

Seminar: **Gedanken und Blicke als Gespräche: Peirce' dialogische Semiotik**  
(180161 SE)

## 1. TEXTAUSWAHL: Denken als Dialog

1.)

“Wir denken in Zeichen; und tatsächlich hat das Nachdenken die Form eines Dialogs in dem man ständig an das Selbst des folgenden Augenblicks appelliert, zu billigen ..., dass die Zeichen wirklich die Objekte darstellen, die sie vorgeben darzustellen. Logik ist deshalb fast ein Zweig der Ethik, da sie die Theorie der Kontrolle der Zeichen hinsichtlich ihrer Relation auf ihre Objekte ist.” (In: Peirce 1976, *New Elements of Mathematics*, Vol. III/2, aus einem Brief an P.E.B. Jourdain, vom 5.12. 1908).

2.)

“It is requisite that the reader should fully understand the relation of thought in itself to thinking, on the one hand, and to graphs, on the other hand. Those relations being once magisterially grasped, it will be seen that the graphs break to pieces all the really serious barriers, not only to the logical analysis of thought, but also to the digestion of a different lesson, by rendering literally visible before one's very eyes the operation of thinking in actu. In order that the fact should come to light that the method of graphs really accomplishes this marvelous result, it is first of all needful, or at least highly desirable, that the reader should have thoroughly assimilated, in all its parts, the truth that thinking always proceeds in the form of a dialogue -- a dialogue between different phases of the ego -- so that, being dialogical, it is essentially composed of signs, as its matter, in the sense in which a game of chess has the chessmen for its matter. Not that the particular signs employed are themselves

the thought! Oh, no; no whit more than the skins of an onion are the onion. (About as much so, however.) One selfsame thought may be carried upon the vehicle of English, German, Greek, or Gaelic; in diagrams, or in equations, or in graphs: all these are but so many skins of the onion, its inessential accidents. Yet that the thought should have some possible expression for some possible interpreter, is the very being of its being.”

(CP 4.6. In Dezimalnotation, z.B. 4.6, wird der vierte Band und der 6. Abschnitt der "Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce" zitiert, Bd.I -VI, hrsg. v. Charles Hartshorne und Paul Weiss, Harvard UP, 1931-35; Bd. VII u. VIII, hrsg. v. Arthur W. Burks, Harvard UP, 2.Aufl.: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1958)

3.)

“Notwithstanding their contrariety, generality and vagueness are, from a formal point of view, seen to be on a par. Evidently no sign can be at once vague and general in the same respect, since insofar as the right of determination is not distinctly extended to the interpreter it remains the right of the utterer. Hence also, a sign can only escape from being either vague or general by not being indeterminate. But that no sign can be absolutely and completely indeterminate is proved in [CP3.93] where Plutarch's anecdote about appealing from Phillip drunk to Phillip sober is put to use. Yet every proposition actually asserted must refer to some non-general subject; for the doctrine that a proposition has but a single subject has to be given up in the light of the Logic of Relations. (See The Open Court, pp. 3416 et seq.) Indeed, all propositions refer to one and the same determinately singular subject, well-understood between all utterers and interpreters; namely, to The Truth, which is the universe of all universes, and is assumed on all hands to be real. But besides that, there is some lesser environment of the utterer and interpreter of each proposition that actually gets conveyed, to which that proposition more

particularly refers and which is not general. The Open Court paper referred to [above] made this plain, but left unnoticed some truths of the first importance about vagueness. No communication of one person to another can be entirely definite, i.e., non-vague. We may reasonably hope that physiologists will some day find some means of comparing the qualities of one person's feelings with those of another, so that it would not be fair to insist upon their present incomparability as an inevitable source of misunderstanding. Besides, it does not affect the intellectual purport of communications. But wherever degree or any other possibility of continuous variation subsists, absolute precision is impossible. Much else must be vague, because no man's interpretation of words is based on exactly the same experience as any other man's. Even in our most intellectual conceptions, the more we strive to be precise, the more unattainable precision seems. It should never be forgotten that our own thinking is carried on as a dialogue, and though mostly in a lesser degree, is subject to almost every imperfection of language. I have worked out the logic of vagueness with something like completeness,<sup>1</sup> but need not inflict more of it upon you, at present.” (CP 5.506)

4.)

#### “JUDGMENT AND ASSERTION

Every new concept first comes to the mind in a judgment. This argument evades the consideration of the difficult question of the logical nature of the judgment, but draws attention to a fact that ordinary speech recognizes; namely, that a judgment is something that ripens in the mind, and further that there is a vernacular phrase which betrays a feature of the ripe judgment, the phrase "I says to myself, says I." The phrase indicates the easily verified fact that the ripe judgment, at least, involves an element closely analogous to assertion. But what

is that? What is the nature of assertion? We have no magnifying-glass that can enlarge its features, and render them more discernible; but in default of such an instrument we can select for examination a very formal assertion, the features of which have purposely been rendered very prominent, in order to emphasize its solemnity. If a man desires to assert anything very solemnly, he takes such steps as will enable him to go before a magistrate or notary and take a binding oath to it. Taking an oath is not mainly an event of the nature of a setting forth, *Vorstellung*, or representing. It is not mere saying, but is doing. The law, I believe, calls it an "act." At any rate, it would be followed by very real effects, in case the substance of what is asserted should be proved untrue. This ingredient, the assuming of responsibility, which is so prominent in solemn assertion, must be present in every genuine assertion. For clearly, every assertion involves an effort to make the intended interpreter believe what is asserted, to which end a reason for believing it must be furnished. But if a lie would not endanger the esteem in which the utterer was held, nor otherwise be apt to entail such real effects as he would avoid, the interpreter would have no reason to believe the assertion. Nobody takes any positive stock in those conventional utterances, such as "I am perfectly delighted to see you," upon whose falsehood no punishment at all is visited. At this point, the reader should call to mind, or, if he does not know it, should make the observations requisite to convince himself, that even in solitary meditation every judgment is an effort to press home, upon the self of the immediate future and of the general future, some truth. It is a genuine assertion, just as the vernacular phrase represents it; and solitary dialectic is still of the nature of dialogue. Consequently it must be equally true that here too there is contained an element of assuming responsibility, of 'taking the consequences.'" (CP 5.546)

5.)

“Since I have employed the word Pragmaticism, and shall have occasion to use it once more, it may perhaps be well to explain it. About forty years ago, my studies of Berkeley, Kant, and others led me, after convincing myself that all thinking is performed in Signs, and that meditation takes the form of a dialogue, so that it is proper to speak of the "meaning" of a concept, to conclude that to acquire full mastery of that meaning it is requisite, in the first place, to learn to recognize the concept under every disguise, through extensive familiarity with instances of it. But this, after all, does not imply any true understanding of it; so that it is further requisite that we should make an abstract logical analysis of it into its ultimate elements, or as complete an analysis as we can compass. But, even so, we may still be without any living comprehension of it; and the only way to complete our knowledge of its nature is to discover and recognize just what general habits of conduct a belief in the truth of the concept (of any conceivable subject, and under any conceivable circumstances) would reasonably develop; that is to say, what habits would ultimately result from a sufficient consideration of such truth. It is necessary to understand the word "conduct," here, in the broadest sense. If, for example, the predication of a given concept were to lead to our admitting that a given form of reasoning concerning the subject of which it was affirmed was valid, when it would not otherwise be valid, the recognition of that effect in our reasoning would decidedly be a habit of conduct.

(CP 6.481)