

Wolfgang Kaltenbacher (Hg.)

Versuche über das  
**Absolute**

Festschrift für  
Ludwig Nagl  
zum 80. Geburtstag





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Festschrift für Ludwig Nagl zum 80. Geburtstag

In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici

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Wolfgang Kaltenbacher

## Vorwort

### Versuche über das Absolute

Dieser Band ist Ludwig Nagl zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet. Die hier versammelten Texte sind alle von Kolleginnen und Kollegen geschrieben worden, die sich in vielfältiger Weise mit dem Werk des Jubilars auseinandergesetzt haben. Als die Idee einer Festschrift in den Raum gestellt wurde, konnte schon bald Einigkeit erzielt werden, die Beiträge um die Themen „amerikanischer Pragmatismus“ und/oder „Religionsphilosophie“ kreisen zu lassen. Ergänzt wird der Band durch einen Beitrag von Luca Maria Scarantino und Ludwig Nagls autobiografischen Rückblick auf seinen philosophischen Werdegang.

Geboren in den letzten Kriegsjahren und aufgewachsen in den Nachkriegsjahren in einem vom Weltkrieg gezeichneten Land, kann sich Ludwig Nagl dennoch glücklich schätzen, seine Studien in einer Zeit begonnen zu haben, die von einer Aufbruchsstimmung getragen war und von einer gesellschaftlichen und politischen Veränderung, die für die geisteswissenschaftliche und philosophische Forschung ein günstiges Klima schuf und über viele Jahre eine intensive Forschungsarbeit ermöglichte.

Ludwig Nagl hat in den 1960er-Jahren in Wien studiert. Damals, und wohl noch bis in die 1990er-Jahre hinein, stand an der Universität Wien das Studium der klassischen europäischen Philosophie im Mittelpunkt. In den 1960er-Jahren war Österreich noch ein sehr konservatives Land. Die 1968er-Bewegung erreichte schließlich auch die Universität Wien. Aufsehen erregte die Aktion „Kunst und Revolution“, eine Performance im Hörsaal 1 des Neuen Institutsgebäudes der Universität Wien, an der sich neben Günter Brus und Otto Muehl auch Peter Weibel, Oswald Wiener und Malte Olschewski beteiligten und die von der Boulevardpresse gleich die Bezeichnung „Uni-Ferkelei“ erhielt. Insgesamt fielen die Proteste an den österreichischen Universitäten weit weniger heftig aus als in anderen Ländern. Immerhin konnte mittelfristig eines der Ziele der Studentenbewegung erreicht werden: die Umsetzung der Forderung nach universitärer Mitbestimmung. Der Reformdruck war jedenfalls enorm. Mit der Regierung Kreisky wurden auch die normativen Voraussetzungen für den Umbau der Gesellschaft geschaffen. Kreiskys Justizminister Christian Broda revolutionierte das Strafrecht, Kreiskys Wissenschaftsministerin Hertha Firnberg modernisierte die Universitäten und ließ zahlreiche neue Institute schaffen. In diese Zeit fiel auch die Gründung der Hochschule für Bildungswissenschaften in Klagenfurt. Wesentlichen Einfluss auf die Gestaltung der neuen Hochschule hatte der damals noch junge Philosophie-Dozent



Peter Heintel, der in den Gründungsausschuss berufen worden war. Nach seiner Habilitation in Philosophie erhielt Heintel eine zweite Lehrbefugnis für Gruppendynamik und arbeitete daran, die Verbindung von Philosophie und Gruppendynamik auch institutionell zu verankern. Im Jahr 1971 erhielt er die ordentliche Professur für *Didaktik der Philosophie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehrplanforschung*. Er war der erste Institutsvorstand des Philosophischen Instituts, Rektor (1974–1977) und Prorektor (1977–1978) und sorgte dafür, dass die Philosophie an der Klagenfurter Hochschule (ab 1975 „Universität für Bildungswissenschaften“) einen hohen Stellenwert erhielt. Die meisten Assistenten am Institut hatten wie Peter Heintel in Wien studiert, so auch Ludwig Nagl, der 1971 nach Klagenfurt gekommen war. In den 1970er-Jahren arbeitete Ludwig Nagl neben seinem Habilitationsprojekt u. a. an der Konzeption des für die Buchreihe „Wege der Forschung“ bestimmten Bandes *Zur Kantforschung der Gegenwart*, den er gemeinsam mit Peter Heintel herausgab und der 1981 erschien. Durch einen Tausch mit Uwe Arnold konnte Ludwig Nagl 1977 an die Universität Wien wechseln. Von großer Bedeutung waren für ihn in diesen Jahren die Anregungen, die er auf den von Jürgen Habermas, Karl-Otto Apel und Richard Bernstein geleiteten Kursen in Dubrovnik erhielt. Nicht zufällig hatte die neu gegründete Hochschule in Klagenfurt in dem immer noch sehr konservativen Bundesland Kärnten bald den Ruf einer kommunistischen Universität. Ohne Zweifel war die Hochschule für Bildungswissenschaften in den bewegten 1970er-Jahren offen für linke Ideen, vor allem aber war sie ein Ort, an dem junge Nachwuchswissenschaftler zusammenkamen, die den Blick auf das richteten, was sich in der Welt tat, und die empfänglich waren für Anregungen, die aus anderen wissenschaftlichen Traditionen kamen. Ludwig Nagls Bemühungen, die Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Aufklärungsbegriffs zu rekonstruieren, können im Umfeld der 1970er-Jahre auch als Versuch verstanden werden, die eigene Zeit und ihre fortschrittlichen Ideen in Gedanken zu erfassen.

Bevor Ludwig Nagl als Assistent nach Klagenfurt ging, hatte er die Gelegenheit, zwei Semester lang in den USA zu lehren. Während dieses Aufenthalts kam es zur ersten Begegnung mit Stanley Cavell. Jahre später, nach der Veröffentlichung seiner Habilitationsschrift, begann er sich intensiver mit Cavells postanalytischer Philosophie zu beschäftigen und sich systematisch mit dem amerikanischen Pragmatismus und Neopragmatismus auseinanderzusetzen. All dies hat Ludwig Nagl ausführlich in seinem autobiografischen Rückblick beschrieben. Am Institut für Philosophie der Universität Wien entstand „die Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklungs- und Kritikgeschichte der Analytischen Philosophie, die etliche Jahre lang der intellektuelle Sammelpunkt für jene jüngeren AssistentInnen und DozentInnen war, die sich für die aktuellen Debatten im angloamerikanischen Raum interessierten“. In den nachfolgenden Jahren und Jahrzehnten war Ludwig Nagl an der Universität Wien für Generationen von StudentInnen und KollegInnen der wichtigste Ansprechpartner für den amerikanischen Pragmatismus und Neopragmatismus. Hans Joas belegt mit Kenntnis, weshalb Ludwig Nagl zu

den führenden Kennern des amerikanischen Pragmatismus im deutschen Sprachraum zu zählen ist. Die beachtliche Resonanz, die Ludwig Nagls Lehr-, Forschungs- und Publikationstätigkeit gehabt hat, ist neben seiner fachlichen Kompetenz darauf zurückzuführen, dass er es verstanden hat, jeweils zum rechten Zeitpunkt die Initiative zu ergreifen, Projekte zu entwickeln und die richtigen Personen einzuladen. Ludwig Nagl hat die Begegnungen mit bedeutenden Denkern sofort produktiv verarbeitet und seine Reflexionen dazu in seine Texte integriert. Im Mittelpunkt seiner Forschungen stand „die Frage, wie das Verhältnis zwischen Philosophie und Aufklärung valide zu bestimmen sei“. In sechs Jahrzehnten kontinuierlicher Arbeit ist das beeindruckende Werk entstanden, das auf seiner Homepage dokumentiert ist.

Die Forschungsaufenthalte in den USA und die Auseinandersetzung mit den neopragmatischen Denkern haben Ludwig Nagl verdeutlicht, wie sehr die Rezeption der Klassiker des Pragmatismus in Europa auf die wissenschaftstheoretischen und ethischen Aspekte beschränkt war und dass die im Pragmatismus äußerst relevanten religionsphilosophischen Ansätze größtenteils ignoriert worden waren. Wie Klaus Viertbauer hervorgehoben hat, ist es Ludwig Nagls Verdienst, „innerhalb der deutschsprachigen Religionsphilosophie die Tradition des Pragmatismus salonfähig gemacht zu haben“.

Ludwig Nagls Beschäftigung mit der Religionsphilosophie im Pragmatismus und Neopragmatismus verband sich mit einer Erörterung des neuen Interesses der Kritischen Theorie und der postphänomenologischen Dekonstruktion am Thema Religion. Mit dem 2003 veröffentlichten Sammelband *Religion nach der Religionskritik* hat Ludwig Nagl einen Überblick über die neue philosophische Religionsdebatte geliefert und in die 2010 veröffentlichte Monografie *Das verhüllte Absolute* sind diverse von ihm im ersten Jahrzehnt des neuen Jahrhunderts gehaltene Vorträge in überarbeiteter Form eingegangen. In seiner zweiten Monografie zur Religionsphilosophie mit dem Titel *Toward a Global Discourse on Religion in a Secular Age* kommt zu den Studien über den Pragmatismus eine weitere bedeutende Dimension der jüngeren religionsphilosophischen Debatte hinzu: die Begegnung der westlichen Philosophie mit den religiösen und philosophischen Traditionen Asiens, insbesondere mit dem chinesischen Denken.

Wenngleich sich Ludwig Nagl nicht nur mit Pragmatismus und Religionsphilosophie beschäftigt hat, sind viele seiner anderen Forschungsfelder direkt oder indirekt rückgebunden an dieses Makrothema. Offensichtlich ist dies im Fall von Freud und dessen Religionskritik, aber auch die jüngsten Arbeiten zur *artificial intelligence* kreisen um dasselbe Zentrum, sie fügen sich ein in die Kritik am „posthumanistischen“ Reduktionismus und in den Diskurs über Humanität und Spiritualität.

Neben vielen anderen Konferenzen waren die Weltkongresse der Philosophie immer eine willkommene Gelegenheit für einen Austausch mit Kolleginnen und Kollegen und zur Präsentation neuer Arbeiten. Der letzte Weltkongress fand in Peking statt. In der Großen Halle des Volkes, in der neben den Parteitagen der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas auch jedes Jahr das Treffen des Nationalen Volkskongresses abgehalten wird,

wurde am 13. August 2018 der XXIV. Weltkongress der Philosophie feierlich eröffnet. Der Kongress übertraf alle Erwartungen. Mit 6000 Teilnehmern aus 120 Ländern wurde er zum größten Philosophiekongress aller Zeiten. Die Organisatoren waren gezwungen, den Veranstaltungsort vom Universitätscampus in das China National Convention Center (CNCC) zu verlegen. Es war nicht so sehr die Zahl der Teilnehmer, die diesen Kongress von allen vorangegangenen unterschied, als vielmehr die Tatsache, dass in Peking fast alle philosophischen Traditionen der Welt mehr oder weniger vertreten waren und der Weltkongress nicht mehr den Eindruck vermittelte, von westlichen Traditionen dominiert zu sein. Den diversen chinesischen Philosophien wurde besonders viel Platz eingeräumt, wie das einem Gastgeberland gebührt. Es war eine außerordentliche Gelegenheit, sich mit den bedeutendsten Gelehrten der klassischen chinesischen Philosophie auszutauschen. Einer der Höhepunkte des Kongresses war die Wang Yangming Lecture von Tu Weiming über das Thema „Spiritual Humanism: Self, Community, Earth, and Heaven“. Tu Weiming, der lange an der Harvard University gelehrt hat, ist weltweit einer der bedeutendsten Kenner der konfuzianischen Tradition. Seinem Prestige, seiner wissenschaftlichen Autorität und seinem Engagement ist es zuzuschreiben, dass es möglich war, den Kongress in Peking zu veranstalten, und er hat mit klassischer Eleganz den Titel des Kongresses formuliert: 學以成人 (*xue yi cheng ren*), „Lernen, Mensch zu sein“. Tu Weiming gehört zu den Autoren, mit denen sich Ludwig Nagl in *Toward a Global Discourse on Religion in a Secular Age* auseinandersetzt. Im Kapitel „Contemporary Discourses on Humanism (Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor, Tu Weiming)“ vergleicht er zwei westliche Theorien des Menschen mit Tu Weimings *spiritual humanism* und analysiert dabei Affinitäten und Unterschiede. Tu Weimings Philosophie ist eine subtile und tiefsinnige Reinterpretation des klassischen Konfuzianismus. Mit einer feinen und artikulierten Begrifflichkeit arbeitet Tu Weiming die religiöse Dimension des Konfuzianismus heraus. Da es dem Neukonfuzianismus ähnlich wie dem Neuhinduisimus mehr auf die Kernideen der eigenen Tradition als auf eine historische Kontextualisierung ankommt, hat der westliche Leser mitunter Schwierigkeiten, das Neue vom Alten zu unterscheiden. Der Maxime von Tu Weimings *spiritual humanism*, Verschiedenheit nicht aufzuheben, aber in ihr die Harmonie zu suchen und den Dialog dem Kampf der Kulturen vorzuziehen, kann man sich wohl schwer entziehen.

Auf zahlreichen Vortragsreisen hat Ludwig Nagl die Diskussion mit Kollegen aus Ost und West gesucht und in immer neuen Anläufen versucht, die Grundlinien seines eigenen Leitprojekts zu vermitteln: die Neudimensionierung des Aufklärungsbegriffs unter den Vorzeichen unseres Zeitalters. Als Hommage an Ludwig Nagl und sein internationales und transkulturelles Engagement ist es zu verstehen, dass in den vorliegenden Band auch Luca Maria Scarantinos Text „Philosophy in a Postnational World“ aufgenommen worden ist. Es handelt sich um eine überarbeitete Version der Leibniz Lecture 2022 an der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, in der Scarantino

die gegenwärtigen Herausforderungen der Philosophie in einer stets komplexer werdenden Welt analysiert hat. Der Philosophie könnte eine wichtige Rolle zufallen bei der Rekonstruktion und Interpretation der aktuellen geopolitischen Konflikte, der sozialen Verwerfungen und der wirtschaftlichen Polarisierungen. Dazu aber müssten alle philosophischen Traditionen die kulturellen und disziplinären Grenzen überwinden und Begriffe, die bisher für universal gehalten worden sind, neu überdenken. In der Philosophie werde nicht nur eine Überprüfung der akademischen Forschungsgegenstände notwendig werden, so Scarantino, sondern auch eine Intensivierung des Austausches mit anderen wissenschaftlichen Disziplinen und mit anderen Formen des Wissens, mit anderen Formen von Spiritualität.

Allen Autorinnen und Autoren dieses Bandes sei herzlich gedankt für ihren Beitrag. Zu besonderem Dank verpflichtet bin ich Herrn Michael Stork für alle redaktionellen Arbeiten sowie Frau Mag.<sup>a</sup> Sarah Stoffaneller für die Gesamtkoordination und die Betreuung des Bandes vonseiten des Verlags.



Ivo A. Ibri

## A Myth of Interiority in the Philosophy of the Young Peirce<sup>1</sup>

I would like to dedicate this paper to Professor Ludwig Nagl,  
with deep friendship and admiration.

### Thematic Introduction

In a famous text from his youth (1878), *How to Make Our Ideas Clear*, Charles Peirce (1839–1911) affirms:

[A] dream has a real existence as a mental phenomenon, if somebody has really dreamt it; that he dreamt so and so, does not depend on what anybody thinks was dreamt, but is completely independent of all opinion on the subject. On the other hand, considering, not the fact of dreaming, but the thing dreamt, it retains its peculiarities by virtue of no other fact than that it was dreamt to possess them. Thus we may define the real as that whose characters are independent of what anybody may think them to be. (CP 5.405)

He therewith suggests that the fact that someone dreamt is sufficient, as a mental phenomenon, for the corresponding dream to be considered as something *real*. Nonetheless, it follows from Peirce's mature philosophy that the concept of reality, in line with its necessary otherness, is configured as something whose access is open to all minds that cohabit a determined common arena of experiences. From this point of view, the cognitive statute of a dream, or even something that happens only in an individual's mind, is in fact concealed, echoing Wittgenstein's famous myth of interiority, in which an internal sensation is incapable of being an object of the vocabulary typical of cognitive language. It seems licit to suppose that this passage from Peirce's youth would be revised in his later years, or, at least, rewritten in order to avoid confusion, as something in contradiction with his later concept of reality and with all the ontological doctrines that are developed in his mature work, profoundly interactive with his semiotics and pragmatism.

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1 This article is a revised and extended English version of the previously published in Portuguese: "Um mito da interioridade na filosofia do jovem Peirce," *Cognitio. Revista de Filosofia* 11 (2), 2014, 190–200. I would like to thank *Cognitio* for the courtesy of granting the authorization for the use of this article.

Aiming to reflect on the possibility of a contradiction in the Peircean concept of real within the aforementioned essay, we will expose in this paper the reasons why certain forms of solipsism or of private experience do not partake in the semiotic theater that constitutes the true realm of what Peirce considers to be *reality*.

### Some Important Aspects of Peirce's Mature Philosophy

Pragmatic meaning according to Peirce, as is known, is that which in some way reflects on the practical conduct of life.<sup>2</sup> Rooted in the pragmatic maxim as enunciated by Peirce, this definition is justified by the understanding that conduct is the exterior dimension of concepts inasmuch as these refer to worldly objects, namely, objects that are part of the phenomenal spectrum that constitutes human experience. Thus, it is in the interaction of the theoretical and experiential universes that all possible positive meaning is consummated – in this interaction, human belief develops as habits of action. In this light, it becomes natural to relate two dimensions of Peircean thought: Semiotics, inasmuch as it reflects on the relation between signs, objects and interpretants, and pragmatism, as the principle that states that all positive meaning must affect conduct.

Nonetheless, Peirce's radical realism<sup>3</sup> that results in a logical-categorical symmetry between man and world,<sup>4</sup> will allow us to transpose this conceptualization of meaning, connected to human conduct, and extend it to the conduct of any real object, as we generalize the demands of pragmatism and semiotics, i. e., inasmuch as one admits, in light of realism, that general principles are associated with natural phenomena, in such a way that the signs defined by these phenomena carry meaning as the exterior experiential aspect of these principles. It is possible to propose, therefore, within the principles of Peircean realism, a dimension of *meaning* of a non-anthropocentric character, as something extensive to all phenomena in general. From this approach, meaning is not only human, nor, much less, only extensive to post-human, but also to *pre-human* – in other words, enveloping a temporality that demonstrates coherence with Peirce's realism, configured by the recognition of a world that is independent of our representations and that evidences its own and independent semiotic-pragmatic sphere of meaning. In my view, this approach is none other than a commitment stemming from Peirce's realist ontology.

2 For other problematizations on the concept of *pragmatic meaning*, see Houser 2003; Liszka 2009; Hookway 2012.

3 For other interesting approaches to the author's realism, see also Lane 2004; Mayorga 2007.

4 In a clearer way, between any cognitive mind and objects that are *alter* to it, seeking in this way to untwine Peirce's philosophy from any anthropocentric residue, as his mature philosophy shows once and for all.

In this way, it seems important to emphasize that a broader concept of meaning unfolds the pragmatic consequences of positive concepts, namely, those that refer to the world, to factuality, and to the phenomenological landscape open to visitation by all beings with cognitive capacity.

It is necessary to consider, once more, that Peirce's mature work entails a theoretical framework that has been enriched not only by logic, as, for example, his existential graphs that he infuses with an iconic logic, but also and chiefly, as mentioned above, by a complex objectively realist ontology, based on his phenomenology and semiotics. This consideration will allow us to reread Peirce's early work in light of a new vocabulary, result of the definitive and vigorous introduction of an idea of world that, although never absent even in his early work, definitively enters his final theoretical system, distinguishing the author from currents of epistemological analysis based merely on the analysis of language or of the faculties of the cognizant subject.

We can affirm that Peirce's mature philosophy is definitively dialogical, semiotically interactive between the world of the real object, the signs that seek to represent it, and the evolutionary history of the interpretations of these signs. The conceptual axis of this philosophy draws on the broad consideration of its three categories, that originate from an inventory of the ways in which we experience phenomena and concludes that they are also the modes of being of reality itself. This amplification of the reach of the categories, equally permeating subject and objectual world, provides a relation of formal symmetry that is paramount to the justification of the dialogue between language and experience.

One could ask if introducing a theory of world that, ultimately, interacts with Peircean epistemology, would not be an unwarranted inflationary measure, when the contemporary philosophical tendency has gone in the opposite direction, i. e., that of a deflation, especially when an ontology appears to develop interactively with variables of a cognitive nature.

Indeed, Peirce's mature philosophy, by beginning with phenomenology, starts with the introduction of the subject into the world and this *cohabitation* will not be undone throughout the whole development of the other theories. This man-world cohabitation will imply, under a reading that takes Peirce's realism into consideration, the establishment of an equivalence of the logical rights of both, and this item will be guaranteed indiscriminately by the validity of the categories, for the modes of being of the conscience that experiences as well as for the reality experienced. This categorial symmetry between subject and object will be the fulcrum for the understanding of semiotics as a science that dialogues with the universes of sign and object.

What allows us to affirm that we *learn through experience* in Peirce's philosophy is not, absolutely, any form of concession to a crude empiricism, whose conceptual axis would encompass a sort of epistemological naivety and a typically nominalist skepticism, namely, one based on the possibility of a discontinuity of nature, however, with-



out reflecting on the resulting radical discontinuity of the possibility of any language, before any cognition. *To learn from experience* will demand the constitution, or rather, the logical justification of its very possibility. Here, the symmetry of the categories will prove its efficacy, legitimizing a connaturality between the object of experience and the experiencing mind. This connaturality will ultimately be the stage where semiotic dialogue is made possible – not, we must insist, a merely intersubjective dialogue, but one between subjectivity and objectivity, both configured as realms of signs and meaning in Peirce's mature philosophy. The semiotic dialogue between sign and object, language and reality, we reinforce, will be enabled by the connaturality between both that is consummated in Peirce's doctrine of objective idealism, which establishes the recognition that both the object and the sign commune in *ideality*.<sup>5</sup>

The adoption of categorial symmetry will also enable a nonanthropomorphic reading of the world: correlates of human faculties will always be found in nature, the theoretical aspect that, for one who is unfamiliar with Peirce's philosophy, may be the most surprising if not unusual. In the short space of this paper, unfortunately, it is not possible to give a detailed justification of the consequences of this rejection of an anthropocentric philosophy by Peirce.

### Returning to Peirce's Early Texts

Still in his youth, in the year 1868, when he was 29 years old, Peirce wrote two articles entitled “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man” (CP 5.213–263; W 2.193–211; EP 1.2–27) and “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (CP 5.264–317; W 2.211–242; EP 1.28–55) both correlated and sequential, fundamentally on the epistemological guidelines that mark the subsequent philosophy of the author. They are two texts that continue to interest scholars of pragmatism, since they speculate on the possibility of our having cognitive access to our minds and, in a certain way, to those of others.

In particular, in the text on the “Four Incapacities,” Peirce summarizes them as follows, maintaining the order of exposition of the original text:

- a) We have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts.
- b) We have no power of Intuition, but every cognition is determined logically by previous cognitions.
- c) We have no power of thinking without signs.
- d) We have no conception of the absolutely incognizable.

5 On the concept of objective idealism, see Ibri 2017. For other approaches, see McCarthy 1984; Dilworth 2011; Houser 2014.

In this same text on the “Four Incapacities,” Peirce analyzes these four propositions again, based on their origin in the essay “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man,” where he characterizes his strongly anti-Cartesian position, characterized by the rejection of a philosophy that starts with universal doubt, by the proposition of an intuition that has cognitive power and by the separation of mind and matter.

We now proceed to analyze the aspects of the aforementioned “Four Incapacities.” Intentionally leaving the first of them to be analyzed last, since it will connect directly to the central theme of this text, let us begin with the second incapacity.

The second incapacity, according to which “we have no power of Intuition, but every cognition is determined logically by previous cognitions,” is clearly an anti-Cartesian affirmation, as we have already commented. In fact, for Peirce, all cognition is constructed within a temporal continuum, in which a logical weaving of signs occurs, and the mind that operates these relations has no power to act simultaneously in the universe of mediation and that of intuitive immediation, as if intending, contradictorily, to *be* in time and concomitantly remain *outside* of it. Nonetheless, a deeper analysis of Peircean epistemology will bear on the question of synthesis put forward by Kant: What is the condition for the possibility of the unity of consciousness, i. e., a unity under which the signs are heuristically associated? While in order to justify this unity, Kant returns to the Cartesian *cogito* (I think), Peirce defends that the unity of consciousness is immediate feeling, what he calls *quale-consciousness*. A type of immediacy of a *non-time* as a background becomes the possibility of a consciousness of synthesis or of learning that develops only in time. Although sufficiently complex that the space here will not allow a deeper reading of this second incapacity, for now it is enough to describe it in order to concentrate on the analysis of the first, even while noting that *quale-consciousness* is one of the key concepts in the development of Peircean cosmology.

Let us now consider the third incapacity: “We have no power of thinking without signs.” In a certain manner, this consideration follows from the anterior analysis of the second incapacity. All thought happens through signs, i. e., through logical representations, in a temporally continuous process in which past memory is always active for the recognition and introduction of phenomena into conceptual signs that analyze the present state of things for some future prediction. In this mere description, time is shown to be all-inclusive for thought. Furthermore, to think of an object is to think of the predicates that define its conduct, and conduct can only be apprehended through signs that represent relations between phenomenal states.

The fourth incapacity affirms that “we have no conception of the absolutely incognizable.” Contrary to what it may seem at first, this topic has a close connection to the central theme of this paper. To be incognizable, according to Peirce, is to be unable to have phenomenological access to the catalogue of predicates of a certain object, meaning that such an object does not appear in its exterior face, the condition for it to be experienced. Up until this point, this analysis is merely Kantian. However, in light of Peirce’s cate-

gories, something that does not have a manifestation as an external phenomenon, open to the general universe of experience, simply *does not exist*, since it does not pass from a state of interior indetermination to a state of external determination, namely, from a potential state to an actual state.

In light of the vocabulary of those categories, one could say that the interior universes of the first and third categories must existentialize in some way in the second category, which is directly open to visitation by all minds. Uncognoscibility, therefore, is given by the nonexistence of an object, transferring the problem from the sphere of epistemology to that of ontology. In truth, Peirce's thought will emphasize the close relationship between these areas of philosophy.

Let us now return to the first of the incapacities, "we have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts." Here, the author's mature approach to this theme is stated explicitly. Peirce rejects any appeal to psychology for reflecting on the phenomenon of introspection. Indeed, his focus will hinge on the articulation of the categories and pragmatism. To say that knowledge of the external world is that which counterbalances our knowledge of the internal world<sup>6</sup> is to affirm that our interiority, from the point of view of logic, possesses a purely potential or modally possible nature, and that only concrete action can determine interior indetermination as an effective choice. On the other hand, action, inserted in an objective history, is cognitively open to public experience and provides reflexively its semiotic, dialogical analysis. To have no power of introspection means, as well, to not "know what we know" of our and of "other minds," if not by the way in which this knowledge is reflected in the exterior world, appearing in a defined way – and if we could, as well, make use of Heidegger's vocabulary, although rarely clear, we could say that the exterior world is that which, in fact, reveals itself as a phenomenon in its cognitive determination.

Categorially, the external world is characterized by *secondness*, the locus of the kind of experience that can be interpreted and learned. Herein lies the justification that the fact and the thought that generates it are connatural, such that the collection of the first to the interior of the second must be done semiotically and dialogically.

In this line of argumentation, we can affirm that it is through the external universe that the possibility of knowledge of interior universes is consummated – this, in fact, is the closest meaning of the term *reflection* that configures the semiotic-pragmatic dialogue between these universes.

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6 On the relations between internal and external worlds considered from the point of view of pragmatic significance, see Ibri 2022, chapters 14 and 18.

## The Interaction of Knowability and Reality in Peirce's Philosophy

In Peirce's philosophy, as already mentioned, there is a strong connection between epistemology and ontology. Both are constructed evolutionarily in his thought, in such a way as to create a conceptual interdependence that is not foundationist, i. e., which would incur in metaphysical dogmatism as the stanchion for the knowability of the world.

As an attentive reader of Kant, albeit distinct from him given the realism of scholastic root he embraced in his youth and that becomes radicalized in the conception of reality sustained in a theory of continuity considered ahead, Peirce could not invert the hierarchy between logic and ontology, without falling into the error of making the second the linchpin of the first. However, logic or semiotics, which Peirce makes to be equivalent, placed thus in the list of the Peircean classification of the sciences, does not legitimize a transcendentalist interpretation of his philosophy, rather, one should have in mind that in this classification, philosophy begins with a phenomenology, a science of experience that establishes the author's three categories and molds all subsequent theoretical construction of the other sciences and the respective doctrines that characterize them.

In order to reclaim an important conceptual aspect of the epistemology-ontology relationship in Peirce, we return to his critique of the Kantian idea of the *incognoscibile*. In a passage of his work, we read:

*Not, then, or what is other than, if a concept, is a concept of the cognizable. Hence, not-cognizable, if a concept, is a concept of the form "A, not-A," and is, at least, self-contradictory. Thus, ignorance and error can only be conceived as correlative to a real knowledge and truth, which latter are of the nature of cognitions. Over against any cognition, there is an unknown but knowable reality; but over against all possible cognition, there is only the self-contradictory.*

*In short, cognizability (in its widest sense) and being are not merely metaphysically the same, but are synonymous terms.* (CP 5.257, emphasis I. A. I.)

In fact, the equation *to be is to be knowable* establishes conceptually an equivalence between the two conditions, i. e., that of *being real* and that of this reality being an *object of knowledge*. Thus, to be knowable, in the author's philosophy, means to show oneself phenomenologically as otherness, and this concept is essentially connected to the exterior world. *Otherness*, in the Peircean vocabulary, is situated in the second category, that encompasses the exterior face of any reality, in such a way as to be independent of any representation that may be made of it. This independence of objects of knowledge in relation to their representation is the first aspect that in Peirce's philosophy defines what reality is. Indeed, this condition already imposes that nothing that can be considered real can be submitted to any subjective constitution, in such a way that the guarantee

of reality's objectivity is translated into its general phenomenological character, open to the visitation of any cognizant mind.

It is worth noting as well, even if only in passing given the restricted space of this text, that the equivalence of *knowability* and *being real* is integrated with the conceptual realm of Peirce's objective idealism, a doctrine in which the author affirms the connaturality between mind and matter, rejecting simultaneously the disassociation of the nature of both, of Cartesian origin, and all forms of materialism that subsume mental phenomena to physical laws (see also Hausman 1993; Parker 1994).

### A Myth of Interiority in Peirce

Returning to the initially cited passage (“[A] dream has a real existence as a mental phenomenon, if somebody has really dreamt it [...],” CP 5.405), what stands out is the consideration that something real could in this way be *known* merely by one interiority specifically, namely, that of the person who dreamt a certain dream, reminding us in some way of the discussion on the legitimacy of the private use of the word *to know*, similar to what Wittgenstein proposed in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Nevertheless, in the backdrop of Peircean philosophy, the focus of the question would not be on language and the appropriateness of its use or not, but rather, on an approach that reclaims the nonfoundationist commitment to logical harmony between epistemology and ontology, such that the concept of real is made akin to the equation *to be is to be knowable*. Evidently, someone's dream, despite the fact that the idiosyncrasy that characterizes it may be independent of any representation made of it, is not open to what we have been calling phenomenological visitation and, therefore, in light of the criteria of knowability of Peirce's realist philosophy, cannot be represented in signs that have that dream as an object and that sustain themselves on it in such a way as to be incorporated in the public circle.

The question here of epistemological interest is formed by the fact that the dream of a particular subject can only be made public through the report of the dreamer himself and, given the inaccessibility of the fact to other knowing minds, the *reality* of this dream depends on the representation of the one who dreamt, and could not satisfy the essential condition of what reality is for Peirce, i. e., that of being independent of any and all representation of it. The dream as a fact would not, therefore, have reality, since it is not an object of public experience. Strictly faithful to the criteria of reality adopted by Peirce, the mentioned passage ends up creating a contradiction by considering a dream as something real in the face of its factuality being independent of any opinion about it. Let us consider as well, that the mere testimony that something happened in an individuality does not confer upon it the statute of a real object, existent, able to be visited by any mind that could represent it and introduce it into some communal knowledge.

Nonetheless, we know from psychoanalysis that dreams have meaning by pointing to factual situations associated with emotional interpretants – to use here the vocabulary of semiotics. It is interesting to notice that dreams or events of an internal nature, precluded from being publicly experienced, have two modes of appearing in the theater of external objects, namely, by the report of the subject who dreamt or through their influence, or even, their connection to the conduct of the one who dreamt. The first mode in itself would not satisfy the condition of pragmatic meaning, for signs, in their symbolic character, must begin phenomenologically, i. e., pass from the plane of language to that of conduct – this, in turn, can be the object of observation that is no longer private, but open to be experienced by other minds. The second mode unites the necessary and sufficient condition for pragmatic meaning. However, one should also think that a reflecting on conduct, from the psychoanalytical point of view, does not necessarily proceed from a report, rather, the core of this science is the deciphering of emotional interpretants into logical ones, that is, by making use of the patient's life history, proceed to create hypotheses of their influence on behavior. Emotional interpretants can create forms of human suffering by determining non-deliberate behaviors that end up, in some way, raising questions of the nature: *Why is it that one acts in this way?*

Notwithstanding the evident complexity of the topic in question, it is at least possible to point out some avenues of reflection on what might constitute these operations of translation, or even, transposition of interior phenomena to the objectual theater where a science like psychoanalysis can be developed, using the criteria of pragmatic meaning (see Colapietro 1989 for different perspectives).

It is also fitting to consider that an individual fact, despite its character of exteriority that in some ways complies with the semantic demands of pragmatism, cannot lack in redundancy, of possessing a regular occurrence to serve as a semiotic indicator of a rule of behavior that, after all, constitutes what in Peirce's philosophy could be called real *thirdness*, his category of laws or habits of conduct. In the case that something happens with redundancy in some interiority, it is to be supposed that in some manner it could then become externalized, even if obliquely, indicating this essential element of knowability, whatever it may be, a real rule, inferable by experiential judgments. In the case that this event is of a physical nature, it is interesting to observe that we cannot count totally on our human capacity for concealment, in the face of the otherness of our own body in relation to our self-control. An extremely evident symptomatology could in itself expose an interior pathological event, like the example of swelling or a toothache.

## Towards a Conclusion

Pragmatism is the principle that encompasses, in Peirce's philosophy, the condition for the meaning of a term, concept, sentence or theoretical declaration, in the form of its possible influence on human conduct. Already, in other occasions (see Ibri 2017, chapter 6), I proposed the consideration of the extension of this principle to a general logical rule, based on the author's categories, in order to understand the concept of conduct ontologically, as the exterior face of any being in the world, able to be visited by any potentially knowing mind. The general rule that is embedded in pragmatism states, and reaffirms, that anything of internal nature must manifest itself in some external fashion, becoming a phenomenon open to experience in general and incorporated in the theater of otherness and reactions, so as to be able to be interpreted reflexively.

The important condition of redundancy as the permanence of something real, and therefore, knowable, is akin to what Peirce calls the principle of *continuity*, in such a way that what is not continuous is not a matter of knowability. Semiotically, continuity depends on indexes of spatial-temporal redundancy, so as to make it inferable, as reflected representation.

This importance of the theory of continuity, called *synechism* by Peirce, from the Greek *synechés* – continuous, that ultimately is connected to his realism of scholastic origin, should satisfy the binomial knowledge – predictability, i. e., the recognition that the ultimate meaning of knowledge is to predict future facts by means of the theories that we suppose to be true, even if fallible. In light of the criteria of synechism, a mere isolated, contingent event does not satisfy that binomial and, in a strict sense, does not constitute knowledge.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the first category, firstness, is also of a continuous nature, even if constituted of continua of qualities, namely, without rules of logical formation. Not without reason, from an external point of view, it is manifested in secondness through the principle of chance, that brings about in the second category all the factual spontaneity that is phenomenologically experiential. Now, considering continuity and exteriority, inasmuch as they are conditions for the possibility of any cognition, and given the equivalence of reality and knowability, in the wake of the connection between epistemology and ontology in Peircean philosophy, an exclusively interior event that is also in some way contingent, cannot be considered *real*. For no other reason, in that text of Peirce's youth, it seems to us at least an unfitting example given by him regarding the reality of a dream, in that he may contradict his own conditions for the admission of a pragmatic concept of reality.

In summary, it could be said that experiences of an internal, subjective nature contain some form of possibility of being externalized and, to the extent that they do so, they will be raised to a reality that can be shared between knowing minds through the three Peircean categories. The mere privacy of experience, as long as it remains as such,

cannot in principle be the object of semiotic dialogism, through the construction of cognitively common logical interpretants. It can be conjectured, however, that many of these experiences must appear in the form of emotional interpretants, entering the factual and humanly historical universe, through its possible expression as a work of art or, alternatively, as a kind of inner light<sup>7</sup> that can be the pre-conceptual axis of ideas of a religious nature. These considerations suggest interesting topics for future semiotic-pragmatic research.

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7 With regard to inner phenomena, I mention the brilliant article by Ludwig Nagl (2011, 137), discussing the occurrence of an *interior light* read under a metaphysics of the divine, certainly with the power to establish beliefs of a privative nature.



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Sami Pihlström

## On Some Literary Influences of William James's Pragmatist Philosophy of Religion<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

It was with reference to William James (among others) that Martha Nussbaum (1990, 284) decades ago expressed her hope for a deeper integration of philosophy with literature, and James has, indeed, been generally regarded as one of the most “literary” philosophers in the sense that for him the style of writing as an expression of philosophical ideas seems to have always been a major consideration. James read deeply and widely, and has himself found deep readers across a wide range of writers.

I will examine some of James’s literary sources that can be taken to have influenced his philosophy of religion,<sup>2</sup> hoping that this is an appropriate way of honoring Ludwig Nagl’s outstanding philosophical achievements among which original interpretations and articulations of pragmatic pluralism in the philosophy of religion play a major role.<sup>3</sup> I cannot offer any comprehensive overview of James as a “literary philosopher”; I can hardly do more than provide a catalogue of potentially interesting influences James had. However, even with this restricted focus, it is easy to see how broad James’s literary sources were, and how they may have shaped his major philosophical interests. Different kinds of literary articulations of the fundamental existential problems of human life are relevant to Jamesian pragmatism, and vice versa. In order to get a grasp of such articulations, we will thus take a look at some major authors James read, with a particular focus on his life-long concern with religion, especially in his late works.

<sup>1</sup> The topic of this paper is more comprehensively discussed in my recent book (Pihlström 2023), especially chapter 4.

<sup>2</sup> James’s significance for literature and literary studies has recently been emphasized in the double special issue of *William James Studies: New Directions in William James and Literary Studies*, edited by Todd Barosky and Justin Rogers-Cooper (*William James Studies* 13 [1–2], 2017). See Cottingham 2014 on the need to include literary reading and interpretation in a “humane approach” to the philosophy of religion, expanding the mainstream methodologies of analytic philosophy of religion (cf. also Kivistö & Pihlström 2016). James has also recently been increasingly examined as a source for modernist writers (see Evans 2017), but this interesting theme falls beyond the scope of the present essay.

<sup>3</sup> For Nagl’s recent *magnum opus* developing a sophisticated version of pragmatist philosophy of religion especially in the context of the debates on religious plurality and diversity in the global world, see Nagl 2021.