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Bonfantini, Fabbrichesi, Zingale (a cura di), *Su Peirce. Interpretazioni, ricerche, prospettive*, Milano, Bompiani, 2015, 316 pp.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) is known today as the first American philosopher, and as the ‘founder of pragmatism.’ Indeed, Peirce was both and much more. In a partial list of roles he played during his life, Peirce graduated as a chemist, published as an astronomer, worked in geodesy, wrote as a philosopher, and defined himself as a logician. While he gained only a partial, late recognition in his time, today the broadness of his interests is reflected by the diversity of the people that refer to him, either for scholarly study or for inspiration. The 21 essays constituting *Su Peirce* provide an overview of Italy’s scholarship on Peirce’s philosophical, semiotic and historical thought.

The essays were originally presented in a series of meetings organized by the Psòmega Club for the centennial of Peirce’s death at the University of Milan and the Polytechnic University of Milan. They are organized into four sections: an introductory one (“On the meaning of Peirce: Three Introductions”) and three thematic ones (“Understanding Peirce: Perspectives and Problems,” “Peirce and Others: Philosophy and Semiotics,” and “Peirce beyond Peirce. Inquiries and Problems”). Contributions range from close analysis to traditionally philosophical topics in Peirce – such as the idea of externality (Calcaterra), reality (Brioschi), Kantianism (Maddalena), logic and phenomenology (Stango, Paolucci), language (Fadda) – to dialogical engagement with different thinkers – as with Vailati (Facchi), Lady Welby (Petrilli), Husserl (Silvestri), Saussure (Martone), Hjelmslev (Caputo), Bachtin (Ponzio), Lacan (Cimatti) – and to multidisciplinary discussions in the direction of applied philosophy. In this last section, the authors tackle the problems of historical testimony (Pisanty), the social situatedness of creativity (Goldoni), experience in the working practice (Proni), and abduction and projects in design theory (Zingale). Bonfantini closes the volume with a reflection on contemporary issues in light of a ‘pragmatic historical materialism.’

Despite the diversity of the fields of engagement, I detect a strong philosophical unity beneath the 21 essays in this volume, namely in the quest for a *Peircean anthropology*. The obvious reference here is to Kant. Anthropology, for Kant, is the study that aims at answering the question on what man is (“Was ist der Mensch?” – *Logik Jäsche*, 1800; AA IX) through the careful observation of man’s actions. The role of actions becomes even more pivotal in Peirce’s philosophy. Dispositions towards action and expectation of outcomes describe not only the attitude of the inquirer (“The Fixation of Belief,” 1877), but also the purposive self-control of the moral man (“What Pragmatism Is,” 1905).

In the following, I will offer a brief account of the many essays that constitute the volume, focusing on how the idea of a pragmatist anthropology emerges from their different perspectives.

Bonfantini, Eco, and Fabbrichesi open the volume with three introductory essays. While Eco and Bonfantini provide a connection with the history of Peirce’s reception in Italy, Fabbrichesi programmatically opens the debate towards the future and uses

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Peirce as a tool “Towards the possibility of a New Pragmatic Anthropology.” In this, her essay fits very nicely within Bonfantini’s presentation of Peirce’s philosophy as an open system of knowledge (“A Guess at the Riddle,” c.1889, CP 1.1): Peirce’s declared hope is that his philosophical work may be general enough that any particular sciences could fit in (13).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Fabbrichesi draws on biology (Gilber, Sapp, & Tauber 2012) as well as from Peirce’s philosophy for her discussion of man as a *socially* rather than individually defined being. Her article also relates to Calcaterra’s contribution, in that Fabbrichesi discusses a social and external perspective on the self from later writings of Peirce (“What Pragmatism Is,” 1905, EP2, and a paragraph from MS R 403, c.1893, quoted in De Tienne 2005), while Calcaterra focuses on the early papers “New List of Categories,” 1867, and “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man,” 1868.

Bonfantini’s introduction is quite helpful in presenting chronologically Peirce’s most famous philosophical and semiotic writings. The early “New List” (1867) is the point of departure *and* the leading aim of philosophical inquiry: to find concepts general enough that they may be used by any other philosopher as well as by any person in the ordinary operations of reasoning. Those general concepts are thus termed ‘categories,’ elucidated in the anti-Cartesian essays of 1868, the “Illustrations of the logic of Science” of 1877-8, the reflections on continuity and mind of 1892 and evolutionary love (Peirce 1893: 15-9). Bonfantini’s final recap of the scope of the “New List” and its integration with phenomenology and phanerescopy highlights the novelty of those later reflections (20) but misses the opportunity to draw the reader’s attention to MS R 403 (c.1893) – an explicit rewriting of the 1867 early “List” (EP1: 1). Indeed, as far as I know, the implications of this for the evolution of Peirce’s thought remain to be explored.

Eco’s contribution is a reworking of his thesis of ‘primary iconism,’ first expounded in his 1997 *Kant and the Platypus*. Eco’s effort in the 1997 book aimed at demonstrating the reality content of the semiotic experience: “My thesis was that, if one defends a theory of interpretation, and *precisely because* of that, then one must also concede that there is something that can be interpreted” (23). With this, Eco openly declared his positive intentions: his aim was that of *supplementing* Peirce’s theory with a possible answer to the problem of finding a *ground* for reality. Peirce’s explicit refusal of a first start of our knowledge of reality – a key-aspect of his philosophy, as pointed out by Paolucci (28) – was rejected by Eco, who feared the nihilism involved in an infinite and *groundless* process of mediation (28). The theory of ‘primary iconism’ was therefore first elaborated to fulfill the need of a ‘ground’ of reality. While keeping to the label of ‘primary iconism,’ Eco now explains this concept in a quite different way, namely as “what cannot be avoided when a subject – an *interpretant* subject – enters the semiotic process” (32). What cannot be avoided is something that pertains equally to the subject’s cognitive system and to the external world at a given instant *t*. Eco concludes: “even if primary iconism does not exist *cosmologically*, it still exists *for* the subject” (33). To use a Peircean phrase, reality pertains more to ‘the outward clash’ than to ‘the outward’ itself.

1. References to the essay’s pages are to the Italian text; however, all quotations have been translated into English. If not further specified, all translations are mine.

A different strategy to approach Peirce's concept of reality (and truth) is to be found in the *anthropological* shift towards practice and agency that the pragmatic perspective encourages us to assume. This is precisely the attitude that is explored in the rest of the volume. Among the introductory essays, Fabbrichesi applies her anthropological commitment to an account of the self as *derivate*: the self is not the ground but rather the product of its own actions and choices. Therefore, it becomes possible to distinguish two aspects of being a person, namely *personality* and *individuality*. While personality is the series of actions sewed into habits and, as it were, embroidered into the larger fabric of the world, *individuality* is the still unrelated thing, similar to the thread that may be hanging from the unfinished embroidery.

Calcaterra's contribution ("Epistemology of the Self") further elaborates on the notion of the agent subject from the perspective of the subject's *external* construction. Accordingly, the great innovation of Peirce is his complete dismissal of the dualism between an "internal" and an "external" self, which had permeated the philosophical discourse since Descartes (59). The dualism is eliminated by denying any originality or foundational role to the "internal" side, which becomes an inferential product of the active agent. The construction of the self is achieved through the experience of *error* (there must be someone who is wrong – *I am wrong*; 61) and the *testimony* of the others ("Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man," 1868, EP 1).

In Brioschi's essay "The Notion of Reality in Peirce: Between Expectation and Surprise" the real – as Calcaterra's self – is a *derived notion*, that may be discovered through its opposite: namely, illusion (82). However, unlike the self which can indeed be built out of false testimony, the real seems to advance a stronger claim towards truth (in the long run): first, by *resisting* our attempts at thinking arbitrarily of it; and, secondly, by being the object toward which any inquiry, if pursued fairly and long enough, will ultimately *converge*. However, Brioschi notices, there may be a problem in defending those two theses at the same time (88). Intuitively, in order to resist us, something must at least be *present* to us; however, the truth and the real are to be discovered at the end of the process of inquiry – that is, in the *future*. Brioschi shows that the two theses can be reconciled, provided that reality is defined through the anthropological analysis of the structure of *expectation* and *surprise*. Expectation and surprise are not simply feelings but rather *logical attitudes*; following Maddalena (2003), Brioschi relates them to the metaphysical categories of Thirdness and Secondness respectively. While Thirdness, showing the regularity of natural laws, grounds *expectation*, Secondness, that is the subject's clash with its object, is the metaphysical name for *surprise*.

Maddalena's discussion of the anti-Kantianism of Peirce ("Peirce, anti-Kantianism, and the synthetic meaning of pragmatism") has several facets, which are probably best illustrated in his recent *The Philosophy of Gesture* (2015). I survey the one more closely related to the anthropological leaning of the book. According to Maddalena, "experience as *continuity*" (71) is the common element to all pragmatism. Experience and common sense are opposed to "intellectualism," as shown in the Peircean critique of Cartesianism. Indeed, Maddalena argues, since Kantianism is a form of intellectualism, and since the anti-intellectual attitude is *constitutive* of both Peirce's

and the pragmatic movement, then by adopting pragmatism one should dispose of Kant *and* of Descartes at once. This reading of Kant's philosophy – and of its relation with Peirce's – is not without critics, especially because Peirce claims to have derived the very term 'pragmatism' from Kant ("What pragmatism is," 1905; EP2: 333) and to value Kant for his *practical* philosophy more than for his epistemology. The most serious critic to Maddalena's views is probably Gava (2014). Although Maddalena acknowledges Gava's criticism of his anti-Kantian reading of Peirce, he does not engage directly with Gava's argument here. It would be productive for the Peirce community if Maddalena and Gava could give more visibility to their respective positions in a published form.

The two contributions by Stango ("The Logic of Ontological Recognition") and Paolucci ("Logic of Relatives, Semiotics, and Phenomenology") provide some suggestions on how the connection between logical thought and the world can be established and cultivated. Stango's 'logic of ontological recognition' has the notion of 'object' (or of 'it') at its core, namely the problem of how the object is recognised as 'what *it* is' by the knowing subject. Paolucci's contribution is also focused on the role of objects in Peirce's logic: the passage from the logic of relatives to semiotics is based on the idea that the logic is a logic of relations between objects, as exemplified by chemical models. The logic of relatives thus breaks with the traditional form of propositional logic, proposing a diagrammatic (instead of a sequential) style of reasoning. Those two contributions can be seen also as a critical reaction to Eco's theory of 'primary iconism.'

Fadda's essay, "Peirce and Languages," is concerned with the role that "natural, historic" languages play in Peircean semiotics, that is the overlap of cultural and of biological dispositions for language in the human animal (127). Fadda proceeds from here outlining the project to apply Peirce's categories of semiotics, which certainly have a broader concern than language-use, back to linguistics and towards a broader, mostly communicative and visual understanding of language (131), as opposed to the 'logocentrism' of Saussure.

From the 'dialogical' section, only Facchi ("From Peirce to Vailati") and Petrilli ("Peirce and Welby") develop this dialogue from a historical perspective. Martone advances a possible point of contact with Saussure on the notion of the metaphor, and Caputo pushes the linguistic engagement of Peirce's thought towards Hjelmself. A contiguity is found in their mathematical fathers (194), as well as in the role of experience in the semantic content (197). Overall, those contributions fall outside of the discussion of a 'pragmatist anthropology' and engage in a philosophical dialogue with other thinkers and traditions of thought.

The last section of the book contains instances of application of Peirce's theories to contemporary subjects or problems. The essays I shall focus on are those of Goldoni, Proni, and Zingale.

Goldoni ("Inhabiting the Improvisation") connects the musical tradition of jazz improvisation with the ability to 'improvise' in life gained by experience and built into a sharable, social language (245). Proni ("From Peirce to Sennet: Pragmatism and the Project [of living]") argues that both Peirce and Sennet advance a new concept of

human experience. Being experienced goes hand in hand with being aware of one's own actions, and this awareness brings "skill and dexterity" (255) to the agent, who thus becomes "craftsman" of her own actions. This craftsmanship is recognised as a value to be preserved in the alienated contemporary world. Despite the fact that a personal skill is usually not easily transferable to a community, Proni maintains that craftsmanship's skills are suitable to be developed socially. This new kind of "shared craftsmanship" unites individual and social planning, interpersonal relations and logic of scientific discovery, as well as a still to be formulated "guidelines for the [optimal] project" (255). This vision, albeit seeming more Utopian than 'applied' Peirce, remains open for further development.

Finally, Zingale ("This is my design: the Space of Abduction in Planning") connects design as "a cultural and historical form [...] of planned action" (258) with the abductive inference stimulated by the "irritation of doubt." As Brioschi's reality was suspended between expectation and surprise, here abduction stems from a particular uneasiness or cause of concern with what is given. Moreover, the "planning imagination," which is set into motion by concern, is what allows one to "conceive an object, i.e. an artifact," only *together with* its possible effects (263). Indeed this conception is open, and future planning may lead to further effects and therefore to different objects. This pragmatic perspective allows Zingale to introduce a very situated, and semiotically grounded concept of design. Zingale's awareness of the relation that an object has with its environment as well as with the cultural and historical contingency of its users shows a scenario of truly applied pragmatic concepts in the light of a pragmatic anthropology.

To conclude, *Su Peirce* is a very ambitious volume, which captures a relevant part of Peirce's scholarship in Italy, plus an estimate of how appealing Peirce's thought can be for contemporary reflections on society and on community, as well as for other academic disciplines.

As Fabbrichesi writes (55), Peirce has not met the destiny of the other classical pragmatists. William James (1842-1910), John Dewey (1859-1952) and George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) have today been appropriated by different fields (psychology, education theory, and sociology respectively), while Peirce remains an author 'for everyone and nobody,' whose work continually awakes the attention of scholars from the most different backgrounds. *Su Peirce* will therefore appeal to a wide range of scholars, and may set the agenda for further studies in Peirce's scholarship and its ramifications in other cultural domains.