a growing number of people since 1905 understood it and others could confirm it through practical evidence.

What Peirce means by clarity allow ideas to loose their authors. Loosing authorship is also the core of Design Theory (bound to be a Designology) since there is no such thing without the correspondent Practice otherwise it wouldn't be **Design** Theory (being Design Practice the object of Designology). All Design Theories are either embedded in designing or identifiable through designed things or through their use. In that sense Design Theories are meant to loose their authorship. As descriptions of reality they are contingent as well as based on others ideas and descriptions. Only Heidegger knows really what he meant by "Fourfold" and even if some of us are prolonging the magic of it, no one is really sure if Heidegger, returning from the grave, wouldn't say: "No, my dear lad, that's not what I had in mind when I used the fourfold…"

It is easy to see that the ethical question underlying the clarity of ideas lies in not making it authoritarian.

Therefore, as my almost last advice to the ones that want to make their ideas obscure, I suggest that, once all the previous are followed, these ideas should be presented with authority, without any hesitation about the reality of self-contemplation.

Finally, as my last advice, I suggest to the candidate for obscurity to read Peirce and Heidegger, preferably on the same day.

References:

PEIRCE, Charles S., "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878), 286-302. http://www.peirce.org/writings/p119.html

PEIRCE, Charles S. "The Fixation of Belief" *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877), 1-15. http://www.peirce.org/writings/p107.html

HEIDEGGER, Martin, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York, 1971. Conference held in 1951 in Darmstat. http://acnet.pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html