

Memory and Peirce's Pragmatism **Memória e o pragmatismo de Peirce**

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Abstract: *Interpretations of Peirce's frequent references to a proof of his brand of pragmatism vary, ranging from its impossibility to its substantive completion. This paper takes seriously Peirce's claim that a philosophical argument should be composed of multiple fibers and suggests a relatively neglected perspective that connects much of Peirce's thought. This additional fiber is Peirce's account of memory, often only intimated. The importance of this account arises from Peirce's claim that the practically indubitable existence of memory is a strong argument for synechism, the doctrine of continuity. Indeed, the nature of memory relates to several of Peirce's philosophical commitments, including fallibilism and realism.*

As an opening to inquiry, this paper will explore the role of memory in Peirce's account of cognition and its bearing on many of his philosophical positions. Working roughly chronologically, we will look at the implications concerning memory in Peirce's denial of intuition in 1868, his revision of the Kantian mental faculties in 1887, his account of perception, claims about pragmatism and abduction in 1903, and some brief remarks about memory within his mature semeiotic. By covering so much material, I intend only to show the pervasive and richly suggestive theme of memory in Peirce's thought. Accordingly, I raise more questions than I answer. Nonetheless, a probationary conclusion is that Peirce's pragmatism, considered as the logic of abduction, concerns the self-control of memory. Alternatively, under this perspective much of Peirce's philosophy is an attempt to account for knowledge based upon only fallible memory, rather than intuition.

Keywords: *Cognition. Fallibilism. Memory. Peirce. Pragmatism. Synechism.*

Resumo: Interpretações das freqüentes referências de Peirce de uma prova de seu tipo de pragmatismo variam, desde sua impossibilidade a sua substantiva inteireza - por exemplo, no escrito de 1907, "Pragmatismo" (EP 2.398 et seq.). Levando a sério a asserção de Peirce que o raciocínio filosófico "...não deve formar uma corrente que não seja tão mais forte do que seu elo mais fraco, mas um cabo cujas fibras possam ser tão delgadas, desde que sejam suficientemente numerosas e intimamente conectadas" (CP 5.265), este ensaio propõe uma fibra negligenciada no raciocínio de Peirce sobre Pragmatismo. Esta fibra é o valor da memória, usado especificamente para explorar as conexões entre Pragmatismo e Sinequismo. Em vários pontos Peirce sugere um forte elo entre o Pragmatismo e o Sinequismo, com a prova do primeiro estabelecendo a veracidade do último (CP 5.415; cf. CP 4.584). Ademais, Peirce assevera que "O argumento que me parece provar não apenas que há um tal concepção de continuidade pela qual me bato, mas que ela se realiza no universo, é que se assim não fosse, ninguém poderia ter qualquer memória" (CP 4.641). Assim, se a memória é evidência ou prova para a favor do Sinequismo, ela deve estar relacionada ao Pragmatismo. Aceitando que a praticamente indubitável existência da memória é prova do Sinequismo, como a memória se relaciona ao Pragmatismo? Como uma abertura para a inquirição, este ensaio explorará o papel da memória nas explicações que Peirce dá da cognição e percepção. Concernente o primeiro, Peirce identificou três tipos fundamentalmente diferentes de consciência: sentimento imediato, sentido polar, e consciência sintética. A memória é um exemplo deste terceiro tipo, juntamente com a inferência e o aprendizado (CP 1.376). Conseqüentemente, a memória não é uma reprodução rigorosa da sensação, mas, ao contrário, é uma inferência da mesma. Isto está de acordo com nosso segundo tópico a ser explorado, a percepção, pois lá a memória é uma generalização de um percepto em um fato perceptual. Mas qual a natureza desta generalização/inferência? Em CP 7.667, Peirce caracteriza a memória como "...um poder maravilhoso de construir quase-conjecturas ou sonhos que serão trazidos à luz por experiências futuras." A memória como um poder conjetural - isto é, hipotético - aparece, então, como a forma inconsciente (ou não-auto-controlada) da abdução e, em 1903, Peirce defende que o Pragmatismo é a lógica da abdução. Portanto, o Pragmatismo como uma máxima lógica pode ser entendida como concernente ao autocontrole da memória. Este ensaio terminará com alguns breves comentários sobre o papel da memória na semiótica peirceana.

Palavras-chave: Cognição. Memória. Peirce. Percepção. Pragmatismo. Sinequismo.

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Introduction: Another Fiber in the Cable of Pragmatism

As recently as 1997, a scholar as eminent as Richard Robin could safely remark that one of the remaining puzzles of Peirce scholarship is his efforts towards a proof of pragmatism.¹ Even with improved access to Peirce's work, published and unpublished, and the growth of secondary literature, Max Fisch's assessment regarding interpretations of this proof rings true. Specifically, "[t]he problem of the proof of pragmatism calls for further study of Peirce's still unpublished writings on phaneroscopy, semeiotic, existential graphs, the modalities, and the relations between pragmatism, tychism, and synechism."² Peirce himself decided after 1905 that existential graphs were the best form of this proof. Nonetheless, this paper sides with the Fischian – and Peircean – tradition that philosophical "...reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected."³ In particular, I argue that Peirce's neglected account of memory offers another fiber connecting his philosophical reasoning. That is, for the purposes of this paper I take Peirce's "pragmatism" to cover more than the maxim for clarifying meaning, which is more specifically denoted "pragmaticism." Instead, "pragmatism" for our purposes includes a constellation of concepts that Peirce considered intimately related, such as fallibilism, synechism, etc. To illustrate the potential fecundity of viewing these interrelated conceptions through the lens of memory, first I will note two distinct claims made by Peirce that memory provides evidence for the nature of the universe. Then, I will sketch the role of memory in several key arguments over the course of Peirce's career, beginning with his denial of intuition in 1868 and ending with some brief remarks concerning memory and signs in his mature semeiotic of c. 1907. This paper will then conclude with an interpretation of Peirce's 1903 lecture regarding pragmatism as the logic of abduction. Before beginning the main portion of this paper, I must add two more qualifications. First, by addressing much of Peirce's career chronologically, I do not want to imply that his thought did not develop, even on the issue of memory. I intend only to show Peirce's consistent, if often indirect, interest in memory. Finally, I have focused on establishing the plausibility of this interpretational stance within Peirce's writings, to the unfortunate neglect of many fine commentaries. However, I will indicate a few of the most directly influential secondary material in the notes.

1: Memory as Evidence

A prime reason for interest in Peirce's conception of memory is the philosophical use he makes of it as evidence for his positions. Let me note two. First, Peirce claims in several places that memory is the first, or only direct, evidence of his doctrine of synechism, that continuity or Thirdness is active in the universe. For example, "[t]he argument which seems to me to prove, not only that there is such a conception of continuity as I contend for, but that

¹ Robin, "Classical Pragmatism and Pragmatism's Proof," *Rule of Reason*, 140 [1997]

² Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, Pragmatism*, 374 [1981]

³ *EP* 1: 29 "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" [1868]

it is realized in the universe, is that if it were not so, nobody could have any memory.”⁴ As Peirce will identify his overall philosophy as a synechism – a philosophy of continuity, understood in a certain way – an assertion as to the proof of doctrine seems highly important. For example, in 1892 Peirce asserts that his conception of synechism entails three other positions: objective idealism, a logical realism “...of the most pronounced type”, and tychism with a thorough-going evolutionism (what he will later call “agapism”).⁵ Furthermore, synechism is fallibilism objectified.⁶ Finally, in 1905 Peirce claims that his proof of pragmatism relates intimately with a proof of synechism.⁷ These claims support the unity of Peirce’s thought and the potential importance of understanding memory to that unity.

Complementary to this argument is Peirce’s use of memory to argue that reality is neither completely chaotic nor completely ordered, which amounts to the same thing under his analysis. The main exposition of this point is in his 1878 essay “The Order of Nature,” part five of the “Illustrations of the Logic of Science” series.⁸ After analyzing the logical orderliness of the relationships in a chance world, Peirce turns to the experiences of a being in such a world. As there would be no uniformity in experience, meaning that both our perceptions and actions have no regular connection, “...there would be nothing to stimulate or develop either the mind or the will, and we consequently should neither act nor think. We should have no memory, because that depends on a law of our organization.”⁹ Thus, as we do have memory, the world cannot be either perfectly orderly or perfectly random. This agrees with Peirce’s evolutionary cosmology, in which the universe is *becoming* more regular.

However, there are many accounts of memory, and thus if Peirce’s account establishes synechism and therefore bears upon his other positions, there should be something distinctive about his conception of memory. Similarly, if Peirce is correct about memory and synechism, non-synechistic philosophies must have an incoherent account of memory.¹⁰ In an aside during a passage concerning the terminology of psychology, Peirce remarks “...concerning [memory] there is a whole library of books of exceptional average foolishness.”¹¹ Beyond this blanket condemnation, Peirce rarely addresses the explanation of memory offered by others. An exception to this is in his 1868 essay “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” wherein Peirce turns from the continuation of his critique of Cartesianism to reject explicitly the Berkeleyan description of memory.¹² Specifically, Peirce denies that we have images – understood as absolutely determinate – in our memory on both conceptual and phenomenological grounds. I find this passage especially pertinent because Peirce moves from this to a denial that we have such images in perception, which strongly resonates with the second “cotary” proposition to pragmatism from his 1903 lectures: “...that perceptual judgments contain elements of generality, so that Thirdness is directly perceived...”¹³

⁴ CP 4.641 “The Amazing Mazes Chapter 1: The First Curiosity” [1908]

⁵ EP 1: 333 “The Law of Mind” [1892]

⁶ CP 1.171 [c. 1897]

⁷ EP 2.335, “What Pragmatism Is” [1905]. A year later, Peirce identifies synechism as a synthesis of tychism, the doctrine of absolute chance, and pragmatism – see CP 4.584 [1906].

⁸ Reprinted in EP 1: 170-185 [1878]

⁹ EP 1: 176 “The Order of Nature” [1878]

¹⁰ Sandra Rosenthal explores this point in detail in *Time Continuity, and Indeterminacy* [2000].

¹¹ CP 7.377 “Psychognosy” [c. 1902]

¹² EP 1: 47-50 “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” [1868]

¹³ EP 2: 221-224, 6th Harvard Lecture: “The Nature of Meaning” [1903]

2: Intuition and Memory

Peirce's 1868-1869 series of articles in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, known as the "Cognition Series," typically stand as anti-Cartesian documents. This is undoubtedly true, but also lends itself to neglecting the other figures with which Peirce is engaging. Particularly intriguing for us is the passage in which Peirce criticizes the Berkeleyan account of memory. Moreover, Peirce's denial of Cartesian intuition has strong implications for the importance of memory. Let us begin with Descartes. First, in Descartes epistemology there are only two sources of knowledge – intuition and deduction, with the latter potentially reliant upon memory.¹⁴ As memory is faulty, proper deductions are in fact a series of infallible intuitions. However, accepting Peirce's refutation of intuition in the Cognition Series, the only remaining source of knowledge is fallible memory.¹⁵ Support for this interpretation comes when Peirce re-frames his critique of Descartes explicitly in terms of memory in 1893. Here he argues that the fundamental mistake of Descartes is "...to suppose that an idea which stands isolated can be otherwise than perfectly blind. He professes to doubt the testimony of his *memory*; and in that case all that is left is a vague indescribable idea."¹⁶ By denying memory, Descartes strictly is left with nothing, not an absolutely certain foundation for knowledge. Accordingly, memory is the basis for knowledge and its limitations, hence the doctrine of fallibilism. However, what about empirical intuition?¹⁷ Having established that the various modes of consciousness are all inferential – or, in later terms, semeiotic – Peirce must now defend his position against the rebuttal that inference concerns only generals, and thus "...an image, or absolutely singular representation, cannot therefore be inferred."¹⁸ This is a restatement of the empiricist presumption that images are given in sensation and are the source of our ideas. Pointing to an equivocation between "singular" and "individual," Peirce argues that the sense of "singular" used in the rebuttal means "absolutely determinate in all respects." Under the stricture of absolute determination, it seems doubtful that we ever have an "image" in our imagination, and Peirce offers a phenomenological refutation of the Berkeleyan empiricist claim that the only difference between a memory and an impression is one of force and vivacity.¹⁹ If this were so, "...we should remember the book as being less red than it was; whereas, in fact, we remember the color with very great precision for a few moments...although we do not see any thing like it. We carry away absolutely nothing of the

¹⁴ For example, see section 3 in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* [1618-1628]

¹⁵ Cp. Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self* [1989] page 116: "According to [Peirce], we are unable to catch our own thought in flight; we cannot know what we are presently thinking, only what we have just now thought. This sort of introspection, thus, turns out to be *retrospection*, a taking stock that is open to all the pitfalls of erroneous memory and inaccurate description (7.420)"; author's italics. The parenthetical reference is to a c. 1893 statement by Peirce in the *Collected Papers*.

¹⁶ *CP* 4.71 [1893]; emphasis added. This "fundamental mistake" may be the same as the "monstrous error" that blinds Cartesians to pragmatism that Peirce refers to in *MS 322* from c. 1907. That is, asserting that a single idea is intelligible in itself is contrary to the pragmatic tenet that ideas gain their meaning from association with other ideas, especially from those in future experience. For example, well before explicitly defining the pragmatic maxim Peirce claims that "...no present thought (which is a mere feeling) has any meaning, any intellectual value; for this lies not in what is actually thought, but in what this thought may be connected with in representation by subsequent thoughts; so that the meaning of a thought is altogether something virtual" (*W* 2: 227 [1868]).

¹⁷ Cp. Murray Murphey's emphasis on the relevance of Peirce's denial of intuition to the British empiricists in *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy*, 107-109 [1961].

¹⁸ *EP* 1: 47 "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" [1868]

¹⁹ Another line of attack implied by Peirce is that British empiricism fails by taking iconicity (i.e., resemblance) as the only form of representation, thereby neglecting indices and symbols. For example, see de Waal, "Having an *Idea* of Matter," 305-311 [2006].

color except the *consciousness that we could recognize it*.²⁰ This indeterminacy of “memory-images” holds *a fortiori* for imagination. Peirce concludes this trend with several arguments that we do not even have “images” within perception; for example, that our senses are an abstracting mechanism. That is, even if the senses provide absolutely determinate “images” within their respective modalities, which is unlikely on conceptual and phenomenological grounds, every sensation is indeterminate in respect to other modalities. Quoting Peirce: “No one can pretend that the images of sight are determinate in reference to taste. They are, therefore, so far general that they are neither sweet nor non-sweet, bitter nor non-bitter, having savor or insipid.”²¹ This establishes Peirce’s realism concerning generals, and once again suggests the inherent indeterminacy of our knowledge.

3: Inference and Memory

Let us now move 20 years ahead and explore some of Peirce’s comments regarding his understanding of the modes of consciousness. In his 1887-88 proposal “A Guess at the Riddle” Peirce outlines – to varying degrees of thickness – the organization offered by his three categories across the sciences.²² Of special interest to us is the section entitled “The Triad in Psychology,” wherein Peirce identifies memory with the third mode of consciousness. Working in a quasi-Kantian mode, Peirce explores the notion that, due to their ubiquity, the ideas of one, two, and three are rooted in the structures of consciousness.²³ However, they are *not* to be found in the generally accepted Kantian set of faculties – Feeling, Knowing, and Willing – because this division mixes together elements; for example, Willing as desire mixes volition with an anticipatory feeling of pleasure. The removal of desire, and thus Feeling, from Willing leaves only a sense of activity.²⁴ Nonetheless, the antiquity of this idea and its plausibility even among those opposed to Kantianism suggests that there is such a three-fold division. In Peirce’s analysis the three faculties or modes of cognition are the following: “Here then, we have indubitably three radically different elements of consciousness, these and no more. And they are evidently connected with the ideas of one-two-three. Immediate feeling is the consciousness of the first; the polar sense is the consciousness of the second; and synthetical consciousness is the consciousness of a third or medium.”²⁵ More specifically, synthetical consciousness includes the following: “...the faculty of learning, acquisition, *memory and inference*, synthesis.”²⁶ Here we again find a direct connection between memory and Thirdness, as this fundamental mode of consciousness affords an explanation as to the psychological origin of the concept of mediation. However,

²⁰ EP 1: 47-48 “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” [1868]; author’s italics. Later, Peirce will allow that people can have a “hallucinatory” memory, but does not consider this a refutation of his point about determination. See CP 1.379 “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888]: “When red is not before my [Peirce’s] eyes, I do not see it at all. Some people tell me they see it faintly – a most inconvenient form of memory, which would lead us to remembering bright red as pale or dingy.”

²¹ EP 1: 50 “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” [1868]

²² EP 1: 245-279 “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888]

²³ I say quasi-Kantian especially because of this passage: “Kant gives the erroneous view that ideas are presented separated and then thought together by the mind. This is his doctrine that a mental synthesis precedes every analysis. What really happens is that something is presented which in itself has no parts, but which nevertheless is analyzed by the mind, that is to say, its having parts consists in this, that the mind afterward recognizes those parts in it.” CP 1.384 “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888]

²⁴ CP 1.376-377 “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888]; volition minus feeling and purpose is what Peirce later will name *molition* in a letter to William James – see CP 8.303 [1897-1909].

²⁵ CP 1.382, “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888]

²⁶ CP 1.376, “A Guess at the Riddle” [1887-1888], my italics.

what is the nature of this inference associated with memory and synthesis? Here are some hints that parallel Peirce's criticisms of Berkeleyanism reviewed above:

We remember it [a sensation]; that is to say, we have another cognition which professes to reproduce it; but we know that there is no resemblance between the memory and the sensation, because, in the first place, nothing can resemble an immediate feeling, for resemblance supposes a dismemberment and recomposition which is totally foreign to the immediate, and in the second place, memory is an articulated complex and worked-over product which differs infinitely and immeasurably from feeling.²⁷

Again, the "reproduction" that memory performs is the inculcation of a habit of recognition, and as habits are generals, we may tentatively identify memory with abduction, the mode of inference that produces or retains generals. However, confirming this claim would require an exploration of the development of Peirce's thought on the relationship between the forms of inference, especially between abduction/reduction/retroduction and induction, as it varied over his career²⁸ There is warrant for this view in Peirce's claim that "[w]hen we think how slight and entangled must be the ultimate bits of feeling out of which memory constructs her mosaic, we are compelled to liken it to conjecture."²⁹ For another example: "But the moment I pass from the idea of a particular item of my experience, such as seeing a boat with a couple of men going over Niagara, to *the slightest generalization of it*, such as that of the memory of seeing the event, or the general conception of going over Niagara, the positive oneness disappears."³⁰ Let us now turn to Peirce's account of perception and perceptual judgment to continue this trend of identifying memory with abduction and generality.

4: Memory and Perception

Without entering into the full details of Peirce's account of perception, let me note the following points.³¹ First, even something as seemingly absolute as a percept is not so, for while "[t]he present moment will be a lapse of time, highly confrontational, when looked at as a whole, seeming absolutely so, but when regarded closely, seen not to be absolutely so, its earlier parts being somewhat of the nature of memory, a little vague, and its later parts somewhat of the nature of anticipation, a little generalized."³² At another point, Peirce termed these aspects of a percept the *ponecept* and the *antecept*.³³ Here we find again an association between memory and generality, despite the explicit association with vagueness, for at another point Peirce states that "...every memory of a sensation is more or less vague, that is, general."³⁴ There is another passage where Peirce contrasts memory with the generality of expectation, asserting that the two are quite different. Nonetheless, while memory may be essentially anti-general, it is the beginning of the process of generalization from the singular percept: "...whereas the memory is merely the reverberation of the shock of perception,

²⁷ EP 1: 259 "A Guess at the Riddle" [1887-1888]

²⁸ See RLT 141 for a self-assessment of this process [1898]

²⁹ CP 7.667 "Telepathy and Perception" [1903]

³⁰ CP 6.374 "Notes on Metaphysics" [1902], my italics

³¹ Carl Hausman and Sandra Rosenthal influence this outline of Peirce's concept of perception.

³² CP 7.653 "Telepathy and Perception" [1903]

³³ CP 7.648 "Telepathy and Perception" [1903]

³⁴ CP 7.407 "Association" [c. 1893]

essentially anti-general, though worn down here and there into generality by rubbing against memories of other similar occurrences.³⁵

A fuller attempt to understand these passages requires recourse to Peirce's analysis of the interrelated concepts of generality and vagueness to understand how in one case he contrasts them, in another identifies them.³⁶ Nonetheless, for our purposes the continued rich suggestiveness between memory and synechism is enough. Now, what of the intimated relationship between memory and abduction? Peirce's account of perception provides strong support for this relationship, because here he explicitly identifies memory and conjecture. For example, here is a passage where Peirce recasts the account of the present moment cited above. "On the whole then, the percipuum [the immediate interpretation of a percept] is not an absolute event. There is no span of present time so short as not to contain something remembered, that is, taken as a reasonable conjecture, not without containing something expected for the confirmation which we are waiting."³⁷

5: Memory and Semeiotic

In a sense, everything that we have discussed up to this point has concerned the role of memory in Peirce's semeiotic, since he put forth that all thinking occurs through and with signs in 1868, and eventually identified logic in general with semeiotic. However, as a goad for further inquiry, this section focuses on some hints regarding memory in Peirce's later semeiotic.³⁸ To begin, in *MS 599* page 38 Peirce claims "[m]emory is the type of a sign, which takes up the deliverance of past memory and delivers a portion of it to future memory."³⁹ Taking the definite article seriously, Peirce is referring to "type" as understood within his tone-token-type distinction. Illustratively, the various instances of "the" on this page are all tokens of the type "the." Technically, "[a]n Actual sign I [Peirce] call a *Token*; a Necessitant Sign a *Type*."⁴⁰ That is, "the" is a general form that necessarily determines, although not absolutely, the character of any of its actual instantiations – "the" is always a definite article, regardless of its place within a sentence. In a footnote to *CP 4.537* (1905/1906), the editors of *The Collected Papers* assert that this trichotomy is the same as the one of qualisign-sinsign-legisign. Furthermore, Peirce identifies the tone-token-type distinction with a distinction between potisigns, actisigns, and famisigns that he explored circa 1905-1906. It is the latter parallel that returns us to the topic of memory, for a famisign is "...that which is stored away in one's Memory; Familiar, and as such General."⁴¹ Moreover: "*Famisigns*, familiar signs, which must be General, as General signs must be familiar or composed of Familiar signs. (I speak of signs which are "general," not in the

³⁵ *CP 2.146* "Why Study Logic?" [c. 1902]

³⁶ See *CP 5.505-506* "Consequences of Critical Common-Sensism" [c. 1905]. For example, *CP 5.506*: "Notwithstanding their contrariety, generality and vagueness are, from a formal point of view, seen to be on a par."

³⁷ *CP 7.675* "Telepathy and Perception" [1903]. See also *CP 7.670* "Telepathy and Perception" [1903]: "...since the percipuum confesses itself to contain a soupçon of memory – that is, of conjecture..."

³⁸ For a magisterial interpretation of Peirce's semeiotic – really, of Peirce's philosophy overall – see T.L. Short's *Peirce's Theory of Signs* [2007]. I am indebted also to James Liszka's *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* [1996].

³⁹ *MS 599* "Reason's Rules" [c. 1902]

⁴⁰ *EP 2*: 480 "Excerpts from Letters to Lady Welby" [1906-1908]

⁴¹ *EP 2*: 483 "Excerpts from Letters to Lady Welby" [1906-1908]

sense of *signifying* Generals, but as being *themselves* general...⁴² Again, there is a strong link between memory and generality, as this suggests that memory is *of* generals.

Conclusion: Pragmatism as the Self-Control of Memory

In his 1903 lectures, Peirce offers three cotary propositions to pragmatism:⁴³

I do not think it is possible to fully comprehend the problem of the merits of pragmatism without recognizing the following three truths: *first*, that there are no conceptions given to us which are not given to us in perceptual judgments; so that we may say that all of our ideas are perceptual ideas. This sounds like sensationalism. But in order to maintain this position, it is necessary to recognize, *second*, that perceptual judgments contain elements of generality; so that Thirdness is directly perceived; and finally, I think that it is of great importance to recognize, *third*, that the abductive faculty, whereby we divine the secrets of nature is, as we may say, a shading off, a gradation of that which in its highest perfection we call perception.⁴⁴

Thus, proving these three propositions is essential to establishing Peirce's brand of pragmatism. In light of the above material, this the point where Peirce's proof of pragmatism links to his proof of synechism – understood as the reality of generality or an objective fallibilism – with the aid of a proper account of memory.

However, on occasion Peirce suggests that percepts contain *no* elements of generality, instead brutally forcing themselves upon us. Seemingly composed of only Firstness and Secondness, percepts as they first appear are unintelligible, and yet are the basis for all of our conceptions. I think that the appropriate response here is claim that percept is *largely* a thing of Firstness and Secondness, of brute qualitative immediacy, but there is also an element of Thirdness. Maintaining Peirce's heuristic concerning the universality of the categories supports this claim: "Not only does Thirdness suppose and involve the ideas of Secondness and Firstness, but never will it be possible to find any Secondness or Firstness in the phenomenon that is not accompanied by Thirdness."⁴⁵

Therefore, we may say that a percept is immediately "converted" into a memory – "[b]ut you must admit that a feeling experienced in an outward sensation may be reproduced in memory. For to deny this would be idle nonsense."⁴⁶ Peirce's association of memory with Secondness confirms the immediacy of this "conversion," for "[m]emory supplies us a knowledge of the past by a sort of *brute* force, a quite *binary* action, without any reasoning."⁴⁷ Memory, through association with previous experience, generalizes percepts a bit into perceptual facts, this generalization making the immediacy of perception (eventually) intelligible. Alternatively, perhaps more accurately this process of generalization works

⁴² EP 2: 483-484 "Excerpts from Letters to Lady Welby" [1906-1908]

⁴³ "Cos, cotis, is a whetstone. They appear to me to put the edge on the maxim of pragmatism" EP 2: 226 "Pragmatism as the Logic of Abduction" [1903]

⁴⁴ EP 2: 223-224 "The Nature of Meaning" [1903]

⁴⁵ EP 2: 177 "The Categories Defended" [1903]. Also, from the same lecture: "To treat the three categories simply as three units, regardless of their distinctiveness and of their essential correlations, will be a crude procedure from which no useful approximation of the truth of Nature were to be expected" - EP 2: 179 [1903].

⁴⁶ CP 1.308 "The Categories in Detail" [1905]

⁴⁷ CP 2.86 "Partial Synopsis of a Proposed Work in Logic" [c. 1902]. This passage again suggests the idea that the beginnings of memory in perception are indexical, rather than iconic; that is, memory does not "copy" sensations. See footnote #20 above.

through memory harboring the element of generality in a perception as the determinate aspect passes away. And it is here where the notion of pragmatism as the self-control of memory comes into play. Taking the third cotary proposition seriously, perception is towards the unself-controlled, and thus for Peirce uncriticized, end of the spectrum of abduction. Moreover, as memory is the abductive moment of perception, insofar as memory can be self-controlled it falls in the domain of the pragmatic maxim. Again,

Pragmaticism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct. How, then, does the Past bear upon conduct? The answer is self-evident: whenever we set out to do anything, we "go upon," we base our conduct on facts already known, and for these we can only draw upon our memory. It is true that we may institute a new investigation for the purpose; but its discoveries will only become applicable to conduct after they have been made and reduced to a memorial maxim. In short, the Past is the storehouse of all our knowledge.⁴⁸

In broadly pragmatic terms, if the meaning of a concept is its experiential consequences, or its truth is its leading to expected results, those expected consequences rest upon previous experience. Often, the pragmatist emphasis on the future overshadows the importance of remembering the past. Nonetheless, the topic of memory may provide a rich understanding of Peirce's pragmatism and its relations to other doctrines. Although this paper presents little more than a hypothesis, I hope that it is a memorable one.

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Dates given in brackets in the footnotes are those of original composition/publication.

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