



SEÇÃO: EPISTEMOLOGIA E FILOSOFIA DA LINGUAGEM

Between bets and rational choices: conjectures on the fraying of time under intense action of chance

Entre apostas e escolhas racionais: conjecturas sobre o desgaste do tempo sob intensa ação do acaso

Entre apuestas y elecciones racionales: conjeturas sobre el desgaste del tiempo bajo la intensa acción del azar

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Abstract: Starting from the exposition of the fundamental guiding principles of Peirce's philosophy, mainly, its three categories viewed under his Phenomenology and its correlated Ontology, I conjecture about three possible dimensions of Time, considering the function of predicting the future course of events with varying degrees of certainty as the main role of our human rationality. In these three dimensions, the affection of the first of the three Peircean categories occurs with differentiated intensity, this first category precisely the one that includes the way of being of the incidence of Chance, either in the course of a natural Chronos, or in the course of a temporality produced by human actions, or also equally having incidence in the spontaneity of a subjective time, assumed here as Kairós. Inspired by the recent experience of the pandemic that devastated all corners of the planet, this conjecture suggests dimensions of a temporality frayed ontologically in different degrees, leading to a corresponding fraying of our predictive rationality, imposing upon us the condition of being characters who are left to bet on the course of future factuality to the detriment of choices that would be feasible if a history circumscribed by an intense incidence of Chance had not occurred.

Keywords: Peirce; pragmatism; semiotics; chance; time.

Resumo: A partir da exposição das diretrizes fundamentais da filosofia de Peirce, principalmente suas três categorias vistas sob sua Fenomenologia e sua correlata Ontologia, conjeturo sobre três possíveis dimensões do Tempo, considerando como principal papel de nossa humana racionalidade sua função de prever com graus variados de certeza o curso futuro dos fatos. Nessas três dimensões incidem com intensidade diferenciada a primeira das três categorias peircianas, justamente a que inclui o modo de ser da incidência do Acaso, seja no curso de um Chronos natural, seja no curso de uma temporalidade produzida pelas ações humanas, ou seja também igualmente incidente na espontaneidade de um tempo subjetivo, assumido aqui como Kairós. Inspirada na recente experiência da pandemia que assolou todos os cantos de planeta, essa conjectura sugere dimensões de uma temporalidade ontologicamente esgarçada em graus distintos acarretando um correspondente esgarçamento de nossa racionalidade preditiva impondo-nos a condição de personagens a quem resta apostar sobre o curso da fatuidade futura em detrimento de escolhas que seriam factíveis caso uma história circunstanciada por intenso Acaso não houvesse ocorrido.

Palavras-chave: Peirce; pragmatismo; semiótica; acaso; tempo.

Resumen: Partiendo de la exposición de los principios rectores fundamentales de la filosofía de Peirce, principalmente, sus tres categorías vistas bajo su Fenomenología y su Ontología correlativa, conjeturo acerca de tres posibles dimensiones del Tiempo, considerando la función de predecir el curso futuro de los acontecimientos con diversos grados de la certeza como el papel principal de nuestra racionalidad humana. En estas tres dimensiones, la afeción de la primera



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de las tres categorías peirceanas se da con intensidad diferenciada, siendo esta primera categoría precisamente la que engloba el modo de ser de la incidencia del Azar, ya sea en el transcurso de un Chronos natural, ya sea en el curso de una temporalidad producida por las acciones humanas, o también teniendo igualmente incidencia en la espontaneidad de un tiempo subjetivo, asumido aquí como Kairós. Inspirada en la experiencia reciente de la pandemia que asoló todos los rincones del planeta, esta conjetura sugiere dimensiones de una temporalidad deshilachada ontológicamente en diferentes grados, lo que lleva a un correspondiente deshilachamiento de nuestra racionalidad predictiva, imponiéndonos la condición de personajes que quedan. apostar por el curso de la factualidad futura en detrimento de elecciones que serían factibles si no se hubiera producido una historia circunscrita por una intensa incidencia del Azar.

Palabras clave: Peirce; pragmatismo; semiótica; azar; tiempo.

1 Some axial concepts of Peirce's philosophy

Scholars of Peirce know that one of the core axes of his philosophy are his three categories, namely firstness, secondness and thirdness. They appear genetically in his Phenomenology and then extend to his Metaphysics, structuring the modes of being of our experience and of reality itself, respectively.

Firstness, in general, is associated phenomenologically with feelings on its inner side, while irregular, accidental, asymmetrical phenomena evidence the outer side of this category. Reactions to our *ego* by a *non-ego*, in the form of the experience of our human errors, among which can be included forecasts, false expectations, and the insolence of the facts that force entry as unexpected accidents, constitute the general phenomenology of the category of secondness. It is thus conceived also as a mode of being of reality, found in Peirce's philosophy in the concept of *existence*, which constitutes the array of spatio-temporally defined facts. This factual-existential character is what definitively enables this category to harbor its predicate of reaction, whether against our consciousness or among the facts themselves in their individuality and definability of being *hic et nunc*. To secondness, we can attribute the

predicate of *alterity*, which as we know, derives from the Latin term *alter* - other. The *others to us* and the *others to one another* define categorically the concept of *existing*.

Finally, thirdness, to complete the famous triadic character of Peircean thought, is where the general representations of otherness will be, insofar as otherness demonstrates habits, redundancy, which allow us to know the rules of conduct that govern the regularity in its *appearance*, even if never in an exact way, and with degrees of dispersion in relation to what Peirce calls Law - widely understood as the laws governing the conduct of individuals. I describe the ontological condition of thirdness first because it is the condition for the possibility of our mediations, namely, our representations of otherness, through which it will no longer react against our purposes to the extent that it has been represented in its conduct. It is possible to know, however approximately and fallibly², how the *other* will behave in future time, making it possible to program, plan, how we will act in relation to it.

Otherness, therefore, must *allow* itself to be interpreted, in order for us to exercise our rationality, which, after all, has the essential mission of foreseeing the future course of facts. All that our rationality can hope for, and, in fact, what endows it with meaning, is to produce semiosis that *adheres* to the course of phenomena³.

What is important for the sequence of what I intend to expose hereafter is to certify that phenomenologically the three categories are characterized as modes of being of our experience; of free feeling devoid of the world's otherness, of perceiving the reaction of the world that interrupts our consciousness of mere feeling, and of a consciousness of mediating in a *continuum* of a time represented within us. On the other hand, ontologically, the categories as modes of being that are symmetrical to our experience, undoing the dichotomy between *appearing* and *being*, and are present within the three constitutive principles of reality, namely Chance, Existence,

² Fallibilism is one important doctrine of Peirce's epistemology. See, for instance Pierce (1931, paragraph 173).

³ See Liszka (1996). On the concept of the adherence between representation and facts, see Ibri (2022).

and Law (IBRI, 2017). The explicit categorical symmetry of Peirce's philosophy definitively links epistemology and ontology, in which the latter becomes a logical condition of possibility for the former. No cognition would be possible without the logical-semiotic structures of our signical representations of the world being legitimated by an ontological logic that is associated with objective reality (SANTAELLA, 2009). This claim is the simplest and direct consequence of Peirce's realism, which has its roots in the scholastic realism of Scotus, quite different from a contemporary realism simply opposed to a subjective idealism⁴.

This basic condition of Peircean realism, often obfuscated by the fascination that our language and semiotic creativity exerts over our minds, leading us to a nominalist philosophical stance that, in fact, conceals and reduces the true, broadly heuristic potential of Peirce's thought, which lies far beyond tediously anthropocentric philosophies⁵.

2 The three dimensions of Time

2.1 *Chronos* and *Kairós*

In previous texts, I have proposed the consideration of two dimensions of time, namely, *Chronos* and *Kairós* (IBRI, 2022). The first denotes the cosmic, objective, therefore, universal time. For this reason, it is associated with the third ontological category, as a condition for the possibility of natural laws⁶. The second would be a time of internal nature, a feeling of time, one possible representation of real time, which can be totally separated from *Chronos* in certain situations of pure experiences of firstness, such as in experiences of aesthetic nature. However,

Kairós can adhere to *Chronos* in varying degrees of intensity. In the exercise of our mediating rationality, *Kairós* must be synchronized to *Chronos*, so that our logical interpretants result in energetic interpretants directed to ends that are themselves somehow incorporated in *Chronos*⁷. To represent otherness in a cognitive manner means to do so in *Chronos*, that is, according to the manner its conduct is inserted in an objective reality, in which this conduct can manifest itself as a phenomenon in its factual secondness.

Peirce considers *Chronos* as a real *continuum* (PEIRCE, 1933, paragraph 172)⁸, although there must be some point of discontinuity in it so that Chance, as a principle, may be able to act in existence without, contradictorily, being a result of the past or binding its actions to a future. This detachment of Chance in relation to the *continuum* of thirdness of time demands that in this *continuum* there is some point of discontinuity in the present, precisely because it is situated *between* past and future.

Kairós, when independent from *Chronos*, flows in us by means of an absolutely present state of consciousness. Just as an illustrative example, let only the sound of Bach's Cello Suite #1 flow through our consciousness. A consciousness inhabited only by qualisigns has its own temporality, free from worldly time.

Peirce emphasizes in a passage how this hiatus of internal time, which here I am calling *Kairós*, is also verified in real time, *Chronos*⁹. *Kairós* thus flows transversally to *Chronos* through its present point, as illustrated in the figure below¹⁰:

⁴ I discuss this difference in Ibri (2022, p. 230-231).

⁵ See also Anderson (1995).

⁶ See Schmidt (2022) for a detailed analysis of the passages in which Peirce describes his realist position in relation to time and explicitly affirms that time is of the nature of a law.

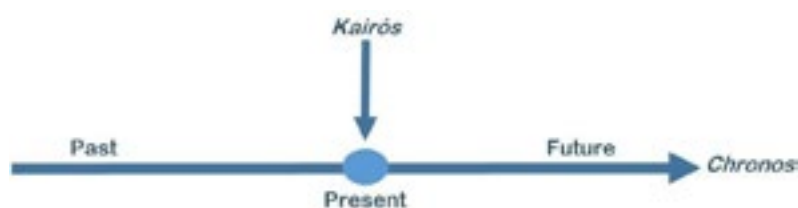
⁷ For an approach on the relation between time and subjective mediation, see Tienne (2015).

⁸ See Sfendoni-Mentzou (2008) for an analysis of Peirce's argument for time as a real *continuum* of dynamic nature, characterized by its potentiality.

⁹ Peirce (1935, paragraph 86): "Yet it undoubtedly is true that the permanence of chance effects is due to the independence of the instants of time. How are we to resolve this puzzle? The solution of it lies in this, that time has a point of discontinuity at the present. This discontinuity appears in one form in conservative actions where the actual instant differs from all other instants absolutely, while those others only differ in degree; and the same discontinuity appears in another form in all non-conservative action, where the past is broken off from the future as it is in our consciousness".

¹⁰ I have proposed the relation between these two already in Ibri (2022).

Figure 1 – The transversal relation between *Kairós* and *Chronos*



Source: Elaborated by the author (2023).

In fact, this relation is present in certain types of experience in which the world, in its aspect of secondness, as a furnishing of facts, can be put in parentheses, namely, when we report to it only for its immediate qualities or suppress it completely for an aesthetic experience through human art¹¹. In both cases, this is an disinterested experience regarding the object, whose character consisting merely of free play is emphasized in the aesthetics of Kant and Schopenhauer¹², for example.

However, *Kairós* must seek to adhere to *Chronos* when our consciousness is within the experience of otherness and, consequently, is inclined to seek a mediating thirdness that might represent real thirdness, to be in synchrony with it and, therefore, with the dimension of *Chronos* to which it is linked. In this exercise of rationality, our internal time seeks to synchronize with real time, the one that elapses as otherness, independent from us. Only through this synchrony does it appear that our predictions about the future course of events can be successful, that is, they maintain adherence with their real course.

However, the development of this essay gave rise to a reconsideration of *Chronos* that complexifies it and details it phenomenologically, making it two-dimensional, as will be shown subsequently.

2.2 On the temporality of human history

At this point, it is an interesting conjecture to conceive of a different dimension of time associated not to a class of phenomena belonging to natural history, but to a factuality produced by

human action, defining the context of its differentiated history, with its own distinctive otherness.

Therefore, let us first consider *Chronos* in its cosmic dimension, that is, as associated with the laws of Nature. When we consider Evolutionism as one of the key doctrines of Peirce's philosophy, we find within it the answer about how such laws became formed, concomitantly with the formation of Time itself. Peirce's Cosmology suggests the hypothesis that the categories took form sequentially from Firstness to Thirdness. This means that the *continua* of the formless qualities of the first category gave rise to the logically shaped *continua* of the third, in which time also took form in its cosmic dimension. Therefore, we can affirm that the laws of Nature had their origin in Chance – and influencing this vector from the first to the third category, according to Peirce's evolutionism, there is an agglutinating, generalizing principle, he calls Agapism (HAUSMAN, 1994).

As complex as this theme of Peircean philosophy is, which I developed in detail in a previous work (IBRI, 2017), it is important to emphasize here that the formation of thirdness and time happens in the context of an evolution still in progress, justifying why the *continua* of time and laws are not perfect, even now interacting with Chance. The laws of Nature appear phenomenologically to evidence dispersions around average values that demand probabilistic representations. Time, in turn, must have a hiatus in its present point, so that this interaction of Chance with Law may be possible. This hiatus in cosmic *Chronos* time is related, in the context of Peirce's cosmology,

¹¹ See also Innis (2013).

¹² An approach to this concept in both authors can be found in Vandenabeele (2012).

to the phenomenological experience of firstness as being pure presentness.

It is true that although the laws of Nature present dispersions due to the incidence of Chance, there is a sufficient degree of regularity in them to allow us to know them with different degrees of probability, as is the case, for example, from the field of astronomy to the field of gas theory or quantum mechanics, providing the natural sciences with a growing and certain development (HOUSER, 2014).

Nonetheless, there is another reality beyond that of a cosmic nature. It is the one configured by human history; the one Hegel used to simply call *History*. A history of knowledge, of culture, of those facts produced by human beings. In this history, how might we consider the interactivity of the categories? To what measure might it be affected by the degrees of freedom of the first category's principle of spontaneity?

It is worth considering here that we, human beings, are more subject to the incidences of the first category, mainly due to our capacity to feel and our capacity to break rules, habits, and even with *Chronos* time itself in our consciousness, plunging it into experiences typical of firstness, such as the mere disinterested contemplation of Nature or the unmediated enjoyment of a work of art.

Phenomenologically, Nature has mechanisms of homeostasis that come from a cosmic temporality incomparable in scope to the scale of human time. This 'youthfulness' of human existence implies a greater incidence of firstness in human behavior, entailing spontaneity, an erratic nature, the formation of habits that can be broken through experiences of otherness and other important characteristics, also associated with the first category, originating from an internal world of which we are at least partially aware, reminding us of the concept of the unconscious proposed by Freud.

Self-consciousness is a property considered typically human throughout the history of philosophy. Although it would be difficult to go into a

deeper reflection on it here (COLAPIETRO, 1989; NÖTH, 2021), let us for now admit that the other natural beings act according to rules accumulated evolutionarily in the form of the predicates of each species, and that they, species, are in a process of dynamic equilibrium, that is, that all actions, albeit conflictive, of fights, of violent disputes, concur to a final equilibrium of the natural system as a whole. In summary, the range of choices other natural beings possess is inscribed within their respective species, including accidental variations that may occur in each factual situation. All of these predicates converge toward a basic purpose: the preservation of life.

There are myriad narratives of scientific nature and also in the arts regarding creative rituals of the beings of Nature that, along with their saga of survival, seem to celebrate their existence with dances, songs, and displays of beauty. For that matter, this display that captivated philosophies such as German Romanticism, is also found in the various forms matter assumes and the manifestations of its qualities, displaying free action, without a necessary connection to the teleology of life.

Our self-consciousness directs us to choices beyond those that would be simply inscribed within the demands of our species. We exercise our freedom within mundane limits, or we subvert them with our imagination, creating possible worlds that can be externalized in the form of the arts or kept within us as unrealized possibilities, which become imbibed with the absence of otherness and traverse our unconscious metaphorically¹³.

However, as mundane characters, we set the objects of our desire in time, as goals to be achieved by means of plans that we hope will reasonably follow the course of events, maintaining a certain adherence to them. One may ask, however, what facts are these? What governs them? Would it not be appropriate to distinguish two classes of facts, namely, one that is constituted by a cosmic structure, governed by the laws of Nature, and another that follows possible laws of a history, created by us humans?

These two classes would then be related to the

¹³ See also Barrera and Nubiola (2019).

two classes of temporality as I will suggest below. The first of them, already mentioned, is cosmic time, associated with the laws of Nature. It is a time that we can conceptualize as foundational, a basis, from which all others would be variations, each one of them subject to the respective phenomenological characteristics that must always accompany the very definition of temporality.

Cosmic time, whose flow is structured by the laws of Nature, receives the incidence of Chance and, therefore, impresses a point of discontinuity in the present, in such a way that the facts that both produce possess degrees of freedom that make laws approximate, of a probabilistic nature. These relations between Chance, Factual Existence and Law, make up the interaction of Peirce's three categories, that is, firstness, secondness and thirdness, in this order (IBRI, 2017).

It is interesting to note phenomenologically that the presence of Chance is made evident in every asymmetry and irregularity that Nature presents, marking *similarities with differences* – both predicates coexist in objects. This conditions what can be generalized, namely, those predicates under law, which are the ones that receive names, while those predicates under chance, non-generalizable, constitute *nameless things*¹⁴. A myriad of nameless things marks all facts, and these do not lend themselves to the formation of concepts due to the impossibility of their generalization. We only have access to them when we abdicate the mediations that are formed logically, precisely by what, in things, is susceptible to generalization.

However, this would inaugurate an alternative way of experiencing those aspects marginalized by concepts, whose main function is to provide a basis for predicting the future course of experience, introducing our factual expectations in the *continuum* of *Chronos*. We deposit into *Chronos* many objects of desire, goals of various natures, and we seek paths that will lead us to them successfully.

It is reasonable to suppose that along the

pathway towards these future goals we expect to encounter reactions proper to the secondness that typifies the otherness of reality, as Peirce states. In the face of them, we also have the expectation that we will know how to find mediations indicative of that conduct which has the highest probability of success. Logical interpretants rationally determining the energetic interpretants in the direction of the dynamic objects that we presume to be reachable.

Although we situate our future objects in *Chronos* and hope to find the mediations that will lead us to them, the interposing path *is not* subject to laws that can be known with a degree of plausibility and verisimilitude, such as those the natural sciences come in contact with. The cognition of natural objects is bound to an ontological thirdness that reveals its lineage over time, as affirms the well-known Peircean expression "in the long run"¹⁵ that characterizes the third stage of his logic of investigation, namely, induction, responsible for gathering spatiotemporal experimental data of the object of cognition.

Let it be said that the pure sciences that deal with the cognition of natural objects and the applied sciences that generate technology depend to a certain degree on human history, in the sense of defining policies that list priorities and allocate resources for their achievement. Beyond these circumstances, in a way, there is no other obstacle of an epistemological or ontological nature, since natural history is under a logically well-defined thirdness, dealing with objects whose conduct is sufficiently explicit and, therefore, open to logical cognition. This is not the case, it should be said, with respect to human history, which is guided by social and individual values driving its actions.

It is interesting to point out that Pragmatism (FABBRICHESI, 2008; NUBIOLA, 2021), from the point of view of its rule of meaning, which also translates the condition of an object's cognoscibility, applies to both histories. Understanding this rule according to the way in which ideas af-

¹⁴ I suggested this concept in Ibri (2022, p. 51).

¹⁵ See, for example, Pierce (1935, paragraph 534) and Pierce (1958, paragraphs 124 and 207).

fect conduct and radicalizing it to its ontological face that is expressed by the manner in which the general affects the particular, as would be provided given the relationship between the three categories in light of Peirce's realism, it is worth reflecting how, within this approach, one could distinguish the way in which pragmatism would read each of these histories.

Conduct is what can be observed as the outer side of beings, whether natural or human, while the inner side, one could say, constitutes the ideas that govern the way these beings act - the way they, in fact, introduce themselves as characters in their respective histories. Here it is worth bringing to the fore Peirce's well-known statement (PIERCE, 1934, paragraphs 264-317; PIERCE, 1992, paragraphs 28-55) that knowledge of inner worlds is only feasible by the way they appear on their outer side.

It is worth asking, what would differentiate the natural and the human inner worlds¹⁶? In light of the ontological face of pragmatism, the conduct of natural beings fully expresses their interior side, understanding such interiority as the *continuum* of predicates that constitutes each species, whether living or merely material. This amounts to saying that there is nothing in the *interiority* of these characters that does not appear phenomenically to cognition.

The same cannot be said about the human example. We are differentiated beings in this aspect, inasmuch as we are able to safeguard an internal world over which we have nearly complete autonomy. I say *nearly*, because our unconscious is the depository of signs about which we know almost nothing, or very little, despite the fact that they influence our behavior, as Freudian psychoanalysis repeatedly affirms¹⁷.

It is suitable to consider that we have degrees of inner freedom whose limitation can only be imposed by the constraints of a world structured by rules that are their own, constituting their pro-

verbial otherness. Such limiting constrictions are recognized by philosophies that preach a broad realism, as Peirce's categories state. Anthropocentric philosophies that not infrequently make no distinction of reality from fiction, in a kind of exacerbation of the possibility of constitution of the world by the subject or by language, immersed in an often-verifiable sterile nominalism, attribute to human beings a historical role that tacitly conceals a prevailing Cartesian dualism.

Human history is thus constituted by the whole of our culture: our knowledge, our science, our arts, by a technology that populates the planet with objects that, because they are mediations in relation to Nature, as the case of the emergence of cities, became ends in themselves, as the great megalopolises show.

Our freedom of choice, mobilized by objects of desire, has given rise to a reading of our history in which proceeds a parade of ideologies, beliefs of all kinds, power struggles, genocidal wars, framed by the highest art of music, poetry, and the fine arts. This reading could, perhaps, metaphorically synthesize our history as a great operatic drama¹⁸.

Returning to the spirit, rather than the letter, of Peirce's philosophy, we could say that we are depositaries of an especially intense presence of firstness in our interiority, leaving us permeated by emotional interpretants that, many times, predominate over logical interpretants. Emotional interpretants, in their formless *continuum*, when dissociated from logical ones, introduce us in the hiatus of the present time, because they do not contain in themselves, by their own nature, the possibility of a mediatory reading of the temporal course of the facts. Their characteristic of immediacy directs us, one might say, towards energetic interpretations with no logical destination, submitting us to the accidentality of Chance.

The possibility of choices without the coercion of rules associated with a logical self-control gives us an illusion of freedom whose philosophical

¹⁶ It is worth mentioning that the philosophy of Schelling, one of the authors that Peirce admired, enables us to think about this difference, highlighting the distinct freedom of human interiority with regard to natural beings.

¹⁷ There is a quite interesting metaphor created by Peirce called bottomless lake of consciousness, based on which I have written "*The Bottomless Lake of Firstness: conjectures on the Heuristic Power of Consciousness. Semiotica*" (IBRI, 2021). In this essay, there is a conjecture on the discover of the unconscious by Peirce before Freud has consolidated it as a psychological concept.

¹⁸ Topa (2016) makes an interesting argument for a Peircean reading of history contemplating some of the elements we have cited here.

treatment, worth remembering, goes back to Aristotle's ethics (ARISTOTLE, 2009) when he questions who would be the free man: the one who follows his immediate will or the one who rationally deliberates what he should do? Time and non-time have long confronted each other in human conduct.

It is important for us here to associate both interpretants with time. However, although we consider *Chronos* as the universal time associated with the most invariable cosmic character of natural facts, such as those of astronomy, we could think of the sequencing of our human history, as already considered, as being depository of our objects of desire. This sequencing is associated to random factors with an incidence that leads us to conceive of an ontology of its own, founded not in the regularity of natural facts, but in the dynamism of those facts generated by human action.

It seems difficult to see in the history of our culture the expression of a rationality that, even if approached dialectically to account for its antithetical conflicts as Hegel proposes, would be free of random factors that conspire against a rational understanding of it. Under this view, the Hegelian view of history as a saga of the revelation of divine Reason seems to become aporetic. We depend greatly on a normativity of our social conduct that seeks to make the conciliation of interests feasible and, especially, a minimally harmonious cohabitation among us humans.

It does not seem reasonable to affirm that we have been successful in our historical task. A myriad of choices geared toward merely private ends has recurrently frayed the aspiration of that coexistent harmony, generating all kinds of conflicts of interest.

Leaving these considerations to remain only as a configuration of the scenario of what in fact matters to the theme of this essay, let us return to the hypothesis that there is in the course of human history a temporality that, it is worth repeating, despite being anchored in *Chronos*, also receives

an intense incidence of Chance. This incidence is due not only to emotional interpretants devoid of predictive power, but also, and mainly, to the disconnection between particular goals that end up directing the course of events towards destinations often defined by pure secondness, strength and power games, and consequently, far from a desirable thirdness that would reconcile them for social cohabitation.

No wonder Peirce calls the reduction of a genuine thirdness *degeneracy*, namely, that which acts as an integrating mediation of otherness in semiotic networks, to relations of mere secondness, whose nature is characterized by action and reaction, and which could very well model a certain aspect of the concept of dialectical synthesis that implies the overcoming of otherness rather than its possible cohabitating logical integration¹⁹.

It is important to emphasize the hypothesis that historical time is constituted within the phenomenology of human actions, and both it and natural phenomenology are subject to the three Peircean categories. However, these ways of being of the phenomena have a different balance in each of the two cases, since it is plausible to consider that the share of firstness in human history would be significantly more accentuated than in natural history, resulting in the third category being much more intensely influenced by the spontaneity of the first category²⁰.

It is interesting, at this point, to recall the theoretical guidelines of Peirce's Objective Idealism (IBRI, 2017)²¹. *Matter* is mind impregnated by crystallized habits - a kind of mind depleted by markedly stable habits, which Peirce calls *effete* mind, while what we properly call *mind* is constituted by habits with a high degree of instability due to its interactivity with experience. This contrast between the two, matter and mind, does not characterize a relationship of estrangement of nature, but exhibits a differentiated spontaneity that is associated with the more pronounced presence of firstness in mind than in matter - in

¹⁹ About genuine vs degenerate categories, see also Kruse (1991).

²⁰ See also Aydin (2009).

²¹ See also Guardiano (2011).

fact, this difference translates into the capacity to feel and to evidence the predicate of life. The so-called living beings are more prone to breaking their behavioral habits due to their sensitivity to the otherness of the environment they inhabit. Mind, therefore, in the light of Peirce's Objective Idealism, a doctrine totally inspired by Schelling (IBRI, 2022), is defined as carrying habits acquired over time, differentiated by its varying degrees of sensitivity and of life.

The recourse to Peircean Idealism in this essay reinforces the differences between natural history and human history. They are constituted by different agents, that is, on the one hand, the evolution of Nature, extensive throughout an immeasurable temporality when compared to human history and, on the other hand, the set of humanity's actions throughout its relatively short existence²².

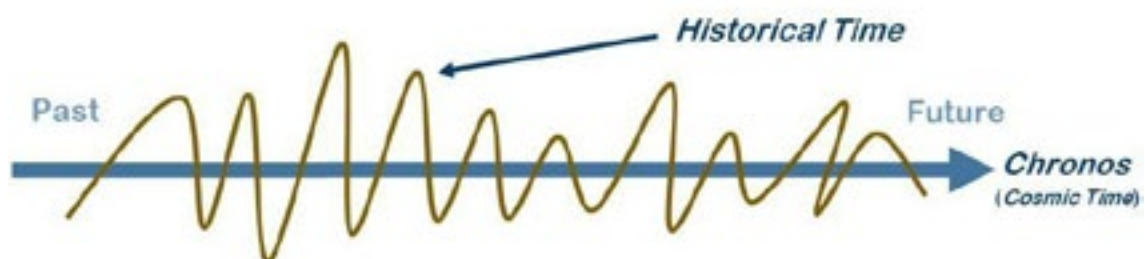
Different degrees of uncertainty emerge in each of these histories, seen through their objective characteristics. They arise through Peirce's realism suggesting an ontology that conditions an epistemology – the uncertainty of signs comes not from the structure of logic or language, but from the very nature of objects – there is

a confrontation of two histories that share the same ideality of the universe of mind but differ in the intensity with which the three constitutive categories of reality are interrelated.

As Chance incurs upon time in a partial hiatus from its *continuum*, which is the present, so one can conjecture that historical time, thanks to its being much more intensely permeated by the first category, suffers deviations in direction throughout the course of its thirdness.

Illustratively, the diagram below seeks to represent this idea, in which there is a linear course of Nature's evolution, permeated by Chance in its present point, while human actions, which do not contribute to a coexistent interactivity of a mediating thirdness, present a kind of obliquity in the course of its time, constituted by deviations, blockages, setbacks and fragmentation due to the frequency and intensity with which human action leaves marks on its factual existence. Clashes of interests and power games multiply the manifestations of otherness, accentuating a secondness that particularizes, in its various possibilities of ramification, lines of thirdness that are often irreconcilable.

Figure 2 – The relation between *Historical Time* and *Chronos (Cosmic Time)*



Source: Elaborated by the author (2023).

The immediacy of emotional interpretants can interfere in the course of facts, removing them from a possible logical path. The firstness of feelings acts by generating energetic interpretants that intervene in human history. The range of beliefs enumerated by Peirce acts in a different

way in this history. It is worth saying that of the four types considered by him, only the scientific type acts in an increasingly evolutionary and universal direction, although it may be slowed down by the presence of instances of power guided by minds aligned with the other types of beliefs, as shown

²² For an analysis of how Peirce himself addressed the topic of history in his writings, see also Viola (2020).

in some periods of our history.

In a previous essay, I suggested a distinction between two concepts, namely, *sensitivity* and *emotionality* (IBRI, 2022). Sensitivity being a term to designate a harmonic combination between logical and emotional interpretants, as occurs in creative insights in the history of science and art. Emotionality, on the other hand, designating the accentuated or almost exclusive predominance of emotional interpretants associated with a receptive factuality of its resulting energetic interpretants. Purely emotional actions usually are subject to the blindness of Chance and, as a result, are capable of introducing unexpected facts into the course of history.

A time frayed by its derivations due to unpredictable and often arbitrary insertions of energetic interpretants derived from emotional interpretants, on the one hand, and from logical interpretants directed to particular purposes, on the other, has a different flow in relation to cosmic time, even though it constantly refers to it²³.

With these considerations, let us now contextualize the phenomenology of human history most recently affected by the pandemic that raged through every corner of the planet.

3 The many faces of *otherness*

3.1 The Ontological – Epistemological Face

A high degree of randomness was considered to pervade human history, in the face of the incidence of actions carried out pragmatically and aimed at particular goals disconnected from a cohabiting and homeostatic thirdness such as that of Nature. Could a social normativity diminish this randomness and make the destinies of particular actions share something like a common good?²⁴ A good theme for *semioethics*, whose development would lead to a branching of this essay, not feasible at this moment.

Let us turn our focus to the period recently

experienced by humanity, namely, the coronavirus pandemic. Let us explore, for the sake of the theme focused on here, aspects of its acute otherness. The first of them, regarding the ontological-epistemological realm, allows us to say that the pandemic itself can be considered as a transversal event in the course of historical time, since it happened accidentally, incidentally, like many occurrences of the same nature in our history, differing, of course, by its general pervasiveness.

In this sphere, social and individual habits were deeply broken, giving rise to acute degrees of epistemological discontinuities resulting from the raw power of secondness that was this event.

We precariously improvised solutions in order to continue our work, while science, amidst political influences, began its mission of discovering the habits of the virus in order to produce vaccines. As all knowledge in this direction requires time, for the semiotic-inductive long run that seeks to reduce the distance between immediate and dynamic objects, the effectiveness of medicine seems always to be drawn from a precarious certainty arising from the lack of necessary statistical data to an expected estimable uncertainty, in the long run, to be only the proverbial consequence of an ontological indeterminism and epistemological fallibility.

3.2 The Phenomenological Face

Our human experience during the pandemic period, as mentioned, was characterized by sharp breaks in social and individual habits.

Without going into its geography or details, let us focus on the classical consideration of the concept of *anguish* in the history of philosophy. Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, in general, all share it as associated with the exercise of freedom and the consequent need for choice as a defining feature of our human existence.

It can be said that this experience of the pandemic, in some way reminiscent of situations

²³ For an exploration of the relations between energetic, emotional, and logical interpretants, see Santaella (2016)

²⁴ For a consideration on the relation between normativity and a communitarian effort towards the common good in Peirce, see Liszka (2022).

experienced by humanity in periods of war, has introduced another class of anguish: that of the unknown, of the precariousness of dealing with a future time that is perforated with accidents and that, in turn, unravels our efforts to fine-tune our mediations and life plans with a forecast that adheres to Chronos time. Kairós time in this class of experience seems to make the uncertainty within us flow through its own channel, creating an environment where our emotional interpretations predominate, precisely those lacking in the logical forms that allow us to predict the consequences of our actions in time.

The anguish of finitude brought by a reflection on the human condition, as Heidegger exemplarily characterizes it by designating us as *being-towards-death*, was exacerbated in this present historical period of profound uncertainty by a daily procession of deaths caused by the pandemic. A distressing state of things, despite being virtually distant from the temporally indeterminate concept of finitude, became close, recurrent, bringing to mind, as mentioned, situations of war, in a manner possibly more accentuated to those close to where they effectively occurred.

This anguish, beyond its psychological dimension, is nourished by the raw secondness of the unknown, generating a pressing need for restitution of our mediations in the face of reality, made precarious by uncertainty. This is an experience that confirms the logical importance of our life habits and of mediations that allow for the development of plans for the achievement of objects deposited in future time (PAPE, 2009; PIETARINEN, 2008). A crisis of this nature certainly makes us aware of human vulnerability, intensified in scale by the differences between social classes, evidencing the precariousness of defensive mediations among the most disadvantaged. This, among many others, is another possible characterizing face of the experience of anguish.

4 In conclusion

It seems fair to say that under acute conditions of otherness, as characterized by our recent passage through a severe pandemic, are associated

with intense degrees of uncertainty, brought about by the breakdown of mediations, habits of conduct, and so on. Our representation of historical time, phenomenologically, is perceived as incapable of containing our objects of desire, as if it no longer supported them, making us players who are left only to bet and not beings capable of making choices by rationally predicting the temporal course of events.

Precarious, we can affirm, is that existence that imposes on us the script of players, as if, allowing ourselves this metaphor, we had to submit our plans to a roulette wheel, leaving to Chance the encounter with the objects of desire that we had placed in a history endowed with a visible future, contingently shattered by the raw otherness of the unknown.

The exercise of our rationality compels us to make feasible choices based on a vision of a continuous time defined by a factual history minimally ordered within it. The pandemic period recently experienced by all of humanity has revealed a temporality perforated by gaps that prevented it from being minimally continuous as a condition for the possibility of a social thirdness endowed with a predictively successful rationality.

We can legitimately state that, while cosmic time elapses in its typical *continuum*, historical time does not allow us to adequately tune our Kairós time with it, and one reason that becomes evident is that our objectives, our conduct towards them, depends on a future woven by a historicity interspersed with discontinuities.

This pandemic crisis made us adopt hygienic habits with a frequency hitherto only applicable in specific places such as hospitals. It is worth considering that the discontinuities of historical time also brought to us the need to disinfect our internal world, contaminated by a justified anguish that comes from the brutal breaking of habits, mediations, and expectations deposited in points of time fragmented by accident and uncertainty. This metaphorical disinfection of interiority is deemed to have been made possible by genuine actions of solidarity, albeit certainly socially unbalanced, nevertheless minimizing

human anguish and fragility, somehow nourished by the hope of scientific discoveries, capable of restoring the normal course of life, contingently impregnated as it was by an acute ontologically universal otherness.

Phenomenologically, once the normal course of a setting where human history takes place has been restored, despite always being subject to the vicissitudes of Chance, we can once again experience a temporality that, in a way, allows us to plan our future conduct, contrasting it with the memory of recently lived times when we experienced the fragility and dependence of a time frayed by the always brute action of an otherness resistant to being semiotically represented, whose brute force is attenuated by the understanding of its conduct.

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