

Peirce's garden of forking metaphors

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Abstract. The philosophic system of the founder of pragmatism Charles Sanders Peirce is rarely grasped from the point of view of its metaphoric usage. However, some of his most original yet often misunderstood and contested ideas such as those of '*matter as effete mind*' and '*the play of musement*' are metaphoric representations. In the present paper I am offering a new way to discuss the role of metaphors in Peirce's philosophy by taking a twofold approach to the problem. On the one hand, metaphor itself becomes an object of inquiry. I touch upon the appearances of metaphoric thinking at the level of his classes of signs and metaphor's relation to abductive inference. I trace those appearances in the process of their becoming from the spontaneity of Firstness towards the actuality of Secondness via the generalizing effects of Thirdness. Then I propose a flexible graphic model of metaphor that is parallel to Peirce's inherent evolutionism. This model is seen as a "gentle" methodological tool for deriving meaning. To illustrate its applicability I include a playful nod to the literary works of Jorge Luis Borges to show how hard logical thought and aesthetic beauty complement each other.

Keywords: Peirce; metaphor; effete mind; play of musement; abduction; Borges

Some general remarks

As the title of this attempt to tackle the problem of metaphor suggests, it is a Peircean one with a playful nod to the literary works of Jorge Luis Borges. However, a few general remarks regarding the background of the inquiry are necessary to better explain the ideas discussed. My research approach rests on the notion that knowledge and thinking are outgrowths of the instinctive ability of biological organisms to (re)present and signify reality. This ability is seen as an evolutionary adaptation that ensures survival in the dynamics of the environment. The idea has