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# DEPENDENCES BETWEEN LOGIC AND COMMUNITY
## PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PEIRCE'S CATEGORIES FOR PRAXIS[1]

*Jordi Graupera*

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to analyse the possible implications of Peirce's categories for a project of a community. In order to do so, I will start by analysing the first formulation of these categories in Peirce's early writings, and then I will compare them with their later formulations. Thus, we will see some their most important characteristics, namely, their universality and their dynamism, which will allow for a particular understanding of the role that logic can play in his system, in a theory of scientific inquiry and, finally, in a community in general.

**Keywords:** *Peirce, pragmatism, social theory, political system, logic of science*

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## UNIVERSAL OMNI-PRESENT CATEGORIES

During the 1860s, Peirce published[2] a series of articles which contain the general framework of his late philosophy. In fact, we can find the idea of truth as the consensus reached in the long run by a community of inquirers, or the idea that the constant repetition of induction can lead to truth (Peirce, 1869, 56-82). We can also find the idea that the notion of unknowable is absurd (Peirce, 1868b, 28-55), the idea that all thoughts are present only as signs (*Id.*) and the idea that these thoughts follow three forms of inference (Peirce, 1867). But, above all, we can find an early formulation of his theory of categories (*Id.*), in which he articulates these and other themes in his thinking.

By contrasting the first formulation of his *thought in process* with the later formulation of his theory, our intention is to find some characteristics of Peirce's famous theory of categories that can help us to define certain consequences of his thinking, namely, some social consequences that can serve as a basis to highlight the richness and possibilities of his threefold categories for a social and political understanding of both science and knowledge, and vice-versa, a pragmaticist[3] understanding of politics and society.

The first *official* formulation of Peirce's categories can be found in his 1867 article, *On a New List of Categories* (*ONLC*) (Peirce, 1867) the analysis of which will serve as the basis for our interpretation of some of the implications of his later theory. Before going into the text in depth, it is important for our purposes to state that *ONLC* departs from a profound *anti-psychologism* and a radical rejection of the *phenomenon/noumenon* distinction.[4] Regarding his anti-psychologism, Peirce's aim is to show how it is possible for *thought* to be general, independent of its concrete nature in a particular individual. Psychology, or a psychological perspective, cannot deliver these conditions, and consequently it is impossible for psychology to be the cornerstone of logic. Regarding his rejection of the

[2] All internal quotations are taken from *Essential Peirce. Vol. 1*. Ed. by Nathan Houser & Christian Kloesel. *Vol. 2*. Ed. by The Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 1992-1997. Hereafter they will be cited by the name of the article, the volume, and the page number.

[3] I will follow Peirce's terminology: *pragmaticism* for *pragmatism*.

[4] In this formulation of the relation between Peirce and Kant, I am following Douglas Niño's interpretation. (Niño, 2004). (My translation and paraphrasing); and the discussion between Buzzelli (1972).

phenomenon/noumenon distinction, his difference with Kant is apparent: While Kant argues that the mind brings its categorical mould to experience and that in order to grant the objective validity of subjective synthesis an *incognoscibŭlis noumenon* must be postulated, Peirce, in this early phase of his thinking, rejects the notion of the noumenon because he believes that stating what is *unknowable* is nonsense. Briefly: a representation must have content, and if the representation of the noumenon has no content, then the *noumenon* is trying to represent what it is non-representable, and therefore, to speak of a *noumenon* is to speak of a representation that is not a representation (Niño, 2004, 2). On the other hand, in Peirce's opinion, the phenomenon is something representable, and thus thinkable: it is experience which brings the scheme, or a mould, to the mind, and it is only later that the mind brings it back to experience. Although it would lead us to far afield to go deeper into this issue, let us assert that Peirce's rejection of the noumenon/phenomenon distinction would have consequences in his theory of cognition/representation and in his method of searching for his categories (De Tienne, 1989).

Regarding the text of the *ONLC* itself, then, it is worthy to note already in the first paragraph the relation between Kant's and Peirce's categories.

> This paper is based upon the theory already established, that the function of conceptions is to reduce the manifold of sensuous impressions to unity, and that the validity of a conception consists in the impossibility of reducing the content of consciousness to unity without the introduction of it (Peirce, 1867, 1).

As Niño shows (Niño, 2004, 3), what is striking about this paragraph is how much it agrees with Kant and how much it disagrees with Kant. Kant's aim, it can be said, is to give objective validity to the subjective conditions of understanding, and according to him, this validity can only be granted through a *transcendental deduction*. When Kant speaks of his categories, he mentions them in his *Transcendental Logic* as the twelve functions of understanding that entail the passage from the basic concepts of general logic to those of the transcendental logic. In this sense, Peirce agrees with Kant, since reducing "the manifold of sensuous impressions to unity" means that the purpose of the categories is to convey the conditions under which the objects of experience can be thought about. In other words, it is the function of understanding to produce propositions that give sense to the many things that we encounter in experience. Indeed,

these conceptions behave as the conditions of intelligibility because they produce propositions as "bricks with which knowledge is built up, and without them the production of bricks ceases." (Niño, 2004, 3) In this sense, a *conception* or category is not something present in sensorial impressions but an element of understanding, added to cognition, aimed at reducing those sensuous impressions to unity. Paraphrasing Peirce, it can be said that any reflection on an impression, given that it is a step that leads to the unity of consistency, is a conception.

However, while in Kant some category among the twelve is always indispensable for understanding, none is wide enough to be capable of containing all thought (Kant, CPR: A 79-83), and this is precisely where Peirce diverges from Kant. Let us examine this in detail through Douglas' account. In Kant we find four classes of categories (quantity, quality, relation and modality) each of them containing three categories, making a total of twelve categories. However, one category from each class would play a role in each thought, that is, at least four, but not all twelve of them together. Therefore, some of the Kantian categories are necessary in order for an object of experience to become thought, but not all of them simultaneously. The same holds true with Aristotelian categories; in this sense and only in this sense, "neither the Aristotelian nor the Kantian categories are universal, but particular categories". (Niño, 2004, p. 4), When Peirce, on the other hand, says in the second part of the sentence that the validity of a conception consists in the "impossibility of reducing the content of consciousness to unity without the introduction of it', he is saying that the validity of a conception, that is, a category, is its universality, the necessity of being included in all thought. Therefore, this implies that Peirce's effort will consist in describing elemental conceptions that are always present in the mind when something appears to it (Buzelli, 1972). Beyond its universality and formality, Peirce's categories will be omni-comprehensive, meaning that all of them together will contain not only all possible thought (as both Kantian and Aristotelian categories do) but each and every thought.

But, why is it necessary to have "a plurality of categories, rather than one single universal and formal category"? (Niño, 2004, 5)

> This theory gives rise to a conception of gradation among those conceptions which are universal. For one such conception may unite the manifold of sense and yet another may be required to unite the conception and the manifold to which it is applied, and so on. (Peirce, 1867, 1)

Despite the fact that the purpose of these categories is to reduce multiplicity to unity, more than one category may be needed. It is possible, for example, that once understanding has introduced a category when faced with a multiplicity of sensuous impressions, *unity of consistency* is not yet reached. In this case, understanding will need another category to intervene. If with this second category unity were attained, then only two categories would be universally valid. But it is possible too, that even with the intervention of two conceptions unity is not yet reached, and a third conception will be needed, and so forth, until unity emerges.

From the analysis of these two first paragraphs, then, we can infer that Peirce's first intention to describe a *new list of categories* implies that his *novelty* is rooted in the necessity of finding first universal categories and secondly a plurality of them that covers each significant phase until unity is attained.

## THE IDEA OF PROCESS

In contrast to Cartesian solipsism, Peirce raises a series of counter-arguments that challenge both the intellectual process of attaining a truth (or, at least, a trustworthy conclusion) grounded in all a priori principles for conception-formation, including principles such as intuition and introspection, and the lonely work of the inquirer, conceived as a genius who reaches definitive certainty through his own mental powers, including the empiricist scope based on sensual experience and the idealist scope based on the strength of reason or on some sort of innate revelation.

The rejection of interiority as the main source of knowledge goes as far as implying that even the delimitation of the concept of self finds content in external facts. These external forces do not merely include facts and objects but also other subjects and other subjects' discourses. Consistent with this, Peirce develops the role played by others as witnesses. The role played by testimony is essential in configuring both the idea of the self and a dynamic understanding of science, and with it, an idea of community.

Let us start with the idea of oneself. In *Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man*, Peirce asks and answers several questions concerning the nature of interiority, especially certain of its features such as intuition, introspection and self-consciousness. As he himself summarises it:

> 1. We have no power of introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts. 2. We have no power of intuition, but every cognition is determined logically by previous cognitions (Peirce, 1868b, 30).

Furthermore, in order to answer the question "whether we have an intuitive self-consciousness", he looks for the origin of self-consciousness in the early stages of life and reason, that is, early childhood, and he concludes that self-consciousness comes not from innate intuition of the self but from a contrast between an individual's apperceptions of the external world, or the absence of them, and the testimonies that others give about their experiences of the world. This contrast produces a consciousness of a difference between Oneself and the Other.

> Thus, he (the child) becomes aware of ignorance, and it is necessary to suppose a self in which this ignorance can inhere. So testimony gives the first dawning of self-consciousness. (...) But, further, although usually appearances are either only confirmed or merely supplemented by testimony, yet there is a certain remarkable class of appearances which are continually contradicted by testimony. These are those predicates which we know to be emotional, but which he distinguishes by their connection with the movements of that central person, himself (...). These judgements are generally denied by others. Moreover, he has reason to think that others, also, have such judgements which are quite denied by all the rest. Thus, he adds to the conception of appearance as the actualization of fact, the conception of it as something private and valid only by supposing a self which is fallible (Peirce, 1868a, 20).

This awareness of ignorance and error not only leads the child to infer the existence of *himself* and the privacy of his emotions, but, as is implicit, it also corrects his understanding of the external world. A simple transposition of this idea to the level of science gives us a clear image of one of the pillars of Peirce's thought: the development of science, and thus the attainment of truth, must be confirmed or corrected by *others*. But there must be a vehicle for this give and take, this proposition-error-correction triad; there must be a way to communicate and to assert validity. This need will be provided by both logic and the theory of signs.

However, this possibility of self-correction on the part of science implies a dynamic character, in the sense that science is susceptible to change and that its own development also fuels its *revisibility*. Thought is essentially

dynamic, and as such it is a sort of in-apprehensible train of *feelings*. Its expressions, its representations or signs are but a highlighting of a *moment*:

> From our second principle, that there is no intuition or cognition not determined by previous cognitions, it follows that the striking in of a new experience is never an instantaneous affair, but is an event occupying time, and coming to pass by a continuous process. Its prominence in consciousness, therefore, must probably be the consummation of a growing process; and if so, there is no sufficient cause for the thought which had been the leading one just before, to cease abruptly and instantaneously. (...) Every thought, however artificial and complex, is, so far as it is immediately present, a mere sensation without parts, and therefore, in itself, without similarity to any other, but incomparable with any other and absolutely sui generis. Whatever is wholly incomparable with anything else is wholly inexplicable, because explanation consists in bringing things under general laws or under natural classes. Hence every thought, in so far as it is a feeling of a peculiar sort, is simply an ultimate, inexplicable fact. Yet it does not conflict with my postulate that no fact should be allowed to stand as inexplicable; for, on the one hand, we never can think, "This is present to me", since, before we have time to make that reflection, the sensation is past, and on the other hand, when once past, we can never bring back the quality of the feeling as it was in and for itself, or know what it was like in itself, or even discover the existence of this quality except by a corollary from our general theory of ourselves, and then not in its idiosyncrasy, but only as something present. But, as something present, feelings are all alike and require no explanation, since they contain only what is universal. (Peirce, 1868b, 39-41).

Every movement feeds future movements, as in a dynamo. At the level of the individual, the process of reasoning, understanding or obtaining conceptions is essentially dynamic, but this dynamism will find a mirror at the collective level of science that we will try to use as a paradigm for social community as such. The process of unifying multiple sensorial data in one's mind does not have a clear origin or an ultimate end either; rather it has *a process*, just like science has *a method* and communities have *praxis*.

## THE THREE CATEGORIES AND THE SOCIAL PROCESS OF SCIENCE

Firstness is the quality itself, independent of anything else, the sheer appearance of phenomena, before they are understood or mediated; what is given to the senses before the object they come from is delimited. It is absolute freshness; we might call it adamicity. Secondness is the appearance of the fact, its delimitation by its contrast with everything else. Secondness is the emergence of the brute fact, before it becomes intelligible, but also after it has been differentiated from other facts or objects: it is what makes possible awareness of their existence. The existence of a concrete fact in the milieu of other facts means presence in the universe of experiences. It implies a dynamic reaction before all other things in the universe and therefore fundamentally implies relation.

> Just as the first is not absolutely first if thought along with a second, so likewise to think the Second in its perfection we must banish every third. The Second is therefore the absolute last. But we need not, and must not, banish the idea of the first from the second; on the contrary, the Second is precisely that which cannot exist without the first. It meets us in such facts as Another, Relation, Compulsion, Effect, Dependence, Independence, Negation, Occurrence, Reality, Result (Peirce, 1888, 249).

The existence of something has a dyadic character because this existence becomes explicit only through opposition to other: this is its proper kind of relation. In secondness, a thing becomes distinguished from other things by emerging in its real determinacy in relation to all other things and thereby negating all other events, facts or objects as not being part of itself.

If firstness offers the possibility of the presence of fact, and secondness its effective presence, thirdness refers to the intelligible aspect of facts.

> First and Second, Agent and Patient, Yes and No, are categories which enable us roughly to describe the facts of experience, and they satisfy the mind for a very long time. But at last they are found inadequate, and the Third is the conception which is then called for. The Third is that which bridges over the chasm between the absolute first and last, and brings them into relationship.

Thirdness pertains to the realm of law, beyond the sensory manifold. It is the *habit* of becoming a habit that a universe in continuous development has and manifests in an ever-growing magnitude. Thirdness, then, is "that which is as it is as mediate between two others" (Houser, 1992, XXX).

Science is the collective process of obtaining thirdnesses, that is, laws, habits, mediations for understanding the objects of experience. In science, error and truth contain each other in the sense that it is through an established scientific truth that we can predicate that it is a mistake, and it is through error that we can hope to attain a new and better truth. In this sense, doubt must be a consequence of content, not a feigned attitude to justify pre-conditioned beliefs. Peirce, in his questioning of interiority as source for knowledge, takes the basis of Cartesianism and shows its limitations, and to do so, he starts with the idea of *methodological doubt*:

> Let us not pretend to doubt in philosophy what we do not doubt in our hearts. (...) We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the community of philosophers. Hence, if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory himself. (Peirce, 1868b, 29).

For Peirce, the only method is logic. Logic is a system of representations aimed at expressing truth, but in itself it does not grant truth, as it is obvious. However, it conveys an order in the process of expressing thoughts that makes them quasi-universal:

> We cannot say that the generality of inductions are true, but only that in the long run they approximate to the truth. This is the truth of the statement, that the universality of an inference from induction is only the analogue of true universality (Peirce, 1869, 79).

And this is exactly why the content is subject to error. Logic provides this analogy, so it can be corrected by the facts of experience. And, at the same time, logic makes thoughts comparable with other thoughts through their structure. It provides something between relation and mediation. The latter is true at an individual level: logic brings mediation to the opposition of thoughts. The former is true of the collective level: logic gives form to the comparison of theories, of claimed truths.

An inquirer, a scientist, who tries to advance towards truth will face firstness, secondness and thirdness not only in her approach to facts in the world of nature or the realm of experiments, but also in her relation to science itself. Faced with a prevalent scientific theory, an inquirer is the other in relation to the theory. She must serve as an affirmative or negative witness of it. In this scenario, a temporarily valid truth (namely, the corpus of a tradition at any given time) is a phenomenon that every inquirer faces.[1]

Notwithstanding the fact that a scientific theory or a scientific law belongs to the sphere of thirdness, because it is precisely the hypothetically understood reality, the corpus of a scientific tradition at any given time –before every branch of science or every theorem is even differentiated– can be understood as playing the role of firstness in the inquirer's mind. Scientific tradition is the quality of truth independent of anything else, a sheer appearance of a phenomenon that is faced when a human being decides to devote herself to the search for truth.

Consecutively, a theory becomes present in relation to all other knowledge. It becomes different, distinct, in opposition not only to other theories but also to itself. It is a form of testimony that reciprocally delimits the knowledge that occupies the space within the community of inquirers and the consciousness of oneself as an inquirer. This is the secondness of science. At the same time, one becomes aware of the fact of a theory as opposed to other theories, and the radical opposition between the inquirer that oneself is and the theory she is examining. It is just after this moment of awareness that logic acts. In the process of making a theory intelligible, logic plays the role of making sense of the internal consistency of its truth claims. It mediates between the individual quest and the external expression and recognition of one's claims.

But, what place does this moment occupy in the process of unifying the manifold of experiences?

The three categories of Peirce's phenomenology, as we have seen, are universal and omni-comprehensive. Also, as we have shown, they respond

[1] "We are told that every science has its Qualitative and its Quantitative stage; not its qualitative stage is when dual distinctions – whether a given subject has a given predicate or not – suffice; the quantitative stage comes when, no longer content with such rough distinctions, we are required to insert a possible half-way between every two possible conditions of the subject in regard to its possession of the quality indicated by the predicate." (Peirce, 1888, 251).

to a dynamic process which, in a sense, contains even our own existence: "Just as we say that a body is in motion and not that motion is in a body we ought to say that we are in thought, and not that thought are in us." (Peirce, 1868b, 42 footnote). Words, signs, theories are representations of preeminent bits of the train of thoughts. In this sense, the *Theory of Categories* developed by Peirce is also a sign, or a group of signs. And, consistently, the words firstness, secondness and thirdness are in the purest sense representations of universal events in the train of thought. In this sense, each of them represents a bit in a continuum that occupies, as we have seen, the whole process of understanding. If we take them as a formal expression of frozen moments, it can be said that the fluidity of thought orbits around them. However, in so far as it is obvious that other material, concrete moments can be signalled between one category and another, it can also be said that there could be a formal sub-category placed in between two of the three categories that Peirce conceived. Actually, a continuum can be divided infinitely. In the material sense, for example, some kind of poetry can be understood as in between firstness and secondness because it aims for a pure quality, but in being expressed it disappears, and at the same time, it tends toward delimitation, but it never quite reaches real relation.

Can logic be understood as a moment in itself? Can it be understood as a quasi-conception that lies between secondness and thirdness? We are not yet at the stage of testing the truth of a theory by testing its content in a laboratory experiment but only at the stage of testing its formal validity. This moment of logical examination could be called *second-and-a-halfness*, a moment in which doubt can arise or remain silent. If doubt arises, it is to be understood not as a subjective insecurity but as an objective problem in the theory qua fact. And, hence, in the mind of the author of such a theory, "if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, this ought to create doubts in the mind of the author" (Peirce, 1868b, 29). Second-and-a-halfness is not a new category; it is just a middle stage that shares something with secondness, namely, the appearance of distinctiveness, and something with thirdness, namely the outcropping intelligibility of the object. It expresses the dunamikos of the inquiry. It is the form of a scientific, reasonable doubt.

## LOGIC AND COMMUNITY: PRAGMATICIST PRAXIS

Logic serves as an explicit law of reasoning. The key word here is *explicit*, because in the process of examining a theory it is necessary to overcome the mere opinion one has about it, or the feeling of agreement or disagreement, and instead employ logic deliberately. Hence, logic also serves as an objective set of rules that makes it possible to set opinion aside. Logic lives in the space created between the community of inquirers and its effective channel of communication. It is, as it were, the constitution of the community of inquirers, a community that aims at the real.

> And what do we mean by the real? It is a conception which we must first have had when we discovered that here was an unreal, an illusion; that is, when we first corrected ourselves. Now the distinction for which alone this fact logically called, was between an ens relative to private inward determinations, to the negations belonging to idiosyncrasy, and an ens such as would stand in the long run. The real is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge. And so those two series of cognitions, -the real and the unreal, consist of those which, at a time sufficiently future, the community will always continue to reaffirm; and of those which, under the same conditions, will ever after be denied (Peirce, 1868b, 52).

Therefore, logic is the rule which a member of such a community must obey in order to be loyal to the community, in order to be a committed citizen, to turn personal, private, untransferable, subjective experiences into communal, public and transferable objective knowledge.

Nevertheless, the stage of second-and-a-halfness, this state of doubt, asks for logic to be explicitly stated to be able to critique the scientific tradition, that is, the assumed truth. In this explicit statement, there is a will to challenge every sign, every proposition and every argument that configure a theory and, more generally, to challenge the conception of truth at any given time. Aware of herself and her role thanks to ignorance and error, an inquirer must assume that her nature is equal to other inquirers' nature.

> The individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be, is only a negation. (Peirce, 1868b, 55).

Her own being as negation must become negation of another's being as negation. She must be a witness for others. She must compete against others. The need for explicit logic thus implies a commitment to polemos. True members of this COMMUNITY are those who, within the rules of the scientific method,[2] make their experiences compete, make their errors challenge each other's reciprocally. Those who assume imperfection as the only vehicle to go along the pathway towards truth are the only true members of the community of inquirers.

Therefore, logic is a question not only of validity but also of both clarity and the possibility of law and error. Let us examine this in detail. Logic becomes a question of clarity in the sense that an inference must be expressed. So when we say that it is not only a question of validity, we mean that beyond securing a given induction, deduction or hypothesis in a formal way, logic is also an external activity aimed at being understood by a community of inquirers. Clarity is here structure. It is a formal path to express the thought process. It is not a consensus in the sense of tradition, nor is it clarity in the sense of an agreement about a universe of words or of meanings. Logic is, in this first sense, a condition of possibility of awareness of being part of the same conversation. In being clarity, it becomes absolute openness. It opens the path for thirdness to appear, meaning that complete intelligibility in the universe of science presupposes this formal validity as the type of thinkable clarity. Therefore, it is law. But not law as habit, not the nomological tendency of science, nor law as the universal determination of nature. Rather, law as enforcement, as force. Law as limit. Law as the formal dike that keeps confusion and imposition at bay. If thirdness is the content of a principle, logic represents the fact that a principle comes first, and that principality emerges from the brute fact and moves towards the intelligibility of the content of the law. But, as that type of force, it is also the possibility of naming an error, and thus of undertaking the process of correction. Because it

[2] To challenge the method itself would open up a new set of questions and problems. Essentially, it would raise the question of radically different paradigms and the possibilities of their comparison or communication. Would *polemos* even be possible?

sets limits for the examination of the content of a scientific theory or a given hypothesis, and because it sets the conditions for clarity and law, it conveys the possibility of shaping an objection and being precise about it.

This triad *clarity*, *enforcement* and *correction* becomes the social and political base for a community of inquirers. The question then becomes: Can what we have described here be established as a basis for community in general? The problem we are facing here is the problem of rational political systems. Its dangers are historically known, and its problems are already contained in its formulation: total rationality implies abstracting from circumstances, and when a rational principle is applied in politics, often this *abstraction* away from circumstance becomes *rejection* of it. Kant links his concept of pure reason with moral and political principles thanks to his notions of universality and autonomy, which allows freedom to become central and circumstance to be a limit. But, eventually, abstract concepts of understanding can be followed by pure political impositions regardless of the proposal that Kant himself offered, i.e., there is this possibility of the tyranny of determinative judgment. Modern rationality often ends up in the notion of a static truth, that is, a rationalised dogma. And, it therefore excludes pluralism or includes it as a lesser evil. The reason behind this is that modern rationality seems to exclude dynamism. Indeed, both seem to exclude each other. Peirce's pragmaticism, on the other hand, can become a political mirror of evolutionism, which is a dynamic form of rationale, for several reasons: he is less concerned with foundations and ontological origins and instead absolutely focussed on consequence and external forces. In this sense, he is also focused on acknowledging the static nature of given representations in contrast to the dynamism of what is represented, including thought and life. The relationship between object, sign and interpretant can give us a clue into what a Peircean sense of the concept of political may be.

> A sign is anything which stands for something to something. What the sign stands for is its object and what it stands to is its interpretant. (...) Every sign has two objects, a dynamic object, that is, the real, efficient object, but not "immediately present object" and an immediate object, the object as the sign represents it. And every sign has three interpretants, a final (or logical) interpretant, which is the "effect that would be produced on the mind by the sign after sufficient development of thought" a dynamic interpretant, which is the "effect actually produced on the mind" and an immediate interpretant, which is the interpretant represented or signified in the sign (CP 8.343).

> Any given sign only partially reveals its dynamic object, and that partial revelation constitutes its immediate object. Similarly, the final interpretant of a sign is the result of a history of semiotic interaction with the given dynamic object, while the dynamic interpretant is the immediate significance of the sign independent of any previous history involving its object (Houser, 1992, XXXVI).

If we substitute in this paragraph *political representative* for *sign*; *society* or *country* or *people* for *object*, and *state* or *legislation* for *interpretant*, we see how the dynamic conception of the world and the mind that Peirce holds implies a form of unfixable usage of reason in the organisation of a community. Indeed, it supposes the existence of a community as a dynamic body, representable only as an immediate *moment*, not as a fixed *form* or *abstraction*. (So under this vision, we could rename the *state* the *occasion*).

This is what we will call *praxis*, which is a kind of adaptation of principle in light of consequence. At the same time, praxis needs an acknowledgment of the imperfection of all solutions and the awareness that only through that acknowledgment does correction arrive. The role that the individual plays in this way of addressing a community includes his uniqueness and incomparableness as a necessary negation of all the rest, as a form of signified otherness, a present wholeness facing the imperfection of tradition at any given time. Freedom is, then, the possibility of expressing oneself as a sign of one's own dynamism at any given time. And community is the possibility of acknowledging one's own error and thus one's own existence and consciousness.

Let us finish then with this second-and-a-halfness that we introduced as a means to express the dynamism that flows under the Peircean categories, logic as a middle-way between brute fact and intelligibility. We have said that in the community of inquirers it meant clarity, enforcement and correction, and this lead us to an evolutionary concept of political praxis. Now, if reasons are signs of past mistakes and their consequences are their logical interpretants, we are facing a political praxis that renders a given situation of a society the dynamic object of representation, of which any political analysis will be as dynamic as it itself is, regardless of their similarity, consistency or identity.

Therefore, the introduction of logic in this Peircean sense opens the door for a rational-pragmaticist political system that explains divergence, opposition and political confrontation as signs of the existence of a real

community. In other words, divergence and political confrontation are virtues of a pramaticist political system rather than the lesser evil of a modern rationalistic system.

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