

A STUDY OF THE
METAPHYSICAL CATEGORIES
OF
CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE

BY

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I

Little is known about the life of Charles Sanders Peirce and perhaps even less about his system and place in the history of American philosophical thought. Somewhat superficially we recognize that he influenced the pragmatism of William James, but even here, were the facts known, the influence would be exceedingly remote, owing to James's own misinterpretation of Peirce's leading ideas. Prof. Perry says that: "Perhaps it would be correct, and just to all parties, to say that the modern movement known as pragmatism is largely the result of James's misunderstanding of Peirce." ¹ James himself at one time stated that Peirce's lectures were pleasant to listen to but practically impossible for him to understand. The fact that James and others, notably Papini and F. C. S. Schiller, radically transformed Peirce's "mere maxim of logic" into a "sublime principle of speculative philosophy" ² need not here concern us, except that we recognize that Peirce is still a figure very much clothed in the garb of mystery and misunderstanding.

¹ Ralph Barton Perry, Thought and Character, vol. ii, p. 409.

² Hartshorne and Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vol. v, pp. 14-15.

Although a philosopher in every sense of the word, in his later years Peirce preferred to call himself a logician. It was a title which seemed more apt and fitting to him, as he regarded logic as the best possible foundation for a sound philosophy. Early in life he saw the need of a definite reform of philosophical thought. What he desired most was a "scientific" philosophy. . . one that would utilize the methods of the various natural sciences (i. e., physics and chemistry) as the models for its speculations. To be sure, Peirce had a right to use the term "scientific," considering that his father, Benjamin Peirce, was one of America's greatest mathematicians, professor at Harvard in mathematics and natural philosophy throughout his entire academic career. Indeed, Peirce's earliest training was in mathematics at the Lawrence Scientific School. He once remarked that he "grew up in a laboratory,"³ beginning the study of chemistry on his own accord at the age of eight and setting up his own chemical laboratory at twelve. Later in life he did good work in the observatory and busied himself with the conduct of a good many statistical researches in connection with the U. S. Coast and Geodetic

³ Josiah Royce, "Peirce as a Philosopher" in the Journal of Philosophy, vol. xiii, pp. 701-2.

Survey. This, together with his early acquaintance with exact measurement (both in theory and practice) enabled him to know the meaning of "scientific" method. In 1862 he obtained his M. A. degree from Harvard and the following year an Sc. B. (summa cum laude) in chemistry, which was the first degree of its kind given by Harvard.

But Peirce was primarily a logician. Writing to Lady Welby late in his life, he says, "Know that from the day when at the age of twelve or thirteen I took up, in my elder brother's room, a copy of Whately's Logic, and flung myself on the floor and buried myself in it, it has never been in my power to study anything---mathematics, ethics, metaphysics, psychology, phonetics, optics, chemistry, comparative anatomy, gravitation, thermodynamics, economics, the history of science, whist, men and women, wine, meteorology---except as a study of Semeiotic."⁴ Indeed, his fundamental distinction as a philosopher lies in his wedding logic and metaphysics into a unique logical realism. . . a realism of objective order systems against a background of metaphysical chance.

The direct influences on Peirce's thinking were many and varied, both positive and negative.

⁴ Quoted in Harvey Gates Townsend, Philosophical Ideas in the United States, p. 198.

1. His greatest interest in technical philosophy came with his study of the German metaphysicians, especially Kant. Like Peirce, Kant also came to philosophy by way of an interest in physics. But it was Kant's great strength in logical analysis that interested him most. Yet Peirce did not emerge as a neo-Kantian but leaned rather in the direction of the meager but more scientific English tradition. Still, among all the German philosophers, Kant alone seemed to him to have "possessed in a high degree all seven of the mental qualifications of a philosopher: the ability to discern what is before one's consciousness; inventive originality; generalizing power; subtlety; critical severity and sense of fact; systematic procedure; energy, diligence, persistency, and exclusive devotion to philosophy."⁵ Yet seldom, if ever, does Peirce come to the same conclusion as Kant; often their points of view are diametrically opposed. Kant's influence was in the formation of his philosophy, never in the result. Through Kant he was led to see that philosophy must be understood as a self-consistent body of knowledge, excluding nothing and applicable to everything, a system that must be planned from the very beginning. Every person, says Peirce, "who wishes to form an opinion

⁵ Hartshorne and Weiss, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 277.

concerning fundamental problems should first of all make a complete survey of human knowledge,"⁶ drawing on the results made available both by the sciences and by common-sense experience. Thus, the mind must make itself ready in advance through logical preparation, or the replacement in the mind of everything particular by something general. Man is by nature intensely individualistic; he has original ideas and instincts, which are racial ideas. These must be replaced by a "deliberate logical faculty" and the sole function of this logical deliberation is to grind off the arbitrary and individual character of thought.⁷ He was one with Kant in his desire for a unified and general systematic metaphysics.

From Kant also Peirce learned that metaphysics must be based upon logic, as any other foundation would prove itself to be shaky and insecure. But where Kant used logic to render his philosophy chiefly critical, Peirce's plan was to set up a positive constructive metaphysics based upon logic. Peirce felt that Kant had overlooked the importance of the medieval logicians and had allowed his logic to become entirely an affair of psychology, terming all propositions

⁶ Ibid., vol. vi, p. 12.

⁷ Ibid., vol. i, p. 76.

and principles as "judgements." Peirce corrected this "error" by combining the two best developments of logic he had learned: those of Kant and those of the scholastics. The result was that Peirce completely objectified the Kantian system, attacking the problem entirely from the side of formal logic. Kant taught that the most fundamental conceptions stemmed from a system of logical forms, which, if examined closely, Peirce felt, would prove to be three elementary and primary conceptions of all objects and domains.

"Kant taught that our fundamental conceptions are merely ineluctable ideas of a system of logical forms; nor is any occult transcendentalism requisite to show that this is so, and must be so. Nature only appears intelligible so far as it appears rational, that is, so far as its processes are seen to be like processes of thought. . . It follows that if we find three distinct and irreducible forms of *rhemata*, the ideas of these should be the three elementary conceptions of metaphysics. That there are three elementary forms of categories is the conclusion of Kant, to which Hegel (also) subscribes; and Kant seeks to establish this from the analysis of formal logic. Unfortunately, his study of that subject was so excessively superficial that his argument is destitute of the slightest value. Nevertheless, his conclusion is correct; for the three elements permeate not only the truths of logic, but even to a great extent the very errors of the profounder logicians." ⁸

But in Peirce's opinion Kant's categories of knowledge were essentially subjective. Peirce simply transformed them into the objective sphere where their explanatory value was greatly enhanced. Yet it seems obvious that Peirce's

⁸ Ibid., vol. 111, pp. 263-4.

entire ontology, which is constructed upon the three fundamental categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, grew out of his logic, in imitation of the Kantian postulate that logic is ontologically prior to metaphysics.

There are further points of similarity and differentiation. Kant said that our conceptions do not pass beyond the reach of possible experience. After positing the things-in-themselves as unknowable by reason of the subjectivity of time, space, and the categories, he eventually comes to treat them as external and objective yet knowable. Peirce interprets this as meaning that "our knowledge of things-in-themselves is relative," but that of them "we do have direct experience,"⁹ and moreover that all such "experience and knowledge is of that which is independent of being represented." In other words, Peirce added to the subjective, negative strictures on the experiential limits of rational knowledge the need for a positive system of realistic philosophy whose objects would correspond to objective things-in-themselves. Again, it was Peirce's aim to give objectivity to Kant's subjective principles, launching out into the realm of ontological inquiry despite Kant's feeling that ontology is dogmatic and unconnected with anything em-

⁹ Ibid., vol. vi, pp. 72-3.

pirical. Peirce interpreted Kant here as giving a mere caution not to be too absolutistic and insistent in the formulation of metaphysics, but to subject it constantly to the facts of observation. Again, Kant held that metaphysical ideas were concepts framed merely from notions and transcending the possibility of experience. . . a subjective affair. Peirce, however, defined an idea as "the definition of a real class," a completely objective affair.¹⁰ Further, by taking both experience and reason as the starting point, Peirce deduced from Kant's original position the conclusion that logic and experience (experiment) are interdependent in any and every instance of valid knowledge. In a very real sense, Peirce's whole metaphysical enterprise was to build important principles upon certain certain Kantian postulates and assumptions and to carry Kant beyond his system to its logical conclusion.

2. A more decided influence in the development of Peirce's philosophical position was in the reading of Duns Scotus. According to Peirce, Kant was a nominalist (a thing he abhorred) and could have profited greatly from a knowledge of Scotus.¹¹ It was the sheer realism of Scotus that attracted Peirce. It was through Scotus that he came to regard philosophy as a separate science and not merely as

¹⁰ Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 93-5.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 5.

the hand-maiden of theology; and he included the attempt to reconcile philosophy and science, speculating upon the philosophical aspects of science as well as the scientific aspects of philosophy. It was a new venture in the direction of faith in reason, regarding it as necessary for science and philosophy (as applications of reason) to take for granted certain assumptions or postulates radically incapable of proof and demonstrable only on grounds of the validity of the conclusions drawn from them. ¹²

Another influence from Scotus had to do with the doctrine of universals. It must be remembered that Peirce, from a study of science in its theory and practice, had come to reject any form of nominalism in favor of realism. And it was in Scotus' realism that Peirce found what he wanted in the assertion, time and again, that universals were not intellectual fictions nor merely mental (although they do have mental counterparts) but exist objectively in the reality of nature. It was this form of scholastic realism that led Peirce to affirm that "general principles are really operative in nature," ¹³ a fact upon which hinged Peirce's entire doctrine of Thirdness in all of its ontological and cosmological ramifications.

¹² Ibid., p. 353.

¹³ Ibid., vol. v, p. 67.

To the medieval thinker knowledge was essentially a matter of the general and universal; the particular (i. e., the singular) so much despised by the realist, seemed to elude altogether the grasp of the mind. But it was Duns Scotus' endeavor to rehabilitate the individual and give to it a position of epistemological respectability. For Peirce, this meant eventually the necessity of substituting for the primacy of matter (a former basis for individuality) the primacy of relations. He came to regard a singular not as a substantial piece of matter having qualities, attributes or characteristics, but rather as a set of relations constituting a singular by virtue of their assemblage in an individual. In other words, things ceased to be mere static substances but rather became dynamic relations.

Finally, it was the influence of Scotus, more than any other, that took Peirce out of the excessive rationalism of Kant by showing him that the will is superior to the reason, and as such is in itself reasonable. To be sure, as in most other thinkers whom Peirce had read, he found in Scotus a "taint of nominalism," but, since it was always Peirce's virtue to "go beyond" his influences, he readily acknowledged himself as being profoundly indebted to the subtle doctor. ¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., vol. vi, pp. 253-5.

3. A third influence descended upon Peirce in an altogether negative surge, the nominalism of rene Descartes. If Kant was his Teacher, and Scotus his Friend, then surely Descartes became his Adversary. Indeed, he had less respect for Cartesian nominalism than he had for all the other forms of it put together. Peirce held that the universal doubt which Descartes required for his first principle of inquiry in metaphysics was limited, first by its inability to be applied to itself, secondly by its inability to be applied to that of which there is some positive knowledge, and, thirdly, by its inability to be applied to that of which there does not exist any positive knowledge. Universal doubt, in the Peircian scheme of things, is logically self-contradictory. Psychologically, on the other hand, skepticism was held by Peirce to be a false attitude. Our beliefs are rooted much deeper than Descartes held; we do not truly doubt a thing by simply assuming an intellectually skeptical attitude toward it. Doubt must start where beliefs (and prejudices) are held, that is, if the doubt is to be genuine. But to pretend doubt where it does not exist is not to get anywhere with first principles. No one who follows the Cartesian method will be satisfied until he has formally recovered all those beliefs which in form he has given up. So reasoned Peirce.

Descartes denied the validity of the doctrine of imme-

mediate perception and , having started with consciousness, it was inevitable that Descartes would land himself in a slough of pure subjectivism. To assert, reasons Peirce, that whatever one is clearly convinced of is true is to abandon all test of certainty beyond individual opinion. Further, the "old dualistic notion of mind and matter so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance, will hardly find defenders today." ¹⁵ Descartes came forward to offer to men disgusted with scholasticism a new authority, that of reason. But by rendering reason subjective, he kept the dictation of principles arbitrary, and concealed within subjectivism the same unquestioning appeal to deity which his philosophy had ostensibly come to supplant. Peirce's position was that while reasoning may be a subjective process, it has always to do with only objective things. And if there were no rational order to the universe, there would be nothing for men to reason about and consequently there would be no reason. But Descartes had erred: an objective order, concerning which we do reason, does exist and can be known.

Finally, for Peirce, scientific method, which was always his inevitable pattern and guide, resembles the schol-

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 20.

astic rather than the Cartesian method, as it is dependent upon a great number of proofs rather than upon any one. The entire Cartesian method and philosophy rests upon the strength of a single argument, but philosophy, following the example set by the schoolmen and scientists, should "trust rather to the multitude and variety of its arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one." ¹⁶ It was the weakness of the Cartesian system compared with what he found the scientific men doing in the laboratories of his time that led Peirce into the methods of observation, hypothesis, and generalization, which so characterizes his philosophical investigations and conclusions.

To be sure, there were other influences besides these three, but these, it seems, were the bulk of his intellectual stimulation. Mention should be made of Aristotle and Darwin. Through these he came upon his distinctive doctrine that "chance begets order" in both ethics and in cosmology, but as this does not immediately bear upon the subject of this paper silence will serve as an aid to pass on to the subject lying readily at hand.

Suffice it to say that Peirce's general scheme was nothing less than to supplant Aristotle and to furnish a new system of philosophy, utilizing a new set of categories,

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. v, pp. 156-8.

of broad enough scope to include both the truths of Aristotelianism and the new knowledge of the laboratory which had arisen in the interim. Thus Peirce began his quest for the erection of a real philosophical edifice, concerning himself primarily with the foundations that would be deep, massive, and abiding. Such a foundation must be sought in simple concepts (or categories) which would be universally applicable to every subject. We must now undertake a study and analysis of these metaphysical categories which he did find.

II

In Peirce's way of viewing things it is impossible to dispense with metaphysics; all that one can do at the most, he says, is to replace one metaphysical view with another. "Every one of us," he says, "has a metaphysics, and has to have one. There is no escape from the need of a critical examination of 'first principles'." ¹ To reject metaphysics is to exhibit a preference for a dogmatic view instead of for a carefully developed, self-conscious, and self-respecting one. "Find a scientific man who proposes to get along without any metaphysics---and not by any means every man who holds the ordinary reasonings of metaphysicians in scorn---and you have found one whose doctrines are thoroughly vitiated by the crude and uncriticized metaphysics with which they are packed." ² Every science, in fact, presupposes propositions beyond its power to evaluate. All of the special sciences must take for granted a number of most important propositions and thus must always rest upon

¹ Hartshorne and Weiss, Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vol. 1, p. 52.

² Ibid.

metaphysics. Peirce even says that when some modern minds seek to define all metaphysical discourse as "contraband" they are merely asking for the privilege of allowing their own metaphysical preconceptions to go unexamined and uncriticized.

Metaphysics must necessarily be regarded as a sub-order of philosophy. Philosophy is a sub-class of the science of discovery, and this in turn is a branch of theoretical science.³ It is the function of metaphysics to explain the variety of the universe. "The universe has an explanation, the function of which. . . is to unify its observed variety." Metaphysics is a general science, differing from the special sciences only in its inescapability, evidence, and generality, yet it agrees with the special sciences in being equally dependent upon mathematics, phenomenology, esthetics, and logic. But, first and foremost, it is dependent upon logic. "Metaphysics," says Peirce, "consists in the absolute acceptance of logical principles, not merely as regulatively valid but as truth of being;"⁴ EXACT LOGIC will prove itself to be a stepping-stone to "exact" metaphysics.⁵ Further, this

³ Ibid., paragraph 239 ff, 282; vol. vi, paragraph 6.

⁴ Ibid., vol. i, pp 259-60.

⁵ Ibid., vol. iii, paragraph 454.

dependency upon logic is to be seen in a two-fold way.

First, it is concerned with problems whose resolution requires maturity, if not subtlety of thought. "Metaphysics is a most difficult science, presenting more pitfalls for the uninformed than almost any, which a mere amateur at it would be foolish to fancy that he could escape." ⁶ "Metaphysical philosophy has no work that hard thinking can do. What is needed above all, for metaphysics, is thorough and mature thinking." ⁷ One who is unable to use the powerful and effective instrument of modern logic, according to Peirce, particularly the logic of relatives, is bound to be trapped in the paradoxes and prejudices of the past.

"Unless the metaphysician is a most thorough master of formal logic---and especially of the inductive side of the logic of relatives. . . he will inevitably fall into the practice of deciding upon the validity of reasonings. . . by the impressions those reasonings make upon the mind. . . Just look at the dealings of the metaphysicians with Zeno's objection to motion. . . The metaphysician who is not prepared to grapple with all the difficulties of modern exact logic had better put up his shutters and go out of trade." ⁸

In all metaphysical philosophy logic is the fundamental discipline. Peirce says that " a metaphysics not founded on the science of logic is of all branches of scientific

⁶ Ibid., vol. i, paragraph 204.

⁷ Ibid., vol. iii, paragraph 406.

⁸ Ibid., vol. i, paragraph 624.

inquiry the most shaky and insecure." ⁹

Secondly, as both Kant and Aristotle recognized, metaphysical concepts should be adaptations of logical ones. Peirce says that: "If the theory of Logic which is to be developed in this book has any truth, the position of the two greatest of all metaphysicians, Aristotle and Kant, will herein be supported by satisfactory proof, that that science (metaphysics) can only rest upon the theory of logic. Indeed it may be said that there has hardly been a metaphysician of the first rank who has not made logic his stepping-stone to metaphysics." ¹⁰ "The only rational way would be to settle first the principles of reasoning, and that done, to base one's metaphysics upon those principles." ¹¹

But metaphysics must rest upon fact and experience as well as upon logic. Logic may be more general than experience and fact, but it does rest upon them both. And if metaphysics rests on logic, from which at times it is indistinguishable, and logic rests on experience and fact, it follows that metaphysics must be, indirectly at least, an

⁹ Ibid., vol 11, paragraph 36.

¹⁰ Ibid., paragraph 121.

¹¹ Ibid., paragraph 166.

observational discipline. Its data is open and observable to every man at every moment.

According to Peirce, "Metaphysics, even bad metaphysics, really rests on observations, whether consciously or not; and the only reason that this is not universally recognized is that it rests upon kinds of phenomena with which every man's experience is so saturated that he usually pays no attention to them. The data of metaphysics are not less open to observation, but immeasurably more-so, than the data, say, of the highly developed science of astronomy. ¹² Philosophy contents itself with observations such as come within the range of every man's normal experience and for the most part in every waking hour of his life. . . These observations escape the untrained eye precisely because they permeate our whole lives, just as a man who never takes off his blue spectacles soon ceases to see the blue tinge." ¹³

Hence, metaphysics is the indispensable general science of reality, based upon the absolute acceptance of logical principles as the truths of being, as well as upon the more direct disciplines of observational fact and experience.

¹² Ibid., vol. vi, p. 2.

¹³ Ibid., vol. i, p. 110; also vol. vi, p. 5.

Further, the observations of both logic and experience will verify one another in the formation of the simplest categories (or concepts) into a system all-inclusive of the realm of being and existence. These categories will reveal not only the structure of fact itself but also its actual or possible relations to other facts. They will reveal the nature of the real world and the realm of truth, which is, in all respects, both objective and knowable.

III

The entire philosophy of Charles Peirce was developed systematically out of the implications of the three fundamental categories which he called Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. There was nothing sacred or mystical about the decision on these three, nor were they arrived at in any arbitrary fashion. His mathematical mind perhaps accounts in part for their discovery, for Peirce found philosophy, like the special sciences, to be a sort of mathematical empiricism. He felt that it was the empirical content of the sciences that gave them their concreteness. But it is also evident, he reasoned, that the empirical data of the special sciences must be arranged into a logical form that can furnish a basis for scientific prediction, and it is mathematics that gives the sciences this logical form. The science of chemistry is based upon the implications of a set of numbers---the atomical numbers of the chemical elements. One of the first steps in chemistry is the classification of chemical substances, the empirical data of chemistry, in the most general terms (in terms of their atomic numbers). Through this classification, the relative

combining weights of the elements are known, and quantitative predictions may be made concerning the proportions in which the elements combine with one another. Thus, in much the same way, the first step in philosophy is a description of experience in the most general terms, in other words, a classification of phenomena in terms of the categories. As in the special sciences, the empirical data of philosophy must first be arranged into a logical form. This is done by means of general conceptions or categories, and here again, as in the sciences, it is mathematics that is the key to the categories. Philosophy, like chemistry, according to Peirce, is based upon the implications of a set of numbers, the numbers one, two, and three, generalized into the categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness.

Following his own directive that metaphysics must be based upon logic, Peirce derived his categories from his logic of relatives, in which he invents a notation for representing the various possible types of relations and signs. There are, he says, three irreducible kinds of relatives: monads, dyads, and triads; and, corresponding to these relatives are the three kinds of signs: the icon, the index, and the symbol. These three kinds of signs, he argues, are the clues to the three essentially different kinds of mental processes; and are consequently also the clues to

the categories.

It must be remembered that for symbolic logic, at least, monads, dyads, and triads are ultimate and irreducible. They are also the same in the role of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness as the ultimate categories of all philosophy. More than that, they are not only the theme that is the key to the unity of Peirce's metaphysics (and indeed of his entire philosophy) but they are also the key to its objectivity. Thus it may be well to perform a cursory study of the three at this point.

Any character or proposition, Peirce held, must concern either one subject, two subjects, or a plurality of subjects, depending upon the implication of the copula through which the relations among the subjects are symbolized. A system of relations expressed in a proposition is called a relative, and relatives are named dyads, triads, and polyads, depending upon the number of subjects related.

A triad is a relation between three things or subjects. A dyad is a relation between two things; while a monad is a sort of "degenerate relation" with only one term. The monad is a character or subject considered by itself apart from all other relations to anything else, expressing the relation merely of identity with itself. In the speculative ontology

of Peirce, again, the monad becomes the category of Firstness, the dyad becomes the category of Secondness, and the triad becomes the category of Thirdness. As Peirce puts it: "The first is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other." ¹

Firstness has the characteristic of preceding all synthesis and all differentiation, having no unity and no parts. That which is absolutely first must be entirely separated from all conceptions of or reference to anything else. It is present and immediate, fresh, original, spontaneous, free, since it cannot be second to a determining cause. It is vivid, but it must not be the object of some sensation. It cannot be articulately thought or asserted, for assertion implies a denial of something else. The pure idea of a monad is the idea of a "sui generis suchness," that is, a special quality, with some degree of determination but none of comparison. Peirce makes this much perfectly clear: that the

¹ Hartshorne and Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce, vol. 1, p. 183.

monad is not a phenomenological event, but a pure ontological construct. Even the best phenomenological description of it can be no more than a bare approximation; still this does not dismiss its authenticity any more than the authenticity of circularity is dismissed owing to the fact that empirically we can only reach a rough approximation of circularity.

Secondness is the acknowledgement of the reality of the external world. But this, however, need not mean that that reality is dependent upon our acknowledging it.

"In sense and will, there are reactions of secondness between the ego and the non-ego (which non-ego may be an object of direct consciousness). In will, the events leading up to the act are internal, and we say that they are agents more than patients. In sense, the antecedent events are not within us; and besides, the object of which we form a perception (though not that which immediately acts upon the nerves) remains unaffected. Consequently, we say that we are patients, not agents. In the idea of reality, Secondness is predominant; for the real is that which insists upon forcing its way to recognition as something other than the mind's creation. . . . The real is active; we acknowledge it in calling it the actual." 2

Secondness cannot be what it is apart from the role that is played by the first. Peirce says that it "meets us in such facts as another, relation, compulsion, effect, dependence, independence, negation, occurrence, reality, result." 3

2 Ibid., p. 163.

3 Ibid., p. 184.

It is determined unalterably by the first. Secondness is resistance, effort, the stubborn resistance of brute fact, whose very existence consists in its inertia.

"We find secondness in occurrence, because an occurrence is something whose existence consists in our knock-up against it. A hard fact is of the same sort; that is to say, it is something which is there, and which I cannot think away, but am forced to acknowledge as an object or second beside myself, the subject or number one, and which forms material for the exercise of my will." ⁴

It is, in a sense, the element of struggle, or as Peirce describes it, the "mutual action between two things regardless of any sort of third or medium, and in particular regardless of any law of action." ⁵ A dyad consists of two subjects brought into oneness, having their modes of being both in themselves and in their connection with each other as first and second. The dyad is not the subjects, but the relation between them, having the subjects as one element of it. It is the dyad that brings the subjects together, thereby imparting a specific character to each of them. It is an individual fact, as it existentially is, having no generality in it. The being of a monadic quality is a mere potentiality without existence; while existence is purely dyadic.

Thirdness is mediation, generality, order, interpreta-

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 161.

tion, meaning purpose. The third is the medium or bond which connects the absolute first and last, and brings them into relationship. Every process involves continuity, and continuity represents thirdness almost to perfection. One of the ideas in which thirdness is predominant is the idea of a sign, or representation. "A sign stands for something to the idea which it produces or modifies. . . . That for which it stands is called its object; that which it conveys, its meaning; and the idea to which it gives rise, its interpretant." ⁶ Meaning and purpose, says Peirce, are the kernel of thirdness, and these can be expressed only in triadic terms (e. g., A is the meaning of B to C. Every triadic relation involves meaning. For example, "A gives B to C," does not mean that A threw away B, and C accidentally found it; it means that there was a deliberate transfer of the right of property, thus involving law, thought, meaning, and purpose. Unless the first and third of a triadic relationship are connected by meaning, then the relation is not triadic, but a succession of two dyads, e. g., A lost B, and C found B).

Thus the quality of immediate consciousness, of absolute present, is firstness; the existence of brute compulsion of external reality is secondness; the representation that me-

⁶ Ibid., p. 171.

diates between the two---law, order, generality, meaning, is thirdness. The category of the present is firstness; the category of the past is secondness; the category of the future is thirdness; for the quality of the first is in the absolute present, the existence of the second is the irrevocable reality and compulsion of the happenings of the past; and the third, which is meaning, purpose, law, generality, order, is a potentiality governing the future, a prediction by which the future may be controlled. Firstness is an ineffable metaphysical abstraction, and the same holds true for absolute secondness, as neither of the two are ever cut off from each other and from thirdness. They interpenetrate one another and involve monadic, dyadic, and triadic aspects. But there is no absolute third, not even as a metaphysical abstraction, as the third is essentially relative.

Peirce holds that these three categories contain within their bounds all the relations of the realm of existence and true being. Since they are irreducible to each other and all others (of higher numbers) are reducible to triads and can be seen as mere complications of threes, therefore there can be but three irreducible categories, and no more. His speculative ontology, based upon the verdict of logic, insists that all polyads of a higher additivity than the triad merely consist of combinations of triads, while the

dyad, triad, and monad are irreducible. Of course, Peirce's assumption here is that the categories of logic are per se the categories of Being. Peirce defends himself in this assumption by remarking that it is completely beyond his province to question the applicability of logic to metaphysics. However, the history of philosophy will prove that any metaphysics not based upon logic shall inevitably fall (and by "fall," of course, Peirce means that it would devolve into a useless form of Cartesian nominalism). But the real sanction for the categories of speculative ontology comes not from within, but from the study of phenomenology, which has as its office the proof that the categories have not only a logical objectivity but an experiential objectivity as well. All of which is according to the plain laid down by Peirce for a true metaphysics: that it fit the facts of logic and experience. The phenomenological categories are intended to illustrate in concreteness the validity of the metaphysical categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness.

IV

Phenomenology, or "phaneroscopy," as Peirce prefers to call it, has as its purpose the ultimate analysis of all experience and is, in reality, the first task to which philosophy ought to apply itself. ¹ It is a "preliminary inquiry," a science that does not draw any distinction of good and bad in any sense whatever, but merely contemplates phenomena as they are, simply opening its eyes and describing what it sees---simply describing the object as a phenomenon and stating what it finds in all phenomena alike. ² It is the business of phenomenology to draw up an inventory of appearances without going into any investigation of their truth; it simply scrutinizes the appearances and endeavours to combine minute accuracy with the broadest possible generalization. A phenomenon is whatever happens to present itself to the mind at any time and in any way.

Metaphysics, in Peirce's scheme of things, is thus

¹ Hartshorne and Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce, vol. 1, paragraph 280.

² Ibid., vol. v, paragraph 37.

divided into three parts: phenomenology, ontology, and epistemology. But in a narrower sense metaphysics is concerned mostly with ontology and phenomenology. As would be anticipated, the phenomenological categories are three in number, while ontology falls into two separate studies: (1) the modes (or categories) of being, and (2) the modes (or categories) of existence. There are also three categories of being and three categories of existence. Perhaps the phenomenological categories are more closely related to the second set of metaphysical (ontological) categories than to the former. What separates and distinguished the phenomenological categories from the metaphysical is the overlay of "generality" which pervades all three of the latter in both existence and being. They are the ultimate and irreducible broad divisions into which the phenomenological categories fall. This distinction shall receive closer attention as we pass on to the next two sections of this paper.

The work of the phenomenologist is to survey and examine fully the phenomenon and to decide exactly what are the characteristics that are never wanting in it, whether that phenomenon be something that outward experience forces upon our attention, or whether it be the wildest dream or

the most abstract and general of the conclusions of science. Three faculties are required for this task: (1) the faculty of seeing what stares one in the face, which is the faculty of the artist, (2) the faculty of "resolute discrimination" which fastens itself like a bulldog upon the particular feature that is being studied, following it with dogged determination and detecting beneath it all of its apparent disguises, and (3) the generalizing power of the mathematician, who produces the abstract formula that comprehends the very essence of the feature under examination purified from all admixture of extraneous and irrelevant accompaniments.³ Of course, "phenomenon" is to be understood in the broadest sense conceivable; so that phenomenology might be defined as the study of what seems rather than as the statement of what appears. Peirce's alternative name for phenomenology is "phaneroscopy" and for the phenomena the "phaneron." At any event, phaneroscopy is the beginning or entry, after logic, into metaphysical inquiry. Through the direct observation of phanerons and the generalization of its observations, it discovers several very broad classes of phanerons, describing the features of each, and arrives at a compact list of categories that will include the very broadest class. Although the phaneron includes everything that is experienced,

³ Ibid., paragraphs 41 and 42.

Peirce was concerned with centering his attention only upon the phaneron's "indecomposable elements" (that is, those that are logically indecomposable).

Peirce came to the conclusion that at least three and only three categories would be necessary to describe the basic elements of what was contained in his experience. These categories were arrived at in the following fashion:

1. In seeking to discover indecomposable elements, phenomenology finds them to have a kind of "external structure" . . . a structure that is first indicated in the relation between signs and their logical objects.

"The first (category) comprises the qualities of phenomena, such as red, bitter, tedious, hard, heart-rending, noble; and there are doubtless manifold varieties utterly unknown to us. Beginners in philosophy may object that these are not qualities of things and are not in the world at all, but are mere sensations. Certainly, we only know such as the senses we are furnished with are adapted to reveal; and it can hardly be doubted that the specializing effect of the evolutionary process which has made us what we are has been to blot the greater part of the senses and sensations which were once dimly felt, and to render bright, clear, and separate the rest. But whether we ought to say that it is the senses that make the sense-qualities or the sense-qualities to which the senses are adapted, need not be determined in haste. It is sufficient that wherever there is a phenomenon there is a quality; so that it might almost seem that there is nothing else in phenomena. The qualities merge into one another. They have no perfect identities, but only likenesses, or partial identities. Some of them, as the colors, and the musical sounds, form well-understood systems. Probably, were our experience of them not so fragmentary, there

would be no abrupt demarcations between them, at all. Still each one is what it is in itself without help from others. They are single but partial determinations." ⁴

Hence, the first phenomenological category is a QUALITY OR FEELING. Peirce speaks of it thus: "Imagine me to wake and in a slumbrous condition to have a vague, unobjectified, still less unsubjectified, sense of redness or of salt taste, or of an ache, or of a grief or joy, or of a prolonged musical note. That would be, as nearly as possible, a purely monadic state of feeling." ⁵ But the idea of Firstness, he continues, is much nearer an object than it is to a conception of self. Hence, in order to convert that psychological or logical conception into a metaphysical one, we must think of a metaphysical monad as a pure nature, or quality, in itself without parts or features, and without embodiment. In order to understand this transition from the psychological idea of feeling to the metaphysical idea of quality we must isolate feeling and the thing felt. Now, nominalism has always maintained that such a quality cannot exist without sense, while realism, and Peirce would be included in that school, has always denied this, and even maintained the opposite. This is the great error of the conceptualists, Peirce affirms: "That the quality of red depends upon any-

⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 149.

body actually seeing it, so that red things are no longer red in the dark, is a denial of common sense." And also Peirce says that it must be remembered that "a realist fully admits that a sense quality is only a possibility of sensation; but he thinks a possibility remains possible (even) even when it is not actual. The sensation is requisite for its apprehension; but no sensation nor sense-faculty is requisite for the possibility which is the being of the quality . . . A quality is a mere abstract potentiality; and the error of those (nominalistic) schools lies in holding that the potential, or possible, is nothing but what the actual makes it to be." ⁶ Hence, quality is seen as an external thing, completely independent of the mind; a possibility which sense experience may or may not actualize, but which is in any case independent of such actualization.

Firstness is also both original and free, since it neither derives from nor leads to anything else. The idea of firstness is predominant in the ideas of originality, freshness, life, freedom. It is free as it does not have another behind it to determine its actions. Of course, the quality-element of experience (firstness) has no generality,

⁶ Ibid., pp. 230-1 (parentheses mine).

as it is what it is apart from anything else, but qualities reflected upon reveal themselves to be general. Quality, in effect, is the "monadic element of the world. Anything whatever, however complex and heterogeneous, has its quality sui generis, its possibility of sensation, would our senses only respond to it." ⁷ The seeming contradiction between the particularity of a particular quality and its generality when reflected upon, is resolved when we understand that although quality can only occur under particular determinations, it is "in itself, general." ⁸

2. Secondness is FACT or, as Peirce prefers to call it, BRUTE FACT. Peirce says that ". . . there is no a priori reason why there should not be indecomposable elements which are what they are relatively to a second but independent of any third. Such, for example, is the idea of otherness." ⁹ This is the same notion described in logic as the dynamical, OR ENERGETIC, INTERPRETANT of a sign. It comprises the actual facts, whereas the qualities, in so far as they are general, are somewhat vague and potential. "But an occur-

⁷ Ibid., p. 233.

⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

rence is perfectly individual. It happens here and now. A permanent fact is less purely individual; yet so far as it is actual, its permanence and generality only consist in its being there at every individual instant. Facts also concern subjects which are material substances. We do not see them as we see qualities. . . But we feel facts resist our will. That is why facts are proverbially called brutal. . . mere qualities do not resist. It is the matter that resists. Even in actual sensation there is a reaction. Now, mere qualities, unmaterialized, cannot actually react. So that, rightly understood, it is correct to say that we immediately, that is, directly perceive matter. To say that we only infer matter from its qualities is to say that we only know the actual through the potential. It would be a little less erroneous to say that we only know the potential through the actual, and only infer qualities by generalization from what we perceive in matter. All that I here insist upon is that quality is one element of phenomena, and fact, action, actuality is another." ¹⁰

Thus, secondness is seen to be "reaction" as an element of the Phenomenon. . . the conception of being relative to,

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 228-9.

or the conception of reaction with, something else. It is the "brute actions of one subject or substance on another."¹¹ It is "force in its widest sense". . . the object of experience as reality. It can be seen that secondness is quite another category from that of firstness, or quality. There is only one kind of firstness, as has already been described; but there are two different kinds of secondness. This distinction rests in the very idea of the second category. The dyad contains two subjects and some sort of union between them. The dyad brings the two subjects together and in so doing imparts a character to each of them. Peirce says that there is a "distinction between two kinds of secondness; namely the secondness of genuine seconds, or matters, which I call genuine secondness, and the secondness in which one of the seconds is only a firstness, which I call degenerate secondness."¹² Peirce also termed genuine secondness "ob-sistence". . . as a trait which concerns subjects which are non-monadic. He states that in this kind of dyad at least one of its subjects must have a mode of being over and above what its mere inward suchness involves; that is, it must have a mode of being gained by its opposition to another. This opposition imparts to it a special quality of its own,

¹¹ Ibid., vol. v, p. 322.

¹² Ibid., vol. i, p. 280.

which marks it out as a genuine secondness. In genuine secondness, the general aspect of the quality of the subjects is not considered; only their individuality. Degenerate secondness, however, is the weaker form, and may only be relatively degenerate. The degenerate dyad is a proposition whose two subjects are mere qualities. This kind of secondness Peirce termed essential, as it is the only kind of secondness that can be composed of firstness alone (i. e., without a notion of their union as a separate and determinate affair). It amounts to nothing, according to Peirce, but this, that a subject, in its being second, has a firstness, or quality. ¹³

Although there are a number of ways in which secondness may be subdivided, the most obvious is that of secondness as (1) an individual thing and (2) as a field of individual things. Peirce referred to the individual thing as a "fact," and to the field of individual things as either "existence" or "actuality." A fact is intimately associated with the dyad and consists of two subjects brought into oneness; the dyad, however, is not the subjects; it has the subjects as one element of it. In bringing the two subjects together it imparts a particular character to each of them and has itself

¹³ Ibid.

two sides according to which subject is considered as first. Through opposition, Peirce says, a fact fights its way into existence. In another instance, he states that a fact is not, however, two subjects but rather one object containing two subjects in a certain relation.

Secondness regarded as the field of individual things is termed existence or actuality. The field of actuality is really akin to Aristotle's field of activity. The word "activity" implies a generalization of effort, and effort itself is seen to be a two-sided idea, effort and resistance being inseparable, hence, actuality also takes on the dyadic form. Actuality, or existence, is, like individual things, brute.

"Actuality is something brute. There is no reason in it. I instance putting your shoulder against a door and trying to force it open against an unseen, silent, and unknown resistance. We have a two-sided consciousness of effort and resistance, which seems to me to come tolerably near to a pure sense of actuality. On the whole, I think we have here a mode of being of one thing which consists in how a second object it." ¹⁴

"For example, an existent particle. . . is nothing for itself; whatever it is, it is for what it is attracting and what it is repelling: its being is actual, consists in action, is dyadic. That is what I call existence." ¹⁵

Further, there is a degree of regularity in the field of activity itself. Substances as well as events are con-

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., vol. vi, p. 235

stituted by regularities. Even the flow of time is seen as a regularity. From this and the foregoing a degree of distinction can be seen between the first two categories in the phaneron. There must be a firstness with its QUALITY for the secondness to RESIST; secondness is inseparable from the idea of dependence, that is, a dependence upon the first. Thus, firstness is an indispensable element of secondness; but the reverse is not true, for secondness is not part of firstness. Firstness is absolutely simple, whereas secondness exhibits a degree of complication. . . a complication which consists in the opposition of a second subject to the quality of the first.

3. From this Peirce is led to say that ". . . there is no a priori reason why there should not be indecomposable elements which are what they are relatively to a second and a third, regardless of any fourth. Such, for example, is the idea of composition." ¹⁶ This third aspect of the phaneron is called LAW OR LAWS. It is symbolized by sheer generality (there can be no law without generality) and exists in the universe of representations. As Peirce describes it:

"The third category of elements of phenomena consists of what we call laws when we contemplate them from the outside only, but which when we see both sides of the shield we call thoughts. They are not qualities nor facts. They are not qualities because they can be produced and grow, while a quality is eternal, independent of time and of any realization. Besides, thoughts may have reasons,

¹⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 147.

and indeed, must have some reasons, good or bad. But to ask why a quality is as it is, why red is red and not green, would be lunacy. If red were green it would not be red; that is all. And any semblance of sanity the question may have is due to its being not exactly a question about quality, but about the relation between two qualities, though even this is absurd. A thought then is not a quality. No more is it a fact. For a thought is general. I had it. I imparted it to you. It is a general on that side. It is also general in referring to all things and not merely to those which happen to exist. No collection of facts can constitute a law; for the law goes beyond any accomplished facts and determines how facts that may be, but all of which never can have happened, shall be characterized. There is no objection to saying that a law is a general fact, provided it be understood that the general has an admixture of potentiality in it, so that no congeries of actions here and now can ever make a general fact. As general, the law, or general fact, concerns the potential world of quality, while as fact, it concerns the actual world of actuality. Just as action requires a peculiar kind of subject matter, which is foreign to mere quality, so law requires a peculiar kind of subject, the thought . . . or the mind, as a peculiar kind of subject foreign to mere individual action. Law, then, is something as remote from both quality and action as these are remote from one another." 17

Thirddness is seen to be a Medium between a second and its first. It is a Representation as an element of the Phenomenon. It is that character "whereby a first and a second are brought into relation." 18 Peirce says that Continuity represents thirddness almost to perfection; it is the process intervening between the causal act and the effect, involving the idea of composition or combination. There are three grades of genuine thirddness. (1) The first is a

17 Ibid., pp. 229-30.

18 Ibid., vol. vi, p. 35.

"positive qualitative possibility, in itself nothing more."

Peirce calls this first grade the LAWS OF QUALITY. They are all of one type, all of them determining systems of qualities.

". . . they all simply determine systems of qualities, of which Sir Isaac Newton's law of color mixture with Dr. Thomas Young's supplement thereto, is the most perfect known example." ¹⁹

They may concern singles, pairs, or triads of qualities.

(2) The second grade of genuine thirdness is "an existent thing without any mode of being less than existence, but determined by that first." ²⁰ It consists in LAWS OF FACT.

Laws of fact divide themselves into laws logically necessary and laws logically contingent. That is:

"The laws of fact divide themselves at the outset into those which must be true if there be any true answer to every question that has a meaning, or, as we say, into laws logically necessary and laws logically contingent. To this division another is intimately connected. Namely, of laws logically contingent the most universal are of such a kind that they must be true provided every form which by logical necessity must be thought of a given subject is also a form of its real being. Calling this kind of necessity, metaphysical necessity, we may divide laws logically contingent into laws metaphysically necessary and laws metaphysically contingent." ²¹

(3) The third grade of thirdness is a mode of being which consists in the secondness that it determines, the mode of being a law. It is marked by REGULARITY. Peirce says:

¹⁹ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 257.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 283.

²¹ Ibid.

"Five minutes of our waking life will hardly pass without our making some kind of prediction; and in the majority of cases these predictions are fulfilled in the event. Yet a prediction is essentially of a general nature, and cannot ever be completely fulfilled. To say that a prediction has a decided tendency to be fulfilled, is to say that the future events are in a measure really governed by law. If a pair of dice turns up sixes five times running, that is a mere uniformity. The dice might happen fortuitously to turn up sixes a thousand times running. But that would not afford the slightest security for a prediction that they would turn up sixes the next time. If the prediction has a tendency to be fulfilled, it must be that future events have a tendency to conform to a general rule. . . . A rule to which future events have a tendency to conform is ipso facto an important thing, an important element in the happening of those events. This mode of being which consists in the fact that future facts of secondness will take on a determinate general character, I call a Thirdness." ²²

From this one can readily take note of the phenomenological categories themselves embodied in the grades of thirdness: Laws of quality, fact, and regularity (or law or continuity).

In addition to the grades of genuine thirdness there are also two degenerate forms. The first consists in those instances where there is in the fact itself no thirdness or mediation, but where there does happen to be true duality. It is found in an "Irrational Plurality which, as it exists, in contradistinction (to) the form of its representation, is a mere complication of duality." ²³ The second degree of degeneracy "is where there is not even true secondness in

²² Ibid., p. 8.

²³ Ibid., vol. v, p. 48.

in the fact itself." Peirce says that the most degenerate form of thirdness is where we conceive a mere Quality of Feeling (firstness) to represent itself to itself as Representation.

Genuine thirdness, like logic itself, may be defined as either representation or combination. Without the psychological or accidental human element in genuine thirdness we see the operation of a sign. An example of the triad is given instance in the icon, the index and the symbol.

Peirce says that: "Of these three genera of representamens, the Icon is the Qualitatively degenerate, the Index the reactionally degenerate, while the Symbol is the relatively genuine genus." ²⁴ Triadic relations of signs are the most basic kind. They are perfectly general and have the nature of a representamen. Peirce claims that no triad which does not involve generality (that is, the assertion of which does not imply something concerning every possible object of some description) can be called a genuine triad.

Further, it is important to note that both firstness and secondness are involved in every triad. There can be no reaction without a quality against which the reaction can take place, nor any representation without a quality and a reaction taken together. But, on the other hand, it is equally

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 50-1.

true that thirdness cannot be reduced to either firstness or secondness, or to both. Every triadic relation involves a meaning, and a quality taken by itself is obviously not a meaning. Further, no number of dyadic relations will constitute a triadic relation. Therefore, although thirdness includes firstness and secondness, it also includes something more.

Thus the three phenomenological categories are shown to be woven into the texture of experience itself, in which their complexity and inter-connectedness are everywhere revealed. The triad of categories calls for the interrelations of all things. Whatever is not firstness is secondness or thirdness, and whatever is not secondness must be one of the others, and so for thirdness. The upshot is that no two things in the Peircian scheme can be absolutely disconnected. To be sure, there is relative disconnection. But in Peirce's mind, to say that two things are disconnected is the same as saying that they are connected in a way different from the particular way we happen to then have under contemplation. Everything is in some relation to each other thing. A priori there are three categories of indecomposable elements to be expected in the phaneron: (1) Quality (or those which are positive totals), (2) Fact (or those which involve dependence but not combination), and (3) Law (or those which involve combination).

V

Peirce's metaphysical categories fall under two separate headings: the Modes of Being and the Modes of Existence. The Modes of Being are: (1) possibility, (2) actuality, and (3) destiny; while the Modes of Existence are: (1) chance, (2) law, and (3) habit. It will be seen immediately how closely these two sets of categories are related to the three phenomenological categories we have just reviewed. Although Peirce intended the phenomenological categories to illustrate and validate the categories of Being, it will become evident that they develop much more closely into the second set of metaphysical categories or the Modes of Existence. This much is clear: The metaphysical categories are the ultimate and irreducible broad divisions into which the phenomenological categories easily fall.

However, there is some indication of the metaphysical categories of Being in the phenomenological categories of Quality, Fact, and Law. Peirce speaks of Quality (phenomenological Firstness) as a possibility which may or may not be actualized, a positive qualitative possibility independent of the mind. Secondness (Fact) is termed "actuality" as

the field of opposition and reaction. ¹ While the third category of the phaneron is termed "law," and since Peirce spoke of law as being "how an endless future must continue to be," we have a kernal of the third mode of Being, which he calls Destiny.

It will be seen that the metaphysical categories of Being are wider and more general than the phenomenological categories, a fact which constitutes their basic distinction. For example, Possibility differs from Firstness in two ways. Possibility is absolutely general, while Firstness, or Quality, is not. Peirce says that although Quality lends itself readily to generalization it is not within itself general, but the idea of a "general" involves within itself the ideal of possible variations which no multitude of existent things could exhaust, so that it would leave between any two not merely many possibilities, but possibilities absolutely beyond all multitude. ² Actuality differs from Secondness in that Secondness imparts actuality to the possibility of Firstness by introducing a field of reaction and opposition. "The mode of being of the quality is that of Firstness. That is to say," says Peirce, "it is a possibility. It is

¹ Hartshorne and Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vol. 1, paragraphs 527 and 455.

² Ibid., vol. v, pp. 67-8.

related to the matter accidentally; and this relation does not change the quality at all, except that it imparts existence, that is to say, this very relation of inherence, to it. But the matter, on the other hand, has no being at all except the being a subject of qualities. This relation of really having qualities constitutes its existence." ³ Destiny differs from Thirdness, in that Thirdness is less general and is confined to law, whereas Destiny concerns both what is within and what is without law. Even freedom from law is as much destiny as law itself; hence again the category of Being is the wider category. It is this overlay of generality which pervades all three of the metaphysical categories that forms the fundamental distinction.

Peirce further holds that the three modes (or categories) of Being can be directly observed in whatever elements that happen at any time to be present to the mind in any way. He speaks of them as the "being of positive qualitative possibility, the being of actual fact, and the being of law that will govern the facts of the future." Undoubtedly, Being itself is the widest category of all; even Nothing is not exempt from it. Peirce holds that there is no reason

³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 279.

to believe that nonbeing (or nothing) has no determination. Nonbeing is a form of Being. Being in this broad sense has meaning only with reference to the summum bonum. The modes of Being "are the elements of cooperation toward the summum bonum." ⁴

1. POSSIBILITY is both real and objective, a positive affair that must be distinguished from negative possibility. Negative possibility, according to Peirce, is subjective and a category of knowledge, while positive possibility, on the other hand, is a category of Being. Neither is to be equated with potentiality. Potential Being is concerned with the future altogether, while possibility is not concerned exclusively with the future. Indeed, it is not a time category in that sense at all, but closer to what Peirce says that Mill nominalistically described as a "permanent possibility." ⁵ Potentiality means indeterminate yet capable of determination in any special case, while metaphysical possibility means rather a "possibility by supernatural power," so that the latter is "nearly a potentiality" but not quite. In other words, Potentiality signifies some inherent capacity or tendency toward actuality which, if not thwarted, leads to final completeness of Being; whereas Possibility has no such

⁴ Ibid., vol. 11, p. 66.

⁵ Ibid., vol. 1, paragraph 487.

tendency. It is the more inclusive term, of which perhaps potentiality is the sub-species. Metaphysical and logical possibility, however, are practically equivalent. Logical possibility means "freedom from all contradiction," while metaphysical possibility means "possibility of existence." ⁶ But possibility of existence is a thing which is free from all contradiction. And all existing things are at least partially contradictory, but their existence depends upon their having been positively possible to some extent at least, and not upon their contradictoriness.

2. ACTUALITY is the second category of Being. It is closely related to possibility in that possibility always implies a relationship to that which exists. Of course, possibility remains actually more than the actual, for a possibility remains possible when it is not actual, while an actual cannot remain actual if it is not also possible. In other words, Existence or Actuality, is, in reality, a "matter of degree;" not all possibles can exist; actuality is a selection of them.

"In order to represent to our minds the relation between the universe of possibilities and the universe of actual existent facts, if we are going to think of the latter as a surface, we must think of the former as three-

⁶ Ibid., vol. ii, paragraph 538; vol. vi, paragraph 371.

dimensional space in which any surface would represent all the facts that might exist in one existential universe." ⁷

Although the actual world cannot contain pure possibility, it is governed by it; the actual world is in fact an offshoot of the Platonic world which is the world of possibility. The relationship between actuality and possibility is seen again when we remember that, in Peirce's system, the existence of things consists in their regular behaviour, and regularity is an affair of generality. Again, all that we perceive, or think, or that exists is general and (although it is also infinitely determinate) it could not exist at all without the generality which it possesses. Thus, its existence is dependent upon its generality, which is only another name for possibility. Actuality and Possibility, in other words, have to be interrelated, for actuality considered alone and by itself would ignore the distinction of essence and existence, which, in Peirce's mind, is the fallacy of nominalism.

Peirce says that he learned from Kant that no general description of existence is possible. Actuality is the activity of the real. It is closely related to the phenomenological Secondness, regarded as the field of individual things. Existence is an affair of blind forces; the passive

⁷ Ibid., vol. iv, p. 401.

condition of capability of action which consists in the function of reaction or resistance is what is meant by actuality. To be actual is to be the subject of qualities, to be stimulated to action by some object's crowding out a place for itself in the universe; it lies in the possibility of an identical opposite, or of being indeterminately over against itself alone, with a determinate opposition, or over-againstness, besides. Opposition is that which gives actuality. Any complete description of actuality, Peirce says, must appeal beyond actuality to the field of generality or possibility.

3. DESTINY is the third category (or mode) of Being. Unlike Actuality and Possibility, it is sub-divided and has two parts: (1) destiny as Necessity, or Determinism, and (2) destiny as Freedom. Destiny as freedom can be described as "Freedom from Destiny," since the affirmation or negation of Being is equally relevant to it. Hence, both Destiny and Freedom are aspects of Destiny.

Necessity itself is sub-divided into possible and actual necessity. Possible (or logical) necessity is universal and tautological truth. Peirce says, "The essentially or logically necessary is that which (a person) knows is true. For instance, he would not know whether or not there was or was not such an animal as a basilisk, or whether there are any

such things as serpents, cocks, and eggs; but he would know that every basilisk there may be has been hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg. That is essentially necessary; because that is what the word basilisk means." ⁸ Actual necessity is termed "fate." It is that special kind of destiny by which events are supposed to be brought about under definite circumstances which involve no necessitating cause for those occurrences. Peirce says:

"I also think that, in addition to actuality and possibility, a third mode of reality must be recognized in that which, as the gipsy fortune-tellers express it, is 'sure to come true,' or, as we may say, is destined, although I do not mean to assert that this is affirmation rather than negation of this Mode of Reality."⁹

". . . (I take it that anything may fairly be said to be destined which is sure to come about, although there is no necessitating reason for it. Thus, a pair of dice, thrown often enough, will be sure to turn up sixes some time, although there is no necessity that they should. The probability that they will is 1: that is all. Fate is that special kind of destiny by which events are supposed to be brought about under definite circumstances which involve no necessitating cause for those occurrences)."¹⁰

This is about as much light as he gives on the subject, leaving us to infer for ourselves exactly what he had in mind. It would seem that Fate, or actual destiny, will prove itself to be blind destiny, without any necessitating

⁸ Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 43-4.

⁹ Ibid., p. 433.

¹⁰ Ibid., (footnote).

cause, although, in using the term Peirce warns us soundly that we are not to think of it as absolute (as though every single fact in the universe is precisely determined by law . . . or that the state of things existing at any time, together with certain immutable laws, completely determine the state of things at every other time) for there is an undeniable element of chance alive in the world which would deny any such superstitious folly.

The second part of Destiny is Freedom, which shares with actual necessity (or Fate) the control of Actuality. It is in the discrepancy between law and real fact that freedom is discovered. Although phenomena approach very closely to satisfying general laws, we have not the smallest reason for supposing that they satisfy them precisely. We are prone to exaggerate the part that law has to play in the universe. It is by means of regularities that we understand what little we do understand of the universe, hence there is a sort of mental perspective which brings regular phenomena to the foreground. But uniformity, says Peirce, is a highly exceptional phenomenon.

"We say that every event that is determined by causes according to law. But apart from the fact that this must not be regarded as absolutely true, it does not mean so much as it seems to do. We do not mean, for example, that if a man and his antipode both sneeze at the same instant, that that event comes under any general

law. That is merely what we call a coincidence. . . The doctrine is that the events of the physical universe are merely motions of matter, and that these obey the laws of dynamics. But this only amounts to saying that among the countless systems of relationships existing among things we have found one that is universal and at the same time is subject to law. There is nothing except this singular character which makes this particular system of relationships any more important than the others. From this point of view, uniformity is seen to be really a highly exceptional phenomenon. . ." 11

Somehow, Peirce says, we pay little attention to irregular relationships, as though they were of no interest to us. But irregularity is a vital element within the making of law and, as such, has its own part to play within the category of Destiny.

"We are brought then to this: conformity to law exists only within a limited range of events and even there is not perfect, for an element of pure spontaneity or lawless originality mingles, or at least must be supposed to mingle, with law everywhere." 12

Hence, within the category of Destiny, freedom, as seen in this element of pure spontaneity or lawless originality, has its own particular role. This free ingredient within Destiny proves to be one of Peirce's leading ideas: that is, that the universe is not a mere mechanical result of the operation of blind law. In his way of thinking, diversity is just as primitive as law itself, leaving the

11 Ibid., vol 1, pp. 222-3.

12 Ibid., p. 223.

universe open to the destiny of freedom as well as fate.

Obviously, there is a certain vagueness with regard to this free element of Destiny in Peirce. When he speaks of "an element of pure spontaneity" or "lawless originality" in the category of Thirdness, he is in fact using language we have found to be descriptive of both phenomenological and ontological Firstness (as Quality or Possibility). How far chance or freedom can be considered logically as a part of Thirdness remains obscure. At any rate, according to the laws of logic Peirce has laid down for himself, it seems quite inconsistent to hold that any spontaneity or novelty should be found in the third mode of Being.

4. THE MODES OF EXISTENCE. Actuality, or existence, was seen in the metaphysical categories of the modes of Being to be an affair of blind force. Blind force, in its phenomenological aspect of Secondness, is an effort of resistance, opposition, and reaction. But the repetition of such effort in the course of actuality leads to certain patterns which can be detected. Resistance can only be effected, opposition conducted, and reaction exerted in terms of further categories. These categories are the MODES OF EXISTENCE. They are: (1) Chance, (2) Law, and (3) Habit, and are closely related to the phenomenological categories of Firstness,

Secondness, and Thirdness, as will be seen from what follows.

CHANCE is the first category of existence. Peirce says: "The very first and most fundamental element that we have to assume is a Freedom, or Chance, or Spontaneity, by virtue of which the general vague nothing-in-particular-ness that preceded the chaos took a thousand definite qualities." ¹³ Not everything within the universe can be explained by causation. Chance, he explains, "is a mathematical term to express with accuracy the characteristics of freedom or spontaneity." ¹⁴ Conformity to law exists in only a limited range of events, whereas uniformity is a highly exceptional phenomenon. An element of pure spontaneity or lawless originality mingles with law everywhere it happens to be observed. Nature itself is a living expression of spontaneity.

"Those observations which are generally adduced in favor of mechanical causation simply prove that there is an element of regularity in nature, and have no bearing whatever upon the question of whether such regularity is exact and universal or not. Nay, in regard to this exactitude, all observation is directly opposed to it; and the most that can be said is that a good deal of this observation can be explained away. Try to verify any law of nature, and you will find that the more precise your observations, the more certain they will show

¹³ Ibid., vol. vi, p. 137.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 138.

irregular departures from the law. We are accustomed to ascribe these, and I do not say wrongly, to errors of observation; yet we cannot usually account for such errors in any antecedently probable way. Trace their causes back far enough and you will be forced to admit they are always due to arbitrary determination or chance." ¹⁵

Chance or irregularity is seen to be the absence of any coincidence; it is that diversity and variety of things and events which law cannot prevent. The senses give testimony to the reality of chance, while variety is the predominating characteristic of the universe. The infinite diversity of the universe (chance) may bring ideas into proximity which are not associated in one general idea. Variety, then, must be admitted; indeed, Peirce feels, it cannot be denied. "The theory of chance," he says, "merely consists in supposing this diversification (chance, freedom, spontaneity) does not antedate all time." ¹⁶ Exactly what Peirce means by variety not antedating all time is difficult to render. He merely allows this cryptic thought to explode upon the reader with the close of the paragraph and nowhere, as far as I can see, continues the train of thought for further clarification. This much, however, is sure; it would be inconsistent for Peirce to make such a subjective assumption

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 36-7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

pertaining to the first category of existence (secondness) without resting his argument upon the discipline of observation. And how far brute fact can help him here in making such a pronouncement remains a mystery and a logical inconsistency in this phase of his categoriology.

It is interesting, however, to observe that, before Peirce, chance had usually been considered to be a subjective affair, a thing confined to the realm of human error and ignorance, under the assumption that, if our minds were fully developed and capable of knowing all the data and facts, chance would fade away into non-existence. But Peirce lifted chance out of this subjective level to a higher objective category. According to Peirce, chance is a genuine constituent of the actual world. The chance component of an event may be reduced somewhat, but it can never be eliminated altogether. This means that everything that happens happens at least partly by chance, since actuality itself is seen to be essentially a chance affair. Hence, our knowledge of chance comes to us from the objective and actual world; in other words, we know subjectively about the existence of an objective chance. But it is not our knowing that puts chance into the objective world; it is a fact already there, perfectly real and obvious.

LAW, as the second category of existence, is restricted

to metaphysically contingent law. Law as an active force is "second;" order and legislation are "third," and it is law as "second" that Peirce means by "metaphysically contingent law." Law and chance, however, are correlatives; law is not explicable in terms of chance alone, nor can we say that they sprang into being of a sudden by fiat. That would be to make the laws of nature blind and inexplicable. But we can say that they have a natural history, that is the result of evolution, and to suppose this is to suppose them to be imperfect. The discrepancy between the absolute generality which we might suppose law to have and the limited generality of actual law is accounted for by the fact that law is not a mere uniformity but a compulsion (an idea closely related to the phenomenological concept of secondness). In other words, a law is not a static thing of mere uniformity; its function is to act and operate upon something else, and in the process we have its evolution. Hence, genuine laws are those which will "govern facts in the future,"¹⁷ and this gives them their significance, for the future necessary consequent of a present state of things is as real and as true as that present state of things itself. Thus, since a law is how an endless future must continue to be, it follows

¹⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, paragraph 23.

that a law never can be embodied in its character as a law except by determining a habit. Habit itself is a continuation and a completion of our understanding of the category of law.

HABIT is the third mode of existence. In some ways it is the most important, as it both characterizes existence and gives it direction. It can be seen in logic in the notion of a symbol. It is derived from chance; there is a logical process which we may suppose takes place in things, says Peirce, in which the generalizing tendency builds up new habits from chance occurrences. When accident acquires some staying quality, some tendency towards consistency, then the beginning of a habit has been formed. Habits are formed by the passing from certain states to certain others, not only in the biological and psychic realms but as well, and perhaps moreso, in the realm of the earliest spatial extension. Hence, pairs of states begin to take on habits.

It must be seen that Peirce does not mean the word "habit" in the ordinary psychological rendering of the word. He is dealing with something much broader. In the narrower sense of the word we usually think of an acquired habit, but in its wider (and, according to Peirce, perhaps still more usual) sense it denotes such a specialization, original

or acquired, of the nature of all things, that they behave, or tend to behave, in a way describable in general terms upon every occasion that may present itself of a generally describable character. In this sense of the word, habits are characteristic of all actual things, animate as well as inanimate, entirely unconscious within themselves.

Peirce says that: ". . . according to my view, there are three categories of being: ideas of feelings, acts of reaction, and habits. Habits are either habits about ideas or feelings or habits about acts of reaction. The ensemble of all habits about ideas of feeling constitutes one great habit which is a World; and the ensemble of all habits and acts of reaction constitutes a second great habit, which is another World. The former is the Inner World, the world of Plato's forms. The other is the Outer World, or universe of existence."¹⁸ It is the performance of a certain line of behaviour, throughout an endless succession of occasions, without exception, which constitutes a habit. Further, the laws to which we find no exception seem to be the results of long periods of habit-taking. Uniformities come about by their taking on habits. It is the tendency to obey laws which has always been and always will be a growing thing. Hence, Peirce says that law is an outgrowth of two necessary in-

¹⁸ Ibid., vol. iv, pp. 134-5.

redients: the growth of habit-taking, plus the element of chance; thirdness and firstness make for secondness.

How this can be is another apparent inconsistency in Peirce's system. That habit-taking and chance together provide an explanation for the evolution of law is incontestable. But, in the Peircian scheme of existence (secondness), law is "secondness" and habit is the "third." How Thirdness can logically combine with Firstness to make Secondness is inconceivable, according to the pattern we have established. It seems that Peirce could have greatly improved his categories of existence if he had regarded law as "thirdness" (instead of "secondness") and habit as the second term. Certainly, there would be as much ground for holding "habit-taking" as secondness as there was for either "fact" (in the Phenomenology) or for "actuality" (in the speculative ontology). As a matter of fact, "law" is thirdness in the phenomenological categories. This is a decided weak point in the modes of existence, granted that laws evolve and become habits.

Peirce says that, if law is a result of evolution, which is a process lasting through all time, it follows that no law is absolute. That is, we must suppose that the pheno-

mena themselves involve departures from law analogous to errors of observation. Yet habits produce statistical uniformities, and when these are high enough in number there are at least no departures from the law which our senses can take cognizance of. The only bridge that can span the chasm of the chance medley of chaos and the cosmos of order and law is a principle of habit or this infinitesimal chance tendency toward habit-taking.

Before Peirce, habit was regarded as almost altogether a psychological category. Habits were seen to be entirely human affairs and the term had little meaning outside of the human province. Now Peirce did not deny the psychological validity of the category of habit (just as he did not deny the subjective validity of the element of chance) but he did add to habit as a psychological category the conception of habit as a cosmological one. In other words, he stressed the truth that habit was not merely a subjective activity and a mere function of the higher organisms, but also a characteristic of the real and objective world, a realm in which Peirce always had such a profound interest. He saw both habit and chance as perfectly valid objective and subjective conceptions. Physical events, he held, repeated sufficiently, reveal a tendency to take habits, whether there is a human mind to take notice of that fact or not. Habit is an authentic ontological category.

It is not easy to criticize a thinker of the stature of Peirce. One stands before his architectonic as though standing before a Gibraltar. Yet perhaps it is not the might of the system that is most frightening, for the points of weakness are obvious. It is mostly the mystery of what might be lurking behind the hidden fortress walls, perhaps never to be seen, that causes the reader's hesitation. Peirce's writings are so sketchy and without system and pattern that one has a moment's hesitation before standing in judgement of his scheme. There is the feeling that somewhere within those fragmentary paragraphs and disjointed essays there is an answer, but it is only to be found by inference. That is not to say that Peirce is guilty of philosophical obscurantism. He is far from that in both thought and expression. Yet the sentences are so brief and cryptic that on some points we do wish that he had labored on for the sake of clarity and illustration.

To be sure, the phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness (Quality, Fact, and Law) are all that he claimed them to be. A more careful and penetrating analysis of the phaneron and its all-inclusive characteristics could not be desired. In phenomenology, Firstness is a true first, Secondness a true second, and

Thirddness a true third. The development is altogether logical and reasonable.

Yet, when we reach the categories of Existence, the development is not so clear and according to reason. For example, in the scheme of Chance, Law, and Habit (the modes of existence), on the surface it would seem more logical to make Habit the category of Secondness and Law the wider category of Thirddness, into which "habit-taking" seems more naturally to evolve. Peirce himself says that Law is an outgrowth of two necessary ingredients: (1) the growth of habit-taking (Thirddness) and (2) the element of Chance (or Firstness). But how, according to the plan of the speculative ontology, can Thirddness and Firstness combine to make a "Second?" Certainly, Law would seem to be the more general of the three categories, and generality is a basic feature of Thirddness. Peirce speaks of Habit as "that which characterizes existence and gives it direction," which is almost the same as saying that there is a certain purposiveness or end toward which it reaches. Of course, he never does exactly what that end might be, apart from a rather indeterminate "making for general reasonableness," but, granted that this is all that he could say, would not Law fit that characteristic more accurately than mere "blind habit-taking?"

Again he states that Habit is derived from Chance, but Chance is Firstness; how can Thirdness (Habit) be derived directly from Firstness? These questions are not answered within the text, or, at least, the fragmentary and disjointed paragraphs of the Collected Papers leave no hint of a positive answer.

Again, in the modes of Being, the designation of Freedom as a phase of Destiny seems greatly out of place. Freedom as spontaneity, originality, and novelty is Firstness (according to the phenomenological categories), yet he uses these same words to describe the ontological category of Thirdness or Fate. Granted that Chance is an obvious ingredient within the evolution of Law (there being no ultimate scale of determinateness whereby we can ascertain whatever twist all future events shall take), is it not too much to say that this same Chance shares equally with Fate the role of Thirdness in the realm of Being?

These questions are not raised, nor is there any apparent hint at a suitable answer, within the text. And it is this silence which seems to indicate a fundamental weakness in the categoriology, particularly in the third categories of both the modes of Being and Existence. Of course, if Peirce had been more Hegelian in his thinking

than he claimed to be, it would be an easy matter to read Thirdness back into Firstness or Secondness, singly or together. But Peirce's system is neither closed nor all-inclusive. It is strictly evolutionary and builds itself toward a state of generality. According to its fundamental assumptions there can be no evidence of Thirdness in either Firstness or Secondness, so that when he states that Thirdness (Destiny) takes on the attributes of Firstness (Quality) as "free spontaneity" we are left with an inconsistency unexplained.

VI

It can be seen from what has gone before that the key to the understanding of Peirce's metaphysical system, indeed to all of Peirce's philosophical thought, rests in his categoriology. Everything is analyzed into the three-step waltz of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, based upon the disciplines of logic and observation. Phenomenology draws up an inventory of appearances without going into any investigation of their truth, studying the kinds of elements universally present in the phenomenon, meaning by the phenomenon whatever is present to the mind at any time and in any way, and emerges with the three categories of Quality, Fact, and Law as the phenomenological fundamentals. Ontology, in examining the realm of Being and Existence, relying upon the logical categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness and observational fact, emerges with Possibility, Actuality, and Destiny as the three fundamental modes of Being, and Chance, Law, and Habit as the three fundamental modes of Existence. Epistemology also involves the categories. Firstness is seen in perception, in that perception is the

experience of a Quality. Secondness is involved in the surprise element in the experience of phenomena (the ego taken in surprise by the nonego) and is seen in the "resistance" which the surprise entails. And, since Thirdness is the general, the perceptual judgement, which always contains general elements, is seen to be a type of Thirdness. The knowing process is one of percept, judgement, and generality . . . Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Corresponding to the three categories of fact, Peirce also found three aspects of reality. Corresponding to Firstness is the primeval chaos, the treatment or theory of which he called Tychism. Corresponding to Secondness, is determinate particularity with its mathematical distribution of an infinite number of instances, the theory of which he called Synechism, or Continuity. Corresponding to Thirdness is "interpretation" or "evolutionary love," the theory of which he called Agapism. From the beginning to the end of his career, he devoted his energies to developing and applying the doctrine of the three basic, irreducible categories; Being, Opposition, and Reason, or Immediacy, Action, and Mediation, or, as he preferred to call them: Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Eventually they became the clue for him to the classification of the sciences, the fundamental divisions of semiotics, metaphysics, and logic, and each suggested to him

the nature of the object of esthetic inquiry.

Peirce held that each of the categories must be viewed as prior to and explanatory of the others. The immediate is the aboriginal, the first in the order of evolution, "the most primitive, simple, and original of the categories."¹ The existential or active is first in the order of fact, the locus of both the immediate and the rational. Existence is seen as being dyadic, and as present, is a first, while as intelligible, it must embody a third. The third is seen to be first in meaning, relating and completing the others. Each category, Peirce reasoned, can be seen to be something within itself; each is distinct from and contrasted with the others, and each is intrinsically intelligible.

This categorial system of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness in some ways seems to be an echo of Hegel's thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, yet there are some profound differences. Both resort to analytic methodology, but the Hegelian method is to study historic method and not scientific analysis founded upon the principles of the laboratory. Peirce himself speaks of the profound contrast

¹ Hartshorne and Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vol. 11, p. 50.

between the two systems. He holds that Hegel attributed far too much to originality, was deficient in mathematics, and erred in accusing the philosophers of not taking thirdness into account. He claimed that Hegel supplemented synthesis for analysis, using the mind to analyze a thing into false parts and not according to reality. ²

"Hegel. . . formulates the general procedure in too narrow a way, making it use no higher method than dilemma, instead of giving it an observational essence. The real formula is this: a conception is framed according to a certain precept (then), having so obtained it, we proceed to notice features of it which, though necessarily involved in the precept, did not need to be taken into account in order to construct the conception. These features we perceive take radically different shapes; and these shapes, we find, must be particularized, or decided between before we can gain a more perfect grasp of the original conception. It is thus that thought is urged on in a predestined path. This is the true evolution of thought, of which Hegel's dilemmatic method is only a special character which the evolution is sometimes found to assume." ³

Yet, despite the rather rough treatment of Hegel in this quotation, it is quite evident that Peirce was a far greater debtor to Hegel than he was ready to admit. In one instance he writes: "Had Hegel instead of regarding the first two stages (categories) with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent or distinct elements of the Triune Reality, pragmatists might have looked up to him as the

² Ibid., vol. 1, paragraphs 368 and 384.

³ Ibid., p. 262.

great vindicator of their truth." ⁴ To be sure, Hegel, did dwell within the realm of Thirdness, yet Peirce himself, despite his argument, seemed to lay a greater stress upon Thirdness than he did upon the other two categories. At least it seems obvious that Thirdness (i. e., Continuity) gives him the greatest cause for philosophical jubilation. Certainly, he must have shifted his emphasis from time to time, and as the years went on found more and more features which differentiated his views from others, but, throughout, his doctrine seems to be marked off by its recognition of the basic role which rationality, order, continuity, and habit (all of which are Thirdness) play in the interpretation of a concept. Paul Weiss says that: "Most of Peirce's limitations . . . follow from the fact that he never adequately saw that the first and second categories were as basic and as revelatory as the third." ⁵ This would seem quite understandable once we can see how Peirce held the general (or mediating) term as the key to reality; yet the fact seems to remain that both Peirce and Hegel were absorbed in "Thirdness." An interesting study could be made comparing the roles of synthesis and thirdness in the two systems. Both

⁴ Ibid., vol. v, pp. 290-2.

⁵ Paul Weiss, "The Essence of Peirce's System" in the Journal of Philosophy, vol. xxxvii, no. 10, p. 262.

have much in common. Both serve as instruments of relation and mediation; both have to do with the general and more inclusive. The basic difference perhaps would be in the fact that, for Hegel, synthesis is more intimately related to the other two terms, whereas, in Peirce, Thirdness remains somewhat remote in the evolutionary process. Then, too, Peirce has always to contend with that realm of Secondness and "brute fact" - - - regardless of his stress upon the reasonable and continuous.

Paul Weiss claims that Peirce was both a naturalist and an idealist, owing to his interpretation of the nature of laws as evolutionary, changing and growing. Peirce held that his philosophy "resuscitated Hegel" and that matter was "habituated mind" ⁶ which obviously put him in the idealist camp. But, since he also held that matter existed and that it was subject to efficient causation and that laws were immanent in things, he was obviously a naturalist as well. He reconciled the two by showing their interdependence, while leaning mostly towards an idealistic solution of the matter: ⁷

⁶ Ibid., vol. vi, paragraph 25; vol. i, paragraph 42.

⁷ Paul Weiss, op. cit., pp. 261-2.

"Final causation without efficient causation is helpless. . . Efficient causation without final causation, however, is worse than helpless, by far; it is mere chaos." ⁸

"Physical evolution works towards ends in the same way that mental action works towards ends, and thus in one aspect of the matter it would be perfectly true to say that final causation alone is primary. Yet, on the other hand, the law of habit is a simple formal law, a law of efficient causation; so that either way of regarding the matter is equally true, although the former is more intelligent." ⁹

Naturalism might, however, be defined as the view which attempts to explain everything by the operation of force, combination or aggregation. If this is its meaning, Weiss suggests, then it is true that Peirce not only supplements it with an objective idealism which insists on the presence of an element of law, mind, or rationality in the universe, but with a subjective idealism or empiricism which stresses the element of immediacy. Peirce, he feels, insisted on all three and thereby resuscitated Hegel, but in a rather "strange costume."

That preference on the part of Peirce for generals (or "Thirdness") can be understood once we remember that his

⁸ Hartshorne and Weiss, op. cit., vol. 1, paragraph 220.

⁹ Ibid., vol. vi, paragraph 101.

system was developed upon the basis of an out and out rejection of the nominalism that was rampant in his day. Nominalism consists in the denial of the reality of general terms. Realism (to which Peirce immediately went for refuge) consists simply in the assertion of the reality of general terms or laws, a reality equal to that of objective things and subjective minds. He had found a great stimulus in the writings of Duns Scotus and a study of medieval logic, and felt that Scotus would be a sound corrective for much of the nominalistic nonsense which was then appearing on the stage of philosophic thought. Descartes, Locke, Berkely, Hartley, Hume, and even Reid, were regarded by Peirce as nominalists. Kant and Hegel, too, were considered nominalists. He spoke of Hegel as a "nominalist with realistic yearnings,"¹⁰ while Leibniz was regarded as an extreme nominalist. As early as 1871, Peirce says that he made his declaration for realism,¹¹ saying that the heart of the dispute seemed to lie in the fact that the modern philosophers, one and all, unless Schelling could be taken as an exception, recognized but one mode of being, the being of an in-

¹⁰ Ibid., vol. i, paragraph 19.

¹¹ Ibid., paragraph 20.

dividual thing or fact, against all other things. Peirce claimed that he would not doubt the importance of fact but would relegate it to the category of secondness or "Existence," in a middle position between the other two. There are but three modes of being: (1) positive qualitative possibility, (2) the being of actual fact, and (3) the being of law that will govern facts in the future. In his mind, there had to be at least these three in any proper rendering of Being or the nature of Reality in the universe. All varieties of nominalism are, in his mind, foolhardy attempts to render the universe explicable on the basis of only one or two categories.

Perhaps it was Peirce's knowledge and background in the ways of modern science which motivated him most in his revolt. Nominalism was constantly rendering and assuming things to be absolutely inexplicable, whereas science, in order to proceed at all, had to suppose that explanation was at least possible, if not already attainable. Nominalism failed to distinguish between regularity and law, supposing that law is nothing but a mere regularity. But law, Peirce held, could not be reduced to mere uniformity or a mere "name." Peirce claims that it is a name but not "mere". . . laws are names for something real: real possibilities.

Peirce's Realism or Objective Idealism deliberately insists upon the being of an "ideal" world of which the real world is but a fragment. It is a world in which the real is composed of both the potential and the actual together.

"We must suppose that the existing universe, with all its arbitrary secondness, is an offshoot from, or an arbitrary determination of, a world of ideas, a Platonic world." 12

". . . we cannot suppose the process of derivation, a process which extends before time and from before logic, we cannot suppose that it began elsewhere than in the utter vagueness of completely undetermined and dimensionless potentiality. . . The evolutionary process is, therefore, not a mere evolution of the existing universe, but rather a process by which the very Platonic forms themselves have become or are becoming developed." 13

The fundamental difference between the Platonic world of Ideas and Peirce's seems to lie in the fact that, in the latter, evolution explains both the world of ideas and the world of existence, which is a partial actualization of the former.

"In short, if we are to regard the universe as a result of evolution at all, we must think that not merely the existing universe, that locus in the cosmos to which our reactions are limited, but the whole Platonic world, which in itself is equally real, is evolutionary in its origin, too." 14

Plato's world of ideas, on the other hand, is eternal and changeless, far from being "evolutionary" and "changing."

12 Ibid., vol. vi, p. 134.

13 Ibid., p. 135.

14 Ibid., pp. 136-7.

It forms a system of absolute truth under the idea of the Good. Every idea mutually implies every other idea, with logical necessity, and every idea is a form of the Good, being a means toward the reality and value of all the other ideas, and of the whole system. Peirce, of course, would not go this far. He did hold that the Platonic Ideas might be considered as being the wholes of which the actual things are but the fragments, but, in his mind, to suppose them to be absolute exemplars would be to adopt a position of extreme nominalism.

Peirce sometimes called his "Platonic" ideas universals, but more usually generals. He states further that although generality is an indispensable ingredient of reality on the grounds that actuality without any regularity whatever is a nullity, absolute universality must be regarded as impossible of attainment. A universal or general refers to something real: that is, to the regularity of a common relationship; it is neither exclusively actual nor an invention of the minds of men.

From this it follows quite readily how Peirce came to put so much emphasis upon Thirdness, or the general. He held that qualities were general, although no one is more general than the other. Reaction (Secondness), too, has its

aspect of generality, but reaction involves at least two things and a general relation between them; for the being of a thing consists in some other fact. But if qualities and reactions are general, relation, Peirce believed, is of the very essence of generality. Reality is an affair of mediation between quality and reaction. And everything is in some relation to some other, which leads us to the conclusion that all truths form a system, the proposition of a total relatedness. Furthermore, there are ideas in nature which determine the existence of objects. Hence, it is, according to Peirce, impossible to escape the conclusion that general principles are real, at least as real as actual objects, which is the controlling tenet of realism: that things that are real are whatever they really are independently of any assertion about them. The general is not capable of any full realization in the world of action and reaction but is of the nature of what is thought, but our thinking only apprehends and does not create thought. Logic may and does as much govern outward things as it does our thinking.

Hence, the method of attaining to reality is that of an indefinitely prolonged series of inductions, so that a sufficiently long series of inferences from parts to whole will lead us to a knowledge of it. Thus, it follows that reality is "something which is constituted by an event in-

definitely future." 15 And reality will be a real fact which will correspond to the idea of probability; it is something which is hypothetical, for there are real possibilities in the realm of Being. Also, there is nothing to prevent our knowing outward things as they really are, and it probably follows from the hypothetical nature of reality that we not only can but do know them (things as they really are) in numberless cases, although we can never be absolutely certain of doing so in any special case. However, this uncertainty of knowledge does not mean that reality is a subjective affair. The real world is independent of whatever we might think it to be. Reality is not only wider than opinion; it is also wider than truth. The real might be defined as the immediate object of that which is true, although this can never be an adequate definition of reality, since reality is wider than truth. The real world is objective and can be known, in the generality of its relationships.

Peirce's thesis, then, was that objectivity in philosophy "is reached through diagrammatic thought, denotation, and pragmatic specification of meaning (which brings with it social agreement), by the use of the icon, the index, and the token. (Although) this objectivity. . . is not absolute

15 Ibid., vol. v, paragraph 331.

. . . it expresses a relatively stable belief about a real world." ¹⁶ In other words, the categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness give us the clue to objectivity and our knowledge of it. The three categories are simply objectifications of the three elemental relations of symbolic logic, and thus every instance of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness may be diagrammed as the occurrence of a monadic, dyadic, or triadic relation respectively. These diagrams, Peirce held, are not expressions of a superficial or accidental character of the categories, but express their inmost essence. The objectivity derived from these diagrams is that of precise communication, in an unambiguous ideographic form, of the logical meaning of the categories. The metaphysical categories of Chance, Law, and Continuity are adaptations of the three basic inferential processes of abduction, deduction, and induction. The power, growth, and self-corrective nature of logic, and particularly of induction, are the clue to his view that all the elements of the universe are being gradually solidified into a single rational whole.

"Synecism (continuity) is founded on the notion that the coalescence, the becoming continuous, the becoming governed by laws, the becoming instinct with general ideas, are but phases of one and the same process of the

¹⁶ Eugene Freeman, The Categories of Charles Peirce, p. 34 (parentheses mine).

growth of reasonableness. This is first shown to be true with mathematical exactitude in the field of logic, and is thence inferred to hold good metaphysically." 17

Induction is a form of thirdness, making intelligible the efficient reasonableness of the universe.

Thus, it can be seen throughout this brief study that it was Peirce's aim throughout the categoriology to make metaphysics the science of reality. Reality consists in regularity and real regularity is active law. Thus, the close interplay of metaphysics and logic. But, although Peirce based his metaphysics upon logic, he would never hold to the reverse of that process as being true. Perhaps he would have found even more to object to in Dewey's scheme to found it on biology or the practices of the scientists. Logic, for Peirce, was abstract, formal, with its own laws and conditions; he could see no rationality in making it dependent upon the concrete, the specialized, the contingent, and the fallible in this manner. He would have commented on Dewey's work probably to the effect that pragmatism or instrumentalism cannot determine, but must presuppose, a logic, and that the attempt to deal with logic in any but its own terms would be to destroy its value as a support of the exact sciences.

17 Hartshorne and Weiss, op. cit., vol. v, p. 3.

I think we can safely say that Peirce's metaphysical categories rendered philosophy (and particularly metaphysics) scientific and formed the basis for a system of thought which could fittingly analyze the realm of existence and being into the logical parts necessary for an understanding of reality. Although Peirce never brought his ideas within the pattern of one grand systematic treatise, we can, nevertheless, infer from his scattered papers the general structure of what that system might be. Perhaps Peirce was not concerned with founding a system at all, much less making it audible to the rest of the world. In all probability, it was the categorial scheme that was his greatest concern, based upon logical discipline and observational fact.

He stands in the stream of our philosophical heritage as a great seminal mind, but more than that: a transition between American transcendentalism and Hegelianism on the one hand and contemporary pragmatism and realism on the other. His major contribution lies in a study of his categoriology and its objectivity: Firstness as sheer totality and pervading unity of quality in everything experienced; Secondness as existentiality or singular occurrence (the chief merit of which is in its rendering a thoroughly realistic interpretation of philosophy); and Thirdness, the

principle of Continuity or Mediation.

Thirdness, or generality, does not altogether constitute reality, although it is an essential ingredient. To deny this would be to err in the direction of the nominalism Peirce so brilliantly fought against. It must be understood in terms of doing, or action (secondness); while secondness cannot exist without immediate feeling or firstness, on which to act. There is ample reason to understand the author's fascination concerning his "Triune Rhapsody." It is a return to the great central theme of philosophy which, for lack of a better name, we may call the Platonic.

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PERSONAL HISTORY

I was born June 14, 1919, in Farnham, Virginia, the only child of Oscar and Vivian Luttrell. In 1920 the family moved to Baltimore, where I grew to manhood, attending the public schools, and graduating from Baltimore City College in 1938. After two years of clerical work in a Baltimore broker's house, I decided on the Christian Ministry and entered the University of Richmond in 1940, from which I was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in philosophy in 1943. I entered Crozer Theological Seminary in the fall of that year and graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in 1946 and was ordained to the Baptist Ministry in Seventh Church, Baltimore. While a student at Crozer, I served as Assistant Minister in the First Church of Philadelphia and pursued two years of graduate study in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. After ordination, I served as Associate Minister in the Second Church, Richmond, until 1948, at which time I came to my present pastorate at the Main Street Church in Emporia, Virginia. I married Agatha Constance Powell of Richmond in 1944, and we are the parents of one child, Mark Edwyn, age two.