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1. Why were you initially drawn to Peirce?

After my graduation in 1975 from the University of Valencia in Spain, I worked in the broad field of analytical philosophy. I wrote my master's thesis on John L. Austin's theory of truth (1977) and my doctoral dissertation at the University of Navarra (1982) on the essentialist commitment of modal logic, focusing on the debate between W. V. O. Quine and S. Kripke. My attention in those years was concentrated on philosophical issues related to language, following mainly the insights and the style of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hilary Putnam and other analytic philosophers of a pragmatist stripe. In 1991 my mentor Alejandro Llano suggested to me that it was the right time to look for a single author to devote my study to in order to compensate for the piecemeal character of my analytic training. I talked with several colleagues to find out who the philosopher was who *deserved* my attention. Leonardo Polo, an old colleague from Navarra, suggested that since I was a pragmatic person and I was interested in Communication Theory perhaps Charles S. Peirce was the right choice.

In the summer of 1992 I found myself as a Visiting Scholar at Harvard University trying to write an introduction to contemporary philosophy of language, looking to show how a historical understanding of analytic philosophy enabled one to predict that this philosophical tradition would undergo a renovation of a markedly pragmatic nature. At the same time, given that I found myself in the homeland of Charles S. Peirce, I was hoping to familiarize myself with his thought, his writings and with the scholarship that had recently sprung up around him. One day a lawyer friend of mine suggested that I read the American novelist Walker Percy's (1916-90) Jefferson Lecture "The Fateful Rift: The San Andreas Fault in the Modern Mind," which appears in the posthumous volume of his essays published in 1991 under the general title *Signposts in a Strange Land*.¹ That reading of his wonderful lecture had an effect

¹ This lecture was given by Percy on the 3rd of May, 1989 as the *18th Jefferson Lecture* at the *National Endowment for the Humanities* (Washington D.C.). It was published with the title "The Divided Creature" in *The Wilson Quarterly* 13 (1989), pp. 77-87, and was included by Patrick Samway in the posthumous book

on me very similar to Helen Keller's remarkable experience with the water from the fountain, referred to so many times by Percy.²

In the reading of that text—which can be considered the intellectual testament of Percy, at that time already very ill—I discovered the unification of my diverse intellectual interests that had long been pursued separately. For some time I had been interested in seemingly disparate segments of our culture, such as the philosophy of language, semiotics and the theory of communication, the argument concerning the limits of artificial intelligence, the possibility and limitations of mechanically processing human language, the attempts to teach language to primates, feral children and their linguistic capacities, the language of the deaf-mute, the creativity of language and even the revolution in linguistics provoked by Chomsky's generative grammar. My reading of that text by Walker Percy, physician and humanist, astonished me, because it revealed as clear as day both the diagnosis of the most serious disease afflicting our present-day culture, and its cure.

Percy was suggesting that the unifying element in all those topics that had attracted me so much was to be found in the insufficiency of the scientific narrative that, permeated with a simplified Darwinism, had dominated the Anglo-American academic scene during the second half of the past century, with the aim of explaining the most characteristic behaviors of human beings such as language and communication. The cure—in Percy's judgment—ought to be looked for in Charles Peirce and his discovery of the irreducibly triadic nature characteristic of all linguistic behavior. Indeed, the remedy for overcoming the gap that divides our culture between the natural sciences and the humanities, and which made an integrated understanding of human beings and their activity impossible, was to be found in “the work of a human scientist who, I believe,” Percy concluded, “laid the groundwork for a coherent science of man, and did so a hundred years ago”.

Scientism, promoted by the Vienna Circle and its positivist heirs, became the dominant philosophical culture from the 1950s onwards, converting itself into that dominant mainstream naturalism which trusts in the progress of human reason and its ability to explain all problems definitively in the immediate future. As a reaction to this scientific optimism, post-modern thought, widespread in the last three decades, has oscillated between the presentation of science as a mere power structure

Signposts in a Strange Land (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York), 1991, pp. 271-291.

² W. Percy, *The Message in the Bottle*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1976, pp. 34-36 and in many other places.

or as just another form of literature.

Following Hilary Putnam, it is my conviction that Peirce's thought may help us not only to reassume our philosophical responsibility—which has been largely abdicated by much of 20th century philosophy—but also to tackle some of our most stubborn contemporary problems. More specifically, the founder of pragmatism not only identified most of these problems one century ago, but he also mapped out some paths that we could follow to overcome the poverty of contemporary scientific reductionism.

2. What do you consider your contribution to the field?

My contribution to Peirce scholarship is mainly in three areas: 1) the launching in 1994 in Navarra of a Grupo de Estudios Peirceanos [<http://www.unav.es/gep/>] in order to promote the study of the work of Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914), especially in Spain and in the Spanish speaking countries, in the belief that his thought may offer some key insights into problems related to the culture, science and philosophy of the 21st century; 2) the detailed study of Peirce's "cosmopolitan period", to use Max Fisch's expression (1870-1883), in particular through his correspondence; and 3) some specific studies of the connections between C. S. Peirce and other authors like John H. Newman, Richard Rorty, George Searle, Alfred N. Whitehead and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

In connection with the first area, I want to say that I have been extremely fortunate in having outstanding doctoral students during the last twenty years. I've learned together with them all that I know about Peirce and pragmatism. In particular, I am extremely grateful to Dr. Sara Barrena, who has been the main translator of Peirce into Spanish [<http://www.unav.es/gep/Peirce-esp.html>] and to Dr. Izaskun Martínez who has worked as the webmaster of the Group for years. Together with Fernando Zalamea we have edited the volume *Peirce y el mundo hispánico* (2006), which includes an exhaustive and commented catalogue of all that has been written in Spanish about Peirce from 1883 until the year 2000. For twenty years we have been hosting monthly seminars with scholars from all around the world, particularly from the Spanish-speaking countries. In this sense, I also like to recall the great number of courses that I have given throughout the Spanish-speaking America in order to spread the word about Peirce and pragmatism: Bahía Blanca, Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Tucumán (Argentina), Bogotá (Colombia), Santiago (Chile), Chihuahua, Ciudad Juárez, México D. F., and Monterrey (México). I was always impressed by the great attraction that Peirce exerted in all these places. The motto of our Group is that quotation from Peirce that reflects well the spirit of agapastic collaboration: "I do not call the solitary studies of a single man a science. It is only

when a group of men, more or less in intercommunication, are aiding and stimulating one another by their understanding of a particular group of studies as outsiders cannot understand them, that I call their life a science.” (*MS 1334*, Adirondack Summer School Lectures, 1905).

Regarding the study of Peirce’s “cosmopolitan period”, we have transcribed, translated into Spanish and published on the web, in heavily annotated form and with links and illustrations, all the letters by Peirce or to Peirce related to his first and second European trips (7/18/1870 — 3/7/1871 and 4/2/1875 — 8/26/1876). Scarce attention has been paid until now to Peirce’s correspondence and we think that it is of great importance for understanding the real Peirce. In the course of our research, we have discovered some documents completely unknown until now, for instance, his signature in the book of visitors of the Alhambra and in the registration book of the British Library Reading Room, the galleys of “Fixation of Belief” with handwritten corrections sent by Peirce to W. K. Clifford; however, it seems to me that our main contribution is just the publication with open access of thousands of images of Peirce’s pages, illustrated and annotated.

Although Peirce was a philosopher and a logician, he was first and foremost a real practitioner of science. Peirce insisted that the popular image of science as something finished and complete is totally opposed to what science really is. Science is for Peirce “a living historic entity” (*CP* 1.44, c.1896), “a living and growing body of truth” (*CP* 6.428, 1893), and above all a communicative mode of life. For this reason I have been always interested in the connections between Peirce and other authors. In my studies on Peirce’s relations with J. H. Newman, R. Rorty, G. Searle, A. N. Whitehead and L. Wittgenstein I have tried to combine careful and thorough evidence-based scholarship with intellectual relevance.

3. What is the proper role of Peirce’s work in relation to philosophy and other academic disciplines?

Peirce has been gaining an ever-increasing relevance in very different areas of knowledge: in astronomy, metrology, geodesy, mathematics, logic, philosophy, theory and history of science, semiotics, linguistics, econometrics, and psychology.³ In all these fields Peirce has been considered a pioneer, a forerunner or even a “father” or “founder” (in the cases of semiotics and pragmatism). Bertrand Russell’s comment is representative: “beyond doubt ... he was one of the most original minds of the later nineteenth century, and certainly the greatest American thin-

³ M. Fisch, “The Range of Peirce’s Relevance”, *The Monist* 63, (1980), pp. 269-276; 64, pp. 123-141.

ker ever”.⁴ Even among academic philosophers it has become a commonplace to say that Peirce is the most original philosophical mind that the United States has yet produced⁵ and his seminal role in a wide range of philosophical problems has been alluded to by many philosophers: Popper described Peirce as “one of the greatest philosophers of all times”⁶ and Putnam called him “a towering giant among American philosophers”.⁷

Peirce is usually identified as a *philosophers' philosopher* since he always gives food for thought. My colleague Sara Barrena and I have published a co-authored book on the occasion of the centennial of Peirce's death with the title *Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914): A Thinker for the 21st Century*.⁸ In our book we have collected most of the papers jointly prepared along twenty years. Much of the work we have gathered there reflects those central aspects of his thought—abduction, creativity, pursuit of truth, reasonableness, God—that have attracted our attention over the years, and the volume as a whole provides a fairly accurate view of the nature and scope of the work of Peirce. We wanted to provide easy and direct access to the richness and depth of this scientist, logician and philosopher, who is so relevant and still so little known in the Spanish-speaking world. We are persuaded that Charles S. Peirce is not a nineteenth-century author who can be relegated to oblivion, but, on the basis of our knowledge of him, we claim is really a thinker for the twenty-first century. Peirce invites the reader to always to go deeper, to think more. This is for me his greatest legacy.

4. What do you consider the most important topics and/or contributions in the field of Peirce studies?

It is not easy and perhaps not fair to answer this question simply by highlighting some names of persons and their contributions. On the door of my office I have a sign with Peirce's expression: “The life of science is in the desire to learn” (CP 1.235, c.1902). In this sense, I would like to say that the most important contribution is each time that a new graduate student finishes his or her doctoral dissertation on some aspect of Peirce's thought. In that situation this new scholar is opening

⁴ B. Russell, *Wisdom of the West*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959, p. 276.

⁵ E. Nagel, “Peirce's Place in Philosophy”, *Historia Mathematica* 9, (1982), p. 303.

⁶ K. R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 212.

⁷ H. Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 252.

⁸ S. Barrena & J. Nubiola, *Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914): Un pensador para el siglo XXI*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 2013.

the door of Peirce scholarship to new promising developments. Along this line, I want to mention, for example, Santiago Pons' recent dissertation on the laws of nature according to Peirce, Hedy Boero's thorough dissertation on Peirce's ethics (which was awarded the Extraordinary Prize of my university), and Ignacio Redondo's superb work on Peirce's communication theory.

From a general perspective, the most relevant contribution is without any doubt the *Chronological Edition* of Peirce's writings developed by the Peirce Edition Project in Indianapolis during decades. It is a pity that the pace of publication of the volumes is slow, due mainly to limitations of funding.

5. What are the most important open problems in this field and what are the prospects/avenues for progress?

When I entered the field of Peirce scholarship something that surprised me was the relatively scant attention paid throughout the years to the religious dimensions of Peirce's thought. Since my first readings of Peirce twenty years ago I had been deeply struck by this neglect, which contrasted so much with the ubiquity of religious references in his writings, especially in his mature years. In my meetings with well-known Peirce scholars I used to ask them about God and religion in Peirce, and mostly the answer that I received was that there was plainly a lot of religious stuff in Peirce, but that they were not interested in it. On the other hand, I was pleasantly surprised by Walker Percy when in his correspondence with Kenneth Ketner he called himself "a thief of Peirce", intending "to use CSP as one of the pillars of a Christian apologetic".⁹ It seemed to me that Percy was in some sense nearer to the real Peirce than those scholars whom I had asked about God and religion in Peirce.

My reaction to these conflicting approaches was to decide that the whole matter deserved careful attention and I suggested this area of research to three of my graduate students. The first of them, Sara Barrena, did the first translation of "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" into Spanish and published it in 1996 with a long introduction dealing in detail with the subject (she later wrote a doctoral dissertation on creativity and reasonableness in Peirce); the second, Gonzalo Génova, wrote his dissertation on abduction and Peirce's logic of discovery, published in Spanish in 1997 and available on the web [<http://www.unav.es/gep/Genova/Genova.pdf>]. Since Peirce's Argument was a particular form of abduction, going deep into this type of inference would support the study of Peirce's thought about God; the third, Ro-

⁹ P. H. Samway (ed.), *A Thief of Peirce. The Letters of Kenneth Laine Ketner and Walker Percy*, University Press of Mississippi: Jackson, MI, 1995, p. 130.

lando Panesa wrote a doctoral dissertation on science and religion in Peirce (1996), which is available on our website [<http://www.unav.es/gep/TesisDoctorales/TesisRPanesa.pdf>].

During these years we have studied and translated into Spanish a good amount of Peirce's religious texts, but the world is still eagerly awaiting the book that Douglas Anderson and David O'Hara are preparing of *Peirce's Religious Writings*. This is for me the most urgent need in Peircean scholarship.

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