

The relevance of C. S. Peirce for socio-semiotics

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Abstract. Neither Peirce's thought in general nor his semeiotic in particular would appear to be concerned with 'society' as it is generally conceived today. Moreover, Peirce rarely mentions 'society', preferring the term 'community', which his readers have often interpreted restrictively.

There are two essential points to be borne in mind. In the first place, the epithet 'social' refers here not to the object of thought, but to its production, its mode of action and its transmission and conservation. In the second place, the term 'community' is not restricted to the scientific community, as is sometimes supposed. On the contrary, it refers to the ideal form of a society, which he calls 'the unlimited community', i. e. a group of people striving towards a common goal.

Furthermore, Peirce's semeiotic has been put in doubt as capable of providing a model for communication, the basis of social, dialogic, thought and action. The aim of the present article is to show that semeiotic, funded as it is on Peirce's three categories, which define and delimit the ways in which man perceives and represents the phenomena, can provide a comprehensive model for the analysis of all types of communication in all social contexts.

Finally, in this domain, as in others, Peirce was a forerunner, with the result that his thought has often been misunderstood or forgotten. In addition, he was pre-eminently a philosopher, thus his work has been neglected in other disciplines. The elaboration of other triadic systems, such as, notably, that of Rossi-Landi, shows that the tendency of semiotics in general is to move away from the former static, dyadic model towards that involving a triadic *process*. This trend, with which Peircean theory is in harmony, has been sharply accentuated in recent years, but often lacks a philosophical justification for its assumptions, which Peirce provides.

Introduction

In an article entitled *The Range of Peirce's Relevance*, Max Fisch enumerated the many domains in which Peirce's sign-theory has been of enduring influence, among them, not only semiotics, linguistics and anthropology but sociology (Fisch 1983). This last might appear surprising, as Peirce himself took a poor view of sociology as such and of sociologists in general. If he admitted the existence of "social sciences", such as "the natural history of religion, economics, political science" and the like (Ketner 1975–1987, 3: 229), he did not recognise sociology as such as a science because not founded on some general idea. His comments in review-articles in *The Nation* make this abundantly clear.

Furthermore, "society" is not a term often used by Peirce. Admittedly, for him, as for other pragmatists, all thought is "social", and he develops this point very frequently. But Peirce, unlike other pragmatists, especially Dewey, was not interested in social conditions or conflicts, and when he uses the term "society" it is not with the connotations of the term as used to-day, and certainly not those of its problematic nature. "The social nature of thought is an essential part of Peirce's evolutionist philosophy and enters into his definition of truth", wrote Philip P. Wiener; "unlike Dewey, however, Peirce scarcely deals with any specific social problem" (Wiener 1949: 20).

At the time Peirce was writing, sociology was still in its infancy, and socio-semiotics as it is understood nowadays, not even thought of. And references to Peirce in contemporary writings on socio-semiotics are extremely rare. What could it mean then to say that Peirce's semeiotic can have relevance for socio-semiotics? I think we can say that his thought, after the event, as it were, as in the case of sociology, may be seen to have this relevance precisely because it constitutes a coherent system not confined to any particular time or place.

A counter-example may be relevant here: Dewey's pedagogy was developed in Chicago and other industrial towns as a result of the conditions of unrest prevailing there at the time. However respectable Dewey's fundamental ideas may be deemed, the fact remains that when his system was later adopted in France, the result was catastrophic, the context being entirely different. One may object, with reason, that these ideas were imperfectly interpreted by French educationists, who did not perceive the philosophy underlying them,

and were merely looking for “recipes” (Deledalle 1996, 2: 90) but that fact is also part of the context, which was not ready to receive them.

This is not the case with Peirce, whose semeiotic is founded on a philosophical basis capable of transcending local or temporal material circumstances. If it remains true that Dewey and Peirce “both proposed the same methods of approaching problems, any problems [...], Peirce’s pragmatism was more theoretical, Dewey’s instrumentalism more practical” (Deledalle 1996, 2: 90). If it is also true that a philosophy also depends, to a certain extent on time and place, the domains in which it moves and has its influence will be different according to the problems it has to solve. The more general the nature of this philosophy, and the fewer the particular questions raised, the wider this potential relevance will be. Peirce’s pragmatism was indeed that of ideas. But ideas are applied to concrete situations, “the proof of the pudding is in the eating” and if Peirce’s thought helps to solve problems, the pragmatic answer may be to use it.

The social origin and nature of thought

What exactly does it mean to say that for Peirce all thought is social? One may first remark that in expounding his semeiotic, Peirce habitually takes examples from our everyday life. I am not here alluding merely to weathercocks, flags and such-like, which he gives as examples of different types of sign, but to anecdotes and conversations in social contexts recognisable to the reader as corresponding to his own experience. The famous analysis of “What sort of day is it today?” (CP 8.314) explores the question of what a person is actually communicating, or trying to communicate, when he speaks, and the manner in which this is received by the interlocutor, in other words, everything which lies beyond a “signifier” and a “signified”. Likewise the passage on “the cook’s desire”, which analyses the idea of generality with reference to a common everyday event, (in this case the making of an apple pie; CP 1.341). “This example, although a simple one, is highly significant, for it can be taken as paradigmatic of Peirce’s concept of intelligence: the governing of behavior by appropriate general rules (or ‘habits’) in order to attain a desired end” (Limper 1996: 283–284), or the example of two men standing on the seashore, of whom one may decry a ship although the other cannot

see it, this situation bringing about a modification of the object of discourse (CP 2.232).

But, although this aspect of the question has been developed extensively in socio-linguistics (notably by M. A. K. Halliday, who claimed, curiously, in 1985 that “dynamic models of semiotic systems are not yet very well developed”¹) this is a comparatively minor point in attempting to explain what Peirce really means by “social”. More fundamental is his exposition of scientific method, where he explains himself quite clearly: the fact that the method of modern science “has been made social” (CP 7.87) is a vital factor. He says:

On the one hand, what a scientific man recognizes as a fact of science must be something open to anybody to observe, provided he fulfils the necessary conditions, external and internal. As long as only one man has been able to see a marking upon the planet Venus, it is not an established fact. (CP 7.87)

In other words the validity of facts or ideas must rest on public proof of them, as Dewey was never tired of remarking.

“On the other hand, the method of modern science is social in respect to the solidarity of its efforts”, and here Peirce compares the scientific world to a “colony of insects, in that the individual strives to produce that which he himself cannot hope to enjoy. [...] When a problem comes before the scientific world, a hundred men immediately set all their energies to work upon it” (CP 7.87). For “man is not whole as long as he is single, [...] he is essentially a possible member of society. [...] It is not ‘my’ experience, but ‘our’ experience that has to be thought of; and this ‘us’ has indefinite possibilities” (CP 5.402, n2).

This notion of “indefinite possibilities” is essential, and Peirce develops it elsewhere in the domain of logic. “All human affairs rest upon probabilities, and the same thing is true everywhere” (CP 2.653). But man is mortal, Peirce goes on, and

death makes the number of our risks, of our inferences, finite, and so makes their mean result uncertain. The very idea of probability and of reasoning rests on the assumption that this number is infinitely great. [...] logicity inexorably requires that our interests shall *not* be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom

¹ Quoted by Scott Simpkins (1998: 511).

we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds. He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the world, is, as it seems to me, illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the social principle. (CP 2.654)

and elsewhere, “the social principle is rooted intrinsically in logic” (W 2.270–1). This solidarity of society (extended, be it noted in passing, “to all races”) is not thus, for Peirce, some vague well-intentioned humanitarian principle but a *logical necessity*.

A logical necessity, but also a psychological and intellectual one, for in reasoning, says Peirce

one is obliged to *think to oneself*. In order to recognize what is needful for doing this it is necessary to recognize, first of all, what “oneself” is. One is not twice in precisely the same mental state. One is *virtually* [...] a somewhat different person, to whom one’s present thought has to be communicated. Consequently, one has to express one’s thought so that that virtually other person may understand it. (CP 7.103; CSP’s italics)

In other words, in order to think, we need others, and if they are absent we have to imagine them. “No mind can take one step without the aid of other minds” (CP 2.220) and in fact “[...] the man’s circle of society (however widely or narrowly this phrase be understood), is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism” (CP 5.421). Thus society and the individual are indissolubly bound together. “The non-social individual is an abstraction arrived at by imagining what man would be if all his human qualities were taken away”, as Dewey said (Dewey 1967–1972 [1888], 1: 232). The idea that all thought is a dialogic process is not new, but as Fisch remarks “There are no more pervasive themes in Peirce’s work, from early until late, that all thought is in signs and is dialogic in nature” (Fisch 1986: 442), and Peirce develops this idea in more precise contexts.

Consequently, all knowledge is social in origin. The impossibility for an individual of arriving at any ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ is one of Peirce’s most constant themes. In one of his review articles he says that “to say that a broad philosophical conception is altogether new, is almost equivalent to a condemnation of it. That anybody has given it its definitive form can hardly ever be said” (Ketner 1975–1987, 3: 170).

Society and community

Why then, does Peirce so seldom refer to ‘society’? He prefers in general the term ‘community’. In view of this preference, it is somewhat amusing to find James M. Baldwin himself stating in his *Dictionary* that this word is used “loosely”, and that “no technical use of this term is recommended” (Baldwin 1953, 1: 200–201). In a review article on a work by Baldwin, Peirce regrets with the author that there exists no theory of the *socius*, which is “the weakness of current sociology” (Ketner 1975–1987, 2: 111).

It has also sometimes been remarked that the term, for Peirce, usually refers to the “community of inquirers”, or the “scientific community”, which, understood in a restricted sense, leaves Peirce open to the charge of elitism which is sometimes made, and which might appear to disqualify him as a universal thinker. If it is true that in general he does use the term in this restricted sense, this is perhaps not so heinous as it may appear. For there is (*pace* Baldwin) a significant difference between the terms ‘society’ and ‘community’. The former term designates an association, a gathering of people living in the same geographical locality, bound by a government, a common system of laws, whereas ‘community’ implies some common link or interest binding a group together, which transcends physical proximity and legal or political conventions. A ‘society’ is not necessarily otherwise united: on the contrary, class-divisions and conflicting interests may prove to be a source of social problems, which physical proximity may actually exacerbate.

In effect, different communities may exist within a society, whereas there can hardly be different societies within a community, which is more closely-knit, bound together as it is by shared norms and values. In a word, the cohesion of a society is imposed from the outside, however ‘democratically’ (or not), whereas that of a community emanates naturally and dynamically from a group striving *towards a common goal*. So far, and superficially, the charge of elitism might seem to be somewhat justified.

But in actual fact, far from opposing the two notions, Peirce expands this notion of ‘community’ to the ideal of what a society *should* be, i.e. the ‘unlimited community’ (Goudge 1969: 261, 290, 305). This community “may be wider than man”, indeed it may include “all living beings” (W 2.271) (which, with his inclusion of

protoplasm (CP 1. 351) also perhaps foreshadows the possibility of bio- and zoo-semiotics). And it is also unlimited in time. The conception of reality “essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge” (W 2.239 CSP’s capitals). That, in actual fact, and in our daily lives, ‘society’ is usually conflictual, is not Peirce’s problem, but this is not in contradiction with the fact that all thought is social, for the epithet applies to the way in which thought is produced and elaborated, the mode of its action and the means of its conservation.

Communication

How does this link up with socio-semiotics?

If one accepts the idea that man cannot think by himself, and that thought is a collective process, this necessarily implies communication, and communication can take place only through signs. A sign cannot exist *in vacuo*; if it is not perceived by somebody as a sign, it cannot be a sign. Any branch of semiotics concerning man is therefore inevitably social. The term ‘socio-semiotics’ is almost a redundancy if we did not know, by ‘collateral experience’ what sense to give it.

There are many semiotic models, and the semeiotic of Peirce has recently been put in doubt as a model for a general theory of communication, a point to which we will return. However this may be, Peirce’s triadic model has a great advantage. In the first place, it is not merely a *model*, it is part of a *system*. Models can usually be modified at will, sometimes to suit a particular case, whereas in a coherent system, if an element is modified this implies either that this modification will be an aberration, or alternatively that if it is found to be genuinely justified, then the whole system will have to be modified and re-thought in virtue of some other general principle.

The system on which his semeiotic is based is his phaneroscopy, which provides us with three categories for apprehending the phenomena, Firstness (possibility, spontaneity, feeling), Secondness, (action and reaction, experience) and Thirdness (law, thought, mediation, habit). Peirce here did a useful work, appreciated by philosophers but not always by semioticians. In a recent article, Mats Bergman maintains that

the study of Peirce's semeiotic has reached a point where certain central findings, such as the triadic character of the sign and its reliance on Peirce's categories of *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*, have been established firmly enough to speak of an interpretive consensus. (Bergman 2000: 227)

This may be the case for philosophers studying semiotics, but it is doubtful if for the semioticians who are not philosophers all the implications of Peirce's theory, especially in what concerns the hierarchy of categories, esteemed by Gérard Deledalle (2000) as being of crucial importance, are very obvious. Indeed, some semioticians think his system is needlessly complicated, whereas in fact it is simpler precisely because it reduces the number of categories to the fundamental ones by which man perceives the world and represents it. His sign-system is thus also triadic. Peirce's inestimable contribution to sign-theory is the presence of the Interpretant, which pertains to mediation, and thus to Thirdness, *within the sign-process*. In a dualistic theory of signification the Object corresponds to the Sign. In actual fact everybody knows this is not true. The immediately perceived sign, linguistic or other, (the Representamen) will invariably necessitate a complement of information before it can approach to an adequate 'meaning'. The latter, moreover, will not be fixed and stable, but will continue to evolve with each successive semiosis.

This is not news even to dualists. They have all encountered the problem and attempted to solve it in different ways. 'Contexts' and 'codes' abound, but they are often simply convenient adjuncts to fundamentally dualistic systems where they have no official status. In other words, Thirdness is always with us, but unrecognised as such.

But Thirdness cannot be reduced to a dyadic system, there is no place for it. What pertains to thirdness will remain *outside* a semiotic process in a dualistic system, thus it can be modified at will. Gérard Deledalle (1978: 27–49; 2000: 100–113), for pedagogical reasons, attempted to formulate Peirce's sign in Saussurean terms and proved it to be an impossible task. And it is not advisable, from the point of view of the ethics of terminology to use the terms 'signifier' and 'signified' and to appropriate the term 'interpretant' as a useful adjunct in a basically dualistic process of communication and interpretation as is sometimes done. If one is evoking the interpretant, one is at the same time referring to Peirce's whole system, which, ideally, would have to be accepted in all its coherence. Peirce's semeiotic cannot be dissociated from the philosophy and the logic which are its

foundations. This said, his position on ‘chance’ and ‘fallibilism’ must not be forgotten.

It can thus be argued that this phaneroscopia is relevant for socio-semiotics precisely because it accounts clearly for the multiple and different ways in which man perceives and expresses the world in which he lives, moves and has his being.

Can semiotics provide a model for communication?

1. Contra

Semiotics in general however has been put in doubt as capable of supplying a model for communication, and we shall here deal briefly with some of the objections formulated.

The ‘post-semiotic’ view of John Stewart (1995) is that semiotics cannot be applied to other domains because of “its symbol model basis, which assumes ‘language is fundamentally a system of signs or symbols’” and that the “most prominent stumbling-block is a two-world orientation that posits ‘a fundamental distinction between [...] the world of the sign and the signifier, symbol and symbolised, name and named, word and thought’” on the grounds that “‘*world* is the *single* coherent sphere that humans inhabit’” (Simpkins 1998: 509). While being valid with reference to a dyadic semiotics these remarks can obviously not be applied to Peirce’s triadic semeiotic, and in actual fact, no Peircean would object to this objection!

But other objections, paradoxically, are voiced by some of those who advocate the extension of the field of semiotics towards other domains, notably the social. R. Hodge and G. Kress (1988) insist on the necessity in the latter domain of a *diachronic* dimension, while also, just as paradoxically, condemning “semiosis [...] as ‘necessarily ideological’” (Simpkins 1998: 510). It is hardly necessary to point out, on one hand, that ‘semiosis’ in Peircean semeiotic is *by definition* a diachronic process, and on the other hand, that, although Peircean semiosis does not and cannot ignore ideology, the latter must be taken account of only as constituting a field of interpretants, which can in no way command or govern the semiotic process itself. The only way of invalidating the statement I have just made would be for semeiotic to deconstruct itself by advancing the notion that it is itself based on an

ideology, however I think this sort of ‘Cretan paradox’ can hardly be maintained.

Although these authors claim to be taking into account “all sign systems” (Simpkins 1998: 510), that of Peirce has obviously been neglected. This kind of objection to semiotics in general as being unable to provide a model for communication is obviously irrelevant here.

More serious are the philosophical arguments set forth by Mats Bergman in the afore-mentioned article, with reference to works by Habermas (1995) and Parmentier (1985; 1994). Bergman does concede at the outset that

it is uncertain whether his scattered remarks on the topic entail a consistent theory of communicative phenomena, one may even question whether semeiotic can plausibly be developed in this direction at all. Peirce’s most formal account of the sign relation, given in strictly unpsychologistic terms, without reference to human utterers and interpreters, indicate that pure semeiotic is after all only concerned with the abstract conditions of representation and truth, and that communication is a non-philosophical problem-area that is best left to the special sciences. (Bergman 2000: 226)

Playing the devil’s advocate, Bergman exposes the point of view of those who maintain that the utility of semeiotic is restricted to “truth-functional epistemology and mathematical logic, and thus renders Peirce’s theory of signs practically useless for other types of inquiry, such as studies of culture and social communication” (Bergman 2000: 226).

Having duly nourished Cerberus, Bergman then proceeds to undermine these statements, with reference to the work of Johansen (1985; 1993), Colapietro (1996) and Liszka (1996) showing that it is the definitions of those who make them that “restrict” the scope of semeiotic. It is not our intention here to make a detailed analysis of Bergman’s lucid and thoroughly-documented article, but to stress several points made which have relevance for our present topic.

The main point is that the pragmatistic dimension, “the domain of habits and practices” (Bergman 2000: 237) of semeiotic cannot be ignored. Moreover, he says, if one cannot maintain that Peirce’s model be a perfect model for communication, it must not be forgotten that the idea of perfect communication is itself perhaps illusory, “communication is not a straightforward transmission of truth” (Bergman 2000: 238), which would be a dyadic process, he remarks

(and, we would add, would entail interminable discussions about the nature of this ‘truth’, and the philosophical assumptions underlying it). He stresses the fact that although “Peirce undeniably characterizes his theory of signs as a scientific undertaking [...] that does not mean that semeiotic would study nothing but science” (Bergman 2000: 247). He reminds readers of a fundamental point we made at the beginning of this article, that although Peirce’s *most formal* accounts of the sign relation concern the theoretical science of rhetoric, Peirce, in spite of his anti-psychologism indicates that “it is acceptable to take some psychological facts into consideration”, adding that “we could perhaps broaden its scope further by allowing a limited number of sociological insights to enter the proceedings”, for “Peirce tends to view practically anything that can in any sense be investigated in semiotic terms” and “inquiry is a social mode of conduct” (*ibid.*, my italics).

2. Pro

If it is true that the occurrences of Peirce’s use of the *term* ‘communication’ are rare, as Bergman and others point out, this does not mean that it is not, in fact, a *subject* continually treated, albeit indirectly, in his writings. In fact, contrary to the assertions quoted above, examples of communicative processes in concrete situations are to be found dispersed everywhere in his writings, as already noted, even in apparently abstract philosophical discourse, showing that Peirce never loses sight of the fact that man is pre-eminently a sign, living in a “universe [...] perfused with signs” (CP 5.448 Fn P1). Semiosis does not take place in a philosophical stratosphere:

Propositions refer to the real universe, and usually to the nearer environment. Thus, if somebody rushes into the room and says, “There is a great fire!” we know he is talking about the neighbourhood and not about the world of the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*. (CP 2.357).

Or again, when defining ‘Predication’: when we say ‘it rains’, “it does not mean that it rains in fairyland” (CP 2.360).

In the present writer’s opinion, Bergman’s article most effectively disposes of any objections of a philosophical nature that could be made to using Peirce’s semeiotic as a model for a system of communication or its extension to other fields of social activity. That

Bergman advances his arguments with some caution, and without mentioning Peirce's many references to the context of the everyday world is a fact, but this caution (I feel) is only a 'sign' conveying the usual reluctance of certain philosophers to admit that their theories might have 'effects' or 'practical bearings' on the world in which we live. Not being a professional philosopher, I feel myself entitled to go a little further.

In actual fact, researchers have not waited for a philosophical justification. Peirce's thought has already been used *systematically* in recent years by Dinda Gorrée (1994; 2004) in the field of translation, by Irene Portis-Winner in anthropology (2002), by David Scott and others in visual semiotics and also in architecture by Claudio Guerri, not to mention the analysis of literary texts. 'Communication' is not restricted to some specialised field of inquiry. All human activities can be the subjects of communication, and most of them can be considered themselves as forms of communication. So the multiplication of fields of interpretants requires that any statement, be it linguistic, artistic, sociological, psychological or other, about the human situation must be examined with the minutest care, in order to assess the import of the signs which constitute it. It would appear, at least to the present writer, that this can be effected only by a sign-system taking account of the different ways in which the world is apprehended. Peirce, using Ockham's razor, supplied us with the essential categories necessary for doing this.

With the advance of the twentieth century, sign-systems reposing on a dualistic basis had obviously fallen into disrepute, giving 'semiotics' in general a bad name. As noted previously, thirdness is essential; some important, but relatively modern social concepts, such as that of 'alterity' are based on it (Deledalle 1991; Net 1994; Deledalle-Rhodes 1994a; 1997) Other sign-systems have been elaborated, some of these recognising the importance of Peircean thought. And many semioticians refer to Peirce as one of the 'founding fathers' of semiotics. Unfortunately, even though this is true, as Ketner and Kloesel (1975: 404) pointed out "some of them have hardly scratched the surface in understanding his work". One of the reasons for this is, as previously noted, that Peirce "never published one single, special, and comprehensive work on semiotic and that comments and reflections which might be regarded as useful to modern semiotics are found throughout his published articles"

(Ketner, Kloesel 1975: 400). Another reason is that “some scholars present Peirce’s work in terms of various compartments: his metaphysics, cosmology, pragmatism, ethics, semiotic, logic, mathematics, and so on” (Ketner, Kloesel 1975: 397). This may sometimes appear useful for purposes of exposition, the authors admit, but for semiotic they suggest that “this kind of approach [...] is neither fruitful nor appropriate”; for “semiotic (or logic in the broad sense) which is his omnipresent epistemology, permeates his whole scholarly output” and “when Peirce turns to consider any of the sciences other than semiotic, the consideration is undertaken using the epistemological or philosophical approach that semiotic provides” (Ketner, Kloesel 1975: 397). The authors thus conclude that “present-day students of semiotic should properly be conversant with all his philosophical work, not merely with what they consider to be a relatively restricted part which they identify as relevant to semiotics” (Ketner, Kloesel 1975: 398).

In publishing *Charles S. Peirce: Ecrits sur le signe* (Deledalle 1978), which is not, as is sometimes thought a work written by Peirce, but a selection of the most relevant of Peirce’s articles arranged logically and accompanied by commentaries and explanations, and *Théorie et pratique du signe* (Deledalle 1979), Gérard Deledalle did a great deal to remedy this situation in France and francophone countries, and by founding IRSCE at the University of Perpignan in 1974 enabled scholars to study not only Peirce’s semeiotic, but the philosophy on which it is based. Furthermore, IRSCE became a centre for international conferences, assembling Peircean specialists of different origins, mainly from Italy, Germany and the United States and South America, whose work is so well-known that it would be out of place to dwell on it here.

However, these international conferences, at which all aspects of semiotics were exposed and discussed, were not devoted exclusively to Peirce, but recognised the relevance and importance of other triadic systems, often based on Morris, as well as those stemming from the Prague school and, in some sense, parallel to Peircean semeiotic, but not in opposition to it. That of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, which is, according to Jeff Bernard “a genuine socio-semiotics” (Bernard 1992: 1639) would appear indeed to be almost complementary to Peirce’s sign-theory. This theory was exposed notably by Jeff Bernard in his paper read at the 4th Congress of IASS at Perpignan in 1989, and in

1992, Gloria Withalm, invited lecturer at IRSCE devoted her seminar to the subject. Both found an appreciative audience.

The diagrammatic representation of this system (Bernard 1992: 1640) is a pyramid, consisting of a cluster of triads, representing the semiosis of sign-production. Bernard insists, and this is important for Peircean semioticians, that

this is *not* a model from the structuralist-functionalist kind [...] but in itself already a *compositum mixtum* of many empirical and theoretic origins [...] moreover, one should not forget that we have to deal here, factually, in a reductionist way with *processes*, i.e. with concrete persons in their historicity. (Bernard 1992: 1641)

The final diagram, which accounts for further exploration and application of this theory (Bernard 1992: 1646) shows a series of inter-connecting and related triads. These diagrams call to mind the triangle usually employed to represent Peirce's triadic concept of semiosis, but they are obviously far more complex, and concern a domain not specifically treated by Peirce. That Rossi-Landi initiated his system with reference to a different field of interpretants is not so important as it might first appear. Similar semiotic analyses are the result. The essential point for a comparativist semiotician is the triadicity, the dynamism and the continuity of this system. Gérard Deledalle always insisted that the triangle, necessary in a first stage for pedagogical reasons, should not be taken to mean that a semiosis is limited. He, like Lady Welby, instead of a "vicious circle" would have preferred the diagram of an open-ended "virtuous spiral" (Welby 1983 [1903]: 37–38), representing the continuity of the process of signification, but for practical reasons this is far more complicated to reproduce.

Conclusion

At the present time, it is obvious that the static, dyadic model based on a dualistic world-view has been found unsatisfactory and is dying a natural death. After the event, even Saussure, held to be responsible for the diagram of a sign that perpetuated a dyadic model, subsequently adopted in many other semiotic fields, has been re-read and interpreted in a totally different perspective, as exposed by Simon Bouquet (1997). My only point in writing this necessarily incomplete

essay is to underline the comprehensive, dynamic and coherent nature of Peirce's system, elaborated unfortunately *before* the development of socio-semiotics, with the result that it has often been forgotten, misunderstood, or simply ignored. Peirce's thought is too often regarded by non-philosophers as a complex and complicated system of abstractions having no relation to social facts and realities. Peirce himself would have been the first to deny this. For the pragmatist, ideas and theories are not mere playthings for philosophers, but *tools* to be used for solving real problems. This is nowhere more evident than in his article on "Theory" in which he analyses the distinction made between 'theory' and 'practice', pointing out that on one hand no theory can embrace all the facts and on the other hand that all practice has a theory behind it, concluding as follows:

Perceptual judgments, [...] are, for the purpose of logical criticism, absolute facts without any admixture of theory. If a theory does not square with perceptual facts it must be changed. But the impressions of sense from which it is supposed that the percepts have been constructed are matters of theory. If the percepts were proved not to square with the impressions of sense, it would not at all be the percepts that would have to be reformed; it would be, on the contrary, that theory, that the percepts are constructed out of the impressions of sense, that would have to be modified. (Peirce 1953 [1901]: 693–694)

Far from being an abstract system removed from reality, Peirce's thought, with its social origin, pragmatic dimension and its adaptability to all types of situations and experiences would seem to recommend it on the contrary as a potential tool of great interest for sociosemioticians.

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Значение Ч. С. Пирса для социосемиотики

Ни общая философия Ч. С. Пирса, ни его специфически семиотическая часть на первый взгляд не касаются «общества» (*society*) в современном значении этого понятия. Более того, сам Пирс редко пользуется термином «общество», предпочитая термин «сообщество» (*community*), трактуемое многими его читателями довольно узко.

Следует запомнить два положения. Во-первых, эпитет «социальный» указывает тут не на объект мышления, а на результат, механизм, передачу и сохранение мыслительной работы. Во-вторых, «сообщество» не ограничивается сообществом ученых, как часто думают. Наоборот, «сообщество» указывает на идеальное общество, которое Пирс называет «ограниченным сообществом», т.е. на группу людей, которые стремятся к общей цели.

Более того, часто сомневались и в том, может ли семиотика Пирса предложить нам модель коммуникации. Цель настоящей статьи — показать, что основываясь на трех категориях Пирса, которые определяют и разграничивают модусы перцепции и презентации разных явлений, семиотика может дать всеобъемлющую модель для анализа всех типов коммуникации во всех социальных контекстах.

Наконец, Пирс был первопроходцем в данной области (как и во многих других), что означает, что многие его идеи позабыты или неправильно поняты. К тому же он был прежде всего философом и поэтому другие дисциплины отвергали его работы. Возникновение иных триадических систем (напр. Ф. Росси-Ланди) указывает на общую тенденцию семиотики отдалиться от статической диадиктической модели и повернуться к моделям, содержащим триадический процесс. Это направление, которое соотносится с пирсовской теорией, проявляется особенно ярко именно в последние годы, но, к сожалению, зачастую без философского обоснования своих предпосылок, имеющих у Пирса.

C. S. Peirce'i tähtsus sotsiosemiotika jaoks

Ei Charles Peirce'i üldine filosoofia ega ka selle spetsiifiliselt semiootiline osa ei näi esmapilgul puuduvat "ühiskonda", nii nagu seda mõistet tänapäeval üldiselt tõlgendatakse. Veelgi enam, Peirce mainib "ühiskonda" (*society*) harva, eelistades mõistet "kogukond" (*community*), millele paljud tema lugejad on andnud üsna piiratud tähenduse.

Olulised on kaks tõsiasi. Esiteks ei viita epiteet "sotsiaalne" siin mitte mõtlemise objektile, vaid mõttetöö tulemile, toimimismehhanismile, edastamisele ja säilitamisele. Teiseks ei piirdu mõiste "kogukond" käesolevas mitte teadlaste kogukonnaga, nagu vahel arvama kiputakse. Vastupidi, "kogukond" viitab ideaalsele ühikonnale, mida Peirce nimetab "piirituks kogukonnaks", st grupile inimestele, kes püüdleval ühiste eesmärkide poole.

Veelgi enam, tihti on kaheldud selles, kas Peirce'i semiootika suudab pakkuda kommunikatsiooni — sotsiaalse, dialoogilise mõtlemise ning toimimise aluse — mudelit. Käesoleva artikli eesmärgiks on näidata, et põhinedes Peirce'i kolmele kategooriale, mis määratlevad ja piiritlevad erinevate nähtuste tajumise ja esitamise mooduseid, suudab semiootika pakkuda välja kõikehõlmava mudeli igat tüüpi kommunikatsiooni analüüsimiseks kõigis sotsiaalsetes kontekstides.

Lõpeks oli Peirce antud valdkonnas (nagu paljudes teisteski) pioneer, mis tähendab, et tema ideed on tihti unustatud või valesti mõistetud. Peale selle oli ta ennekõike filosoof ja seetõttu on teised distsipliinid tema tööd eiranud. Teiste triaadiliste süsteemide tekkimine (nt F. Rossi-Landi) osutab semiootika üldisele tendentsile eemalduda staatilisest diaadilisest mudelist ja pöörduda triaadilist protsessi sisaldavate mudelite poole. See suundumus, mis on kooskõlas Peirce'i teooriaga, on just viimastel aastatel teravalt esile kerkinud, kuid kahjuks puudub tal tihti filosoofiline põhjendus oma eeldustele, mis Peirce'il on olemas.