FALLIBILISM AND THE FUTURE OF PRAGMATISM: AN ISSUE OF REALISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

FALLIBILISMO E O FUTURO DO PRAGMATISMO: UMA QUESTÃO DE REALISMO E CONSTRUTIVISMO

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Abstract: *This paper examines Joseph Margolis's notion of fallibilism, specifically his distinction between the views of two classical pragmatists, Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey, as well as the reasons why he prefers Dewey's fallibilism above Peirce's. In this examination I will trace the Nathan Houser-Margolis debate insofar as it has unfolded itself in the Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, beginning with Nathan Houser's 2004 presidential address. Houser's main objection to Margolis is that he misread Peirce and that as a consequence his favoring of Dewey is misguided. Though Margolis concedes the former, he continues to insist that the future of pragmatism still lies with Dewey, not Peirce. Revisiting the debate, I seek to clear up some of the confusion, so as to get a better idea of the classical pragmatist position that Margolis thinks needs reinventing. In doing so, we will be able an interpretation to the claim that Peirce is to be considered a realist philosophy of the constructivist stripe that does not require us to collapse one conception of fallibilism into the other.*

Keywords: *Houser, Margolis, Peirce, Dewey, Realism, Constructivism, Fallibilism.*

Resumo*: Este trabalho examina a noção de falibilismo de Joseph Margolis, especificamente sua distinção entre as visões de dois pragmatistas clássicos, Charles Sanders Peirce e John Dewey, assim domo as razões do porque ele prefere o falibilismo de Dewey ao de Peirce. Neste exame, eu percorrerei o debate Nathan Houser-Margolis como ele se desenrolou na revista *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, começando com a palestra na posse de Nathan Houser como Presidente dessa *Sociedade*. A principal objeção que Houser faz a Margolis é que ele leu mal Peirce e, portanto, seu favorecimento de Dewey é mal orientado. Embora Margolis aceite a primeira objeção, ele continua a insistir que o futuro do pragmatismo ainda reside com Dewey, não Peirce. Revisitando o debate, eu busco esclarecer parte da confusão, para que possamos ter uma idéia melhor da posição do pragmatismo clássico que Margolis acha que precisa ser reinventada. Ao fazê-lo, nós poderemos fornecer uma interpretação à reivindicação de que Peirce deva ser considerado um filósofo realista do tipo construtivista que não exige que nós detonemos uma concepção de falibilismo com a outra.

Plavras-chave*: Houser, Margolis, Peirce, Dewey, Realismo, Construtivismo, Falibilismo.

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In his book, *Reinventing Pragmatism: American Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century*, Joseph Margolis asserts the direction pragmatism must take if it is to be the dominant American philosophy. Thanks to Rorty and Putnam, interest has been revived in pragmatism, but they ignored some fundamental questions – pragmatism must have a "third life" if it is to succeed. According to Margolis, Rorty and Putnam actually retreat from what pragmatism originally intended back into the arms of Cartesianism. Margolis uses this term very broadly. Cartesianism, for Margolis, signifies any external notion added to a doctrine that tries to save objectivity. For instance, he notes with Putnam that his limit concept is foreign to his internal realism—an *ad hoc* maneuver solely intended to avoid the charge of

relativism. But, the relativist question is one that *must* be taken into account by the new life of pragmatism. Along these lines, Margolis argues for a renewed commitment to fallibilism, but one specifically conjoined to some form of historicism. In fact, Margolis claims that fallibilism is pragmatism's most far reaching influence, and should, thus, be central to any new formulation of pragmatism. I wish to consider this notion of fallibilism in relation to Margolis and his arguments. Specifically, I want to observe the distinction he makes between the fallibilist positions of Peirce and Dewey, and why he considers Dewey's fallibilism to be more favorable than Peirce's.

According to the second edition of *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, there are many forms of fallibilism, but all of them seem to hold that certain classes of propositions are not certain, and, so, have the potential to be wrong. Of course, fallibilism is most closely associated with the classical pragmatists, but the contention of Margolis is that there are important distinctions to be made between the various forms of fallibilism. In both of his articles, "Peirce's Fallibilism[1]" and "Rethinking Peirce's Fallibilism[2]," Margolis holds that the Peircean fallibilism contain three central tenets: T1) we may be mistaken with regard to any proposition or belief; T2) it is likely that, given enough time, self corrective inquiry will progress towards true belief; and T3) there are *metaphysical* doctrines that provides some assurance that T1 and T2 do occur. In his first paper, "Peirce's Fallibilism," Margolis attempts to attack Peircean fallibilism on the grounds of T3. Specifically, by examining two of the metaphysical claims he attributes to Peirce: C1, the act of knowing a real object alters it, and, C2, the objects of reality are independent of what we think them to be. Based upon this formulation, there is an obvious paradox between the two statements. This "dualism," according to Margolis, shows that there are two different conceptions of truth—one for finite inquiry, where we can alter the objects of our representations, and one for infinite inquiry, where the objects of our representations are unalterable. Margolis believes that because of this, T3 fails. As such there is no metaphysical support for T1 or T2.

Without T3, Peirce's fallibilism collapses into Dewey's- a purely epistemic doctrine holding that there is no privileged mind or self, but that all thought emerged from practical endeavors like surviving in an ever-changing world. This is a much narrower claim than that of Peirce, at least ostensibly. With Peirce, we have the metaphysical concepts such as the ideal limit of inquiry, which is a telos that inquiry would ideally reach given enough time. Thus, this concept allows us to postulate some sort of progression towards true belief; moreover, it gives us some degree of rational assurance that progress is possible. Dewey gives us nothing of the sort:

> …fallibilism takes two entirely different forms in Peirce and Dewey. In Peirce it signifies the perpetual postponement of inquiry's ever arriving at the "truth about reality". . . . In Dewey it signifies the restriction of all cognitive claims within a thoroughly fluxive world, by means of practical skills (on which science itself depends) that first emerge from certain non-cognitive animal powers implicated in our survival and viability.[3]

 All we have from Dewey, according to Margolis, is the hope that progress, through self-corrective inquiry, exists. It becomes a *mere* hope precisely because there are no metaphysical

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[1] Margolis, Joseph. "Peirce's Fallibilism". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34 (1998)

[2] Margolis, Joseph. "Rethinking Peirce's Fallibilism." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* vol 43, No. 2 2007

[3] Margolis, Joseph. "Peirce's Fallibilism." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34 (1998): 537.

underpinnings giving us any sort of certainty that progress is taking place—fallibilism becomes a purely epistemological thesis. This has far reaching implications. For example, if fallibilism collapses, then neither Peirce nor Dewey can save scientific realism—after all, we are left with only a *mere* hope of progress. In a reply to these far-reaching claims from Margolis, Nathan Houser focuses on the apparent paradox between C1 and C2.

According to Houser, Margolis has only identified an *apparent* paradox; indeed, he has misquoted Peirce in his first paper concerning C1. Peirce actually does not hold this claim:

> Here is what Peirce said: 'It appears that there are certain mummified pedants who have never waked to the truth that the act of knowing a real object alters it. They are curious specimens of humanity, and as I am one of them, it may be amusing to see how I think.' So, on a more careful reading of the text, this paradox disappears—it disappears, anyway, assuming that Margolis is wrong in holding that claim 1 is required by Peirce's fallibilism (as Peirce obviously denies).[4]

Upon fixing the infelicity, the paradox disappears, and C2 is all that is left; thus ostensibly destroying Margolis' argument. In fact, Houser goes further and states that the fallibilisms of Dewey and Peirce are actually compatible. While Margolis claims that Dewey can offer us no more than the hope of progress, Houser contends that Peirce offers much of the same—but, instead of *mere* hope, he gives us *rational* hope:

> We are all walking across this bog. Fallibilism is the understanding that no matter where we are in our journey and no matter how solid the ground may feel beneath our feet, at any time it may begin to give way. When we feel the ground beginning to shift what is it that guides us in taking our steps (hopefully) to a new firm place? It could not be the convergence of inquiry; we would sink into the depths long before. No, it is abduction alone, or perhaps even that proto-abductive cognitive process we call perpetual judgment, that saves our hides.[5]

It is not some convergence of finite truth to infinite truth (as Margolis suggests) that provides justification for some form of realism; rather, it is the abductive form of logic that gives us hope to explore new "foundations" of "objectivity." In summation, Margolis stresses the wrong aspect of Peirce's metaphysic that allows for a viable form of realism. In the end, Peirce himself admits that we have little more than a reasonable hope to believe in progress towards truth and objectivity.

In response to Houser's objections, Margolis admits that he erred in a hasty treatment of the text, but affirms that the original paradox can be reclaimed—in an even stronger version. He notes that Houser was right in his textual objection, but by offering the wider context of C1 the paradox will be reinstated. The crux of Margolis's claim revolves around the idea that the notions of *True* and *Satisfactory* are synonyms. Consider the following quote from Margolis:

> Now, the absolutely decisive point is this—a point Houser does not mention—namely, that Peirce was entirely willing (in the context of what I've cited) to countenance the verbal formula (James's in effect) if the meaning of the "Satisfactory in cognition" were brought into accord (whether in science or morality) with the fallibilist concordance between Truth and Reality.[6]

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[4] Houser, Nathan. "Peirce in the 21st Century." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society. Vol. 41 (2005).* 7.

[5] Houser, Nathan. "Peirce's Contrite Fallibilism," in *Semiotics and Philosophy in Charles Sanders Peirce*, Rossella Fabbrichesi Leo and Susanna Marietti, eds., (New Castle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 13.

[6] Margolis, Joseph. "Rethinking Peirce's Fallibilism." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* vol 43, No. 2 2007. 244

What Margolis is hinting at with this assertion is Peirce's account of belief and doubt in "The Fixation of Belief," an account worth taking a moment to consider.

The first premise of Peirce's theory of belief and doubt, and arguably the most fundamental, is his concept of thought. Thought functions to produce belief, which are habits of action, meaning that the reason thinking goes on is to provide us with a belief concerning objects of our possible experience—"truth" about reality. These conditional and fallible truths allow us to operate in the world. From this we see that beliefs or truths are not merely static concepts to be enumerated and taken account of; rather, they are tools employed to cohere our experience with the real world. Thus, by implication, what we call truths are really beliefs that are subject to change when the objects to which we apply them resist our conceptions about that object. That is to say, beliefs are subject to change because real objects resist the ideas any one individual, or group of finite individuals, have to say about them. In light of this, we learn that thought functions to produce a new belief to eliminate the doubt produced by a novel experience that resisted our old belief. These beliefs go on to produce habits of action which govern our responses to certain stimuli. Margolis interprets this as the concept of satisfaction that removes all stimuli, where stimuli lead to doubt.

This is where the dualism resurfaces. Peirce had two concepts of this sort of satisfaction, or the cessation of doubt. On the one hand, he believed that speculation at the level of triteness operated much as if it were a simple organism working towards the cessation of a certain stimulus. On the other hand, Peirce believed ideal satisfaction, or ideal inquiry, aims at that which is the end of inquiry—Truth. In light of this, Margolis is able to re-introduce his original attack on the metaphysic surrounding Peirce's fallibilism. From Margolis's second paper about Peirce's fallibilism, we receive his argument that there is no way to measure between something that is finite and something that is infinite. In this case Margolis' critique of a gap between finite and infinite continuities is applied to satisfaction in the finite sense, the mere cessation of doubt stimulus, and satisfaction in the infinite sense, the end of inquiry that results in the closest approximation to the truth. Furthermore, seeing as how Peirce cannot logically claim justification in light of this paradox, he has nothing with which to retort to James's conception of truth. The logical proof for his assertion that inquiry pursued in a fallibilist nature will end up corresponding to the "Truth" is not justified. Margolis is willing to grant that it may be better to turn to this sort of method, but the justification for it is lacking.

Margolis also answers the question of how we are to interpret Peirce. Ultimately, Margolis concludes that we view Peirce as a variant of Hegel, which is to say that he can offer nothing to escape a thoroughly constructivist account of reality. If we are willing to admit this, then it is possible to reduce Peirce back to Dewey once again. This is the price of a failing metaphysic that no longer supports the epistemological claim of fallibilism. So, Margolis concludes that since no probable calculus of measuring the distance between the finite and infinite is possible, Dewey's notion of fallibilism has been superior all along. Indeed, Dewey himself offers the key to what would follow if we were to do away with the absolute or ideal limit—something that Margolis suggests Peirce and Hegel were not aware of.

There are a few things to note about Margolis' critique. It is clear that, if they hold water, then their implications reach to the core of Peirce scholarship. For instance, both Houser and Margolis are claiming that Peirce and Dewey are somewhat compatible with each other. The difference, however, is that, on the one hand, Houser wants to claim compatibility without any major revision on the view of Peirce; on the other hand, Margolis claims compatibility,

but at the risk of denying the extreme realist position of Peirce and re-examining him in the light of constructivism—which Peirce would want to avoid if it is the case that in adhering to extreme realism he is attempting to save objectivity.

It seems as though that the relationship between synechism and fallibilism is critical here. Clearly, Margolis wants to claim that fallibilism is the linchpin, or at least a linchpin, of Peirce's system, but Peirce claims, at least directly, that synechism is more general than fallibilism:

> The principle of continuity is the idea of fallibilism objectified. For fallibilism is the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy. Now the doctrine of continuity is that all things so swim.[7]

From this it may be claimed that it is in fact synechism that is the *one* linchpin of a Peircean philosophy. That being the case, Margolis anticipates this by claiming that one should not conflate finite continuities and infinite continuities. I am not so sure Peirce would make such a distinction as he claims that the notion of continuity itself involves the concept of infinity.[8] Consider the following: "The property of Aristotelicity may be roughly stated thus: a continuum contains the end point belonging to every endless series of points which it contains. An obvious corollary is that every continuum contains its limits."[9] Thus interpreted, a finite continuum may have its limits at infinity, but according to the above property those very infinite limits are contained within the finite continuum itself. This may be one way of understanding Peirce when he claims that the notion of infinity is contained with the concept of a continuum.

Another way to approach the question has been suggested by Nathan Houser. Margolis' problem with Peirce's fallibilism (and his philosophy in general), is that a convergence theory of truth seems to carry with it a perpetual postponement of reaching truths. It is always off in the distance. In effect, according to Margolis, the paradox running through Peirce's account of truth prevents him from linking the end of inquiry with the "here and now" pragmatism so critically requires. Margolis stresses that Dewey, in stressing his concept of ends-in-view, is simply more pragmatic in the "hereness" and "nowness" sense. Peirce, however, need not be interpreted this way. We may light upon the so-called truth with our very first abduction or hypothesis. What fallibilism requires is that we cannot know that we have done so. What it boils down to is the epistemological claim that we cannot know that we know we have hit upon the truth. Note that it is not that the truth is always in the future, it is the certainty that is postponed until the end of inquiry. Menand's account of Peirce and the importance of statistical reasoning and the law of errors in *The Metaphysical Club* bolsters this interpretation of Peirce's theory of the end of inquiry. This provides the conceptual link necessary for uniting the end of inquiry theory with the "here and now" that Deweyan pragmatism touts.

This raises the further issue: is Peirce a realist or a constructivist? Margolis claims that Peirce must be a realist of a constructivist stripe. Now, based on the forgoing discussion of the fallibilism issue, if it is the case that Margolis misses the mark and we are able to reinstitute Peirce's metaphysics, then it can be used to show just how Peirce may agree with a limited

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[7] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce.* Vols. 1-6 Charles Hawthorne and Paul Weiss, eds., Cambridge, Mass., 1931-1935; vols. 7-8, Arthur Burks, ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1958. CP 171
[8] Ibid. CP 165
[9] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce.* "The Law of Mind." Vol 1. Eds Kloesel and Houser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pg 321

concept of constructivism. As a reference point, we can consult the entry for social constructivism in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*:

> …Any variety of views which claim that knowledge in some area is the product of our social practices and institutions…Mild versions hold that social factors shape interpretations of the world. Stronger versions maintain that the world, or some significant portion of it, is somehow constituted by theories, practices, and institutions. Defenders often move from mild to stronger versions by insisting that the world is accessible to us only through our interpretations, and that idea of an independent reality is at best an irrelevant abstraction and at worst incoherent.[10]

Traditionally, constructivism has been opposed to realism, because constructivism broadly construed rejects that our knowledge and our categories of thought reflect or try to come to know some sort of transcendent ontological reality. This general tenet and theory can be further subdivided into the doctrines of epistemological constructivism and ontological constructivism. The former holds that our knowledge is socially constructed, while the latter seems to be more radical in that it supposes that the objects of reality themselves are socially constructed in a sense. Though it is not certain that epistemological constructivism entails ontological realism, it is no doubt possible to relate the two, and many people do as the quote states. Hence, it could be stated that our socially, or communally, constructed knowledge is the result of an active participation in socially, or communally, constructed real objects. Taken in this context, this is an intriguing assertion made by Margolis and one that seems highly contested. It seems however, that any pragmatist must be a constructivist in some narrow sense of the term through the rejection of the spectator theory of knowledge. If it is the case that we simply do not mirror nature and discover truths that merely correspond to an already fully determined reality, then humanity as a whole must have some say in the unfolding of reality—no matter how small. Peirce, as is the case with every other pragmatist, must be some sort of constructivist. The question becomes how extreme a constructivism can be attributed to him. In relation, another paradox could be raised. Even though a possible solution to the problem of uniting the here an now with the end of inquiry in regard to Peirce's fallibilism, it is a different question to ask how it is that Peirce is at least a narrow constructivist and yet hold that reality is independent of what any finite collection of inquiries may think it to be. How can it be that we participate in constructing reality if this is the case?

Christopher Hookway has provided an answer to this in his paper "Truth, Reality and Convergence." Hookway notes that Peirce gave this pragmatic explication of reality being that which is independent of what we think it to be relatively early in his career. His paper goes on to show that, as Peirce mature, he came to distance his notion of truth from his concept of reality. In other words, he moved away from defining reality as that which is independent of any finite collection of inquiries. From this we may claim more generally that reality is that which causes belief. In the possible words of Hookway, real objects are those objects that found the basis for prompting questions in the course of our experience that our contested true propositions are directed at. Rather than focusing on reality as what is independent of what we think it to be, I, like Peirce as Hookway suggests, understand the concept of reality as that which causes belief. Formulating reality henceforth will allow us to avoid thinking of an "absolute conception of reality,"[11] which is crucial to question of Peirce as a constructivist. It is this absolute conception of reality, or transcendent reality that is

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[10] Audi, Robert ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999, pg. 855

[11] Misak, Cheryl ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*. "Truth, Reality, and Convergence." Christopher Hookway. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2004

independent of relative secondary qualities, that the constructivist seeks to avoid. I will now view the claim of constructivism within the context of Peirce's evolutionary cosmology as portrayed in the "Monist" series.

In "The Architecture of Theories," Peirce lays out the structure of his metaphysics with the following claim: "The one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws."[12] Peirce's objective idealism will encompass the most critical parts of his philosophy. Unlike the modern cosmological theories that claim that all things are the nature of matter, Peirce holds the contrary, matter and the physical laws of nature are mental. Thus, what we take to be matter is essentially highly determinate mind by virtue of the acquisition of a great many habits. This process will be explained and extended through the concepts of Synechism, Tychism, Agapism, and Peirce's notion of concrete reasonableness.

Peirce considers Synechism to be a linchpin or keystone for the systemmazation of the direction that philosophy must take. We find it present everywhere in Peirce, and he explicates it most fully in "The Law of Mind." It is a curious and difficult doctrine that entails the objective idealistic one law of mind and the mathematical concept of infinitesimals. The Law of Mind holds that ideas tend to spread; thereby generalizing and affecting other ideas, but losing intensity in the process. Being that Peirce holds that physical matter is highly habituated mind, we immediately see that we no longer are dealing with discrete, or *severely* demarcated kinds, but only matters of degree along a continuous spectrum. I pause here to note that Peirce did have a conception of kinds, but even this conception was not meant to reflect sharp and clear divisions among objects. Ideas, of course, are mental phenomenon. Mediating between these two thoughts and explaining how the law of mind works is the theory of infinitesimals. Instead of configuring space as a set of points or time as static, infinitesimals destroy the common notion of points on a line all together. Whereas a traditional conception of a line was thought of as a set of close points, the infinitesimal conception of expansive entities that sort of "bleed" into one another. Perhaps, an infinitesimal conception of time is clearer. An instant of time contains an infinity of infinitesimal moments whereby the middle of one interval is the beginning of the next interval, the end of the first interval is the middle of the second interval, and the end of the middle of the second interval is the beginning of a third interval. This process expands infinitely in both directions, both past and future. Thus, if we consider the second interval to represent the present, we can see that the present moment is not purely discrete to the past or future; rather, the past is infinitesimally close, or expands into, the present. Likewise, the future expands infinitesimally back to the present. In other words, the present mediates between the past and the future. It is on this basis alone that makes it possible for ideas to spread and interact with each other and makes it possible that everything is of one substance. Moreover, it is this keystone that makes it possible for physical laws to be a subclass of mental laws.

Since it is the case that everything, including physical matter and natural laws, is of the nature of mind, it must be the case that absolute chance operates in nature. This is the proposal of Tychism as espoused in "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined." If this were not the case, then we have no recourse to an explanation for the variety and complexity increasing in the universe. Mechanical principles offer no explanation for this as they require that, essentially,

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[12] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. "The Architecture of Theories." Vol 1. Eds Kloesel and Houser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pg 293

the diversity or complexity at the beginning of any process be the same at the end of the process as well. Peirce believes that observation does not bear this out. Tychism is one of Peirce's trump cards against the Spencerian notion of evolution. Observation shows us that the universe is becoming increasing more complex and various; however, mechanical principles cannot account for this phenomenon. A mechanical philosophy would have to hold that the variety or complexity has been present since the beginning of the universe. Curiously, this seems consistent with an absolute conception of reality as it promotes an essentially independent reality in relation to human endeavors. A notion of absolute chance can account for increasing complexity; furthermore, and more close linked with our observations, Peirce challenges this notion of mechanical laws of nature in the following way:

> Try to verify any law of nature, and you will find that the more precise your observations, the more certain they will be to show 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.[13]

Here we find a fuller extension of the claim that matter is effete mind. It may be the case that matter is mind greatly determined by numerous habits, but it is still mental in nature—all things are. Peirce thinks mental law is clearly not fully determinate. Now, physical laws may be hidebound with habits and far more rigid, but they are still mental laws at bottom. Thus, they cannot be fully determintate as well. This is what the quote shows and our observational experience bears out. Variations in measurements are not solely due to error on the part of the subject measuring, but because reality in not fully determined in relation to the physical law being studied. The measurements may have smaller and smaller oscillations around a given number, but there remains absolute chance nonetheless. Peirce has provided us with the possibility of evolution at this point, but what is the actual mode or mechanism by which things do evolve?

Agapism, as Peirce discusses in "Evolutionary Love," which includes Tychism, holds that a sort of evolutionary love has reality in nature. It is difficult to pin down what Peirce means by love, but it is certain that Synechism is at the heart of it as Peirce claims that love has no exact opposite, i.e. hate is not the opposite of love, rather, what we call hate and evil are merely degenerate forms of love. As Peirce states in this paper love is to tend to hate in such a manner that hate becomes love. From this the claim can be made that what is supposedly contrary to love is slated to merge into it. Peirce calls this process "sympathy." We can apply this to individuality and community as well: Peirce advocates that a sympathetic evolution requires that individuals merge their individuality with the neighbors, forming a sort of community spirit. It is important to note that this kind of evolution is purposive. This is part of the explanation as to why Agapism is different from Tychism--this sort of evolution extends beyond absolute chance. Hence, Agapism provides an explanation for not only how things vary (absolute chance), but also as to how things grow. Considered in the context of the individual merging their individuality with another, love causes growth when one individual makes their impulse the fulfillment of another's impulse and vice versa.

There are the critical elements of Peirce's metaphysics. They are at the heart of Peirce's metaphysical account of the origin and evolution of the universe, as such they are critical in interpreting Peirce in a constructivist manner. As Menand has noted in his Pulitzer winning

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[13] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined." Vol 1. Eds Kloesel and Houser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pg 305

book *The Metaphysical Club*, Peirce, like his predecessor Kant, subscribed to the metaphysical nebular hypothesis of the universe. This essentially holds that the universe progressed from a state of chaos and possibility to one of order and determination. Peirce's variant is as follows:

> It would suppose that in the beginning,--infinitely remote,--there was a chaos of unpersonalised feeling, which being without connection or regularity would properly be without existence. This feeling, sporting here and there in pure arbitrariness, would have started the germ of a generalising tendency. Its other sporting would be evanescent, but this would have a growing virtue. Thus, the tendency to habit would be started; and from this with the other principles of evolution all the regularities of the universe would be evolved. At any time, however, an element of pure chance survives and will remain until the world becomes an absolutely perfect, rational, and symmetrical system, in which mind is at last crystallised in the infinitely distant future.[14]

This account of the metaphysical evolution of the universe is a microcosm of Peirce's philosophy. The notion of objective idealism is present everywhere, but most explicit in Peirce's claim that at the end of the infinite process of evolution mind will have crystallized. As everything is of the nature of mind, everything will be perfectly determinate at this point. Tychism is the theory of absolute chance that makes the provision necessary for moving from indeterminacy to determinacy. Synechism is the fundamental conception that links everything together in the process, and Agapism is Peirce's most general form of evolution. Also implicit in this account is Peirce's theory of the categories. The categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness are ubiquitous in all three of Peirce's universes. As such, there are many different modes these characters can take depending on the context. For instance, in logical, or semiotic, terms, Firstness refers to terms, Secondness to propositions, and Thirdness to arguments. They can be construed in terms of Feeling, Action, and Thought. Metaphysically speaking, Firstness refers to possibility, Secondness to actuality or existence, and Thirdness to law or habit. This is the dimension of the categories that concern us here, the modal possibilities. For by Peirce's account, the universe was originally in a state of Firstness whereby existential events would spring up here and there exemplifying Secondness. The moment that certain existential events reoccur, however, we have the development of a habit and the introduction of Thirdness. At this introductory stage, Tychism, or chance, play a large role in the universe, but as the universe evolves habit begins to diminish this role of absolute chance, and reason and logic, broadly construed, begin to determine things more and more. It is precisely this evolution from chance to habit, and our part in it, that can shed light on the discussion of realism and constructivism in Peirce.

Being that Peirce rejects the correspondence theory of truth, we must have some part to play in the determination of knowledge and of reality. For Peirce this is called concrete reasonableness:

> The creation of the universe, which did not take place during a certain busy week, in the year 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done, is the very development of Reason… The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior Reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness, so far as we can comprehend it. Under this conception, the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving

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[14] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. "The Architecture of Theories." Vol 1. Eds Kloesel and Houser. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pg 297

a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is "up to us" to do so.[15]

From this quote we receive a fuller extension of Peirce's metaphysical thought. Peirce arrives at this ultimate through a combination of his metaphysics and his classification of the normative sciences. According to Peirce, aesthetically speaking what we admire in relation to nothing else is the harmonious action of parts into a whole, i.e. think of the Greek problem of the one and the many. This is what Peirce means by Reason not being admirable for an ulterior purpose. Reason, or Thought, which is a third, mediates between a first and a second; thereby providing the mechanism of going from the many back to the one. The second normative science, ethics, shows what ends in relation to this summum bonum, the admirable-in-itself, we are able to pursue. Logic, the third normative science tells how we can most efficiently and effectively achieve those ends. Therefore, if it is admirable to make the world more determinate, then we pursue those things that make it so, i.e. creating theories to make sense of phenomena, and we pursue these theories according to prescriptive claims of correct thought. It must be remembered that Peirce's objective idealism is a form of monism, this underlies Synechism. The doctrine of Synechism must hold that there is no severe demarcation between human beings and the universes that we inhabit. Thus, in this process of concrete reasonableness we are essentially engaging in making the universe more and more determinate through the embodiment of generals. We could not do this if it were the case that the supposed dualism of Descartes held as the problem of interaction arises. What allows us to make the universe more concrete is the fact that we are a part of it. As will be seen below we are essentially an embodiment of the universe itself.

Another way to approach this, and to re-enforce this concept is through elements of Peirce's theory of signs. As a basis for his semiotic theory, and one of his proofs for Pragmatism in general, Peirce claims that all thought is in the form of signs. While this is interesting in itself, what most concerns us is when we combine this premise with the following claim concerning thought in general: "In my opinion it is much more true that the thoughts of a living writer are in any printed copy of his book than they re in his brain."[16] So Peirce is claiming that all thought takes the form of signs and that thought in general is not isomorphic with the brain. What we can conclude from the quote is that thought resides outside what we consider to be the human mind—the brain. If that is the case, then we cannot relegate the concept of thought to a purely human or even "living" activity. Thought is all around us: a fact supported by Peirce's account of the origin of the universe through his metaphysics—recall that Peirce's categories have many different modes, one of which would hold that Thirdness is the category of Thought. Moreover, Peirce also claims that human beings themselves are signs. Ergo, we have part of the reason for Peirce privileging the community over the individual: our individuation as human beings is only the result of the universe being embodied and concreted. Considered in this sense, we ourselves are the product of concrete reasonableness and the things we do are as well. When Margolis, or any other philosopher, makes claims concerning some topic, it is an attempt to make some reality more determinate. Indeed even this paper, albeit perhaps a poor attempt, struggles to do its part in the process of concrete reasonableness. All of this is confirmed in the analysis of how semiosis, or the production or

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[15] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. "What Makes a Reasoning Sound?" Vol 2. Ed Nathan Houser and The Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. Pg 255

[16] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Vols. 1-6 Charles Hawthorne and Paul Weiss, eds., Cambridge, Mass., 1931-1935; vols. 7-8, Arthur Burks, ed., Cambridge, Mass., 1958. CP 6.34

interpretants, takes place. The sign mediates between what constrains it, the object, and what it in turn constrains, the interpretant. Through this mediation the sign brings the interpretant and the object into mediate contact. The interpretant of this relation goes on to represent the connection between the sign and the object in a new sign process producing a new, and hopefully, clearer and more developed interpretant. This is the place of concrete reasonableness in semiotics; whereby vagueness and indeterminacy are reduce through interpretant production. The catch, however, is that it is a process that is universal and exists outside the realm of human conduct and thinking. Hence, it is a process we engage in as part of reality itself.

In consequence of the above, I propose the following claims: Peirce, in relation to constructivism and realism, can be interpreted in two ways, 1) at the level of the individual, the level of commitment to constructivism is slim, and 2) at the level of community, especially the infinite community, the level of commitment to constructivism is at least more robust if not to the point where the distinction between realism and constructivism ceases. I will not discuss the first claim as neither the constructivist nor the pragmatist seems to privilege the individual over the community in their respective theories. Implicit within the discussed notions and theories is the acceptance of some form of constructivism. It is clear that Peirce rejects a transcendent, static conception of the universe as evidenced by his account of his evolution of the universe. This is tantamount to denying the spectator theory of knowledge, where the individual mirrors a completely objective, fully determined reality. Tychism, along with the underlying doctrine of Synechism, provides the determination from the Firstness of the universe, chaos, nothingness, and possibility, to the Secondness of the universe, actuality, brute, existential events, to the Thirdness of the universe, thought, mediation, and the continual formation of habits. For Peirce, the only admirable purpose without regard to anything outside of itself is the embodiment of reason and thought; thereby further determining reality. To the extent that we participate in this process, we can be shown to at least help construct reality—not only epistemologically, but ontologically as well. For if the objects of reality still have an element of absolute chance disrupting their habits, no matter how small the degree, then we have a say in their construction. If we hold that our knowledge is based on the state of these real objects (which is to suggest some form of realism), then to an at least equal degree we construct our knowledge as well. At this point, it must be mentioned that these real objects exhibit the category of Secondness. In other words, though the objects of reality are indeterminate to some degree, they still will resist false conceptions about them from any group of finite inquirers. This further provides for Peirce's realism.

While there can be no doubt that the process of becoming in regard to reality is in process and not already finished and that we participate to it in some degree, is it really the case that human beings participate enough in its determination so that in some sense reality is constructed? Certainly, the fact that we are the embodiment of reality itself gives some credence to this notion, but there remains the question of how active our control is over this process. To answer this, consider what Peirce says about signs. Signs must be embodied for them to have any meaning or any effect upon an interpretant. Just so, the laws and habits of the universe must be embodied as well. Clearly, embodiment is fundamental to the evolution of signs and the universe (indeed Peirce claims that the universe is a symbol as well). How does this embodiment take place? Peirce provides that answer to this in an interesting quote:

> As to that I should say that a law of nature left to itself would be quite analogous to a court without a sheriff. A court in that predicament might probably be able to induce some citizen to act as sheriff; but until it had so provided itself with an officer who, unlike itself, could not

> discourse authoritatively but who could put forth the strong arm, its law might be the perfection of human reason but would remain mere fireworks, brutum fulmen.[17]

In short, as a community, human beings play a large part in the role of the sheriff. The universe, signs, and thought in general would be impotent if it did not have the capacity to be embodied. Through endeavors such as scientific theories and semiosis, human beings provide a fundamental service to the evolution of reality, we embody and "enforce" the thoughts, habits, and laws of the universe. Hence, concrete reasonableness takes place through the mechanism of embodiment. It is this essential role that, perhaps, gives humanity enough of a role in the evolution of reality to be considered a constructive force in some robust sense of the word. A humbling word of caution is necessary at this point. It is not the fact that we are human that bestows this privilege of embodying the universe upon us. It is the fact that we are rational creatures. In this context, there are other creatures besides human beings that could and possibly do play a role in determining reality. Indeed, Peirce himself holds that even if our species were crushed to the ground and extinguished, another rational species would arise to take our place in making reality more and more concrete.

This brief sketch of some features of Peirce's philosophy has attempted to show that Margolis' claim of Peirce being a realist of a constructivist stripe can be plausibly understood. It is a sketch only, and will surely need further explication and argument. The fact that we, as rational beings, are needed to embody the generality of universe so that it can be determined and crystallized, which is a denial of the spectator theory of knowledge and a transcendent, independent reality, is the "constructivist stripe" that Margolis calls for. As for the realist portion, the very real objects that we help to further determine are already to a large degree habituated. As such a theory or conception that attempts to stretch these objects past their habits will be rejected. This seems to be a fitting mediation between the notions of realism and constructivism and satisfies the general requirements of both. This power of constructivism is largely only at the level of the community; however, as the role of the individual is severely marginalized—individuals are extremely fallible. I think Margolis would have to agree with this as the community is the focus of both the pragmatist and the constructivist—it is the community that is able to interpret and embody reality. This is our role in the determination of reality.

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[17] Peirce, Charles Sanders. *Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. "On Phenomenology" Vol 2. Ed Nathan Houser and The Peirce Edition Project. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. Pg 152

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