

Beyond Essentialism and Relativism: Nietzsche and Peirce on Reality¹

Além de Essencialismo e Relativismo: Nietzsche e Peirce sobre Realidade

Ciano Aydin

Radboud University Nijmegen – The Netherlands
caydin@phil.ru.nl

Abstract: Nietzsche and Peirce offer us a perspective on reality that is more adequate than the essentialist and relativist approaches. The problem of the essentialist is that he precludes the possibility of real novelty, and fails to account for the dynamic connectedness of the world. The relativist is not capable of doing justice to the elements of brute force and regularity, which are aspects of reality that cannot be simply reduced to particular standpoints or frameworks. Nietzsche's and Peirce's worldviews are discussed on the basis of the notions "possibility", "struggle", and "regularity". The paper ends with confronting Nietzsche's view with that of Peirce.

Keywords: Essentialism. Relativism. Reality. Possibility. Struggle. Regularity. Novelty. Connectedness. Brute force.

Resumo: *Nietzsche e Peirce oferecem-nos uma perspectiva sobre a realidade que é mais adequada do que as interpretações essencialistas e relativistas. O problema do essencialista é que ele obstrui a possibilidade da novidade real, fracassando em dar conta da relacionalidade do mundo. O relativista não é capaz de fazer justiça aos elementos de força bruta e regularidade, que são aspectos da realidade que não podem ser simplesmente reduzidos a pontos de vista ou arcações particulares. As visões de mundo de Nietzsche e Peirce são discutidas com base nas noções de "possibilidade", "luta" e "regularidade". O artigo termina confrontando a visão de Nietzsche com a de Peirce.*

Palavras-chave: *Essencialismo. Relativismo. Realidade. Possibilidade. Luta. Regularidade. Novidade. Relacionalidade. Força bruta.*

¹ This paper is an outcome of a research that was funded by the Niels Stensen Stichting and the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

Introduction

There is virtually no research that relates Nietzsche's thinking to that of Peirce. And I have to admit, comparing these philosophers seems odd. The only thing that they seem to have in common is that they have lived more or less in the same time. Not only do they have completely different styles of writing, but they also seem to have completely different philosophical projects. Almost in all his writings, and especially in the published ones, Nietzsche's major topic is culture; the philosopher is for him the "physician" that has to diagnose "how a culture is doing".² Peirce's primary interest is without doubt logic, although what he calls logic would be nowadays a sum of philosophy of science, epistemology, and philosophical logic.³

There is also another important difference between Nietzsche and Peirce that has to be mentioned: Nietzsche states often that he distrusts all systematists. Building a system, or better, *one* system, and believing it is unconditional is for Nietzsche a symptom of illness.⁴ The systematist cannot cope with the fact that reality cannot be classified entirely, and creates, as a defence mechanism, an illusory world so he can have a good night's sleep. Associating himself with great systematic thinkers like Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel, Peirce believes that an architectonic approach will reveal the formal or necessary conditions of the objects that philosophy and science deal with. Central for him is the idea that there is a hierarchical order in which certain conceptions are fundamental to others, those to still others, and so on.⁵ Although Peirce's conception of an architectonic system is, as I will show, in contrast to many of his predecessor, an open rather than a closed one,⁶ there is a difference with Nietzsche's view that seems to be unbridgeable.

If we approach Nietzsche and Peirce in this way, and do not dig deeper, it is difficult to see what they could have in common. I will, nevertheless, try to show that they do share an important common ground, although finding similarities between them is not the primary goal of this paper. What I want to show is that a comparison between both thinkers will shed (a different) light on an old but stubborn philosophical problem. A positive outcome will then also justify why we should be interested in similarities between Nietzsche and Peirce in the first place. Moreover, I will try to show that not only the similarities but also the differences between both philosophers will help us to understand this problem better. Talking about their differences, however, is only meaningful if first is established that they relate in some way to each other.

The question that is central in this paper is: do Nietzsche and Peirce offer us a conception of reality that is more adequate than the essentialist and relativist approaches? I don't presuppose here that you find in the history of philosophy pure essentialists and pure relativists. The distinction between essentialism and relativism that I will make has a heuristic function. It is practical because it assembles a lot of classical and modern opposite positions in a certain way without having to go into details; oppositions like

² Cf. N 23[15] 7. 545.

³ Cf. EP I, Introduction, p. xxx.

⁴ Cf. *Morgenröthe* 318 3.228; *Götzen-Dämmerung* 26 6.63; N 18[4] 13.533.

⁵ Cf. EP I, 21, p. 285ff.; for a detailed discussion of Peirce's classification of the sciences, see B. KENT (1987).

⁶ Cf. J. FERRATER MORA (1955, p. 351-359).

“platonism-anti-platonism”, “absolutism-relativism”, “foundationalism-anti-foundationalism”, “cartesianism-anti-cartesianism”, “objectivism-subjectivism”, “realism-nominalism”, “realism-idealism”, “construction-deconstruction”, “pluralism-anti-pluralism”, etc. Of course you cannot throw all these oppositions on one pile. That is not what I am suggesting. My point is that the distinction between essentialism and relativism that I will make reveals a couple of aspects, which play in one way or another an important role in a lot of the opposite positions that I have mentioned. Furthermore, this distinction functions as a background against which the position that I will present can be projected.

I take the essentialist to be somebody who believes that all phenomena contain or are deducible from certain *pre-given* and *invariable* instances by virtue of which there can be one, independent, and durable world. Put in other words, all things, organic and inorganic, contain something pre-given, an essence or substance, by virtue of which they have a durable and independent identity. Although Aristotle, the most important representative of substance philosophy, thinks that he can save the variability and dynamic character of reality by introducing the concept of possibility, he still holds on to the principle that every possibility presupposes a form of actuality. Possibilities do not emerge from nothing, but are always embedded in something. In other words: actuality is ontologically prior to possibility. There is a pre-given reality that has the possibility or potentiality to change. Change always means that there is *something pre-given* that undergoes change. This Aristotelian view has determined to a great extent the history of philosophy. If you compare, for example, Aristotle, Descartes, and Leibniz with each other, you find that they give different answers to the question of where the ultimate elements of reality are located. But if you compare the different characteristics that these philosophers ascribe to these ultimate elements or substances, you find important similarities: for all of these philosophers substance represents durability, unity, and independence.⁷

The relativist repudiates the idea that any standpoint is uniquely privileged over all others, and asserts that everything is relative to some particular standpoint or framework, like an individual subject, a culture, a language, or a conceptual scheme. There are no pre-given instances by virtue of which material objects, plants, animals, or human beings have a durable and independent identity. Although Richard Rorty does not like to be called a relativist, the following passage gives a good description of how I determine relativism here:

When we consider examples of alternative language games – ancient Athenian politics versus Jefferson’s, the moral vocabulary of Saint Paul versus Freud’s, the jargon of Newton versus that of Aristotle, the idiom of Blake versus that of Dryden – it is difficult to think of the world as making one of these better than another, of the world as deciding between them. When the notion of “description of the world” is moved from the level of criterion-governed sentences within language games to language games as wholes, games which we do not choose between by reference to criteria, the idea that the world decides which descriptions are true can no longer be given a clear sense.⁸

⁷ For an extensive discussion of the substantialist view of Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, and Schopenhauer, see C. AYDIN (2003, part I and II).

⁸ R. RORTY (1989, p. 5).

There are two fundamental problems inherent in the essentialist approach: first of all, to presuppose that all phenomena contain or are deducible from pre-given instances, which are not the result of an evolutionary process, is to preclude the possibility of real novelty. Our observation of real increase in diversity and multitude in the world, and our experience that it is very difficult to assure that there is something that will survive the wheel of time, however, indicate that this view cannot be adequate.⁹

An even greater fundamental difficulty is that this view fails to account for the dynamic connectedness of the world. If everything that happens is to be understood in terms of individual substances, each of which has his own properties, how can it be explained that these substances affect other things, let alone that they should be the cause of something else? If there is nothing that binds the effect to the cause, there can be no causal relationship. How can things that are *essentially* independent interact with each other? Aristotle presupposes that things relate to each other; but the relations are “between” or “among” things, belonging mysteriously to none of them in themselves. Relatedness is given no proper place in reality.¹⁰

The relativists has three problems: there is the well known logical argument against relativism, which indicates that this position is inherently contradictory or self-refuting. Because I am here more interested in the ontological status of theories, I will not go into this problem.

What probably is a bigger and, I think, more interesting problem is the fact that the relativist is confronted with certain aspects of the world that cannot be explained from his point of view: first of all, we are confronted with forces in the world that are and always were beyond everybody’s control, and which we just cannot reduce to certain particular standpoints or frameworks. You rather could say that *every* standpoint and framework collapses in the face of these forces. Second, the world around and in us is characterized by an element of steadiness, organization, or regularity that just cannot be reduced to particular standpoints or frameworks. You rather could say that this element of regularity is a condition for *every* possible particular standpoint or framework.

I will try to show that Nietzsche and Peirce offer an alternative perspective that does not raise these problems. Striking is that in both philosophers’ view on reality the concepts “possibility”, “struggle”, and “regularity” play a primary role. First, I will discuss Nietzsche’s view on reality on the basis of these concepts, which are, as I will show, all involved in his notion of the will to power. Then, I will elaborate Peirce’s view on reality on the basis of the same three concepts. I will end by confronting Nietzsche’s view with that of Peirce.

⁹ For a further discussion of this point, see C.R. HAUSMAN (1993, p. 168-193).

¹⁰ You find this problem very clear in ARISTOTLE’s *Generation of Animals* I 1, 715a4-7 and 21-22, 729b-730b31; *Analytica Posteriora* II 11, 94a20-22; *Metaphysica* I 3, 983a30 and VII 7, 1032a12-b22. See also G. DEBROCK (2003, p. 1-11; p. 159-171). For a more detailed discussion of the problem of the “missing interface” in the substantialist view of the world, see also: M. HULSWIT (2002, chapter 6).

1. Nietzsche on Reality

In his famous aphorism 36 in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche postulates: “[t]he world viewed from inside, [...] it would be simply “will to power” and nothing else. —”.¹¹ This homogenizing of reality into will to power implies that all reality has the same character. Reality has only one intrinsic quality: the will to power. At the same time, the will to power is the only explanatory principle (*Deutungsprinzip*) of reality.

Let us first try to find out how from Nietzsche’s claim that all reality is will to power, and nothing else, it follows that the concept of possibility plays a fundamental role in his worldview. That can be clarified by elaborating what kind of principle the will to power is. Should we understand it as a substantial cause, or as a teleological principle, or as something else? Let us look at the term “power”. “Power” in “will to power” is a peculiar concept. It is characterized, and this is a crucial point, by intrinsic relationality. Power is inherently relational because power is only power in relation to another power. Nietzsche says: “A power quantum is characterized by its effect and its resistance.”¹² The concept “power” would be meaningless if a power would be detached from an opposite power. That power is inherently relational implies further that it is characterized by a relation without relata that precede it or that can exist independent of it. Nietzsche’s principle of the will to power implies that relation is not an additional element of things, but something that constitutes in a fundamental way what a thing is. You have, in other words, not first things, which then have relations with each other. On the contrary, things are what they are by virtue of their relations.

Furthermore, Nietzsche’s concept of power implies that reality is dynamic in the strongest meaning of the word. Power, in Nietzsche’s view, entails a directedness or causation without there being something durable, a fixed cause, which can be separated from that directedness or causation; power is in its essence “something” that does not coincide with itself. It is an always-being-on-the-way. In addition, this structure implies that power must be understood as a necessary striving for more power.¹³ Power is a necessary striving to expand itself. Power is only power insofar as it can maintain itself against other powers, and strives to predominate over them. Power has only meaning insofar as it is understood as subduing or overcoming another power. Power is, in other words, “commanding”.

Commanding is, according to Nietzsche, also in “willing” the intrinsic active force.¹⁴ Somebody who wants something commands something outside or in himself that (he thinks it) obeys.¹⁵ That all reality is commanding, and nothing else, means that there cannot be also something else, a will as ground, or power as end, that is detached from it.¹⁶ The conception that power is always *will to power*, and that will is always *will to*

¹¹ *Beyond Good and Evil* 36 5.55; cf. *Also sprach Zarathustra* II 12 4.147 and *Beyond Good and Evil* 13 5.27.

¹² N 14[79] 13.258; cf. 9[151] 12.424 and 2[159] 12.143.

¹³ Cf. N 14[82] 13.262.

¹⁴ Cf. N 40[42] 11.650, 19[132] 7.461, and 25[185] 11.64; *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* 19 5.31; *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 127 3.483.

¹⁵ Cf. N 14[82] 13.261.

¹⁶ Cf. also V. GERHARD’s attempt to show this (1996, p. 271).

power, implies that the will to power is a directedness without a beginning in a primary cause and an end in a final goal.¹⁷ The will to power refers to acting without there being something (durable) that acts or strives, and without having an ultimate end.

There is in Nietzsche's worldview nothing that has existence and meaning outside the game of power relations. Because of this, you cannot withdraw yourself from this game of power relations. Even rejecting the claim that reality is will to power is an expression of will to power. And also making a statement about the cause or pre-given end of a thing is nothing else than the formulation of a will to power, which always can be questioned by other wills to power. Every account is understood as a power seizure, or as the effect of it. The crucial point is that Nietzsche's will to power not only is not a pre-given, fixed cause or end, but it precisely *precludes* the possibility of such a cause or end.

The notion of the will to power can be conceived as a kind of hypothesis. It is, however, not the kind of hypothesis that can be proved to be a true and valid thesis through sufficient verification or lack of falsification. This is not possible because all conditions that have to be fulfilled are themselves formulations of will to power.¹⁸ In the game of power relations every power tries to impose its own conditions on the rest. A proposition never loses its conditional character, because it is continuously being questioned by other powers. There is no proposition that can ever be determined definitively as being true. The hypothetical character of the notion of the will to power expresses this provisional status, this "always-being-at-risk", of every proposition.

The principle of the will to power proves to be a special kind of "principle", one that deprives every principle, which serves as the basis of our interpretation of reality, of its unconditional character. The homogenizing of reality in this way does not lead to the negation of the diversity and richness of the world. On the contrary, due to it, every determination of reality, every interpretation, is continuously questioned by opponent powers; because of this, other interpretations always remain *possible*.

Every actualization is for Nietzsche the realization of only one possibility. There is, what he sometimes calls, a permanent chaos active, which is a condition for discovering ever more and alternative possibilities. The chaos is, therefore, not a mere burden that we have to overcome to survive or make our life easier; that is only one aspect of it. It plays also a very positive role. It is the basis for all creation and creativity. Without it nothing *novel* could emerge. The more the chaos breaks into our ordered world, the more our creative power will be stimulated.¹⁹ In *Thus spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche puts it in the following poetic formulation: "I say to you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say to you: you still have chaos in yourself."²⁰

Nietzsche believes that this element is operative in every aspect of reality, even on a cosmological level. Not only is there no final ground or divine order to which ultimately everything can be reduced, but there can be also no phase in which there is

¹⁷ For Aristotle, by contrast, things have a cause and an end, which are situated in their essence; a consequence of this is that things are deprived of their fundamental variability.

¹⁸ Cf. P. VAN TONGEREN (1989, p. 174-177)

¹⁹ Cf. N 5[188] 8.93 and 5[1] 10.201.

²⁰ Cf. *Also sprach Zarathustra* Prologue 5 4.19; N 11[121] 9.484 and 24[5] 10.645.

no chaos anymore. In his early writings on cosmology Nietzsche repudiates Anaxagoras' view that the chaos was a phase that preceded the cosmos, and that there is a movement towards ever more order and ever less chaos and chance.²¹ For Nietzsche chaos and chance are, in a certain sense, eternal, meaning that "underlying" every order there is an element of chaos that is operative: we never can reach a final ground or ultimate end, but are always confronted with a multitude of possibilities.

In what sense is struggle a fundamental aspect in Nietzsche's worldview? I have said that a will to power is essentially directed at subduing as many other wills to power as possible. All other wills to power, however, are also directed at that.²² A consequence of this is that the interaction between wills to power should be understood as struggle. That the will to power only exists in and by virtue of its actions and its resistances, as we saw earlier, means that it only *is* in and by virtue of struggle. And since everything that happens is will to power, Nietzsche can say: "All happening [*Geschehen*] is *struggle*..."²³ That is *not the same* as: all reality is *based on* struggle, or, all reality is *determined by* struggle. If you interpret it in that way, you already assume that struggle is an additional quality of something that distinguishes itself from it. Struggle, however, is not an additional but a constitutive relation.

Although all wills to power are directed at commanding, not all of them will always succeed in that. Overpowering implies that there is also something that is overpowered. Struggle generates a hierarchical order in which the strong commands and the weak obeys. Because these processes are dynamic in the strongest sense of the world, the hierarchical order is something that has to be established continuously. All reality is, according to Nietzsche, the result of a continuously changing hierarchical order, of smaller and bigger coups.²⁴ Change can be the symptom of both the establishment of a new hierarchical order as well as the collapse of an old.

This brings us to the third concept that is essential in Nietzsche's view on reality. Although the concept of struggle indicates that wills to power interact with each other by virtue of a reciprocal directedness at overpowering, and form in that way certain relations, it is still difficult to understand how these processes of subduing generate unities that remain sustained for a while. To explain how that is possible, Nietzsche introduces another concept, namely organization.

That Nietzsche introduces the concept of organization is not surprising: if multitude, variability, and relationality are essential constitutive aspects of reality, and if, as a result of that, there are no pre-given forms, then a seemingly independent and durable unity, that is, every perceivable form of reality, can only exist as a variable and relational multitude that is kept together in some way. A variable and relational multitude that is kept together is an organization.²⁵ That which keeps it together is, according to Nietzsche, will to power.

²¹ Cf. N 11[157] 9.502.

²² Cf. 14[186] 13.373f, 36[22] 11.560f, 40[55] 11.655, and 26[276] 11.222.

²³ N 1[92] 12.33; cf. 9[91] 12.385.

²⁴ Cf. N 14[81] 13.260 and 14[98] 13.274.

²⁵ Cf. N 2[87] 12.104.

A will to power as such cannot be a durable and independent unity, but is in reality a variable and relational multitude of wills to power that are kept together, and those wills to power also exist only as a multitude of wills to power; and so *ad infinitum*. There are no last unities which one ultimately bumps up against into. Speaking about “a will to power” is, therefore, always misleading. “All reality is will to power” can be determined more accurately as: “all reality is ‘will to power’-organizations”.²⁶ And because “interaction” is dynamic in the strongest sense of the word, the term “organization” should be understood not as a substantive but as a verb; organization is an activity. The variable and relational multitude has to be organized continuously.

This organizing is for Nietzsche not an end in itself, but always only a means for overpowering other “will to power”-organizations. This overpowering is only possible if a “will to power”-organization has besides the force that it needs to organize itself a surplus of force that can be discharged on its victim. This force is generated by building up internal tension. It is the force that is released through the discharge of this internal tension by which a stronger “will to power”-organization overpowers a weaker “will to power”-organization.²⁷

To built up this internal tension or tensile force two things are needed: on the one hand, the internal strife in an organization has to be increased and intensified to such a degree that enough internal force is generated. On the other hand and at the same time, however, this internal strife has to be organized in such a way that the organization does not fall apart and that the discharge has a certain direction.²⁸ This is why Nietzsche says that the strongest organisms are the most vulnerable: the more internal strife an organization contains, the bigger the chance that it will fall apart.

Crucial here is that the direction of the discharge is for Nietzsche not pre-given. It, in other words, does not lie in the individual nature of things, like in Aristotle’s view, but is the result of an immense complex of interactions between an infinite number of “will to power”-organizations. These are organized in such a way that they simultaneously release their internal tension on the intended victim, that is, the “will to power”-organizations that has to be subdued. And it is this order, which is necessary to have, in a sense, all noses pointing in the same direction, which generates a certain finality or teleology.²⁹

Because the direction of the development of reality is, in contrast to Aristotle’s teleological model, not pre-given, fundamental novelty is possible. But Nietzsche’s model also explains how regularity in the world is possible, without negation of the possibility of genuine novelty. The regulating activity of the will to power also explains how relatively independent unities can be established that endure for a long period of time

²⁶ Nevertheless, I keep using, where it is possible, for frugality the term “will to power”. “Will to power” however always means “will to power”-organizations.

²⁷ Nietzsche applies here Robert Mayer’s thesis of discharge. In 1867 Mayer publishes a volume with the title *Mechanik der Wärme*, which contains, among others, his groundbreaking book *Bemerkungen über die Kräfte der unbelebten Natur* from 1842 as well as a new article *Über Auslösung*. See for a discussion of Mayer’s concept of discharge: A. MITTASCH (1952, p. 114ff) and C. AYDIN (2003, p. 157-163).

²⁸ Cf. N 9[92] 12.387.

²⁹ Cf. N 9[91] 12.386.

and how something like truth is possible. If a “will to power”-organization is able to maintain a certain hierarchical order for a long time, the “illusions” of durability, unity, and independence emerge.³⁰ One then believes that a certain form is substantial. If this belief becomes so strong that it is no longer questioned, that is, if it becomes a truth, then a “world” is established.

2. Peirce on Reality

I will try to show how Peirce fits in all of this through a short discussion of his three categories. Peirce distinguishes only three categories and calls them simply the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. We can, according to him, “directly observe them in elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way.”³¹

The first thing that can be noticed is that, although also Peirce’s categories are related to each other in a certain way, they are, compared to Nietzsche’s notions, not only much more clearly and systematically distinguished, but also considered to be much more distinct categories.

Peirce defines Firstness as “the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else.”³² In addition, he often conceives this element as a quality.³³ At first sight, Peirce seems to ascribe features to the idea of quality that are not compatible: on the one hand, he is repeatedly emphasizing the simplicity and singular character of every quality; but on the other hand, he states that qualities do not show only variety, but “measureless variety and multiplicity”.³⁴ This seems contradictory, but it is not: the absolutely unrelated and irreducible singularity of Firsts implies that each phenomenon has an *absolute novel quality* in the sense of undefinable originality, uniqueness and spontaneity: “[w]hat the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it”.³⁵ It is by virtue of this absolute and unrelated novelty that there *can* be an “unlimited and uncontrolled variety and multiplicity”³⁶ of things. The measureless variety and multiplicity that Peirce is talking about refers to the *impossibility* of so ordering qualities that we can conceive of a limit to their number.³⁷ That qualities are independent

³⁰ “Illusion” in this context does not mean unreal, but expresses the idea that an entity has no eternal status and that it is dynamic; we saw that “organization” is an activity, not a substantive.

³¹ Cf. CP 1.23, 8.328, and 1.546.

³² CP 8.328; cf. EP II, 12, p. 160.

³³ Cf. CP 1.418.

³⁴ CP 1.302; cf. 5.44.

³⁵ CP 1.357.

³⁶ CP 1.302.

³⁷ Peirce introduces the Latin term “*quale*” to distinguish his notion of quality from traditional notions. W. GALLY translates “*quale*” with “particular suchness” and “suchness *sui generis*”. He writes: “Peirce has to device expressions which, by traditional standards, seem self-contradictory, e.g. ‘a particular suchness’ or a ‘suchness *sui generis*’ – something that can be appreciated only if we conform to the rule ‘There is to be no comparison’ (CP 1.303)” (1966, p. 187). To understand a “quality”, for example “green”, as something that cannot

implies that we cannot reduce them to something that we already have in our minds.

Furthermore, Firstness implies for Peirce a qualitative richness, not of recognizable, determinate and repeatable entities, but rather of various and somewhat vague indefinite “stimuli”, which Peirce characterizes as “possibility” or “potentiality”. This also means that the spontaneous and unlimited richness of the world is not actual, but potential. Peirce insists that: “[f]or as long as things do not act upon one another there is no sense or meaning in saying that they have any being.”³⁸

Now it becomes a little clearer how Peirce’s notion of quality differs from the notion of quality that we find in a traditional Aristotelian paradigm. Quality in the traditional meaning of the word is something distinct which is ascribed to this or that subject. Moreover, ascribing a quality to a subject is from this point of view always ascribing something ontologically secondary to something ontologically primary. Put differently, there has to be something actual, let say an apple, before it can possess a quality, for example the quality “red”. Actuality is traditionally ontologically prior to potentiality.

Against the traditional idea that what is directly given in sensation is, in itself, an instance of some quality or “universal”, Peirce claims that it is “something” that we cannot classify or describe. Its absolute unrelatedness and irreducible singularity makes identification by comparison or contrast impossible.³⁹ The idea of Firstness refers to a level of experience that is prior to the grasp of distinctable sense qualities.⁴⁰ Moreover, quality from Peirce’s perspective is something that does not depend on these or some other subject to give it its character. It depends neither on the fact that some actual entity possesses it, nor does it depend on being sensed or thought by a mind.⁴¹ Peirce says that potentiality is a “feeling tone” prior to thought and language.⁴² Quality, as Peirce characterizes it, is *in a certain sense* something prior to quality as understood in the Aristotelian meaning of the word: possible qualities are *in a certain sense* prior to actual qualities.

But we have to be careful here: repeatable and recognizable qualities are not meant to be numerically distinct from possible qualities: “[i]t is not in being separated from qualities [in the traditional meaning of the word] that Firstness is most predominant, but in being something peculiar and idiosyncratic”.⁴³ It is of course not so that we have on the one hand things that are possible and on the other hand things that are actual, precisely because possibilities are “things” that are not actualized yet. The actual qualities are not something quantitatively separate from the measureless variety and multiplicity

be compared with or distinguished from something else is from an Aristotelian perspective contradictory because green is determined as “green” precisely because it can be compared with and distinguished from something else, for example red (this element is characterized by what ARISTOTLE calls “*choriston*”; see *Metaphysica* VII 13, 1039a3-7 and *De Anima* III 2, 427a2). According to Peirce, we have to acknowledge a state of quality, which in a certain sense precedes the state of qualities as distinct entities.

³⁸ CP 1.25.

³⁹ Cf. CP 1.303 and 5.44.

⁴⁰ Cf. CP 1.377.

⁴¹ CP 1.422.

⁴² Cf. S.B. ROSENTHAL (2001).

⁴³ CP 1.302.

of possible qualities, but the result of a crystallization out of these diversity of possible qualities in a certain direction. Actual distinct qualities are crystallized and synthesized possibilities.

The following example that Peirce gives can clarify the peculiar character of Firstness. Imagine a clean blackboard to be a sort of diagram of the *original* vague potentiality. Then all of a sudden I draw a chalk line on the board, with the result that something definite, or more definite, appears on the board.⁴⁴ The crucial point is that this chalk line is the actualization of only one possibility. The blackboard harbors an unlimited variety of possible lines. This also means that the “continuity” of the blackboard has *no a priori tendency* whatsoever to cristalize itself in a certain direction, to cristalize itself in *this* or *that* line. The blackboard accomodates unlimited varieties of lines, which can never be predicted entirely. Firstness provides therefore no *positive* range for determinations in any direction or form, but *excludes* precisely such a positive range.

Of course the comparison of the black board with the *original* vague potentiality is, as Peirce points out, not entirely adequate.⁴⁵ The possibilities of actualization of the black board are not unlimited, the black board cannot actualize itself into a hamburger, whereas the original potentiality has no limits. The black board example, nevertheless, illustrates that it is not pre-given in which concrete forms the unlimited potential richness of the world will be actualized: “[t]here are no points on this blackboard. There are no dimensions in that [original] continuum.”⁴⁶ Peirce emphasizes that “there are doubtless manifold varieties utterly unknown to us”,⁴⁷ which may never be actualized.⁴⁸ That does not mean that we cannot predict anything. It only means that there are possibilities that we cannot predict. The world contains an element of potential *novelty* that is beyond comprehension.⁴⁹

Although the element of Firstness is a condition for every actualization, because every actualization is a realization of something that, at least partially, was not there before, this category cannot explain the process towards actualization and definiteness sufficiently. To explain that, Peirce introduces a second category, which he calls Secondness. Secondness is defined as “the conception of being relative to [...] something

⁴⁴ Cf. CP 6.203.

⁴⁵ Cf. CP 6.203.

⁴⁶ CP 6.203.

⁴⁷ CP 1.418.

⁴⁸ CP 1.418.

⁴⁹ Robert ALMEDER seems not to acknowledge this element of possibility sufficiently when he claims that Peirce adopts an independent “world of objects” (1975a, p. 9). The danger of this neglect is that it opens the door for ascribing to Peirce a correspondence theory of an essentialist kind. And that is precisely the conclusion that is reached by ALMEDER (1975b). David GRUENDER (1983, p. 281-287) and Jeremiah McCARTHY (1990, p. 63-113) ascribe this type of essentialism to Peirce on the basis of an interpretation of his theory of perception. Christopher HOOKWAY (1985, p. 166.) and Carl HAUSMAN (1990, p. 271-308) repudiate, on the basis of that same theory of perception, the idea that Peirce adopts the view that there is an independent and pre-given *actual* reality. Sandra ROSENTHAL elaborates extensively and persuasively that you cannot find this kind of essentialism in Peirce (1994, especially p. 51-62).

else.” This element of relationality, however, has a peculiar character. Peirce says that it “brings the subjects together, and in doing so imparts a character to each of them.”⁵⁰ Secondness is not a static relation, but something active or dynamic. It is an event or a force that cannot be reduced to the subjects, and does something with them.

The idea of Secondness is, according to Peirce, “eminently hard and tangible”, and “forced upon us daily”.⁵¹ We experience this element every time we are being confronted with hard fact, that is, with “something which is there, and which I cannot think away, but am forced to acknowledge as an object or second beside myself”.⁵² Secondness represents the hard and brutal character, the “no-saying”, or better, “no-doing” aspect of reality.

An essential characteristic of this element, which also distinguishes it from Firstness, is spatiotemporality. It “consists in its happening *then* and *there*,”⁵³ and expresses the particular “thisness” of an individual thing. It is not something that we recognize by the similarities between its qualities, nor is it something that we observe, establish or conceive; “[f]or to conceive it is to generalize it; and to generalize it is to miss altogether the *hereness* and *nounness* which is its essence.”⁵⁴ An object distinguishes itself from other things not by any unique characters, but by the compulsion which it exert upon our attention.⁵⁵ It is by virtue of this compulsion, of this antagonistic persistence,⁵⁶ that it has existence and an individual reality.

Existence, actuality, and individuality, are, according to Peirce, fundamentally characterized by struggle, that is, by effort and resistance. This is also implied by his notion of force, because “there can be no force where there is no resistance or inertia.”⁵⁷ . But we have to be careful here: although the concept of force implies a duality of effort and resistance, we do not have first two actual entities, which then struggle with each other. Effort and resistance are not two separate events, but two *perspectives* on the same event. Force has to be understood as an *irreducible* interaction. The act of relating, or *reacting*, which is the term that Peirce often uses, cannot be reduced to a rational faculty that brings distinct entities together, but it is by virtue of this action that distinctive entities emerge.

The following example that Peirce gives can help to grasp this difficult character of force. He writes: “[s]uppose I try to exercise my strength in lifting a huge dumb-bell. If I strive to lift it, I feel that it is drawing my arm down. [...] To be conscious of exerting force and to be conscious [of] having force used upon me are the same consciousness.”⁵⁸ Of course one can make a distinction between on the one hand a weightlifter that lifts a dumb-bell and on the other hand a dumb-bell that resists being lifted. But one cannot say that there are first a weightlifter and a dumb-bell, which then interact with each

⁵⁰ CP 1.326; cf. 5.66.

⁵¹ CP 1.358.

⁵² CP 1.358; cf. 1.24, 4.3, 1.358, 1.24, and 1.323.

⁵³ CP 1.24; cf. 1.532, 1.405, 3.460, and 3.434.

⁵⁴ CP 7.266.

⁵⁵ Cf. CP 6.318, 1.325, 7.551, and 1.320.

⁵⁶ Cf. CP 1.432.

⁵⁷ CP 1.336; cf. 1.320 and 1.322.

⁵⁸ CP 7.543.

other. It is rather the other way around: weightlifters do not lift weights, but weightlifting makes someone a weightlifter. “Weight” and “weightlifter” are only what they are in and by virtue of the activity of weightlifting. This is a crucial difference.

Put in more general words: there is not on the one hand a self and on the other hand a world, which then interact with each other. It is precisely this substantialist view that Peirce repudiates: “the idea of a reaction is not the idea of two *plus* forcefulness.”⁵⁹ It is by virtue of the interaction that we can make a difference between self and world.⁶⁰ In Peirce’s words: “[a]ll the *actual* character of consciousness is merely the sense of the shock of the non-ego upon us”⁶¹; “[t]he waking state is a consciousness of reaction”⁶².

John Lachs writes: “We thus find the world, partly at least, a social product and ourselves the devine co-makers of reality”.⁶³ Although Lachs adopts an interactional framework, he still seems to consider interaction to be something secondary. The view that I propose is, in a certain sense, more radical: not only the world, but also we are only what or who we are in and by virtue of irreducible interactions, and have no individuality outside that “game” of interactions.

This idea of fundamental connectedness applies, according to Peirce, not only to the relation between self and not-self, but also to the other things in the world. He writes: “this notion, of being such as other things make us, is such a prominent part of our life that we conceive other things also to exist by virtue of their reactions against each other.”⁶⁴ Interaction is for Peirce not an external and additional aspect of things, like it is for Aristotle, but the element by virtue of which things have individuality. Individual objects can only manifest themselves in and by virtue of interactions.

That existing things come to be what they are by virtue of interaction does not mean that prior to the interaction there is absolutely nothing. The category of Secondness presupposes the category of Firstness. At first sight this seems to be in contrast with what I have defended until now, but it is not. Although there is something prior to the interaction, this is not something existent, actual, and individual. We do not have first existing things that are unrelated, which then are connected by some external force. Prior to the interaction we have only possibilities. The interaction generates actualization in something particular and distinct.

Peirce’s example of the blackboard, which I have discussed partly earlier, can clarify this further. The clean blackboard stands, as I said earlier, for the original vague potentiality. Then I draw a chalk line on the blackboard. What is responsible for the chalk line? Although we can say that the blackboard is a continuum of possible points that could form a line, there was nothing in the blackboard that already *actually* contained these dimensions. The blackboard was clean. There is no way that the category of Firstness can explain this modification. Peirce points out that what I have really drawn is not a line, but a surface: “the only line there is, is the line which forms the *limit* between

⁵⁹ CP 7.266.

⁶⁰ Cf. CP 7.266 and 1.324.

⁶¹ CP 7.266.

⁶² CP 1.324.

⁶³ J. LACHS (1980, p. 12).

⁶⁴ CP 1.324.

the black surface and the white surface.”⁶⁵ The boundary between the black and white is neither black, nor white, nor both, and can therefore neither be reduced to the black nor the white, nor to some other quality. At the same time, the white and the black can only be recognized as white and black by virtue of their boundary. White is white and black is black by virtue of the contrast between white and black. By virtue of the interaction between the white and the black two different entities are generated and we can recognize the chalk line as chalk line. The black board as a whole can also only be recognized as blackboard by virtue of its contrast to other things, for example the grey wall; and so *ad infinitum*. Individual entities are the result of the generation of discontinuity in possible qualities by virtue of Secondness. Secondness is “one of those brute acts by which alone the original vagueness could have made a step towards definiteness.”⁶⁶

The individual entity that, by a brute act, is emerged out of the continuity of the blackboard is never completely determinate, but always represents only a certain state of determination. I can, for example, draw another chalk line diagonal on the first line, and then I have a cross. And then I can connect the ends of the lines by four new lines, and then I have a sort square, etc. This character applies not only to the blackboard. Every individual entity has a potentiality for further determination. The element of Firstness, which is present in everything, guarantees an inexhaustible potential richness. Every actualization is material for further actualization.

Saying that things have an identity by virtue of brute interactions is not enough to understand how those things can display an identity that is more or less fixed, that can be conceived, and that can be anticipated. Peirce states that a thing is constituted by a “continuity of reactions”.⁶⁷ It is difficult to explain by the categories of Firstness and Secondness how those different reactions can manifest a *real* continuity (which always has a certain direction) and be acknowledged as aspects of a unified whole. To explain that, we have to adopt a third element, which Peirce calls “Thirdness”.

Peirce defines Thirdness as “the mode of being of that which is such as it is, in bringing a second and third into relation to each other.”⁶⁸ Thirdness is a betweenness, medium, or connecting bond. It is what Peirce calls the “thread of life”.⁶⁹ It binds time together.⁷⁰ Without it there would be no continuity in the things that we encounter. Thirdness is a “synthesizing law”.⁷¹ It generates order.

Thirdness can be, according to Peirce, identified as “law” when we approach it from the outside, but when we see both sides of the shield we can characterize it as “thought”.⁷² Being a kind of law, Thirdness is directed at the future: a law states how an endless future must continue to be.⁷³ It is, as Peirce states, “that which is what it is by

⁶⁵ CP 6.203.

⁶⁶ CP 6.203.

⁶⁷ Cf. Peirce’s definition of “Individual” in J. M. BALDWIN (1902, p. 538 = CP 3.613); see for a discussion of this problem also Ch. HOOKWAY, (1985, p. 170f).

⁶⁸ CP 8.328; cf. CP 5.66.

⁶⁹ CP 1.337; cf. 1.328 and 5.104.

⁷⁰ Cf. CP 1.377.

⁷¹ CP 1.351.

⁷² Cf. CP 1.420, 1.420, 1.477, 1.478, 1.536, and 1.342.

⁷³ CP 1.536.

virtue of imparting a quality to reactions in the future.”⁷⁴ Also a thought is, according to Peirce, a kind of general rule. Against what he calls nominalists who believe that “this general rule is nothing but a mere word or couple of words”, Peirce states that the undeniable fact that the general is of the nature of what is thought does not imply that it is also always a product of *our* thinking;⁷⁵ the nominalists confuse “thinking” with “thoughts”. The realists – and Peirce considers himself to be, especially in his later writings, “a scholastic realist of a somewhat extreme stripe”⁷⁶ –, do not make this mistake, and understand “that our thinking only apprehends and does not create thought, and that that thought may and does as much govern outward things as it does our thinking.”⁷⁷

It is always possible that we encounter occasions in the future that falsify certain expectations that we have, but ascribing the fact that, for example, stones have fallen to the ground without verifiable exception for ages to a strange coincidence, and therefore claiming that those experiences of uniformity provide not the slightest guarantee that the next stone that shall be let go will fall, is, according to Peirce, an absurd hypothesis. The only reasonable hypothesis is acknowledging that that kind of uniformities are governed by some active general principle.⁷⁸

This idea applies not only to natural phenomena but also to psycho-social phenomena. I could ascribe the fact that I have made an apple pie every Friday for the last ten years of my life to mere coincidence. In that case the regularity in the past affords does not give me the slightest reason to expect that next Friday I will make apple pie again. But it is obvious that a more reasonable hypothesis is that the fact that I have been making apple pie every Friday has been due to some operative general principle or habit that determines my behaviour.⁷⁹

Peirce specifies this general regulative activity further as “the consciousness of a process”,⁸⁰ “synthetic consciousness”,⁸¹ or “the consciousness of synthesis”.⁸² Our black board example can illustrate that this element of intelligence cannot be reduced to possible quality nor to the sense of opposition:⁸³ we draw a line, and then another, and another, and so on until we have a square. After every line we draw our eye persuades us that there is a new line, that that line relates in a certain way to the previous line, and that we can expect a new line that will be related in a certain way to the previous one; and this goes on until all lines are related to each other in such a way that we recognize the final product: a square. Although the individual lines have by virtue of Secondness a distinct character, that is not sufficient to evoke the concept of a square in our mind. All

⁷⁴ CP 1.343; cf. 1.675, 1.325, 6.142, and 6.141.

⁷⁵ Cf. CP 1.26 and 1.27.

⁷⁶ CP 5.470.

⁷⁷ CP 1.27; see for a lucid discussion of Peirce’s conception of the real in this context: L. FRIEDMAN (1997, p. 253-268).

⁷⁸ Cf. CP 5.97, 5.98, 5.100, and 5.101.

⁷⁹ Cf. CP 5.99, 1.150 and 5.121.

⁸⁰ CP 1.381.

⁸¹ CP 1.377.

⁸² CP 1.381.

⁸³ Cf. CP 1.381 and 1.383.

the different lines have to be analyzed, synthesized, and organized in such a way that a continuous and unified whole, a square, is recognized. The distinct lines lose in this process gradually their independent individuality and become part of a continuous whole.⁸⁴ This process applies also to the separate lines as such; and so on.

This element of intelligence does not imply the extreme idealist view that all things are only creations of (our) mind: without the brute interaction between, for example, the white chalk and the blackboard the square and its concept would not have existed. The same applies to natural phenomena: the law of gravitation governs the falling of a stone and represents it, but it does not make it fall. To give effect to such a law a brute force is needed. In Peirce's words: "[l]aw, without force to carry it out, would be a court without a sheriff; and all its dicta would be vaporings."⁸⁵

Moreover, that the habit by which the square is evoked in our mind is something "mental" does not mean that it can be reduced to a particular standpoint or subjective preference. I perceive a collection of lines arranged in a certain way as a square, because a certain *general* law or habit makes me draw a certain conclusion if certain conditions are fulfilled; for example, if the ends of four lines are attached to each other in an angle of 90 degrees, then one has to conclude that what one sees is a square. This general law applies not only to me, but to every person that is capable of such reasoning.

A thing is thus identified as this or that by virtue of a sequence of reactions that are regulated and represented by virtue of a habit that is operative under certain general conditions. We have to keep in mind here that a thing is not something separate from its (continuous) reactions, but consists of nothing else than those (continuous) reactions. Taking also the element of futurity into account, Peirce says: "[n]ot only will meaning always, more or less, in the long run, mould reactions to itself, but it is only in doing so that its own being consists."⁸⁶

Peirce's famous pragmatic maxim⁸⁷ and his realism go hand in hand. To establish the identity of an object we have to ask ourselves what it does or what can be done with it, which implies that not anything goes. In our interactions with the things that we encounter eventually certain patterns will force themselves on us. We then summarize such patterns or laws under certain general terms like "square", "tea cup", and "hard", which function like hypotheses that enable us to make sense of what we encounter and to anticipate future events.⁸⁸ The identity of an object is not fixed by a certain ontological order that is pre-given and eternal, but by the development and application of habits, which are generated by virtue of a process of interactions.⁸⁹

The identification of an object can be characterized as an inferential process that has no beginning and no end.⁹⁰ The hypothesis, for example, that the general idea "car

⁸⁴ Cf. CP 6.204, 6.206, 1.492, 1.494, and 1.487.

⁸⁵ CP 1.212; cf. CP 1.213, 5.48, 7.532, and 8.330.

⁸⁶ CP 1.343.

⁸⁷ Cf. CP 5.402.

⁸⁸ Cf. CP 5.403; see also Ch. HOOKWAY (1985, p. 171f).

⁸⁹ Cf. S.B. ROSENTHAL (1994, p. 31f, 40f).

⁹⁰ There are three classes of inference, induction, deduction, and hypothesis, which correspond to three modes of mental action. Induction refers to the process by which an association or habit becomes established. A "habit" is, as Peirce states in this respect,

key” indicates that if I put a certain piece of metal in a certain slot and turn it to the right, it will lock the door, and if I turn it to the left, it will unlock the door is established firmly by induction, which means that this idea produces a certain habit that very strongly determines our conduct when we are confronted with a certain piece of metal in a certain situation. The invention of the remote car key, however, compelled us to adjust our concept of a car key and to establish an additional habit: now the idea of “car key” also indicates that pressing on a certain key (now in the other meaning of the word) will lock the door, whereas pressing on another key will open it. A consequence of this is also that the concept “car key” has grown.

The facts that we encounter will continuously force us to adjust and readjust our hypotheses.⁹¹ When confronted with facts that do not confirm the general schemes that direct our reasoning, that is, when certain hypotheses that we hold produce persistently an unintelligible sequence of interactions, we are forced to adjust them and specify further the conditions under which they are operative. Those decisions result in the establishment of different laws or habits that direct and regulate our future conduct and determine the identity of things.⁹² New habits of action are suggested by new observations and experiences, and are added to previous habits of action that embodied the old meaning of the word.⁹³ An established law that predicts certain associations has to prove itself continuously in future experiences.⁹⁴ Establishing what something is is a dynamical *process*. This is even more the case if we deal with entities that have a less clear and more complex identity, like mind, distant planets, or women.⁹⁵

“that specialization of the law of mind whereby a general idea gains the power of exciting reactions” (CP 6.145). Deduction refers to the application of habit that is already established (cf. CP 2.743). A hypothetic process, or “abduction”, as Peirce often calls it, refers to the “the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis” (CP 5.171; cf. 5.189).

⁹¹ Cf. CP 3.161.

⁹² Cf. Ch. HOOKWAY, (1985, p. 171f).

⁹³ Cf. W. GALLIE (1966, p. 203).

⁹⁴ Cf. CP 2.743.

⁹⁵ I presume that nobody in the Peirce literature would deny that for Peirce there is a dynamical relation between theory and the empirical world. About the status of that relation, however, there is much less agreement. Hjalmar WENNERBERG, for example, states that Peirce “blurs the important distinction between logical analysis and empirical research” (1962, p. 147). Peter SKAGESTAD claims, in reaction to Wennerberg, that Peirce “does not blur this distinction in the least; he unconditionally denies that there is any such distinction” (1981, p. 127). SKAGESTAD’s reaction is understandable: theory and empirical experience are for Peirce indeed interwoven; theory is always infected with experience, and *vice versa*. That the distinction between theory and empirical experience is not absolute, however, does not imply that one cannot make a distinction at all. Peirce’s idea that the meaning of words changes and that words grow already presupposes a certain distinction. Terms are summaries of habits or hypothetical laws that predict how things will react to us. They have therefore immediately empirical implications. But as summaries they can be abstracted from the practices that they refer to. Also Sandra ROSENTHAL points at this not-absolute distinction between theory and experience (see 1994, p. 13ff).

3. Nietzsche and Peirce: A Comparison

Both Nietzsche and Peirce repudiate the essentialist idea that there is a pre-given world order to which ultimately everything can be reduced; the furniture of the world is not pre-given. The “world as such” or the “world as a whole”, as far as we could speak of something like that, is for Nietzsche something that is lacking every type of order and organization.⁹⁶ I have tried to elaborate this view mainly on the basis of his notion of chaos. But also terms like “flow” (*Fluss*), “chance” (*Zufall*), and “event” (*Geschehen*), which Nietzsche often uses, denote aspects of this element of reality, which does not mean that all these terms are synonyms. Peirce’s category of Firstness indicates that there is always an element of chance in the world that warrants the possibility of radical novelty: we can never predict for sure in which concrete forms the unlimited potential richness of the world will be actualized. The world is for both Nietzsche and Peirce, in a sense, continuously pregnant of a measureless variety and multiplicity of possibilities that are still unknown to us.

Nietzsche and Peirce also do, in contrast to the essentialist view, justice to the dynamic connectedness of the world. Nietzsche’s notion of struggle indicates that a thing only exists in and by virtue of its actions and its resistances. Peirce’s category of Secondness expresses that vague possibilities are actualized in distinct particular entities by virtue of a brute force that cannot be reduced to a rational faculty. For both philosophers interactions do not occur between already existing things, but interacting “things” come to be what they are by virtue of interactions; interactions are not additional and external aspects of things, but are essential and constitutive.

Nietzsche does not give us a lot of clues about how the relation between possibility or potentiality and actuality should be understood; Peirce offers us a much more sophisticated explanation. Furthermore, although the brutal aspects of reality are accounted for in Nietzsche’s notions of a cruel and indifferent nature and impersonal will to power, also here Peirce shows in a much more systematic way that the element of brute force is the aspect of reality that, contra the relativist view, cannot be reduced to particular perspectives.

That Nietzsche’s and Peirce’s worldview is dynamical in the strongest sense of the word does not imply that there is no principle of regularity operative in the world. A will to power overpowers another will to power by organizing its internal struggle in such a way that the tension that is generated by that struggle can be discharged at the same time and in the same direction. The processes of overpowering bring about a kind of regularity in the world that, in a certain sense, can be called teleological. Peirce’s category of Thirdness is a general rule or habit that states how an endless future must continue to be. It binds the sequence of reactions that constitute the individual things around us in such a way that the world shows a kind of directedness. Against the relativist standpoint, both Nietzsche and Peirce argue that the world around and in us is characterized by an element of steadiness, organization, or regularity that cannot be reduced to particular standpoints or frameworks.

⁹⁶ Cf. M. HEIDEGGER (1961, p. 349); Th. BUSCH (1989, p. 236ff); G. ROHRMOSER (1981/82, p. 339); W. MÜLLER-LAUTER (1999, p. 141 and 148).

Although both Nietzsche and Peirce adopt a kind of teleology, this is not a teleology in the traditional meaning of the word. There are for both philosophers no pre-given eternal forms that determine “the world of unsteady matter”, as Plato, Aristotle, and their adepts believed. Nietzsche emphasizes that everything, including the highest notions of the philosophers, has become and is becoming.⁹⁷ Peirce states that “[t]he evolutionary process is a process by which the very Platonic forms themselves have become or are becoming developed.”⁹⁸ According to him, even logic is a result of this development;⁹⁹ an idea that one can find in Nietzsche frequently.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, for both Nietzsche and Peirce laws are not the rule but the exception. We believe, according to Nietzsche, that there is more order than chaos and chance because we have a “selective mind”; we are principally oriented at regularities because that makes our life easier.¹⁰¹ Peirce stresses that “uniformity is seen to be really a highly exceptional phenomenon”.¹⁰² Because what little we do understand of the world is by virtue of regularities, we only are focussed on them, and consequently “pay no attention to irregular relationships, as having no interest for us.”¹⁰³ In addition, both Nietzsche and Peirce claim that we do not have any convincing reason to believe that even the laws of nature are immutable.¹⁰⁴

All our propositions about the world are for both Nietzsche and Peirce hypotheses that in principle are falsifiable. For Nietzsche every will to power is continuously questioned by other wills to power that want to overpower it; when confronted with an arena of altered power relations, a will to power has to adjust its position if it wants to survive. For Peirce the element of chance generates continuously alterations in the boundless complex of dynamical interactions between various events. Consequently, the hypotheses that have to make sense of these sequences of interactions need continuously to be adjusted. Both Nietzsche and Peirce believe that our statements about the world never lose their provisional character.

All these similarities between Nietzsche and Peirce cannot conceal an important difference. Although Peirce’s perspective is not teleological in the sense that the course of the world is pre-given, it seems to be more linear than that of Nietzsche. To clarify what I mean, I have to say a little more about Peirce’s cosmology.

We have seen that the processes of doubt and habit-taking lead to intellectual growth. Intellectual growth is, according to Peirce, not something that only takes place in human beings, but is a tendency that characterizes the development of the universe as such. All things display a tendency toward ever more regularity and uniformity, which means for Peirce that “all the evolution we know of proceeds from the vague to the definite”.¹⁰⁵ What we have to take into account here is that the increasing regularity and

⁹⁷ Cf. *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Vernunft 4 6.76.

⁹⁸ CP 6.194; cf. CP 6.200.

⁹⁹ CP 6.200.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. for example N 5[67] 11.539.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 322 3.552 and N 4[5] 10.110.

¹⁰² CP 1.348.

¹⁰³ CP 1.348.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. for Peirce CP 1.348; for Nietzsche N 39[13] 11.623.

¹⁰⁵ CP 6.191.

uniformity is not a development toward ever less diversity. On the contrary, “[t]he homogeneous puts on heterogeneity”; “the undifferentiated differentiates itself.”¹⁰⁶ The world develops itself toward a kind of “organized heterogeneity,” or, better, “rationalized variety.”¹⁰⁷ There is a development from a stage of, what Peirce calls, a “general vague nothing-in-particular-ness that preceded the chaos”¹⁰⁸ toward a stage of perfect determination where absolute laws regulate the action of all things in every respect.¹⁰⁹ Statements like “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 crystallized in the infinitely distant future”¹¹⁰ indicate that chance is something that ultimately will be overcome once and for all.

From a Nietzschean point of view this seems to come close to the conception of Anaxagoras who claims that the world will eventually reach a state in which there is no chaos anymore. I showed earlier that Nietzsche repudiates this view. There is, from a Nietzschean point of view, no reason to believe that the world will ultimately reach a state of complete rational order; the chaos is eternal. Nietzsche’s cosmology could probably be called “cyclical”: world orders are and will be constructed and destroyed continuously until the end of time.

But we have to be careful here! Sometimes Peirce seems to conceive this “ideal” more as a regulative principle that has to guide us in the inbetween state in which we are now.¹¹¹ Repudiating that reaching such a state is possible could mean, from Peirce’s point of view, blocking the road of inquiry, the greatest of sins: not striving for this “ideal” would mean being content with a not entirely definite explanation of reality, and “to suppose a thing sporadic, spontaneous, irregular [...] is blocking the road of inquiry; it is supposing the thing inexplicable, when a supposition can only be justified by its affording an explanation.”¹¹²

I want to end this paper with two questions: first question, does the fact that Nietzsche does not adopt Peirce’s view that the world is developing itself toward a stage of perfect determination makes him a nominalist, or may be even a relativist? Is that the point where Nietzsche’s and Peirce’s paths separate? While reflecting on this question keep in mind that Nietzsche’s notion of the will to power implies a directedness at expanding or a strive for grow (which presupposes ever more intensified struggle and ever further actualized organization) that cannot be simply reduced to particulars. Second question, how does the relation between Nietzsche and Peirce look like if we take Peirce’s view that the world is developing itself toward a stage of perfect determination only as a regulative principle?

¹⁰⁶ CP 6.191.

¹⁰⁷ CP 6.101.

¹⁰⁸ CP 6.200.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. CP 1.409.

¹¹⁰ CP 6.33.

¹¹¹ Cf. H.S. THAYER (1968, p. 132); M. MURPHY (1961, p. 302).

¹¹² CP 1.156; cf. CP 6.64.

Abbreviations

CP: *Collected Papers of C.S. Peirce*. V. 1-6: Ch. HARTSHORNE & P. WEISS (eds.); V. 7-8: A. BURKS (ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935; 1958 (CP followed by volume and paragraph number).

EP: *The Essential Peirce*. V. I: N. HAUSER and Ch. KLOESEL (eds.); V. II: Peirce Edition Project (ed.). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992; 1998 (EP followed by volume, chapter, and page number).

N/title: *Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke*, Kritische Studienausgabe. G. COLLI and M. MONTINARI (eds.). München/Berlin/New York, 1988 (published work: title followed by section, volume, and page number; unpublished notes: N followed by note number, volume, and page number).

References

ALMEDER, R. (1975a) The Epistemological Realism of Charles Peirce', *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, v. 11, p. 3-17 [1975].

ALMEDER, R. (1975b) "Fallibilism and the Ultimate Irreversible Opinion", *American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph*, v. 9, p. 33-54 [1975b].

AYDIN, C. (2003) *Zijn en Worden. Nietzsches omduiding van het substantiebegrip*. Maastricht: Shaker Publishing.

ARISTOTLE. (1984) *The complete works of Aristotle*. J. Barnes (ed.). New Jersey/West Sussex: Princeton University Press.

BUSCH, Th. (1989) *Die affirmation des Chaos. Zur Überwindung des Nihilismus in der Metaphysik Friedrich Nietzsches*. St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag.

DEBROCK, G. (2003a) "Introduction: Process Pragmatism". In: G. DEBROCK (ed.). *Process Pragmatism: Essays on a Quiet Philosophical Revolution*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, p. 1-11.

DEBROCK, G. (2003b) "Ethics and Pragmatic Process Philosophy". In: G. DEBROCK (ed.). *Process Pragmatism: Essays on a Quiet Philosophical Revolution*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, p. 159-171.

FERRATER MORA, J. (1955) Peirce's Conception of Architectonic and Related Views. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, v. 15, p. 351-359 [1955].

FRIEDMAN, L. (1997) Peirce's Reality and Berkeley's Blunders. *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, p. 253-268 [1997].

GALLY, W. (1966) *Peirce and Pragmatism*. New York: Dover Publications.

- GERHARD, V. (1996). *Vom Willen zur Macht. Anthropologie und Metaphysik der Macht am exemplarischen Fall Friedrich Nietzsches*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- GRUENDER, D. (1983) "Pragmatism, Science, and Metaphysics". In: E. FREEMAN (ed.). *The Relevance of Charles Peirce*. La Salle, Ill.: Hegeler Institute, p. 281-287.
- HAUSMAN, C. (1990) "In and Out of Percepts", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, v. 26, p. 271-308 [1990].
- HAUSMAN, C.R. (1993) *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (1961) *Nietzsche*. Volume I. Pfullingen: Neske.
- HOOKEYWAY, Ch. (1985) *Peirce*. London/Boston/Melbourne/Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- HULSWIT, M. (2002) *From Cause to Causation: A Peircean Perspective*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers.
- KENT, B. (1987) *Charles S. Peirce: Logic and the Classification of the Sciences*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- LACHS, J. (1980) "Peirce, Santayana, and the Large Facts", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, v. 16, p. 3-13 [1980].
- MCCARTHY, J. (1990) "Peirce's Proof of Pragmatism", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, v. 26, 1990, p. 63-113 [1990].
- MITTASCH, A. (1952) *Friedrich Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph*. Stuttgart: Kröner.
- MÜLLER-LAUTER, W. (1999) *Über Freiheit und Chaos*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.
- MURPHY, M. (1961) *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- PEIRCE, C.S. (1902) "Entry: Individual". In: J. M. BALDWIN (ed.). *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*. New York/London: Macmillan, p. 538.
- ROHRMOSER, G. (1981/82) Nietzsche's Kritik der Moral. *Nietzsche-Studien*, v. 10/11, p. 328-366 [1981/82].
- RORTY, R. (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ROSENTHAL, S.B. (1994) *Charles Peirce's Pragmatic Pluralism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- ROSENTHAL, S.B. (2001) *Firstness and the collapse of universals*. Retrieved October 25, 2004, from <http://www.digitalpeirce.fee.unicamp.br/firros.htm>.

SKAGESTAD, P. (1981) *The Road of Inquiry: Charles Peirce's Pragmatic Realism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

THAYER, H.S. (1968) *Meaning and Action: A Critical History of Pragmatism*. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

TONGEREN, P. VAN (1989) *Die Moral von Nietzsches Moralkritik*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag.

WENNERBERG, H. (1962) *The Pragmatism of C.S. Peirce*. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard.