Dossier temático «La semiótica de C. S. Peirce en la intersección de información y comunicación»

In the Face of Fake News: the Urgency of a Realist Semiotics

Frente a las noticias falsas: la urgencia de una semiótica realista

Diante das Fake News: a urgência de uma semiótica realista

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Abstract

This small paper argues that the notion of truth has been marginalized in much semiotics. As an alternative, Peirce's semiotic theory of propositions and its connection to his special brand of realism are briefly recapitulated. It is argued that they constitute a multimodal theory of truth-claiming, facilitating the understanding of how current media make truth claims in combinations of many signs, linguistic, visual, auditive, gestural and much more.

Keywords: TRUTH, FAKE NEWS, COMMUNICATION, SEMIOTICS, C. S. PEIRCE

Resumen

Este breve artículo sostiene que la noción de verdad ha sido marginada en gran parte de la semiótica. Como alternativa, se recapitula brevemente la teoría semiótica de las proposiciones de Peirce y su conexión con su tipo especial de realismo. Se argumenta que constituyen una teoría multimodal de la afirmación de la verdad, que facilita la comprensión de cómo los medios actuales hacen afirmaciones de la verdad en combinaciones de muchos signos, lingüísticos, visuales, auditivos, gestuales y mucho más.

Palabras clave: VERDAD, FAKE NEWS, COMUNICACIÓN, SEMIÓTICA, C. S. PEIRCE

Resumo

Este pequeno artigo argumenta que a noção de verdade foi marginalizada em muitas semióticas. Como alternativa, a teoria semiótica das proposições de Peirce e a sua ligação ao seu tipo especial de realismo são brevemente recapituladas.

Argumenta-se que constituem uma teoria multimodal de reivindicação da verdade, facilitando a compreensão de como os meios de comunicação actuais fazem reivindicações de verdade em combinações de muitos sinais, linguísticos, visuais, auditivos, gestuais e muito mais.

Palavras-chave: VERDADE, FAKE NEWS, COMUNICAÇÃO, SEMIÓTICA, C. S. PEIRCE

Introduction

I think it is safe to say that in the short life of modern semiotics since its institutionalization in the 1960's – with the foundation of the International Association of Semiotic Studies (IASS) and its journal *Semiotica* in 1969 – the issue of truth has played no central role.

A number of reasons for this fact may be resumed. At the time, the dominant paradigm of semiotics was that of French structuralism which, in turn, came out of the strong current of structural linguistics of luminaries like Saussure, Jakobson, Hjelmslev, and others. Important distinctions in this tradition were those of *langage/parole* and *signifiant/signifié*. The former implied that the study of linguistic and semiotic systems took center stage. But the issue of truth is marginal to the study of semiotic systems, of *langage,* because truth-claiming signs are found in concrete use, in *parole*. A similar influence had the dualism of *signifiant-signifié* focusing on the expression and content of linguistic and semiotic signs, while the use of such signs to refer to entities and phenomena outside of language was pushed to the margins. So, denotation and reference of signs and their possible truth or falsity was widely seen as falling outside of the scope of linguistics and semiotics. Signs, of course, may be used to make both true and false claims, but such use easily fell outside the scope of semiotics, rather belonging to pragmatics, despite the importance of such signs in science, in journalism, in politics, etc. These issues of methodology, moreover, were

oftentimes hypostatized into ontological claims – such as the idea that there was really no reality, independent of human signs, out there – realities of different sorts were just constructions projected by sign use. Greimas' semiotics, e.g. claimed only to study "worlds of paper", a tendency only strengthened in the emergence of various post-structuralisms during the 1970s-90s. Writing "reality" in scare quotes only became fashionable.

Another reason for the marginalization of truth in semiotic studies was no doubt that, despite being initially an interdisciplinary project across all sciences, the early successes and dissemination of semiotics primarily took place in comparative literature and art history departments, that is, in disciplines studying semiotic expressions most often not occupied with the expression of truth, such as fictions, experimental art, etc. More or less explicit generalizations from such use might indicate that truth was of little relevance also elsewhere.

A third reason is probably a political skepticism against the notion of objective truth in the 68' movement making headway into academia at exactly the same time. This idea saw the notion of truth as a mere rhetorical device put to use in order to safeguard bourgeois ideology in institutions, and a refusal of objective truth might be conceived of as a liberating move, emancipating scholars to substitute aims like criticism, support to suppressed groups, and political change for the impartial search for truth.[1] Often supported by skeptical currents in the philosophy of science, attempting to reduce truth to concepts less metaphysically demanding, such as correctness, consensus, consistency, etc.

Looking back on the history of semiotics, these collaborating forces may have been responsible for early successes of the semiotic paradigm, but simultaneously they now appear, in hindsight, as scientifically doubtful, even erroneous.

With the increasing reappearance of populism in international politics during the 21st century, particularly – but not only – on the extreme right wing, and the increasing amounts of "fake news" circulating on the internet and elsewhere in media and communication, often with deliberate political purposes, a semiotics ignoring or even refusing to address issues of truth appears increasingly irrelevant.

Luckily, the competing semiotic paradigm coming out of pragmatism and Charles Peirce's work in particular, offers a different view from the agnosticism or even rejection of truth in the structuralist and poststructuralist paradigms. This has the elementary reason that Peircean semiotics takes logic and the philosophy of science as its model discipline rather than linguistics. In logic and science, of course, truth cannot be marginalized but remains an inescapable issue. In Peirce, this becomes evident on two different levels.

One is that of semiotics: it takes as a central task the investigation of which signs are able to claim to be true: how are such signs constituted, what is their semiotic structure? To Peirce, such signs are propositions or "dicisigns", and measured on the amounts of work he spent on them, it may surprise how many scholars taking over distinctions like *icon-index-symbol* and the like from Peirce have been able to completely overlook that such distinctions are really only there in order to understand how truth-claiming signs are possible. Even if you are yourself an antirealist, believing there is no common reality outside of signs, you would think it should be important to understand how signs are structured which claim truth and so are able to make people believe in such reality.

Another is that of ontology or metaphysics: what is the relation of such signs, if true, to the objects, entities, phenomena, to which they refer? What is the status and character of those objects? This is the metaphysical issue of realism, and it is well-known that Peirce himself was a metaphysical realist in several senses of the word, claiming an early version of the "truthmaker" idea that real is that which makes a true proposition true.[2] I myself have spent some work on attempting to reactualize Peirce's theory of propositions and his realism for current use (Stjernfelt 2014; 2015; 2019; 2021; 2022). Particularly, I think Peirce's theory of propositions merits some interest because of the fact that – unlike most other theories of propositions – it does not restrict the vehicle of propositions to languages, be they everyday language or artificial formalisms. Rather, Peirce's theory is a *multimodal* theory of propositions, seeing language as one semiotic mode among many able to take part in truth claims, besides images, pictures, paintings, diagrams, gesture, and more.

Here, I shall just briefly summarize Peirce's theory of propositions and his metaphysical realism in order to urge semiotics to rise to its responsibility to truth, in the worlds of academia, media and communication, as well as politics.[3]

Propositions as Dicisigns

Propositions were central to Peirce throughout his career. When taking his first major philosophical step, establishing his category table of three already in the 1860's, he generalized those three notions, Quality, Relation and Representation, from aspects of propositions, namely their *predicate, subject,* and *copula*, respectively. The principle of this derivation was borrowed from Kant: metaphysical claims are possible only on the basis of established logical categories – a principle to which Peirce stuck all through his career.

When devising his well-known ten-sign classification of signs in the *Syllabus* of 1903 – arguably the most-quoted source of reference to his semiotics – he had taken the further step of defining those signs as combination of independent sign aspects. Three such sets of aspects were combined, *qualisign-sinsign-legisign, icon-index-symbol,* and *rheme-dicisign-argument*. Much can and should be said about the development and implications of this idea;[4] the important issue here is that this combination approach presupposed that all the three distinctions, in order to be combinable, were exhaustive, covering all signs. So, all signs are either a term, a proposition, or an argument. This generalization had so large consequences that Peirce decided to provide new terminology for the two of them. "Dicisigns" was chosen as the notion for generalized propositions, for now they included both classic, symbolically expressed propositions, but also non-symbolic propositions such as indices and legisigns able to claim truths.

It was this step which decisively made Peirce's later theory of propositions multimodal, and in his mature period he often gave "a picture with a legend" as his staple example of a proposition. This is evidently much different from standard purely linguistic examples. The reason for this is that Peirce's new idea of propositions as dicisigns is *functional*. Propositions are all signs which perform, simultaneously, two independent functions: that of *referring to* or *pointing out* some object or phenomenon, and that of *describing* the very same

object in some sense. The former function is undertaken by a generalization of the old Aristotelian notion of *subject,* the latter function correspondingly by a generalization of the notion of *predicate.* This generalization indicates that subject-predicate cease to refer to linguistic signs only. In the painting-with-legend example, the subject is the legend which, as an index, points out what is depicted (e.g. the name of a person portrayed). In the same example, the predicate is the painted surface, as an icon describing the phenomenon referred to (e.g. the portrait). So, the definition of proposition ceases to refer to substantialist characters of its constituents in favor of the functionalist determination of the functions of referring and describing. So, all signs which may fulfill these two functions, playing the role of subject index and predicate icon, respectively, may express truth claims. The two functions may be satisfied by independent signs put together, like the painting and its legend – but they may also be played by different aspects of one and the same sign, such as a photograph referring because of its causal connection to its object and describing because of the similarity of its shapes with those of its object.

In any case, Peircean propositions are "double signs", and the reason why such signs may be ascribed truth values is exactly this doubleness: if the description offered holds for the object pointed out by the reference offered, the sign is true; if not, it is false. This, of course, simultaneously constitutes the link from Peirce's semiotics of propositions to his philosophical realism. But even if you do not accept said realism, you might appreciate his analysis of how truth-claiming signs are constituted. That definition vastly expands the range of empirical signs and sign complexes out there fitting the definition. Under the definition of dicisigns, there are many more propositions out there than normally assumed: classic linguistic propositions, of course, partially linguistic propositions like newsreel with voiceover speak or news articles accompanied by press photos, products with claims on the wrapping and similar signs attached like labels to their objects, photos with or without accompanying text, ditto film, videos, auditory, gustatory and other signs with text, gesture with or without text, scientific diagrams with legends, and much, much more. On a Peircean account, one of the central purposes of signs is to be able to relate truths. A fascinating issue is to investigate the forms which the syntax of the generalized subject-predicate combination may

take; I propose they two must be "co-localized" in a topological sense requiring further discussion.[5]

The actual "claiming" part of propositions he struggled much to define. Initially, he saw it reside in the copula; in his mature period, he settled on the idea that signs actually claiming truth require the presentation of a token of a proposition as an assertion, that is, in a way so that the utterer assumes responsibility for the truth of that sign.[6] This forms the germ of a Peircean speech act theory, for such assertion is but one act among several which you can perform with a proposition. You can also assent to a proposition, use it as a question, an imperative, an order, a wish, etc. – but its truth-claim requires the assertion of it. In particular, you can assert it without assenting to it, that is, lying. To Peirce, the responsibility theory of assertion presupposes a special self-referential structure already there in the proposition sign itself, and the pragmatic purpose of the assertion, on the other hand, is to persuade the recipient of the claimed proposition. The responsibility theory, of course, goes to explain why publicly claimed propositions expose themselves to criticism and counter-propositions, also in the sense that if counterarguments prove to be true, the responsible utterer of the first proposition is liable to some sort of punishment or retribution, the more precise kind of which depends upon the character of the proposition and the institutional setting of its utterance. Thus, more or less public attacks on a sign for falsity are an indication that a proposition has been presented. In this sense, Peirce's theory of assertion feeds into the notion of public spheres, open discussion, and enlightenment.[7]

Peirce's Realism[8]

All of what I have said until now has bracketed the issue of whether propositions may *actually* express truths. One thing is to analyze the structure of signs claiming to be true, another is to establish whether and how they may really be true.

Peirce's metaphysical realism really has three aspects, already present in his 1860's three-category metaphysical doctrine of Quality, Relation, and Representation. Here, I call them *predicate realism, subject realism,* and *representation realism,* to indicate their connection to Peirce's analysis of the structure of dicisigns.

Probably the most controversial of the three is the former, medieval or "Scotist" realism, with reference to John Duns Scotus whom Peirce read intensively in the 1860s.[9] Peirce's 1868 argument for reality as represented in a true representation emphasizes this realism:

> … it follows that since no cognition of ours is absolutely determinate, generals must have a real existence. Now this scholastic realism is usually set down as a belief in metaphysical fictions. (…) Since, therefore, the word "man" is true of something, that which "man" means is real. The nominalist must admit that man is truly applicable to something; but he believes that there is beneath this a thing in itself, an incognizable reality. His is the metaphysical figment ("Some Consequences of Four Incapacities", 1868, EP I, 53; CP 5.312).

Peirce's argument claims that the existence of true propositions involving general predicates implies that those predicates must refer to structures of reality. Contrary to widespread assumptions, it is not the realist who invents unnecessary and superfluous metaphysical entities, but it is his opponent the nominalist. Peirce should go on to articulate this Scotist realism in his well-known 1871 review of Fraser's publication of Berkeley (EP I, 83–105; CP 8.7–38), and to sharpen it, e. g., with his introduction of "real possibilities" in 1897 which made him a modal realist as to generals. The propositional roots of his realism as to universals, however, are already clear in the 1860s.

Subject realism, by contrast, refers to that aspect of the real which is pointed out by subject indices of Dicisigns. The role of those subjects is not to contribute anything to the description of the object of the proposition, but merely to indicate, identify, or draw attention to those objects as entities assumed to exist separately from the proposition. Here, Peirce stuck to another Kantian idea, that existence is no predicate. The role of the subjects of a proposition is to claim existence, pointing to certain parts of a reality independent of any particular signs. The development of the concept of the index as the type of sign responsible for reference to independently existent objects really got underway in the 1880s after the 1885 "Algebra of Logic". But already in the 1867 "New List", this existence-claiming role of subject indices was developed within the frame of a *likeness-sign-symbol* distinction (later, icon-index-symbol), in which the second category comprise those signs ".… whose relation to their objects consists in a correspondence in fact, and these may be termed indices or signs" (EP I, 7; CP

1.558).[10] Thus, subjects and predicate of the proposition take care, as it were, each of their aspect of realism. Subject signs claim to refer to objects independent of their representation in propositions –and in case of true propositions, they actually do so refer. Predicate signs claim to describe those same objects – and in true propositions, they actually do so describe. Conversely, when both parts of the proposition successfully satisfy these functions, the proposition is true. If not, it is false (in case the subject refers but the predicate fails to describe), or even meaningless (in case the subject fails to point out any object at all). Thus, subject signs incarnate independence realism, the real as that which is independent of signs and interpreters; predicate signs incarnate realism as to universals, the real as that which is governed by general laws and patterns.

These realisms of the two parts of the proposition come together in what could be termed Peirce's *realism of facts or of states of things*. Peirce very often refers to "states of things" in some Universe of Discourse as that which the representation of a proposition, taken as a whole, claims to represent. In his mature period after the turn of the century, this relation is made the object of explicit scrutiny: "A state of things is an abstract constituent part of reality, of such a nature that a proposition is needed to represent it" ("The Basis of Pragmaticism", 1906, EP II, 378; CP 5.549). The whole of a propositional representation has, as its correlate in reality, a state of things, also sometimes called a *fact*. This takes place simultaneously, of course, with the Austrian development of the notion of "Sachverhalte", state-of-affairs, initially coined by Hermann Lotze and Carl Stumpf, later famously popularized by Husserl and Wittgenstein.[11] In Peirce, the two realisms of predicate and subject come together and fuse in a realism of states-of-things: facts are independent of any particular representation, and they combine existence and properties in complexes which are real.

States-of-things in themselves also enjoy a certain independence. The relative independence of states-of-things in reality can be seen from the fact that their depiction in propositions forms independent "medads", that is, 0-valent expressions. In Peirce's well-known doctrine of valency of expressions, 1-, 2-, and 3-valent predicates, monadic, dyadic, and triadic, are irreducible and may combine to form higher-order predicates with any number of slots to be

potentially satiated by subject signs. "X loves Y", for instance, is a dyadic predicate. But when such a predicate is fully satiated by subject signs in all slots, the resulting proposition forms a medad with zero valency, like in "Romeo loves Juliet", and Peirce sometimes speak of propositions as "complete" signs. This allows for an important lesson on the elementary structure of reality: Reality must be structured in such a way so that it is possible for true propositions to slice it into the appropriate, corresponding states-of-things which may, in many cases, be considered in isolation in order to judge the truth value of the relevant propositions. This loose connectedness of reality is made possible by its composition from three types of being, differs both from a holist world with stronger connectedness and an atomist world of independent elements with little or no connectedness. Notably, states-of-things differ from simple parts or subsets of reality. Relations of cause and effect hold between states-of-things or facts, not simply between things. In a certain sense, propositions are what correspond to Wittgenstein's famous "logical atoms" in Peirce's theory. But unlike Wittgenstein who supposed the existence of logical atoms but was unable to point out one single example, in Peirce examples abound, for they comprise all true propositions: "A fact is so highly a prescissively abstract state of things, that it can be wholly represented in a simple proposition, and the term "simple", here, has no absolute meaning, but is merely a comparative expression" ("The Basis of Pragmaticism", 1906, EP II, 378; CP 5.549). In Wittgenstein, logical atoms were supposed to be simple in an absolute, elementary, and compositional sense of the word which was why they were difficult to identify. That is explicitly not the case in Peirce where "simple" is merely comparative, that is, in comparison to complexes of facts which require several propositions and arguments for their description. Peircean facts, moreover, are ontologically neutral: they can be abstracted by true propositions on all levels of reality from mathematics to the special sciences and to everyday issues, and they are so to speak fractal: any state-of-things charted by one proposition may be potentially analyzed into further parts and aspects not yet acknowledged by the given proposition, in order to be investigated in further propositions.[12] An open issue, however, remains whether all states-of-things of reality may be charted by true propositions or whether there may be inaccessible lacunae of reality, of facts.[13]

In a certain sense, Peirce's notion of dicisigns and their connection to realism constitutes a radical *deflation* of truth. Truth is not something very rare, achievable only by the observation of the strictest set of conditions and philosophical requirements. Such an artificially ennobled conception of truth has led much too many philosophers and their followers to assume that such truth is so demanding that almost no empirical propositions may live up to it – leading to skepticism. Peirce's notion goes into the opposite direction, observing that truth claims are all over the place, including everyday discourse, journalism, public debate, academia, and so on. Many of such truth claims, of course, are not or only partially true; that would not bother Peirce because of his pragmatist insistence that current truth claims are and should be subject to ongoing criticism and investigation in the long process across generations towards full truth achievable only in the infinite limit.

Extrapolating realism

Peirce's assumption of the Kantian principle of deriving metaphysics from logic not only offered him his general theory of propositions and his three-aspect realism – it also allowed for him to experiment with further extrapolating propositional realism in a number of surprising directions. In 1907, Peirce returned to judge his early efforts of the "New List":

> The first question, and it was a question of supreme importance requiring not only utter abandonment of all bias, but also a most cautious yet vigorously active research, was whether or not the fundamental categories of thought really have that sort of dependence upon formal logic that Kant asserted. I became thoroughly convinced that such a relation really did and must exist. After a series of inquiries, I came to see that Kant ought not to have confined himself to divisions of propositions, or "judgments", as the Germans confuse the subject by calling them, but ought to have taken account of all elementary and significant differences of form among signs of all sorts, and that, above all, he ought not to have left out of account fundamental forms of reasonings (Notes on "The New List", 1907, CP 1.561).

The implication of the last period of the quote generalizes propositional realism from its core in logic proper to cover also the semiotics of the "*grammatica speculativa*" as prerequisites to logic proper on the one hand, and to the philosophy-of-science investigation structures of the "speculative rhetoric" or "methodeutics" on the other hand. That is, logic in its broad sense, comprising

semiotics, logic proper, and scientific methodology, every part of it may now be taken as point of departure for the metaphysical deduction from logical categories to metaphysical categories. We already saw how the famous triplet *icon-index-symbol* was connected to the metaphysical deduction of the "New List", so that the existence of such sign types was connected to the existence of objective resemblance relations, of objective reactions in the here-and-now, and of general, lawlike behavior, respectively.

But even more ambitious are the possible metaphysical results to be harvested from extrapolating propositional realism to the broader field of investigation. The ineradicability of measurement uncertainty in empirical research, which Peirce knew well from his gravimetric work as a practicing physicist, could give rise to the metaphysical idea of the real existence of "objective chance" or "tychism" around 1890. Similarly, the existence of a continuity of possible occasions for using a general term in true propositions gave rise to the idea that such continuity exists as part of reality itself ("synechism"). The structure of the chain of arguments in investigation could yield metaphysical results in the claim that biological evolution in its move from one species to the next constitutes a sort of inference, reaching a conclusion based on the premises of earlier species and environments. During that process, it may even appear that nature itself performs processes of abduction, deduction, and induction. Yes, the whole evolution of the universe may be seen as one large argument ("Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism", 1903, EP II, 193; CP 5.119). Correspondingly, it seems to be the character of indefinite development from less to more knowledge in the never-ending process of investigation which forms the logical mould of the metaphysical idea of the evolution of the universe from chaos and chance to more and more well-ordered, lawlike and varied behavior in Peirce's cosmology from the 1880s "Design and Chance" and "Guess at the Riddle" to the 1890s Monist papers and beyond.[8] The "Guess at the Riddle" is simply structured over the supposed inheritance of the metaphysical structure of three over the descending chain of philosophy and special sciences, from the Kantian fountainhead of reasoning to metaphysics, and psychology, over physiology, biology, physics, to sociology and theology—going metaphysically far further than any orthodox Kantian, to be sure.

Some of such deductions surely have a more experimental, abductive ring to them, and not all results of them were kept in the course of Peirce's development. But they all share the character that Peirce so to speak takes the step from defining the real as that which makes true propositions true – and to the broader claim that real is all that *which is involved* in making true propositions true. In short, through this expansion of logic to cover all aspects, details, and procedures of the process of investigation, Peircean metaphysics would, in turn, reach many of its most adventurous claims of cosmology. This is not the place to investigate the validity of such claims, merely to resume a handful of them in order to point to the growing breadth of the results of this constant motor in Peirce's development. Every new result in semiotics, logic, and epistemology, expanding from the 1860s core of propositional realism, immediately would raise the possibility of new metaphysical deductions expanding the ontological commitments of Peircean metaphysics. Doing so, he went farther than most other "truthmaker" realists.

Peirce's Propositional Realism in the Current Situation

In a period with increasing internet and computer dominance of media, Peirce's multimodal theory of propositions appears as particularly relevant. The combination of different modalities into truth-claiming signs of many sorts is the rule rather than the exception, and you may venture the hypothesis that propositions expressed by pure text without the presence of any other modalities – like the present paper – is the exception rather than the rule. Multimodality is the normal standard; monomodality is rather a special device chosen for certain, particular purposes. A bit like the observation about mathematical functions: non-linear functions are really the rule and linear functions a rare (and easy) exception, rather than the opposite.

I think this fact opens the analytical gaze for appreciating the much wider dissemination of truth-claiming signs than ordinarily assumed. The current spread of and struggle over fake news is, I would argue, hardly understandable without this insight.[14] A particularly important issue comes out of Peirce's theory of assertion. If asserting a proposition is assuming responsibility for it, anonymous or pseudonymous propositions are not really assertions at all, for in them no actor

stands forward to answer for such responsibility. In a certain sense, they are pseudo-assertions only – which may make them particularly evil in spreading fake news, because more difficult to counterargue, to control, or even, if relevant, to prosecute with legal means. This is not to say, however, that such pseudo-assertions are, in all cases, illegitimate. In authoritarian regimes, there may be very good reasons to keep anonymous while voicing criticism of the regime, but also in democratic publics there may be situations where security issues may argue for anonymity of certain assertions, e.g. of whistleblowers of sources of critical information. In many other cases in democratic publics, however, to hide yourself behind anonymous pseudo-assertions is but a cowardly and even malignant strategy tantamount to pollution or contamination of the public sphere. For even pseudo-assertions remain spreading allegations – if not full Peircean assertions – of truth which should, as all such claims, be open to check and criticism.

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Notes

[1] Parts of the primarily left-leaning academia are, I believe, in the process of realizing that the abandonment of truth was not only an academically really bad idea, but also a political error. In the face of the massive production of right wing "alternative facts" and fake news, you are left helpless with no solid conception of truth. So, the academic left is currently left with the choice of embracing impartial truth or mimicking the right wing by rather embracing identity protection and the defense of group interests as the main purposes of academia. That, however, is a discussion transgressing the limits of this small paper.

[2] Cf. Mulligan et al. 1984

[3] Thus, the present small paper does not claim originality, it basically recycles arguments presented more thoroughly in Stjernfelt 2015, and in 2019, 2021a-b; reprinted in 2014 and 2022, respectively.

[4] See Bellucci 2017; Stjernfelt 2022, ch. 14.

[5] Stjernfelt 2019; Stjernfelt 2022, ch. 5

[6] Stjernfelt 2021b; Stjernfelt 2022, ch. 3

[7] A recent study of the origin of Press Freedom: Langen & Stjernfelt 2022.

[8] This section is an abbreviated version of the argument in Stjernfelt 2021; Stjernfelt 2022, ch. 12.

[9] See Boler 1963; Stjernfelt 2007, ch. 2.

[10] This subject realism argument was inherited by Quine in his famous claim for ontological commitment: "A theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory be true" (Quine, 1948, 33; reprinted in Quine, 1953, 1–19). Quine thus takes over Peirce's subject realism but not his predicate nor representation realism: to him, all that exists are individuals referred

to by the index signs of bound variables. Smith 2005 takes Quine's example to be the root of the poverty of current analytic philosophy metaphysics: taking his departure in a reading of surface features of the logical formalism of first order predicate logic, Quine arrives at a naked "fantology" (from "F(a)-ontology"). Smith's paper implies an important question: which features of logic merit the derivation of metaphysical categories and which do not? Peirce was certainly a maximalist on this question, but I am not certain Peirce did ever articulate explicit criteria to determine the answer. An important further task would be to check if any such criterion could be implied in his many examples.

[11] Actually, Peirce seems to have begun using "states-of-things" as the real correlate of true propositions earlier than the Austro-German tradition for "Sachverhalte", initiated by Lotze (1874) and further developed by Stumpf in the 1880s (cf. Smith, 1994; Milkov, 2002). Peirce used "state of things" as that which a true proposition represents already in the 1860s—e. g., in the 1868 "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties" and "Four Incapacities" papers (e. g., EP I, 24, CP 5.254; EP I, 37, CP 5.279). Initially, however, Peirce does not seem to have explicitly defined "state of things" as a technical term, but he should definitely be included in the early history of states-of-affairs realism and "truthmaker" realism.

[12] Peirce addresses this in a phenomenological rebuke of Kant's more atomist-associationist theory of synthesis: "Kant gives the erroneous view that ideas are presented separated and then thought together by the mind. This is his doctrine that a mental synthesis precedes every analysis. What really happens is that something is presented which in itself has no parts, but which nevertheless is analyzed by the mind, that is to say, its having parts consists in this, that the mind afterward recognizes those parts in it" ("A Guess at the Riddle", 1888, W 6, 449; CP 1.384).

[13] Robert Lane addresses this in his recent book (2020).

[14] A discussion of some of the political problems regarding freedom of expression, truth, and the internet, see Lauritzen & Stjernfelt 2019.

Editor's note

The editor responsible for the publication of this article is Fernando Andacht.

Contribution's note

Frederik Stjernfelt is the only author of this paper. There are no other contributors.

Data availability note

Data for this article is not available.