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The Phenomenology of Love in C.S. Peirce's Philosophy

PHD THESIS

SUMMARY

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Keywords

pragmatism, phenomenology, firstness, secondness, thirdness, degenerate, aesthetics, ethics, logic, semiotics, evolutionism, metaphysics, tychasticism, ananchasticism, agapism, agapasticism, love, hate.

Abstract

Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of pragmatism, puts a lot of emphasis on love, in his metaphysical analyses, stating that this “must embrace what is most opposed to it, as a degenerate case of it” (CP 6.304). Therefore, the feelings that are opposed to that of love are nothing else but degenerate forms of the former. The hypothesis of this paper consists in the fact that Peirce approaches the concept of love by means of his triadic phenomenology. The formulation of this hypothesis is justified on the basis of the fact that the Peircean phenomenology orchestrates the notions of “authentic” and “degenerate” in the phenomenological writings, where the three authentic categories “firstness”, “secondness” and “thirdness” are highlighted and, at the same time, their three degenerate forms, namely “the firstness secondness”, “the firstness of thirdness” and “the secondness of thirdness”, each form being characterized by its specific differences. Since Peirce’s philosophy developed on the ground of the dialogue with Kant’s philosophy and with Hegel’s phenomenology, with the American Protestant theology, as well as with the evolutionary theories of that time, our research will explore these rationalities in order to notice the intersection elements between certain aspects of these kinds of thinking and the pragmaticist philosophy, after which we will point out the philosophical foundation according to which the triadic phenomenology becomes a normative factor in the philosophical approach to love, both to the metaphysical love, and to the one which is a human feeling.

As the phenomenology of love in Peirce’s philosophy brings to the foreground the meaning and role of the triadic love, which is authentic, as compared to its degenerate forms, both the egophilic and the violent ones, this makes out of Peirce an important partner in the contemporary dialogue concerning the approach to conflict resolution. The thesis of Peirce’s phenomenology of love consists in the idea that the genuine triadic love, in order that it may

not degenerate into self-centeredness or into some violent forms of compulsion, manifests itself constantly, by the means which are peculiar to it, towards any animosity and affront.

INTRODUCTION

The introductory stage of the research comprises the motivation and the specific objectives of this kind of approach, as well as a review of many significant researchers of Peirce's philosophy. Thus, the motivation which underlies this paper lies in conjuring up the role that the phenomenology of love can have within the contemporary debates regarding the appeasement of conflicts and the settlement of interhuman tensions. I will emphasize, in the third chapter of this research, the essential thesis according to which *the "agapastic" rationality implies the expression of love in the form of thirdness, regardless of circumstances, towards the triadic conditions in the form of "firstness" or "secondness", "tychastic" or "ananchastic", egophilic or brutal, for the very reason of keeping its genuine character, phenomenologically characterized by the "thirdness" of thirdness.* This thesis will be outlined especially within the contemporary debates on conflict reconciliation in which Miroslav Volf and Jonathan Sacks participate. If these two scholars conjure the role of the Judeo-Christian ethics, regarding it under different philosophical aspects, Peirce does not estrange himself from the pragmatic value of this ethics, but he gives it an "agapastic" language of addressability, sprung from the fertile soil of the pragmatist triadic phenomenology.

Peirce's philosophy enjoyed an ample reception, but also different kinds of interpretations. J. Feibleman considers that ethics, incessantly fuelled by the aesthetic ideal, sets off love as an ethical value of the first order and it sees it as a universal deontological necessity. T. A. Goudge holds up the consideration that Peirce always oscillated between transcendentalism and naturalism, that is why it was possible, on the one hand, to put up ethics in a close connection with theology and cosmology, and semiotics, on the other hand, in connection with phenomenology and methodetics. For M. G. Murphey, logic is the queen of the Peircean philosophical system, because only a reformulation in this field can lead to real modifications within the whole system. J. F. Boler remarks the role of the pragmatist as a method of knowledge in the development of semiotics, of phenomenology and metaphysics

equally. J. Buchler indicates that the entire knowledge, in Peirce's philosophy, is semiotics, nonetheless it is indivisibly connected with the empirical reality. V. M. Colapietro is interested in the philosophy of mind and he ascertains that Peirce's philosophy analyses the self from the semiotical perspective. Similar to Anette Ejsing, M. L. Raposa pursues the theological mindset of the founder of pragmatism. He underlines that religious reflexions deeply interconnect with semiotics, metaphysics and the pragmatical method of clarifying ideas. R. S. Corrington casts light on the correlation between semiotics and metaphysics, laying the foundations for an ecstatic naturalism. C. S. Hausman considers that Peirce's philosophy is pervaded by a realism which differs both from the scholastic one and from the materialist one, which makes it to successfully accommodate the metaphysical aspirations. V. O. Potter holds that phenomenology is the platform upon which the American philosopher's whole system of thought is built. This enterprise joins the latter's viewpoint.

K. O. Apel argues in favour of the idea that transcendental semiotics is the philosopher's main preoccupation, this is why Peirce managed to lay the foundations of pragmatic epistemology, obviously backing away from Kant's transcendental logic. K. A. Parker points out elements which denote the fact that Peirce's theory of continuity encloses both the latter's phenomenology and his semiotics. A. Reynolds has the merit of evoking the philosophical-bibliographical substratum Peirce's outlook on metaphysics. T. L. Short believes that the nature of the research is guided, on the one hand, by semiotics, and, on the other hand, by the empirically-based cosmology, characterized by teleology. J. Liszka argues for the establishing of logic and semiotics upon ethics. The same scholar concludes that the ethical rationality is eminently teleological. Also, R. Herdy confirms the correlation between ethics and phenomenology, another approach which coincides with the present enterprise, this one focusing on the idea that love, as a human feeling, is phenomenologically approachable. Herdy is among the few commentators who dwells programatively, in an applied and not only descriptive manner, upon the degenerate phenomenological categories. And Brent is Peirce's biographer who, besides Louis Menand, the author of an awarded account of the background and concerns regarding the members of the philosophical society, called "The Metaphysical Club", contributes to the attempt to make the study of Peirce's philosophy more agreeable and human.

The last part of the introduction underlines both the central thesis of this paper and its actual steps, trained by the objectives of the research which, as a consequence of it, divide the paper in three chapters. In the first chapter, we will follow the philosophical framework which led to the development of Peirce's philosophical and phenomenological thinking, in the

second chapter, we will seek to understand the regulative function of phenomenology and the reason why love, as a human feeling, has to be appreciated in the light of phenomenology, and in the third chapter, we will analyse Peirce's perspective on cosmic love and human love.

Chapter I. Anchoring in classical philosophy: the philosophical perimeter of Peirce's phenomenology

In the first chapter, there are theological, philosophical and evolutionary rationalities presented for the purpose of demarcating the philosophical perimeter from which both Peirce's philosophical thinking and his phenomenology and ethics descended. Therefore, as concerns Peirce's phenomenology, it is highlighted that the American philosopher formulated the phenomenological triad out of the express desire to accede to categories that are universally valid, unlike Kant's table of categories, which evokes only a special applicability of these. Also, Hegel's phenomenology represents a reference point for Peirce's philosophy. However, contrary to the German thinker's phenomenology, who emphasizes the role of the synthesis, category that corresponds to "thirdness" in Peirce's phenomenology, to the detriment of thesis and antithesis, which get lost in the action of the former, the Peircean triadic phenomenology confers equal value to each category, considering them co-present in the vast domain of the phenomenal reality.

As concerns the construction of the pragmatist philosophy, it is pointed out that there were solid footholds upon which the American thinker's reasoning was reinforced. Thus, Kant's notion of "pragmatic faith", St. John Green's input by evoking Alexander Bain in the discussions of the *Metaphysical Club* philosophical society, the philosophical concern for pragmatism of some of his fellows such as C. Wright and W. James, helped tremendously to the introduction of Peirce's philosophy in its own matrix, as we know it today. Undoubtedly, the great theological discussions in the American Protestant space and the familiarization of their important actors with the European continental philosophy, such as S. Johnson, J. Edwards and R. W. Emerson, the new biblical exegesis and theology's tendency to emancipate had a word to say in the sphere of the ethical debates of the time, which made Peirce both focus on some of the Christian ethical themes, in our case on the theme of love, and recover some essential canonical texts, as it is the case of *The First Epistle of John*. Two classical philosophical analyses, which have an ethical substance, are: Johnson's altruistic ethics and Edwards' semiology of moral behaviour.

Beside the American ethos, which inspired Peirce's ethical and metaphysical thinking, an important role was played by O.W. Holmes' strategy of promoting moral values, J. Fiske's principle of subordinating ethics to man's selfless service that the latter does for the benefit of their neighbour, and man's moral responsibility, stressed by F. E. Abbot. Yet, the general background which intensified Peirce's concern for ethics is represented by the recent scientific results in the field of biology and geology, together with their interpretations that are included in comprehensive cosmological narratives, although, in some cases, divergent.

Darwin's theory of evolution turns out to be one which is capable of reforming paradigms. Aleatory individual variations, preserved and sent forth, from parents to children, by heredity, is one of the main factors of the evolution of species. Therefore, the individuals that are better adapted to the environment through these new physical-biological acquisitions develop and perpetuate to the detriment of the maladjusted ones, consequently the strongest wins in front of the weakest one in their fight for survival. Peirce pursues to harness the ethical implications of this theory pointing out the harmful and egocentric nature of the individual's preoccupation for themselves.

The second theory is that of the catastrophist evolutionism, drawn up by C. King. According to this, the terrestrial crust underwent sudden changes which poured out violently upon the species of plants and animals, characterized by "plasticity". Thus, the transformations in the inorganic world imposed, with rapidity, changes of adaptation in the whole sphere of the organic beings. Peirce includes this theory in the catalogue of those who bring to the fore the idea of mechanic necessity. The theory that Peirce appreciated is the habitudinal evolutionism, presented by the French scholar J. B. Lamarck. Unlike the evolutionism of chance and the determinist one, Lamarck's theory holds an evolution of the species on the basis of some minor changes, carried out in time, following the habits acquired through orientation toward a purpose. This theory corresponds to the constructive, rational evolutionism of Peirce's cosmology, named the "agapasticist" evolutionism.

Chapter II. The construction of philosophy as system

Peirce takes both Kant's idea of the systematic organization of philosophy, and Comte's principle of the hierarchical organization of sciences in a shared structure. According to Kant, philosophy has to be perceived as a whole, coherent system, correlated with practical sciences. On the other hand, the American philosopher shares Comte's principle in conformity with which more abstract sciences facilitate to the less abstract ones, fundamental

formative rules. Subsequently, the most abstract philosophical subject, phenomenology, provides the other fields of study with the triadic phenomenological structure necessary for the simplification of phenomenal diversity.

Phenomenology develops a triadic phenomenal structure whose final categories are "firstness", "secondness" and "thirdness". These represent the concepts of possibility, actuality and continuity. Phenomenological categories impose themselves in the assessment and differentiation proceeding of normative sciences (aesthetics, ethics and logic), in that of analysing metaphysics (ontological, religious and psychical metaphysics) and, what is relevant for our research is that the three phenomenological categories standardize both the understanding of the concept of cosmic love, and human love as well, highlighting authentic love and the two forms of degenerate love. In Peirce's philosophical viewpoint, love embraces "what is most opposed to it, as a degenerate case of it" (CP 6.304).

In order to understand the concept of "degenerate" love, it is important to appeal to phenomenology. The latter underlines three authentic phenomenological cases: "the firstness of firstness", "the secondness of secondness" and "the thirdness of thirdness" and three cases of "degenerate" phenomenological forms. These are the following ones: "the firstness of secondness", "the firstness of thirdness" and "the secondness of thirdness". The notion of "degeneration" is borrowed by the philosopher from Maths, the most abstract science, where, for instance, an authentic triangle (we call a triangle as authentic when the sum of the numerical value of its sides, let us say x and y , is higher than the value of side z , namely $x + y > z$) having the sides x , y , z , may "degenerate" into the form where the sum of the numerical values of its sides, let us say x and y , becomes equal to the numerical value of side z , which means that $x + y = z$.

Pursuing the same mathematical logic, both "thirdness", and "secondness" can degenerate into their own inauthentic forms. Thus, "thirdness" can degenerate into the mode of being of a secondness in itself, and we call this case, *thirdness in the form of a secondness*, or in Peirce's words, "the secondness of thirdness", but this can also degenerate into the mode of being of a firstness in itself, and we call this case the *thirdness in the form of firstness*, or as Peirce says "the firstness of thirdness". "The secondness of secondness" has only one degenerate form, which is "the firstness of secondness". In this case secondness reduces to a firstness in itself. Authentic thirdness evokes a real relationship, like "A gives B to C" (CP 8.331), and the thirdness degenerated in the form of secondness shows an accidental joining of two dyads, for instance "A's laying down the B which C subsequently picks up B" (CP 8.331). In the same order of ideas, the thirdness degenerated in the form of firstness is

expressed by three monads, which may be grouped as such in conformity with their mental association, at least that among them there is no organic relationship but the connection that it supplies, from the exterior, the mind which associates and compares them. A relevant example is "Philadelphia lies between New York and Washington." (CP 1.367)

Secondness, similar to the thirdness of secondness conjures constraint and crude expression, and firstness, the same as the firstness of thirdness and the firstness of secondness explains itself by the mode of being of a monad and finds its social expression in cynicism or selfcentration. Regulative transposition of phenomenology in the proceeding of evaluating love action, in the third chapter of the work, will identify two degenerate forms of cosmic love, that the philosopher will name in a novel way, as we will see later, and two forms of degenerate love, fused, as it can be understood, in the undesirable feeling of hate. Semiotics is formulated on the same substratum of triadic phenomenology, the former is that part of logic that Peirce calls "speculative grammar". The latter has a series of semiotic triads, out of which the best-known "icon", "index" and "symbol". Phenomenology also dictates to aesthetics and ethics the manner in which it assesses, on the one hand, the object that it deals with, and on the other hand, the degenerate forms which are dislikable.

Metaphysics is the last one among the fields of philosophy, in hierarchical order. It is divided according to the phenomenological triad and it evokes (as we will be able to see in the third chapter) three cosmological narratives out of which one is authentic, triadic, also called "agapastic", in conformity with which the universe evolves rationally towards an anticipated apex of regularity and perfection, and the other two are degenerate evolutionary narratives, which evoke, taking turns, the evolutionism of chance, which corresponds to darwinism, and mechanist evolutionism, corresponding to C. King's narrative. However, phenomenological rationality compels Peirce to draw up the three universes of experience, the one of idea, of actuality and of continuity, corresponding to the phenomenological categories of possibility, actuality and regularity.

Chapter III. Love and evolution, cosmos and humanity

The third chapter confirms that metaphysics, and especially the concept of love, are developed under the regulative auspices of phenomenology. The American philosopher argues for the co-existence of three cooperating factors of reality. The first one is haphazard, the second one, continuity, responsible for the firm character of physical, concrete things, and cosmic love, factor which offers rationality and progress to the evolutionary course of the universe. Each one of these evolutionary factors are inseparable and necessary for the

evolutionary process. They match the phenomenological categories. Thus, haphazard corresponds to "firstness", continuity, under its implacable nature, suits "secondness" and cosmic love, by virtue of its interceding, sensible and teleological nature, is congruous with "thirdness".

These factors or metamorphic agents which authenticate the theory that Peirce agrees, called "agapasticism", to the extent in which both haphazard and continuity and love oriented towards a main finality, play an equal and specific part in the world's developmental deployment. "Agapasticism" as theory emphasizes the valid mode of evolution, the "agapastic" one respectively, which tallies with "thirdness" (thirdness of thirdness). In exchange, when cosmological narrative stresses the firstness type of the evolution or when spontaneity prevails in the panorama of the evolution, we have a "tychastic" evolutionary theory which points out a degenerate form of the "agapastic" mode of evolution, and it is congruous with the first form of degenerate triad, that of the "firstness of thirdness". Moreover, the theory of evolution, which reflects the prevailing role of the necessity which determines the cosmos' entire evolutionary endeavour in an unequivocal and implacable manner, highlights the secondness type of the modality of being (a secondness of thirdness), and the American philosopher gives a name to this mutative modality as "ananchastic", and this theory is called "ananchastic".

Peirce is careful to mention that the "tychastic" theory entails Darwin's evolutionism, the "ananchastic" one is represented by Hegel's and King's phenomenology, and "agapastic" evolutionism is best symbolized by that of Lamarck. As concerns human love, Peirce also probes the concept of love of ideas. Thus, the second section of the first chapter focuses on the phenomenology of ideas' attractivity. The authentic love of ideas is rendered by its discovery, by "genial intuition" (CP 6.307), purely and simply by virtue of its attractivity. The attractivity exerted by an idea is degenerated in a firstness form in case the idea does not fascinate in a straightforward way, but it is assimilated based on the fact that it is promoted by and within a community. When, nevertheless, an idea is adopted by the force of circumstances, a love degenerated in a secondness type of being is profiled. Therefore, what validates an authentic love of a thirdness type is its reasonable character, which indicates a love that is degenerated in the form of a firstness, is the monadic, cynical reflex, individual or singular.

Likewise, what displays a love that is degenerated in the form of secondness is the coercive or limitative nature of the latter. Love, this time as a human feeling, treated phenomenologically, has a genuine form and two degenerate forms. Love's genuine form, the

thirdness type of love, is defined by intentionality, rationality and its teleological aspiration, trained ethically-aesthetically. Authentic love is a phenomenological thirdness because it performs the function of a triad of the following kind: "A gives B to C". The love which is degenerated in the form of a secondness or dyadic love, expressed succinctly through the double dyadic relationship, "A's laying down the B, which C subsequently picks up." (CP 8.331), is a relationship lacking ethical-aesthetical intentionality and is associated to "ananchasticism", which highlights the violent, coercive, rude mode of things' deployment.

The second form of degenerate love is that of the "firstness" type, and is expressed, for instance, by the echo which "is my own voice coming back to answer itself." (CP 1.365) The love which is degenerated in a firstness type is expressed through self-love, egocentrism, cynicism and indifference towards the neighbour's suffering. This kind of love is affiliated with the "tychastic" theory of world's evolution, an evolution represented by the Darwinian theory of ferocious fight for survival. Peirce's critique on ethics, established on a firstness type of thinking, Darwinian, is direct and categorical. Agapic love is universal love, triggered exactly by its degenerate forms, of the firstness and secondness type, by omissive indifference and rude constraint, namely by the hate itself that it embraces programmatically and creatively, in accordance with metaphysical (objective) realism and in the hope of finally transforming hate, as degenerate love, into genuine love, detached both from the egophilic indifference, and from the destructive and harmful violence.

Unlike M. Volf, who lays out a love trained by the religious beliefs of the agent of love, and J. Sacks who advances the idea of a love guided by neighbour's unique value, characterized by distinction and dignity, Peirce presents phenomenologically the fact that authentic love, the thirdness kind, equips the agent of love with the phenomenological understanding in conformity with which genuine love cannot manifest itself degenerately, and the manifestations of degenerate love can be dealt with in an authentic and effective manner.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenology of love sets forth the genuine love, of the thirdness type, disconnected from the degenerate forms of the firstness and secondness kind, from selfcenteredness and aggressive coercion, it acts for the neighbour's good because the latter is close to them and in the enemy's favour even if the latter is hostile. The phenomenology of love in Peirce's philosophy evokes a love which treats the degenerate forms in a therapeutic and constructive

way, promoting an agapic rationality by virtue of which hate is welcome with affection, and evil is dealt with intentionally, creatively, transformingly and positively.

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