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Peirce's Reception in Brazil

Lucia Santaella

1. The First Seeds

- 1 A number of scholars of international reputation visited Brazil at the end of the 1960s to give lectures and seminars. Among them were: Nicolas Ruwet, Abraham Moles, Max Bense, Roman Jakobson, Umberto Eco, and Tzvetan Todorov. More than any others, Jakobson's lectures had deep and widespread effect on university circles and on the intellectual and artistic milieu. A while after his visit, a volume containing a series of Jakobson's articles was translated and published in São Paulo. There was no Brazilian scholar in the field of humanities who did not have the book always at hand for discussion with colleagues. The visits of these scholars were a landmark; they opened the doors for the emergence of a spirit of renewal which, in the 1970's, arose not only in the individual scholarly mind, but also in the academic institutions, in the universities, in the publishing houses, and even in the cultural newspapers.
- 2 With regard to the reception of Peirce's thought in Brazil, it is worth considering that the collection of Jakobson's translated texts contained "Quest for the Essence of Language," a text which had great influence on Peirce studies in the country. In fact, Jakobson, and before him Bense, both reported the work of Peirce in their lectures in Brazil and they left behind the great interest that Peirce's semiotics awoke in the mind of the concrete poets Haroldo de Campos and Decio Pignatari, who were also theorists, critics and very active in the Brazilian intellectual life.
- 3 In the 1960s Pignatari was professor at the Escola Superior of Industrial Design in Rio de Janeiro. The students were mainly architects, and it was in the field of architecture that Pignatari took the first steps toward a Peircean semiotic theory of communication. A few years later, he was invited to teach at the School of Architecture, at Rio Grande do Sul Federal University. After his visit, a new area of study was set up at this School, which was to comprise theory of information and the theory of signs.

2. The Postgraduate Program in Communication and Semiotics

- 4 Those were the first seeds which were to flourish a few years later, at the beginning of the 1970s, when Haroldo de Campos and Decio Pignatari became professors in the postgraduate program in Literary Theory at São Paulo Catholic University. In 1978, this program was expanded into Communication and Semiotics. Campos's and Pignatari's interest in Peirce's work began to spread among the students of that program. Already in 1972, seminars on the work of Peirce were developed and his theory of signs was applied to arts, music, architecture, literature, and also to mass communication phenomena. That same year, Cultrix, an important publishing house in São Paulo, brought to light the first small collection of translations of Peirce's texts, under the organization of two Brazilian logicians, Octanny Silveira da Mota and Leonidas Hegenberg. Hence some of Peirce's writings reached Brazilian readers with surprising and promising promptness. And the publications did not stop there. In 1975, a popular series dedicated to philosophy, named *The Thinkers*, brought to newspaper stalls in the streets of Brazilian cities, among other philosophers, a volume of texts by Peirce and Frege which went subsequently through numerous re-editions. In 1977, Perspectiva publishing house brought out a more substantial volume of Peirce's writing. Thus, even in the 1970s there were three books of translations of Peirce's selected writings circulating in Brazil – one possible reason for which Peirce's thought has become widespread in the country from that decade on.
- 5 But the main reason is to be found in the fact that already in 1972 a group of master and PhD students gathered around Decio Pignatari at São Paulo Catholic University, all of them oriented toward Peirce's semiotics. Numerous master theses and PhD dissertations applying Peirce to a variety of subjects, from literature and the arts to cultural and communication phenomena, were defended. I was among those students and, in 1976, I became professor at that same program where I had obtained my PhD in 1973. I started to transmit to my students the same enthusiasm concerning Peirce that had been transmitted to me years before by Campos and Pignatari.
- 6 Since 1976, I have never stopped giving courses on Peirce's philosophical semiotics once a semester every year at the graduate program in Communication and Semiotics/ Catholic University of São Paulo. Counting 20 students per semester in the last 38 years, 760 master and doctoral students have passed through my classes. Not all of them have continued studies in Peirce's semiotics, finding their way into other authors and theories. But since 1978, 220 students received their master and PhD titles under my advisory. Many of these students, perhaps half of them, used Peirce's concepts extensively. Some of them went quite deep into their study, for example, Julio Plaza, Elisabeth Saporiti, Conrado Paschoale, Cecilia Salles, Vera Grellet, João Queirós, Priscila Borges, Roberto Chiachiri, Luciana Pagliarini, Isabel Jungk, Tarcisio Cardoso, Gustavo Rick Amaral, and others. These PhDs are now professors at various universities throughout Brazil and some continue disseminating Peirce's texts and concepts. It is my impression that there is no researcher in the field of the arts and communications in Brazil that has no knowledge, even precarious, of Peirce's semiotics.
- 7 Along more than three decades, from 1980 on, I have published in Brazil nine books each of them explicitly dealing with a different aspect of Peirce's thought: his semiotics in contrast with structuralist and formalist semiotics; an introduction to

phenomenology and the theory of signs; his philosophical edifice in the context of the classification of the sciences; Peirce's aesthetics, the normative sciences, and pragmatism; a detailed account of his doctrine of signs and his classification of signs; his theory of perception; Peirce's methodeutics in the context of the three types of reasoning; a system of classification of sound, visual and verbal semiosis based on Peirce's triads; semiotics applied to different cultural and communication phenomena. Besides these books which are entirely dedicated to Peirce's thought, I also published half a dozen of other books, some of them co-authored with Winfried Nöth, where the presence of Peirce's semiotics is still relevant.

3. The International Center for Peirce Studies

- 8 In 1996, I founded the International Center for Peirce Studies at the Catholic University of São Paulo (estudospeirceanos.wordpress.com/). Besides promoting open public conferences throughout the school year, the Center is composed of Thematic Groups of Study, whose members meet regularly to collaborate in their investigation. The Center has three lines of research: Theoretical Semiotics, Semiotics and Interdisciplinary Studies, Specific Semiotics. These lines are distributed into seven different Groups of study. Each group holds events throughout the year, such as lectures, seminars and discussion forums open to the public in general.
- 9 Participation in these groups is open to both students of the Catholic University of São Paulo and other people interested in Peirce's thought.
- 10 According to the profile that defines the Center, it aims to support a wide range of studies for those who:
 - a. seek inspiration in Peirce only to achieve an introductory knowledge about his thought;
 - b. want to penetrate the intricacies of the general theory of signs with a view to their application to a variety of communication processes;
 - c. seek to solidify their methods of research supporting them on a broad concept of logic as a synonym to semiotics;
 - d. want to reflect on the ontological and epistemological foundations of the universe of signs and communication;
 - e. desire to exploit the semiotic interfaces with other areas of knowledge, particularly philosophy in general and philosophy of language in particular, as well as cognitive and psychoanalytic studies, both inextricably woven in the fabric of signs;
 - f. wish to become experts in Peirce's semiotics.
- 11 In sum: Peirce's work seems to be sufficiently broad, multifaceted, dialogical, and internally consistent to meet all these interests.
- 12 At present the Center is under the executive direction of Priscila Borges and Roberto Chiachiri. Since its opening, every year, a Colloquium is held with the participation of researchers, students, and former students. Every two years, the Colloquium is accompanied by the Advanced Seminar on Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics. These seminars have relied on the participation of international experts in Peirce, among which Vincent Colapietro and Fernando Andacht have repeatedly been present. Deliberately these events have been small, because every second year a theme is chosen to be studied in depth. These seminars have a publication that is delivered to the

participants before the beginning of the seminar so that they can have time to read and study the subject in order to allow a richer discussion.

- 13 In 2006, I also founded a new post-graduate program at São Paulo Catholic University, under the name of Technologies of Intelligence and Digital Design. One of the lines of research is turned to a Peircean oriented cognitive and computer semiotics under the advisory of Winfried Nöth, who became a professor in this program from 2010 on. Seminars on Peirce are being developed there and his thought is being disseminated among students who come from the hard sciences.

4. The Center for Studies in Pragmatism

- 14 For some years, Lauro Frederico Barbosa da Silveira was professor in the department of philosophy at the Catholic University of São Paulo. As a specialist in Peirce's philosophy, he spread his knowledge among his master's and doctoral advisees. In the 1980s, Silveira moved to the University of the State of São Paulo, in Marília, where he continued to spread Peirce's thought, also creating a sort of Peirce school of thought in Marília. In 2007, Silveira published an important book on Peirce's semiotics. Ivo Ibri was one of his students, having defended his thesis on Peirce's metaphysics and cosmology in 1986. In 1994, he defended his PhD at the University of São Paulo, also about Peirce's philosophy.
- 15 Since 1997, Ivo Ibri, already professor of Philosophy at the Catholic University of São Paulo, was also incorporated into the postgraduate program in Communication and Semiotics, in which he teaches courses related to Peirce every semester. In 1998, Ibri founded the Center for Studies in Pragmatism-CEP (pucsp.br/pragmatismo/) which is linked to the Program of postgraduate Studies in Philosophy at São Paulo Catholic University. This Center was born to join researchers and students interested in classical and contemporary pragmatism. Due to the background of its founder, the Center is more emphatically dedicated to studies around Peirce's work, and since its inception it has formed a significant number of experts in Peirce's thought. The Center has encouraged mainly three lines of research, namely, pragmatism and logic, pragmatism and ethics, and aesthetics and pragmatism. Studies around these lines have been the topics for theses and dissertations at the postgraduate program in philosophy that houses the CEP.
- 16 Also in 1998, the Center promoted the 1st Meeting on Pragmatism counting only on Brazilian professors. From this date on, these meetings became annual, and in 2000 they turned into the International Meeting on Pragmatism (EIP), when the event was expanded to count on the presence of foreign researchers in the area. With these meetings on Pragmatism, Ivo Ibri certainly put the Catholic University of São Paulo in the world map of Peirce studies.
- 17 It was also in 2000 that the first issue of *Cognitio-Journal of Philosophy* appeared under the editorial direction of Ivo Ibri. This journal intends to publish papers in the area and has published along the years the contributions coming from the lectures of the International Meetings. *Cognitio* highlights the Center with its two annual volumes, and has obtained excellent national and international repercussion. Beyond this, CEP also edits the online magazine on *Cognitio-studies* which aims to publish articles of young researchers, graduate and postgraduate students. CEP plans to maintain and let all these activities grow, along with an intensive exchange with other international

research centers, taking its own approach of pragmatism, deeply committed to a dialogue with the tradition of the history of philosophy.

- 18 Although it is not certainly exhaustive, the panorama above described is sufficient to show that the flourishing of Peirce studies in Brazil has produced many ramifications and promises to be even more fruitful in the future.

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