

**ON THE RECENT GERMAN RECEPTION OF PEIRCE,
WITH EMPHASIS ON HABERMAS**

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paper prepared for delivery at
the Sixth Pan-European International Relations Conference
of the Standing Group on International Relations
of the European Consortium for Political Research
Turin, Italy
September 12-15, 2007

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Abstract

German thought has begun to address Charles Peirce only in recent decades, as such scholars as Juergen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel have begun to engage the potential of Peirce's semeiotic (theory of signs) for theory of communication. Peirce's work appears promising from this perspective because both are rooted in the concern of modern philosophy with scientific method (theory of inquiry) and with Kantian concepts, especially of transcendental argument (argument to conditions of possibility) in the place of metaphysics. Habermas views Peirce's semeiotic as theory of language and theory of inquiry treated ontologically rather than transcendentially, in part on grounds that Peirce's treatment of phenomenal appearances (firstness) re-introduces the *Ding an sich* and his concept of abductive inference also carries metaphysical consequences. These objections seem mitigated by seeing Peirce's semeiotic as not limited to language and his use of abduction as intended explicitly to avoid the transcendental analysis that he considers itself metaphysical. Nevertheless, Habermas's critique enables him to employ Peirce's concepts in his own transcendental argument to develop his concept of knowledge-constitutive interests and account of communicative action. Apel is more inclined to accept Peirce's concepts as already transcendental in intent, and uses them in support of his own corresponding argument for the a priori of communication. Both approaches, however, still use Peirce's semeiotic concepts to address social communication by way of a transcendental argument about the activity of the inquiring subject, leaving unexplored the possibility of their application to illuminate social communication as object of inquiry.

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Charles Peirce (1839-1914), surely the greatest philosopher the United States has yet produced (cf. Apel 1995: 4-5) is most widely recognized as the founder of pragmatism, the sole major philosophical tendency of American origin. Like most American philosophy, Peirce's attracted little attention in Europe until recent decades, even pragmatism being known there chiefly in the (materially different!) version of William James (Joas 1993: 95-100; Apel 1995: 4, 198 n7). Recently, however, interest in Peirce has undergone a revival on both sides of the Atlantic. This renewal of interest has focused not so much on Peirce's pragmatism as on his semeiotic (theory of meaningful signs). [2] In this respect it reflects the increasing concern of recent Western philosophy for questions of meaning, interpretation, and language, which, particularly in German thought, had already become evident in the late 19th century.

The earliest substantial treatment of Peirce in German appears to be that of von Kempfki (1952; see Apel 1995: 198 n7), whose work lies outside the scope of this essay. [3] Since then, however, the Germans who have most prominently taken up Peirce's ideas are Juergen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel. Inasmuch as both writers are distinguished by their concern with communication, it is hardly surprising that their concern for Peirce shares the semeiotic focus of other recent interest. Their approaches to questions of communication, however, and accordingly their treatments of Peirce, also reflect their grounding in the way modern German philosophy and social theory have addressed concepts of interpretation and meaning. To frame an account of the German reception of Peirce, accordingly, or at least of these central strands of it, it is useful to sketch their context in this German tradition.

Key Themes of the German Tradition

The German tradition, both in social theory and in philosophy more broadly, has been distinguished by its continuing engagement with concepts originating in Kant and Hegel, especially their engagement with the central concerns of modern philosophy generally.

“Modern” philosophy conventionally means the (Western) philosophy that arises by antithesis to the preceding scholastic philosophy. Although various terms have been used to describe this shift philosophically, it is useful for present purposes to view modern philosophy as developing with the function of defending the emerging modern conception of science. Whereas scholasticism can be said to have understood science (in harmony with the etymological meaning of the word) as knowledge, the modern perspective constructs it instead as inquiry, the search for knowledge. Viewing this reconceptualization of science as integral in this way to the genesis of modern philosophy affords a way of accounting for the characteristic centrality to that philosophy of concern for questions of method and theory of inquiry, as well as epistemology and theory of cognition. Descartes and Bacon are aptly cited as initiators of modern philosophy precisely in that they emblemize these connections, being themselves scientists as well as philosophers and, as philosophers, extensively engaging questions of method (Collins, 1998: 562-569).

This methodical turn of modern philosophy, as it may be called, also corresponds to a reconstruction in concepts of the relation of mind (or *nous* or *Geist* or spirit) to world. Whereas scholastic philosophy characteristically presumed mind to be transcendent and foundational, the context of the theory of inquiry renders problematic the relation between the forms of thought and their objects. Once mind is no longer presumed as transcendent noumenon, logos, the ground of form, it can instead be naturalized as consciousness, the subjective, the locus of ideas or of concepts, a shift initially exemplified by Locke (1995 [1693]). In this respect, one might identify the shift from scholastic to modern philosophy as that from metaphysics to method.

The work of Kant and Hegel can be seen as taking up this tension between metaphysics and method, and doing so in a way that establishes it as the fundamental problematic of modern thought in Germany. To address the concerns of modern philosophy, Kant introduces a powerful new arsenal of intellectual resources, including his appeal to “consciousness in general” and his distinction of noumenal from empirical. Of particular relevance to present concerns will be Kant’s development of the concept of transcendental argumentation, or argument from phenomena to the necessary conditions of their possibility. Kant introduces this form of argument a key element of his critical approach, intended to afford an alternative to dogmatic reliance on speculative arguments to secure foundational principles.

Explicitly in response to Locke (1998: 99-100 [1781: A VIII-X]; Rorty 1982: 82), Kant applies these resources as means toward a carefully defended rehabilitation of metaphysical concerns. Hegel promptly transgresses Kant’s cautionary limitations, proposing to endow *Geist* with foundational status by postulating the dialectically realized unity of absolute *Geist* and the objective *Geist* manifest in history (Schnaedelbach 1984: 109) as exemplified in his dictum that “the real is the rational and the rational the real.”

In their expositions, Both Kant and Hegel address the relation of mind and world chiefly in terms of the philosophical concern of the modern tradition for theory of cognition and of inquiry. They accordingly deal with *Geist* chiefly in its role as inquiring subject, rather than as

potential object of inquiry. Habermas, for example, describes Kant as using the rise of science to “investigate the transcendental conditions of knowledge as such” (1971: 91). Nevertheless, the naturalization of *Geist* implicit in modern philosophy and addressed by Kant and Hegel also first opens up the possibility of instituting a scientific inquiry into mind as an object of knowledge, a search for knowledge about the concrete appearance of mind in the world: that is, precisely, a *Geisteswissenschaft*. It is specifically this potential of the modern perspective that becomes crucial for the development of the German tradition of social theory. [4] In context of *Geisteswissenschaft*, the concept of *Geist* appears with a dual bearing: first, in identifying the object of inquiry, and second, in anchoring an organon or method for the subject engaging in this inquiry.

Despite this shift in the nature of the concern with *Geist*, however, this tradition still develops chiefly out of Kant’s and Hegel’s work. Hegel’s engagement with the development of objective *Geist* through history (Rorty 1982: xlvi n49, 46-47, 224) becomes a source of the historical school, a development well exemplified by Droysen. Droysen, himself a student of Hegel’s, turns away from the dialectic, as a method for studying the historical realization of *Geist*, in favor of *Verstehen*, in the sense it has subsequently held of interpretive understanding. Droysen also inaugurates the strategy of resorting to the already existing tradition of hermeneutics for means to achieve *Verstehen* (Schnaedelbach 1984: 43-46, 51-53). On the Kantian side, specifying the distinction between sciences of natural and of human phenomena becomes a hallmark concern of the neo-Kantians. A canonical example of this concern is the assertion by Windelband and Rickert of the interpretive act of valuation as specifically characteristic of the phenomena addressed by the human sciences. (Schnaedelbach 1984: 56-59, 107, 137, 161, 180-185; Anchor 1967: 193).

It is Dilthey, however, who definitively breaks out from the philosophy of absolute *Geist* and opens up the possibility of a *Lebensphilosophie*, or philosophy concerned with all manifestations of concrete life. Though he takes up the Kantian concept of consciousness and the Hegelian concept of objective *Geist*, he insists that both be understood not in a sense restricted to abstract cognition, but rather in the context of actual *Erlebnis* (usually rendered in English as “lived experience”), specifically including emotional and volitional aspects. (Schnaedelbach 1984: 34-37, 54, 125; Habermas 1971: 145-156; Makkreel 1998: 425-426). Dilthey’s work establishes not only the common use of the term *Geisteswissenschaft*, but also the concepts of *Erlebnis* as its proper object of study and of expression (*Ausdruck*) as the form of phenomenon proper for its observation, as well as (drawing on Droysen) of *Verstehen* as its proper method and of a generalized hermeneutics as a source of tools for that interpretive method. (Schnaedelbach 1984: 34-35, 50, 54-56, 123, 125-127; Habermas 1971: 144-159).

This concept of *Geisteswissenschaft* as interpretive science became fundamental in the subsequent development of German social thought through such figures as Weber and Schutz, thereby serving as a key element in the more general turn of Western philosophy to questions of language, meaning, and communication. The tradition of *Geisteswissenschaft*, however, never fully succeeded in constructing a well accepted method for interpretive science on the basis of

the resources available from hermeneutics, and even the concept of *Verstehen* itself appeared from an empiricist perspective to have only subjective psychological import. After the first third of the 20th century, consequently, *Geisteswissenschaft*, along with other forms of interpretive approach, experienced a relative eclipse in the social sciences in favor of empirical and logico-analytical ones, including positivist and behavioral variants.

The tradition to which Habermas and Apel respond nevertheless encompasses not only the philosophical heritage of Kant and Hegel but the theoretical heritage of German interpretive human science. Habermas, for example begins *Knowledge and Human Interests* by discussing what Hegel showed was wrong with Kant, what Marx showed was wrong with Hegel, and what he himself shows wrong with Marx (1971: 7-63). Later in the book, he gives extended treatment to Dilthey as representative of historicist approaches (140-186). The grounding of Apel in both the Kantian and interpretive traditions is sufficiently indicated by the central importance throughout his work of the concept of the a priori of communication (e.g., Apel 1972; Apel 1980: 225-300). Accordingly, the way in which Peirce relates to this entire German tradition, as well as to the overall problematic of modern philosophy, holds significant implications for the ways in which Apel and Habermas read him.

Peirce and the German Tradition

Though Peirce rarely makes explicit reference to other philosophers, the central themes of his work evidently reflect the concerns of modern philosophy for theory of inquiry and the relation of mind and world. He is especially engaged with questions of cognition and with how to vindicate the “secure path of science” (Kant 1998: 106 [1787: B VII]) by validating cognitions about the objects of knowledge. In addition, the prevalence in his thinking of Kantian and Hegelian resources for addressing these questions are well illustrated in his early essay “On a New List of Categories” (EP 1.1-10; W 2.49-59 [1867]; Apel 1995: 114). Peirce’s argument here patently draws on Kantian concepts of categorial analysis as a means of distinguishing ontological realms, although the categories he proposes, here denominated Quality, Relation, and Representation, are of very different character from Kant’s. Instead, this triadic scheme of categories seems clearly, if roughly, correlate with the three movements of the Hegelian dialectic (considered as Being, Negation, and Mediation); in later formulations, Peirce even identifies his third category (in one of its aspects) with mediation (e.g., EP 2.183, in the fourth Harvard Lecture [1903]).

Typically, however, when Peirce invokes Kantian and Hegelian resources, he does so in the service of arguments that contest both Kant and Hegel. His stance toward Kant is illustrated by his well-known “Cognition Series” of 1868-1869, in which the first paper, “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man” (EP 1.11-27, W 2.193-211 [1868]), develops, and the second, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” asserts in slightly different terms, that “We have no conception of the absolutely incognizable” (EP 1.30, W 2.213 [1868]; quoted in Habermas 1971: 98). Peirce does not explicitly develop the force of this proposition against

Kant's transcendently grounded assertion of a *Ding an sich* as the necessary condition, though itself unknowable, of the possibility of the appearance of knowable phenomena. Nevertheless, Peirce's argument in the Cognition Series indicates that he regards transcendental inference to "incognizable" entities as inadmissibly metaphysical.

Peirce's critique of Hegel is perhaps less often clearly in evidence, but is sometimes more explicit (see also Fisch 1986: 261-282). A salient example is provided by Peirce's "Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism" of 1903, which he devotes in large measure to the elaboration and defense of his triadic categorial scheme, now described as comprising "Quality, Reaction, and Representation" (EP 2.179). The third lecture, in particular, explicitly criticizes Hegel's idealism for according ontological status only to Representation, and denying it to Quality and Reaction (EP: 2.177-178).

Peirce's reliance on Kantian and Hegelian resources to criticize the conclusions of both Kant and Hegel exemplifies a similarly twofold relation to modern philosophy in general, and specifically to Descartes. Though Peirce is deeply engaged with Cartesian concerns of method and cognition, he rejects Cartesian appeals to introspection and intuition as means of pursuing them. This stance is already signaled by some of Peirce's other key theses in the Cognition Series, particularly the assertions that "We have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the internal world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts," and that "We have no power of Intuition, but every cognition is determined logically by previous cognitions" (EP 1.28-30, W 2.211-213; see EP 1.11-27, W 2.193-211 [1868]). Although the Cognition Series explicitly directs these denials against Cartesian approaches, Peirce's work implicitly deploys them also against Kantian and Hegelian appeals to intuition and introspection. He persistently contests Kantian efforts to vindicate transcendently grounded concepts and is equally unsympathetic to Hegelian appeals to phenomenology to secure a transcendent *Geist*.

The obverse of Peirce's rejection of these approaches is his self-avowal as a "scholastic realist" of an "extreme" type (Fisch 1986: 195, quoting the fourth Harvard Lecture, EP 2.180; see also EP: 2.339 [1904]). Peirce's realism is "scholastic" in the sense of espousing the reality of universals, in opposition to the "nominalism" of modern philosophy generally and of Descartes in particular. This position appears to have led many, including contemporaries such as James, to regard Peirce as an idealist. Peirce himself, however, "makes ... clear that his realism is ... opposed to idealism as well as nominalism" (Fisch, 1986: 195, citing the second Harvard Lecture, CP 5.56, EP 2.155). His recurrence to scholastic method, then, is not intended as a reversion to scholastic metaphysics; if the quarrel between the scholastics and the moderns is understood as one between metaphysics and method, Peirce must properly be understood as standing on the side of method.

Peirce's dispute, on this view, is not with the modern commitment to method, but with the method to which the moderns have typically been committed. It is through his rejection of Cartesian method for scholastic realism that Peirce arrives at his distinction of his three ontological categories. Although he identifies these most generally as firstness, secondness, and

thirdness, they may for present purposes adequately be glossed as immediacy or phenomenon, existence or relation, and interpretation or mediation. Thirdness thus appears as the category essentially related to semeiotic, so that Peirce's categorial distinctions function to enable him to affirm semeiotic realities equally with those of phenomena and of empirical existence, in a way that avoids a fall into metaphysical speculation. They support his rejection of either idealist or Cartesian attempts to ground cognitive truth, as thirdness, in immediate perception, as firstness; they also function to counter nominalist or empiricist attempts to account for processes of inference, as thirdness, reductively in terms of causal relations, as secondness.

Through its identification of thirdness with interpretation, Peirce's triadic ontology serves as the basis for the semeiotic that lies at the heart of his thought. As will be seen, Peirce himself develops his semeiotic chiefly under the influence of the modern philosophic concern for method. He elaborates his concept of semeiosis, or sign process, in such a way as to make it equivalent to processes of inference, so that his semeiotic theory is ultimately one with his theory of inference, or logic. Nevertheless, because Peirce simultaneously conceives semeiosis as the process of interpretation, it also appears to correspond essentially to the concerns comprehended under the concept of *Geisteswissenschaft*.

In this context, Peirce's rich development of his semeiotic, and especially of semeiosis as a triadic relation, would seem to promise means of addressing not only philosophic questions of *Geist* as subject of inquiry, but also those of a social science that would take *Geist*, and its functioning in concrete practice, as object of inquiry. Although Peirce maintains his standing engagement with Kantian and Hegelian concerns, however, he apparently carries out his work in complete independence of the subsequent development of interpretive approaches in German social theory; I have come across no evidence, at least, that he ever cites any of the scholars with whom the concept of *Geisteswissenschaft* may be associated.

The German Tradition and Peirce

Correspondingly, none of the Germans working on questions either of interpretation or of method in Peirce's lifetime appears to show any awareness of his work. Instead, as already suggested, through almost the first half of the 20th century, the German response to the American pragmatist tradition appear to address only its Jamesian version. One might expect, nevertheless, that the dense relations of Peirce's work to that of Kant and Hegel would tend to render it potentially accessible and attractive to German scholars already steeped in the intellectual heritage of both. Affinities of this sort might also be expected to arise because the problems with which Peirce is most centrally engaged grow ultimately out of the same tradition of modern philosophy to which the exponents of *Geisteswissenschaft* were also responding.

I can offer no conjectures about the specific courses of events through which either Apel or Habermas actually came to engage Peirce's ideas, or even whether either of the two colleagues particularly may have influenced the other in that direction. With regard to Apel, I largely lack

biographical information that would permit me to advance any suppositions. Even in the absence of specific evidence, on the other hand, one might readily suppose Habermas to have encountered reference to Peirce's work during his time in New York. In particular, it seems likely that he will have had some contact there with Dewey, who had been at Columbia until his retirement, was himself a leading exponent of pragmatism, had at one time studied with Peirce, and had himself initially been steeped in Hegelian approaches. (Bernstein, 1967: 380-381).

Both Habermas and Apel engage Peirce's work especially in relation to the central concern he shares with modern philosophy for scientific method and its validity. Both, in addition, conduct their critiques of Peirce's approach to this question in specifically Kantian terms; each, in particular, holds that Peirce's semeiotic requires to be interpreted in transcendental terms. Apel appears inclined to read Peirce's argument as already intended in a transcendental sense, and so develops the implications of Peirce's concepts in context of his own transcendently framed argument. Habermas, on the other hand, explicitly argues that the force of Peirce's semeiotic could be deployed with real effectiveness only if corrected through a transcendental turn. As against Peirce's resort to scholastic realism to avoid what he considers the metaphysical implications of Kant's transcendental approach, Habermas holds that Peirce's scholastic realism is itself metaphysical, exactly because it is achieved by ontologizing semeiosis. In this respect, the question at issue between the German tradition and Peirce, accordingly, could be framed as an argument about who is and is not being metaphysical.

In its current form, this paper does not develop the engagement between Peirce and his German exegetes in as systematic a way as originally intended. Its chief emphasis is on distinguishing the strands of Habermas's critique of Peirce in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971). This complications of this component, along with unavoidable circumstances of composition, precluded at this point either any detailed engagement with Habermas's complementary treatment in *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (1995) or more than a general sketch of the account developed by Apel in his several works on Peirce and implicit throughout the body of his work. In its present state, as a result, the treatment below fails at many points to be equal to the subtlety of the arguments it addresses. The considerations offered may nevertheless at least serve to identify some of the prospects that Peirce's concepts and contemporary German reflections on them may offer for the constructive furtherance of interpretive social theory, and of the direction of the further inquiry needed for their development in this direction.

Transcendental or Ontological Semeiotic?

Habermas makes Peirce a focus, indeed the fulcrum, of his early development of the concept of communicative action in *Knowledge and Human Interests*. After introducing the self-reflection of science through a discussion of the early positivism of Comte and Mach, Habermas uses two chapters on Peirce to mediate the transition from positivism to the interpretive theory of Dilthey. This seems a promising context in which to introduce the application of semeiotic ideas for the development of interpretive theory, and Habermas in fact uses these chapters to introduce

several of his own key concepts that structure the book as a whole. Otherwise, however, although references to Peirce appear throughout Habermas's later work, so far as I am aware he recurs to an extended discussion only in his essay on "Peirce and Communication," which itself was added only for the (otherwise abbreviated!) English edition of *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (1995: iv).

This circumstance appears to reflect the judgment Habermas expresses in both works that Peirce's doctrines ultimately fail to afford an adequate grasp of communicative phenomena, which is to say, interpretive phenomena, which is to say semeiotic phenomena. In *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, Habermas points out that, although Peirce is "convinced of the semiotic structure of thought," he "does not often speak of communication" (1993: 88, citing CP 5.421). Habermas makes the same point in different terms in *Knowledge and Human Interests* when he says that Peirce persistently declines to develop the implications of his triadic concept of semeiosis for the actual functioning of communicative processes in social relations among plural individuals (137-139). It might accordingly be said that for Habermas, the interesting question about Peirce is how a philosophy so centrally concerned with semeiotic can so signally fail in addressing semeiosis itself.

Knowledge and Human Interests introduces Peirce's thinking as an attempt to account for how method can secure scientific progress in a way that avoids the foundationalism inherent in the positivist attempt ("objectivist," for Habermas; "nominalist," for Peirce) to ground knowledge in a "world of facts" (96) that are themselves irrefragable (91). Yet Habermas concludes that ultimately, "a hidden but unyielding positivism finally prevails" (135) in Peirce's thought, because he "tacitly abandons the transcendental approach and restores ontology" (111). Habermas argues that this result arises because Peirce's analysis turns too quickly from the "logic of inquiry" to the "logic of language" (132).

Habermas shows that Peirce conceives reality as whatever can be represented in a true proposition (98, 131). Peirce uses this concept to replace the Kant's constitutive determinations of a generalized transcendental consciousness with the object as it can come to be known by the community of investigators (101, 94-96, quoting CP 7:50). Correlatively, Peirce conceives cognition as that which "find[s] uncompelled ... intersubjective recognition" (92) and scientific method as the means for "arriving at [such] an uncompelled ... consensus" (91). Accordingly, Habermas points out, reality on this account "remains a transcendental concept" (93), because the process of inquiry is the condition of its possibility.

Habermas acutely notes that these moves give Peirce's logic of inquiry a place "between formal and transcendental logic." Though it "falls short of the cognitively constitutive determinations of a transcendental consciousness as such," it offers methodological "rules according to which true statements about reality are obtained" (94; 133-134). He will later extend this point by arguing that his "knowledge-constitutive interests" in general have the status of "neither a merely empirical nor a pure interest" (134). More broadly, Habermas appears to draw on this understanding of Peirce in his more recent formulations about the "unforced force"

of reason in an ideal communication situation as a principle with more than empirical though not strictly transcendental status.

Peirce himself uses his concept of inquiry as the basis for his fallibilism. It enables him to assert method as guaranteeing the ultimate achievement of true cognitions and at the same time to avoid requiring the truth of any specific proposition asserted today (91-92). Habermas counters, however, that Peirce can rely on method to guarantee that “future processes of inquiry will converge upon a state ... in which all prevailing views will be true propositions” (92, with citations to CP 7.319 and CP 7.12) only if he can claim “definite validity in the present for *one* belief, namely the assumption of actual progress in scientific knowledge.” (Habermas 1971: 92)

Habermas concludes that Peirce should proceed to develop his logic of inquiry by a transcendental argument that would “demonstrate methodologically the conditions of possibility of institutionalized cognitive progress” (93). Instead, however, Peirce attempts to secure the possibility of true cognitions by turning to the “logic of language” embodied in his semeiotic. Proceeding from the principle that reality is defined by true statements, he attempts to explain the structure of reality as a correlate of the structure of language (101-2). It is this move to invoke the “logic of language” that Habermas criticizes as a reversion to ontology.

Theory of Language or Semeiotic?

Peirce’s concept of reality implies that cognition it always has a discursive character (97): “even ... perception is the product of ... an implicit inference,” (97, 331n12, quoting from the Cognition Series at CP 5.260, EP 1:25, W 2.209 [1868]) and occurs “already ... in the dimension of semeiotic representation” (Habermas 1971: 98). As a result, “we cannot meaningfully conceive of anything like uninterpreted facts” (97). This principle comports with Peirce’s denial, in the Cognition Series, of intuitive knowledge of the immediate (97-98, where Habermas cites instead to CP 5.265). Habermas points out, however, that to reduce reality entirely to the correlate of true propositions would accomplish a “total mediation of the empirical basis;” in idealist fashion, it would “absorb the facticity of reality ... into ... a self-contained thought process.” (Habermas 1971: 97-98). To avoid this result, “Peirce must assert the independence of singular ... stimuli ... unmediated by symbols” (98).

For this purpose Peirce invokes his concept of firstness, which Habermas presents as referring to “the qualitative immediacy of singular sensations and feelings.” (101) According to Habermas, however, Peirce allows reality only to “the realm of facts that in principle can be represented” (98). His discursive conception of reality and his principle that “no determination that holds only privately for an individual subject can refer to what is real” (100) require him to deny reality to the “immediate ... non-intentional content of experience” that constitutes firstness. (104; 99-100). At the same time, Peirce’s concept of cognition requires him also to assert that “all our statements about ‘the real’ are in some sense grounded” (98) in firstness. For this reason, Habermas holds, Peirce’s concept of firstness “recapitulates the problems of the ‘thing in itself’

at the phenomenal level” (98; 101).

Habermas ascribes this failure to Peirce’s ontological interpretation of his theory of language. Citing the Cognition Series, Habermas argues that Peirce’s ontology presents firstness, in the form of quality, as “a third category alongside the representative and denotative function of symbolically mediated language” (102-103, quoting Peirce at CP 5.290, EP 1.42, W2.227 [1868]). Habermas, however, objects that “quality is a third, independent feature of the linguistic structure, distinct from representation and denotation[,] only if it refers as such to the material substratum of the sign.(1971: 103-104).” To elaborate this argument, Habermas invokes what is perhaps Peirce’s best known trichotomy, of icon, image, and symbol. In Peirce’s formulation, a *symbol* is a sign that stands for its object by convention; inasmuch as this relation entails an element of generality, the symbol represents its object through a relation of thirdness. An *index* can stand for its object because of an actually existent relation, such as a causal one, and so can be taken as referring to that object through a relation of secondness. An *icon* stands for its object by resembling it, or sharing form with it, and so manifests a quality that is a firstness (EP 2.291-292, CP 2.242 [1903], Peirce 1955 [1940]: 102-103).

In these terms, Habermas contends, the iconic quality of a linguistic sign could encompass only its immediately experienceable qualities, which form no part of its function as a linguistic representation. (1971: 104) If, on the other hand, the iconic qualities of a sign embody a “copy function,” they form “only a special case of the representative function” (104). Habermas accordingly argues that Peirce’s model can show

how the pre-symbolic influx of information content enters into the symbolically mediated process of reasoning only if we view the quality of a sign not only as its substratum but also as a copy determined by the relation of resemblance ... [But] psychic events would in this way have merely acquired by subreption just what they lack — symbolic content. ... [Peirce’s] concept of quality is supposed to accomplish two incompatible purposes: to account for the moment of immediacy in singular sensations on the one hand yet include an elementary representative function on the other. ... Either quality corresponds to the substratum of the sign and is not iconic, or it retains its image character, in which case it must be classified as a representative symbol and is no longer immediate. (106)

This phase of Habermas’s argument seems to depend on a certain misapprehension of the intent of Peirce’s semeiotic ontology. Peirce cannot intend to deny reality to firstness, for the Harvard Lectures clearly establish, if nothing else would, that the basic intent of his ontological scheme is to affirm reality of all three of his categories. What Peirce denies of firstness is, rather, existence. Peirce conceives existence as the capacity to enter into relations, which makes it the specific mode of reality characteristic of secondness. The mode of reality characteristic of firstness is that of being an appearance or phenomenon. (Thirdness, finally, is characterized by having reality in its instantiations.)

Firstness accordingly possesses immediacy, but, by the same token, in the strictest sense, is capable of “representing” only itself; here, representation “degenerates” into presentation. On this view, it would seem clearly Peirce’s intent to assert that the specific quality, or suchness, exhibited by a phenomenon (a firstness) differs categorically, in the most exact sense of that term, from the nature of “a quality” that is abstracted and synthesized in a concept, which would indeed be a thirdness. Accordingly, although Peirce’s scheme permits “cognition” of firstness only in the degenerate form of apprehension of the appearance itself, *qua* appearance, it appears well designed specifically to avoid requiring the imputation of any incognizable behind or beyond what is experienced in the phenomenon itself, any more than there is “behind” an object materially related to another object, or “beyond” the state of affairs represented in a proposition.

Habermas also appears to err in taking Peirce’s semeiotic as essentially a theory of language, rather than of sign functioning more generally. Contrary to Habermas’s interpretation of “representation,” Peirce asserts that all signs, and not only linguistic ones, function to represent something. They do so because they are, as signs, part of a semeiotic process; and in this sense participate in thirdness. Any semeiosis involves an inherently triadic relationship of a sign (a First) that represents an object (a Second) for an interpretant (a Third). Conversely, any sign, and not only an icon, is a *First* within the process of representation, in that it is the immediately apprehended element in the process. Insofar as it is functioning as a sign, however, it is not a *firstness*, because it is being apprehended not as a pure appearance or phenomenon, but rather in its relation to the other elements in the sign process. It is by taking Firsts not as firstnesses, but as *relata*, that semeiotic processes interpret them as existing things, related to other existing things.

In classing signs as icon, index, or symbol, in other words, Peirce is no longer distinguishing their ontological status as firstnesses, secondnesses, or thirdnesses. Instead, he is developing an application of these ontological categories to the context of a specific element of sign functioning, namely the way in which signs carry out the (triadic) relation of representing. One possibility is that the interpretant interprets the sign as representing itself, in which case the object and the interpretant each collapse into the sign itself and the sign collapses into its experiential quality. Alternatively, the sign could be interpreted as representing something else: either as an icon of other similar things, or as an index of things existentially related to it, or as a symbol of something related to it only through being posited by the interpretant as so related.

Under this scheme, a word, as a *linguistic* sign, is a symbol, representing its object for its interpretant by convention. Its “material substratum” is relevant to the semeiotic functioning of the word only as the quality by which it may be apprehended as (an instance or token of) that word. A word, even the same instance of the same word, might also be apprehended as an icon, but this would be a different semeiotic act, in which the word would be apprehended as representing only the experienceable form that it bears, or its “material substratum.” In this latter semeiosis it would be functioning not as a *linguistic* sign (a symbol), but only as an icon. No occasion arises to conflate the quality of the sign itself, presented iconically as a phenomenon in a (semeiotic) act of perception, with the quality it may represent, in its use as a symbol in a

(semeiotic) linguistic act.

These reflections suggest that, unless we accept Habermas's presumption that Peirce's semeiosis is grounded in a "logic of language," it is not clear either that Peirce's general concept of firstness reproduces the problem of the *Ding an sich*, how his concept of quality as firstness is equivocal, or why the failure of iconic relations to contribute to linguistic representation is damaging. On this account, it does not appear that Peirce's semeiotic is properly interpreted as reintroducing ontology in an inadmissibly metaphysical sense. Yet Habermas's critique in these terms seems essential to his rejection of Peirce's semeiotic as means to address the concrete processes of communication, discourse, and interpretation with which an interpretive social science would be concerned. On the other hand, it must be admitted that Peirce himself nowhere explicates the structure of his semeiotic in this direction; indeed, as already observed, Habermas points out that Peirce persistently declines to do so. Perhaps, therefore, the suggested defense of Peirce's semeiotic can be advanced only as a potentially useful "misreading" in Harold Bloom's sense.

Transcendental Reason or Abductive Inference?

Habermas implies that Peirce's failure to develop any account of social communication arises because his focus on theory of inquiry leads him instead in the direction of ontology. At the same time, Habermas himself proposes to develop the understanding of communicative action not by a turn away from the theory of inquiry, but rather by developing it instead through a transcendental argument (1971: 118-120). In this respect he, like Peirce, continues to take a philosophical approach grounded in the role of the inquiring subject, rather than a social theoretical one grounded in interpretive process as object of inquiry. None of the considerations advanced in the previous section, on the other hand, carry any tendency to vitiate this proposal of Habermas's. The critique offered impeaches, at most, no more than the word "only" in his conclusion that "non-intentional contents of experience are converted into symbolic representations owing to a synthesis that a consistent pragmatism can develop only in the framework of a logic of the process of inquiry" (102). Habermas accordingly turns to a consideration of the possibility of applying Peirce's theory of inquiry to this end.

As already noted, Peirce's theory of inquiry is essentially his theory of inference. This theory rests on a distinction among three (of course) forms of inference: the classical forms of deduction and induction, plus what Peirce calls abduction or hypothesis. Whereas deduction draws necessary inferences, especially inferences from general propositions to particular cases, inductive conclusions represent generalizations from particular cases. As for abduction, Peirce describes it as invoking a general proposition to explain a particular case. (EP 1.186-199, W 2.323-338, CP 2.619-644). To take the canonical example, we may deduce from "Socrates is a man" and "All men are mortal" that "Socrates is mortal." By induction, on the other hand, we might conclude from "Socrates is a man" and "Socrates is mortal" that "All men are mortal." Abductively, however, we might explain why "Socrates is mortal" by appealing to the principle

that “All men are mortal” to reach the explanatory hypothesis that “Socrates is a man.”

Habermas accordingly says that for Peirce, “deduction proves that something must behave in a certain manner; induction that something does in fact behave in a certain manner, and abduction that something probably will behave in a certain manner” (Habermas 1971: 113). This seems imprecise; Peirce’s actual view is that deduction is the form of reasoning that draws necessary conclusions, induction the form that reaches ones that are (to some degree) probable, and abduction the form that can arrive only at statements of the possible (EP 1.186-199, W 2.323-338, CP 2.619-644). Under either formulation, however, only deduction is necessary reasoning, for it concludes to no more than is contained in the premises, whereas the other two forms of inference both conclude to more than what the premises state. Peirce accordingly calls induction and abduction the “ampliative” forms of inference; identifying them with synthetic judgments (EP 2:218, CP 2.640 [1903]; EP 1.300 [1892]); Habermas expresses the point by noting that both forms of synthetic reasoning are not analytically “cogent” (Habermas 1971: 114-116). [5] In contemporary terms, correspondingly, strictly speaking only deduction would be included in logic; induction and abduction might more readily be considered as encompassed in method.

The essence of Peirce’s account of inquiry is that, observing a phenomenon, we seek a general principle that would explain it. This abductively reached explanation, however, is only possibly true. We therefore make deductions from it about what would be observed if the hypothesis were true, which we then test by observing suitable instances and generalizing inductively from them (Habermas 1971: 113-116). In these terms, the question of method that is so central to modern philosophy presents itself to Peirce as: how is it that these logical rules can guarantee cognitive progress? (116)

Habermas credits Peirce with seeing that the validity of the ampliative forms of inference “can neither be demonstrated through formal logic nor explained empirically (or ontologically ...),” but is instead “a transcendental-logical question about the conditions of possible knowledge” (116-117). For, if Peirce’s rules of inference are “the sole guarantee of obtaining true statements, then these rules have the function of conditions of possible objects of experience” (119). That is, “if we comprehend ... the process of inference as the system of reference for the possible objectification of reality, then the validity of its logical rules can be none other than the validity of transcendental rules” (118). The transcendental argument on which Peirce implicitly relies, however, is that unless synthetic inferences are valid, no process of inquiry could be possible in the first place; the existence of anything real is the condition of possibility of synthetic knowledge (117, citing CP 5.351). Habermas rejects this argument as circular, on grounds that he derived his “concept of reality ... from the logic of inquiry” in the first place: “if reality is constituted in terms of the rules [of] inquiry ... we cannot refer to this reality to justify the validity of the rules” (Habermas 1971: 118).

Although, on this point, Habermas’s critique appears essentially successful, it again seems to rely on an imperfect appreciation of the force of Peirce’s semeiotic concepts. On this

point the implicit dispute alluded to earlier between Habermas and Peirce, over which is being metaphysical, comes to a head. Habermas takes Peirce's ontologized semeiotic as a relapse into foundationalism from the transcendental form of argument that Kant develops exactly for the purpose of avoiding this sort of metaphysical dogmatism. Conversely, however, as Habermas does not appear to note, Peirce regards transcendental argumentation as itself metaphysical, and apparently deploys his concept of abduction precisely as a substitute for such an appeal.

Peirce's apparent objection to transcendental argumentation is not that it purports to establish the conditions of possibility of phenomena, but that it treats those conditions of possibility as separate from the knowable phenomena themselves, and instead as attributable to the presupposed incognizable *Ding an sich*. Peirce's abduction has a form similar to transcendental argumentation, in that it infers to a possible explanatory principle, but it differs in purporting to conclude only to the possible validity of that explanation. Peirce's concept of abduction is consistent with his proclaimed fallibilism, in that it reaches only a conjecture that requires to be tested by further inferences drawn from it and by observations relative thereto. Implicitly, Peirce seems to consider a transcendental argument to be an abductive argument confusedly clothed in metaphysical trappings. Conversely, he deploys his concept of abduction as a means to fulfill the functions of a transcendental argument while naturalizing its metaphysical implications.

Recognition of this function of abduction might further call into question Habermas's conclusion that Peirce's semeiotic must entail an illegitimate ontologization of a "theory of language." On the other hand, again, in no place of which I am aware does Peirce explicitly develop the implications of abductive inference in a way that would overtly contradict Habermas's imputation to him of objectivizing or foundationalist intentions. The view of abduction just suggested may accordingly support no more than a contention that it may be possible to draw on Peirce's semeiotic in a way that would permit its fruitful application to social action.

In this instance again, as well, any difficulties in Habermas's critique do not detract from the force of the alternative approach that he develops in response. The transcendental account that he develops as an alternative to Peirce's proceeds from Peirce's declaration, in the Harvard Lectures, that:

"Pragmatism is the principle that every theoretical judgment expressible is a sentence in the indicative mood ... whose ... meaning ... lies in its tendency to enforce a corresponding practical maxim expressible as a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood." (Habermas 1971: 120; CP 5:18, EP 2.134-135 [1903]).

Habermas elaborates:

An experiment ... can be expressed *grammatically* in the form of a conditional

prediction that can be deduced from a general lawlike hypothesis with the aid of initial conditions; at the same time it can be exhibited *factually* in the form of an instrumental action that manipulates the initial conditions such that the success of the operation can be controlled by means of the occurrence of the effect” (Habermas 1971: 126-127).

This account implies that, to the extent that conditions can be manipulated, meaning “is defined with reference to possible technical control of the connection of empirical variables” (121), and inquiry itself can be regarded as constituted in terms of possible technical control (130). Habermas further points out that this view makes “the transcendental conditions of possible experience ... identical with the conditions of possible experimentation” (126). In this sense Peirce’s theory implies an objectification of reality itself “from the point of view of possible technical control” (130; 134-136)

Habermas is accordingly able to use the implications of this crucial formulation of Peirce’s to establish that the justification of ampliative inference occurs through its function in “the behavioral system of purposive-rational, feedback-controlled, and habitual behavior” (Habermas 1971: 120). He develops the significance of this point through a transcendental argument, presenting this “behavioral system of instrumental action” (119-139 *passim*) as the transcendental condition under which the question of the possible validity of ampliative inference can at all arise. It is this behavioral system itself that “implies the conditions of ... validity” of the modes of inference (121; 125, 129). The force of this transcendental argument is that it permits the validity of ampliative inference to be justified methodologically, even though it cannot be logically demonstrated (128-129).

Habermas proceeds to use the implications he draws from Peirce’s theory of inquiry as crucial leverage to arrive at concepts fundamental to his own further exposition. It is this observation that enables him to elaborate the concept of a cognitive “interest in possible technical control,” (135, emphasis deleted) defined in relation to practical success (134), through which the process of inquiry specifies the objects of investigation. Habermas is able to use the specification of this cognitive interest to introduce, and as a first example of, the concept of “knowledge-constitutive interests” that structures *Knowledge and Human Interests* as a whole (134-135).

Habermas on Peirce

Habermas is also able to use the contrast between Peirce’s theory of inquiry and his own development of it to show how it is that, although Peirce himself is “convinced of the semiotic structure of thought” he “does not often speak of communication” (1993: 88, citing CP 5.421), and indeed persistently refuses to apply his semeiotic to the analysis of communication itself. As Habermas points out, Peirce’s theory not only offers an explication of the logic of scientific inquiry, but also presents inquiry in general as “the reflected form (Reflexionsform) of [a] pre-

scientific learning process that is *already posited* with instrumental action *as such*” (1971: 124). In the Cognition Series, indeed, Peirce asserts that “the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY” (EP 1.52, W 2.239 [1868]), and, as Apel points out, Peirce recognizes that this community must be a real one rather than an abstract presupposition (1995: 29). Yet because Peirce refrains from transcendental analysis, he is unable to arrive at the concept of a cognitive interest that defines inquiry.

More broadly, this position leaves Peirce no means for reflecting on the conditions of possibility of semeiosis as a social activity, in particular on the social activities that make up the process of inquiry, by which a community of investigators would be constituted. As a result, Peirce focuses instead on the abstract form of the processes of inference of which inquiry is composed. Rather than considering what the process of inquiry must imply about the inquiring subject, Peirce restricts himself to considering the way that process constitutes the object of inquiry. Habermas addresses the implications of this approach by bringing to bear his own distinction between monologic and dialogic approaches to interpretive phenomena. Peirce’s focus on inference in its general form involves an essentially monologic concept of semeiosis: “Insofar as the employment of symbols is constitutive for the behavioral system of instrumental action, the use of language involved is monologic” (Habermas 1971: 137).

By contrast, Habermas goes on to argue, “had Peirce taken seriously the communication of investigators as a transcendental subject forming itself under empirical conditions” (137), he would have had to note that “the subject of the process of inquiry forms itself on the foundation of an intersubjectivity” (139) that “arises from symbolic interaction between social subjects who reciprocally know and recognize each other” (137). Further, this “communication of investigators requires the use of language that is not confined to the limits of technical control” (137; 139). As a result, “the *ground of intersubjectivity* in which investigators are always already situated is not the ground of purposive-rational action” (137). Through this argument Habermas employs his own transcendental analysis of Peirce’s theory of inquiry to introduce his crucial concept of “*communicative action* [as] a system of reference that cannot be reduced to the framework of *instrumental action*” (137).

Habermas appears correct that the difficulties in Peirce’s theory of inquiry are related to his development of his semeiotic in ontological terms, rather than by pursuing a transcendental analysis of the conditions of possibility of semeiosis. His implication also seems to be correct that Peirce’s failure to develop the potential implications of his semeiosis in this direction flows from the focus of his theory of inquiry on cognition of the objects of natural rather than human science. Peirce may choose this course in part as a result of his adoption of the canonical concern of modern philosophy for method in relation to the objects of natural rather than human science.

The ontological approach, in any case, leads Peirce to frame his theories of inference and cognition in terms of the object of inquiry rather than as reflections on the activity of the subject

engaging in inquiry. It accordingly brings him to take the object of inquiry as being constituted as the correlate of the process of inquiry. In addition, however, it impels him to develop his semeiotic in a way that does not treat the activities that make up the process of inquiry, themselves, as social processes of communication, but instead treats them reductively, as events that would be investigated only as additional objects of inquiry (Habermas 1971: 135-136). In this sense, it might be said, Peirce ends by attributing to the object of inquiry exactly the semeiotic functioning that his semeiotic theory might have attributed to the activity of the inquiring subject. Habermas accordingly argues that “pragmatism, which disclosed the behavioral system of instrumental action as a constitutive structure, also reobliterated the decisive distinction between the facts that are constituted and the methodological framework within which reality is objectified for the subject of inquiry” (136). Peirce’s ontologized semeiotic vitiates the initial pragmatist insight in accordance with which the reality which is the object of cognition is constituted in relation to (human) semeiotic action.

Habermas presents all these moves as components of Peirce’s adoption of an objectified conception of reality. It is this objectivism, “scarcely distinguishable from Mach’s doctrine,” in which Habermas considers that Peirce’s “concealed positivism” consists (136). It ultimately returns Peirce from a fundamentally pragmatist to a “contemplative concept of knowledge” (132) and, correspondingly, to a scholastic realism interpreted according to the logic of language (133, 136). Ultimately, this approach will lead Peirce toward his “late ontology,” which conceptualizes the general principles embodied in natural laws as habits evolved by nature itself, viewed as an “absolute subject” (Habermas 1971: 107, 111, 132; cf. Apel 1995: 134-157). In this way, Habermas’s description of the course of Peirce’s thought enables him to characterize it simultaneously as positivist and scholastic.

In this analysis, at least, Habermas appears to identify an actual and fundamental shortcoming of Peirce’s work. Evidently under the influence of the problematic of scientific method in modern philosophy, Peirce develops his semeiotic in a way that, as Habermas shows, affords no way to treat individual semeiotic acts, such as acts of inference and communication, as instantiations of thirdness, but can address them only as instances of secondness. Habermas’s solution is to enable inferences from Peirce’s semeiotic concepts to the subject of semeiosis, rather than to its object, by employing a transcendental form of argument. Habermas’s subsequent work demonstrates the potential fruitfulness of this approach in enabling engagement with communicative action.

Notably, however, the transcendental grounding of Habermas’s approach to communicative action means that he still addresses it while retaining the philosophic context of the theory of inquiry as its basis. Such an approach still does not directly take up the aspiration of *Geisteswissenschaft* to develop methods for addressing interpretive processes appropriate from the side of the object of inquiry. In addition, the successes of Habermas’s own argument are not conclusive against the possibility of doing so, nor the success of his critique of Peirce against doing so by applying the concepts of Peirce’s semeiotic. It still represents an achievement of that semeiotic to disclose the categorial distinction among phenomenon or appearance, existence or

capacity for relation, and representation or interpretation, and to develop powerful concepts for addressing their implications. Nevertheless, if a semeiotic were to be elaborated adequate to the understanding of interpretive and communicative processes, it would have to go beyond Peirce's own development to reach a more responsive account of thirdness, its mode of reality and its instantiation.

Some Remarks on Apel

Karl-Otto Apel's consideration of Peirce deserves a fuller treatment than it has proved possible for me to offer in the present context. His engagement with Peirce has been much more persistent than that of Habermas, notably in his editing of a two-volume German edition of Peirce's writings (1967, 1970) for which he wrote introductions that were later also published separately as an intellectual biography of *Charles S. Peirce: From Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* (1995 [1975, 1981]). Throughout his work, he has also drawn on some of Peirce's principles in ways fundamental for his own arguments, so that his writings on Peirce are much more extensive than those of Habermas. The following remarks, accordingly, are intended at least to indicate the direction that might be taken by a treatment adequate to illuminate the German reception of Peirce more generally.

In company with the other recent interest in Peirce described at the outset, Apel's has focused on Peirce's semeiotic more than on his pragmatism *per se*, or, for that matter, on his ontological categories. Although, for example, *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* frequently makes reference to Peirce's "pragmatic maxim" (1995: e.g., 11, 12, 27, 40, 47, 55, 58, 61, 86-8, 91, 97, 160, 162-4, 167-9, 188), the book quotes its canonical formulation in "Illustrations of the Logic of Science" (EP 1: 132, W 3:266, CP 5.402 [1878]) only to call it "neither the clearest nor the most informative" (Apel 1995: 74); in other passages, Apel sets forth versions that he considers better to embody the maxim's intent (Apel 1995: 64, citing CP 5.375n; 70, citing CP 5.398). Similarly, although Apel provides a basic sketch of Peirce's categories early in the same book (1995: 22-23), he does not appear comfortable with them, even referring at one point, if recollection serves, to "Peirce's difficult concept of firstness." Instead, Apel's subsequent exposition in *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* of Peirce's ideas alludes to his categories chiefly in the course of discussion of other points; often in the form only of parentheticals (1995: e.g., 67, 74, 109, 153, 165, 189).

That Apel's engagement with Peirce addresses instead chiefly his semeiotic evidently reflects Apel's own core interests in questions related to understanding (in the specific sense of *Verstehen*) and communication. This focus of Apel's concerns is reflected in passages in the concluding chapter of *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* that explicitly address the potential application of Peirce's ideas to the concerns of the tradition of *Geisteswissenschaft* (1995: 194, see also 29). Apel also develops this connection in a number of his other works, notably through his engagement with the "explanation-understanding controversy" in *Understanding and Explanation* (1984). As the subject of this work illustrates, nevertheless, Apel's concern with

Peirce, like that of Habermas, remains couched chiefly in the explicit context of the concern of modern philosophy for questions of method, specifically as developed in the German philosophical tradition from Kant onwards. This standpoint is also reflected in the title of Apel's book *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy* (1980), and is developed more substantively in the course his early chapter in *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* on "Peirce and the Tradition" (1995: 19-53).

Further, the chief context in which Apel uses Peirce's concepts to illuminate questions of social communication is that of exploring implications of Peirce's theory of inquiry for the functioning of the community of inquirers. Apel addresses this task in detail in his essay on "The Communication Community as the Transcendental Presupposition for the Social Sciences" in *Transformation of Philosophy* (136-179), as well as in *Understanding and Explanation*. In this respect Apel, like Habermas, orients his use of Peirce for the understanding of interpretive phenomena in terms of the role of the inquiring subject, a question rooted in the concern for scientific method, rather than in terms of the concern, which might be presumed characteristic of *Geisteswissenschaft* proper, for social communication as a potential object of inquiry.

In at least one significant respect, however, Apel's application of Peirce's ideas diverges from that of Habermas. Apel appears not to share Habermas's view that the way Peirce develops his semeiotic involves concealed ontological implications that require to be corrected by a transcendental turn. Apel instead appears ready to regard Peirce's argument as already intended to be transcendental, or at least to serve the same function as Kant's transcendental argument of serving as a substitute for metaphysical approaches. He pursues this perspective explicitly in an early essay of *Transformation of Philosophy* entitled "From Kant to Peirce: the Semiotical Transformation of Transcendental Logic" (1980: 77-93), and *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* presents Peirce as replacing "the Kantian alternative of synthetic a priori propositions and synthetic a posteriori propositions with the fruitful circle of the correlative presuppositions of hypothesis (abductive inference) and experimental confirmation (inductive inferential procedure)" (1995: 36).

This perspective enables Apel to regard Peirce's categories not as a form of ontological objectification of processes of inquiry, but instead as transcendental concepts (1995: 22-23), arguing in *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism* that Peirce's semiotic ontology arises through "his meaning-critical revision of Kantian transcendental philosophy" (105). At other points, Apel also asserts the correspondence of Peirce's abductive inference with Kant's synthetic judgement a priori (39, 113). Most significantly, Apel's account of the last paper in the Cognition Series, "The Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic: Further Consequences of Four Incapacities" (EP1:56-82; W2:242-272, CP5:318-357 [1869]) describes its arguments as providing a transcendental justification of the validity of induction, and of inference in general (Apel 1995: 48-53).

This acceptance of Peirce's semeiotic as essentially already transcendental in character is evidently fundamental to Apel's conception of his own project, as a transcendental pragmatic.

This project, reflected in the subtitle of *Understanding and Explanation*, is intended to afford a methodological and conceptual framework for the human sciences or *Geisteswissenschaften*. Apel's development of his own contribution to this methodological problematic such books as *Transformation of Philosophy* and *Understanding and Explanation* rests explicitly at several points on Peirce's work, and would be a focus of a more comprehensive investigation of Apel's contribution to the German reception of Peirce.

Conditionality, Abduction, and Semeiosis

In default of such an examination, one further element of Apel's account of Peirce may be noted. Throughout *Pragmatism to Pragmaticism*, in particular, Apel recurrently draws attention to Peirce's characteristic emphasis on the formulation of propositions in the conditional tense (1995: e.g., 74-75, 96). A key instance is presented by Apel's discussion of how Peirce handles his "diamond example," especially in his late essay on "Issues of Pragmaticism" (CP 5:438-463, EP 2:346-359 [1905]), correcting his own contrary treatment in his better known early "Illustrations of the Logic of Science" (EP 1:132, W3:266-267, CP 5:403 [1896], quoted in Apel 1995: 76). Peirce's late treatment argues that the hardness of a diamond is constituted not by whether any attempt to scratch it is actually made, but by whether any such attempt, if made, *would be* successful (CP 5:453, quoted in Apel 1995: 185). On this view, "the reality of a diamond's hardness" (an abstracted quality and thus a matter of thirdness) must "consist in ... the truth of a general conditional proposition" (CP 5:457, quoted in Habermas 1971: 131).

Habermas is aware of this emphasis in Peirce's thought; *Knowledge and Human Interests* includes its own discussion of some of Peirce's treatments of the diamond example (1971: 129-130, citing CP 5.457 and 7.340). Habermas also addresses this theme by noting that Peirce draws from his conception of reality as what can be represented in a true proposition the implication that the real object is the object as it *would be* known at the "end of inquiry" (Habermas 1971: 96). As noted earlier, Habermas also quotes the key assertion of the Harvard Lectures that pragmatism proposes to interpret any "theoretical judgment ... in the indicative mood" in terms of "a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood" (CP 5:18, EP 2.134-135 [1903]). Habermas acutely notes that this emphasis on the conditional gives Peirce's logic of inquiry a place "between formal and transcendental logic." Though it "falls short of the cognitively constitutive determinations of a transcendental consciousness as such," (Habermas 1971: 133-134) it offers methodological "rules according to which true statements about reality are obtained" (94). Habermas's subsequent work appears to draw on this understanding of Peirce in his formulations about the "unforced force" of reason in an ideal communication situation as a principle with more than empirical though not strictly transcendental status.

Through his persistent recurrence to this feature of Peirce's thought, however, Apel's discussion draws out more clearly the way in which Peirce's move to the conditional from the absolute is fundamental to his overall intent. Peirce invokes the concept of conditionality as a

crucial component of his resources for replacing appeals to absolute or metaphysical principles. In particular, he uses the appeal to reality, conceived, in this way, as conditional, as a replacement for appeal to the incognizable transcendental *Ding an sich*. In the same way, the general propositions that abductive inference offers as possible explanations for observed phenomena are appropriately couched as statements that, *if* the principle invoked as an explanatory hypothesis is correct, it *would* explain the observed phenomena. It is just in virtue of this conditional character of abduction that Peirce can employ this form of inference, in the way he proposes, as a functional equivalent for transcendental argument. That Peirce relies on the conditional in these ways again seems potentially to cast doubt on Habermas's imputation to him of sharing the ontologically objectifying intent of a positivism.

Finally, a conditional or *would-be* character is also inherent in Peirce's fundamental concept of a sign, which he states in "Sundry Logical Conceptions" as: "a First which stands in such a ... relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it itself stands to the same Object" (EP 2:272-273, CP 2.274 [1903]). Under this formulation, the First constitutes a sign not because it actually produces a Third, but because of its capacity to do so, whether or not that capacity is realized in any concrete act of semeiosis. The reality of the sign as a sign, then, like the reality of the hardness of the diamond, is constituted in relation to a general conditional possibility.

This last formulation suggests the sense in which semeiosis itself is implicitly abductive in character. In this respect, it points toward the question of the specific nature of the process in which the "capacity" of the sign to produce its interpretant is realized; that is, how does it become "so related" to its object as to produce its interpretant? It seems that the answer to that question would have to involve reference to the functioning of the agent of interpretation, engaging in the process of symbolic interaction in which semeiotic acts concretely consist. This is exactly the kind of implication of Peirce's semeiotic that, as Habermas points out, Peirce himself declines to reach, about the structure of semeiosis as a concrete process of interpretation. If Peirce's semeiotic were to be developed in this direction, nevertheless, it not only would serve to illuminate the transcendental conditions of possibility of communicative action, but could support the development of concrete tools and methods for interpretive science.

NOTES

[1] Views expressed in this paper are those of the author and, as nobody could in this case possibly be surprised to learn, do not reflect a position of the Congressional Research Service.

[2] I use Peirce's preferred spelling (see Fisch, 1986: 321-322) to emphasize that I am not addressing the sometimes very different concerns of other recent semiotic approaches.

[3] This paper does not deal with von Kempfki because I haven't read his monograph or even

been able to get hold of it.

[4] Useful treatments of these developments appear Schnaedelbach (1984) and Habermas (1988).

[5] Peirce in fact uses “ampliative” in the sixth Harvard Lecture as a translation of Kant’s “erweiternde” judgments, as contrasted with “erläuternde” or “explicatory” judgments (EP 2:218 [1903]).

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