

## Peirce's Nominalist-Realist Distinction, an Untenable Dualism<sup>1</sup>

For Peirce there seem to be only two options. Nominalism and realism represent, for him, the only two possible alternative interpretations of the hypothesis that there is a reality;<sup>2</sup> reality here understood as what is independent of what you or I or anyone in particular thinks of it, or, as he also puts it, thinks it to be.<sup>3</sup> Here I will argue that this nominalism/realism dichotomy is false. By combining Peirce's notions of reality and externality, I will show that there are three options, not the two Peirce distinguishes.

The recognition that there are more options besides nominalism and realism implies that Peirce's basic argument from exclusion—realism must be right because nominalism is proven to be wrong—no longer works. This negative defense of realism is of special significance since it reveals valuable information about what realism stands for. This is important, not only because Peirce remains rather vague about what realism is,<sup>4</sup> but also because the so-called irreconcilable facts which the alternatives hit upon—and because of which they have to be discarded—will tell us what kind of theory realism is to be (cf. CP 4.35, 1893; CP 4.1, 1898). Here I will show not only that such a negative defense of realism can still be maintained, albeit in a slightly more complex fashion, but also that to do so in this triadic setting will leave us with a better picture of what realism entails than Peirce's original dichotomy.

The discovery that the long standing debate between nominalists and realists is intrinsically connected with the notion of reality is made by Peirce in his 1871 review of Berkeley's *Works*.<sup>5</sup> After noting that the nominalist-realist debate revolves around the question whether

universals are real, Peirce comes to realize that the opposite answers of nominalists and realists are not so much the result of their different views on universals, but rather from the fact that:

... each party ha[s] its own peculiar ideas of what it is that is real, the realists assuming that reality belongs to what is present to us in true knowledge of any sort, the nominalists assuming that the absolutely external causes of perception are the only realities. (W 2.489, 1871)

In this passage Peirce relates the debate between nominalists and realists to a difference in their conceptions of reality, by distinguishing between what is real and what is external. Nominalists and realists part ways, Peirce argues, exactly where the nominalists assume that only what is external is real, and the realists deny this. Hence Peirce's distinction between reality and externality has a direct bearing on his interpretation of the nominalist-realist debate. A consequence of focussing on the term "real" of the question "Are universals real?" is that the issue of nominalism and realism is pushed into a different playing field than the one normally associated with it.

With respect to "reality," Peirce remains faithful to the definition given by Duns Scotus: something is real when it is independent of what you or I or anyone in particular thinks about *it*, or thinks *it* to be. Since Peirce derives this conception of reality from Scotus, I will refer to this as the Scotistic definition.<sup>6</sup> Something is external, in contrast, when it not just independent of what anyone in particular thinks about *it*, but when it is independent of what anyone in particular *thinks*, no matter what everyone thinks about.<sup>7</sup> Hence, a stone on the slope of the Mount Everest is *external* to our thought, since it is independent of "whatever our thoughts might be on *any* subject," meaning that it is independent of what we think about anything (W 3.29, 1872; emphasis added). The stone is in addition real, in that it is independent of what anyone in particular thinks that particular stone to be.

Although everything external will be real—since what is independent of what anyone in particular thinks about anything is *ipso*

*facto* independent of what anyone thinks about it—the opposite need not be true. Something may be real, that is, independent of what we may think about *it*, without being external, meaning that it is not independent of what we *think*. This difference between reality and externality comes to light when we consider a case in which a product of our thought is to be characterized as real; meaning that it is independent, not of thought in general, since no product of our thought can be, but of whatsoever anyone in particular might think *about it*. On the terms of the Scotistic definition, such a product of our thought would count as real. Since we are speaking of a *product* of our thought, however, it is evidently not independent of what we think about anything, since had we never thought about it, it would not have been a product of our thought. Consequently, it is at least in principle possible that some things are real that are not external.

Let us thus combine the notions of reality and externality, and see which options this leaves us. In this I will assume, as does Peirce, that some things are real (W 3.27, 1872; CP 5.384, 1877). Moreover, since everything that is characterized as external must also be characterized as real, we are then left with three options:

- (1) All reality is external to all thought; meaning that only what is independent of what anyone in particular thinks about anything is truly independent of what anyone thinks about it.
- (2) No reality is external to all thought; meaning that although there are things that are independent of what anyone in particular thinks about them, there is nothing such that it is independent of what anyone thinks about anything.
- (3) Some, but not all reality is external to all thought; meaning that only part of what is independent of what anyone in particular thinks about it is such that it is also independent of what anyone in particular thinks about anything.

I will call theories that embrace the first option, type-one theories,

theories that embrace the second, type-two theories, and those that embrace the third, type-three theories. Each of the three options relates as a contrary to each of the others, meaning that they can both be false but cannot both be true. In addition, when all three are taken together, to prove the truth of one will prove the others to be false, and to prove two of them false will prove the third one to be true. This means that the possibility of an argument by exclusion is guaranteed.

The first option, according to which all reality is external to all thought, constitutes for Peirce, the *pièce de résistance* of nominalism. In the way it is defined in the Berkeley review, however, nominalism will cover only part of the theories that fall under this first option. This because nominalism, to Peirce, does not just hold that only what is external to all thought is real, but also that something is real *because* it is external to all thought. It is at least conceivable that one might hold a view in which only the external is real for reasons *other* than that it is external. Hence, there seem to be more type-one theories than those that are nominalistic.

As is clear from the Berkeley review, Peirce sees Locke as a paradigmatic nominalist:

. . . nominalism arises from taking that view of reality which regards whatever is in thought as caused by something in sense, and whatever is in sense as caused by something without the mind. But everybody knows that this is the character of Locke's philosophy. (CP 8.25, 1871)

As we will see further down, however, although this may be a correct assessment of the *early* Locke, it does not apply to the later Locke.<sup>8</sup>

An example of the second option, which holds that no reality is external to all thought, can be found for instance in Berkeley, who claims that to be is to be perceived. On the basis of his *esse is percipi* principle, nothing can be independent of what we think about anything, which would make it external, since that would make it independent of it being perceived.

The third option—the view that some but not all reality is exter-

nal to all thought—is held by Peirce himself, and constitutes a core element of his realism. Peirce's realism, however, is not the only view that falls under this option. Although Peirce takes Locke to be the paradigmatic nominalist, Locke's later view should rather be characterized as a type-three theory.<sup>9</sup> This is due to Locke's insistence that, besides the external causes of our perceptions, also all consistent combinations of simple ideas formed freely by the understanding—what Locke calls complex ideas of modes—are real; making some *products* of our thought real as well (II.xxx.4; IV.iv.5).<sup>10</sup> Hence, like nominalism, realism too seems to be only a subclass of one of the three options that are left open after combining Peirce's notions of reality and externality. This because realism includes an additional specification of what these real things that are not external can be; they are such that they would become an object of the final opinion which would be reached if inquiry continues long enough.<sup>11</sup> Other specifications are conceivable, and even held on to, such as Locke's consistency criterion for the reality of complex ideas of modes.

If we look at the issue like this, it appears that the nominalistic and the realistic conceptions of reality cover only some of the options left open after combining Peirce's definitions of reality and externality; nominalistic views being only a subclass of the first option, realistic views being only a subclass of the third. This means that other alternatives are possible and that Peirce's argument from exclusion—realism must be true since nominalism is false—does not work; at least not as it stands. It appears further that Peirce's nominalist-realist dichotomy can be defended only if it can be shown that all views that differ from nominalism or realism lapse back into either one of them. For this it does not suffice to show that these other alternatives are all untenable, since so is nominalism, at least according to Peirce.

In accordance with his dichotomy, Peirce does indeed label the two views I distinguished from nominalism and realism, namely Berkeley's, which is an example of the second option, and Locke's, which is an alternative interpretation of the third option, as nominalistic or even extremely nominalistic.<sup>12</sup> It seems to me, however, that since the three options distinguished above are mutually exclusive it

cannot be defended that views that properly fall under the second option, like Berkeley's, are in fact disguised forms of either nominalism or realism.<sup>13</sup> This means that after combining the notions of reality and externality we are left with a *triadic* division rather than a dyadic one; something which Peirce, given his triadomania, would probably hardly object to.

The resulting three options, could be named "realism," "nominalism," and say "internalism." To take this course, however, would force us to reinterpret the terms "realism" and "nominalism," since it is yet to be established that all theories that fall under the third option are disguised forms of realism and all theories that fall under the first option are disguised forms of nominalism. Realism, as the view that not everything that is real is external to all thought, should in that case be distinguished from realism as the view that everything is real that will be an object of the final opinion. To avoid this kind of confusion I prefer to speak of type-one theories, type-two theories, and type-three theories.

For Peirce's exclusion argument to work in this triadic setting, it needs to be shown: first, that the view that only what is external to all thought is real is untenable; second, that the view that there is nothing external to all thought is real is untenable; and, third, that all views that hold that some things are real besides what is external to all thought are untenable with the exception *only* of the view that reality is what becomes an object of the final opinion. Fragments of all three can be found in Peirce's work, but his argument is in important respects yet incomplete. To give a full examination of such a negative argument for realism, however, falls well beyond the scope of the present effort. I will limit myself thereto to some comments that are meant to show that Peirce's argument is indeed incomplete, and to give a taste of the issues that will surface. Such issues will be instrumental in giving us a more detailed picture of what realism itself stands for.

With respect to his criticism of type-one theories, Peirce seems to direct all his arrows to one variant only, namely those which hold that the externals which constitute reality are incognizable (CP 8.12,

1871; CP 4.68, 1893; CP 1.170, c.1897). Such a view can, for instance, be attributed to the early Locke, who holds on the ground that it is inconceivable that our ideas should subsist alone or one in another (II.xxiii.4), that we are required to suppose a *substratum*, which is

. . . nothing but the supposed, but unknown support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist, 'sine re substante,' without some thing to support them. (II.xxiii.2)

Peirce, I think correctly, dismisses such a view on the basis that "the absolutely incognizable is absolutely inconceivable" (CP 5.310, 1868), as a result of which we can never formulate a theory that relates such externals to our cognitions, for instance, by holding that they "support" our cognitions, as does Locke. The nominalist's crucial mistake is to take terms, like "support," which derive their whole meaning from relations between cognitions, and to apply them indiscriminately to relate our cognitions with things incognizable.

Peirce's objections, however, do not seem to address all views that might fall under this first option. One might hold, for instance, that perception gives us a direct, albeit limited access to the things themselves—which would circumvent Peirce's criticism—and still adhere to the thesis that *only* what is external to our thought is real. It has to be shown, either, that such views turn out to require incognizable causes after all, or else that they are untenable on other grounds.

The views that fall under the second option that is left open after the notions of reality and externality are pitted against one another, include those branches of idealism, including immaterialism, solipsism, etc., that hold that the real objects we commonly associate with the 'external world' exist only in thought. There are certain signs that Peirce himself moves in this direction as well. When discussing cosmology, for instance, Peirce claims that matter is nothing but "mind deadened by the development of habit" (CP 8.318, 1891; CP 6.158, 1892), or, more cryptic, that "matter is effete mind" (CP 6.25, 1891; 6.605, 1893; cf. 6.102, 1892). Similarly, he holds that "all matter is

really mind" (CP 6.301, 1893), and that "everything is of the nature of mind" (MS 54.12f., 1892).<sup>14</sup> There is some indication, however, that the issue here is not that of reality versus fiction, but that of substance versus attribute; substance here understood as something that is what it is independently of *anything* else, such as Locke's *substratum* mentioned above. Interpreted this way, the notion of substance is more basic than that of externality, since the latter is not independent of *anything* else, as is substance, but only of what anyone might *think*. Hence, although all substances will be external, not everything that is external will be a substance. This interference of the substance-attribute issue with that of reality versus fiction, which plagues Locke, Berkeley, as well as Peirce, is one of the loose ends that still needs to be resolved.

With regard to the second option, Peirce is predominantly concerned with Berkeley's denial of matter, which he sees as a major distinction between Berkeley's view and his own. This is revealed in particular by the following comment made by Peirce:

Permit me, by the way, to express my satisfaction that every competent critic will recognize in me a disciple of Berkeley, although I am utterly opposed to his Nominalism, and although his denial of Matter, bad enough in his own day, has become ridiculous in ours. (MS 641.18, 1909)<sup>15</sup>

As it turns out, Berkeley's denial of matter comes down to nothing less than a direct denial of externality. This can be seen clearly from the *Dialogues*, where Berkeley has Philonous remark:

The question between the materialist and me is not, whether things have a real existence out of the mind of this or that person, but whether they have an absolute existence, distinct from being perceived by God, and *exterior to all minds*.<sup>16</sup>

That Berkeley's immaterialism is indeed nothing less than a denial of anything external, is also noted by Peirce (CP 8.30, 1871). Partly in



reply to this, Peirce attributes to Berkeley:

. . . a third new conception of reality, different from either of those which we have insisted are characteristic of the nominalist and realist respectively, or if this is to be identified with either of those, it is with the realist view. (*ibid.*; cf. MS 641.13f., 1909)

It seems, however, that the reason why Peirce attributes a *third* conception of reality to Berkeley—besides nominalism and realism—is due more to Berkeley's claim that what distinguishes reality from fiction is the vividness and concatenation of our ideas, than to Berkeley's denial of externality.<sup>17</sup>

When we look at Berkeley's main argument for denying externals it appears that it is virtually identical to Peirce's argument against nominalism, namely by holding that the absolutely incognizable is inconceivable, or, as Berkeley puts it himself early on in the *Principles*, that "an idea can be like nothing but an idea."<sup>18</sup> Assuming that we may at this point hold on to Locke's characterization of an idea as whatsoever is an object of the understanding when a man thinks (I.i.8; II.viii.8), this can be taken to express that no objects of our thought can ever represent something that cannot possibly become an object of our thought. Berkeley next defends his immaterialism by also relying on an argument from exclusion: since there can be no matter, there can only be spirits with ideas.<sup>19</sup>

Due to the similarity between Berkeley's argument and that of Peirce, however, the limitations that hold for Peirce's criticism of type-one theories apply equally to Berkeley's argument for immaterialism. Although Berkeley gives a successful criticism of nominalistic theories, it does not cover all type-one theories, which means that Berkeley's argument from exclusion also needs to be refined, with possibly a different outcome.

Although Peirce considers himself a disciple of Berkeley, he strongly repudiates the latter's denial of matter, or, more precisely, his denial of externality. This brings us to the second step of our argument, namely to show that all views that fall under the second

option are untenable. At this point Peirce's criticism is inspired by Kant's recognition that existence is not a real predicate.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to Berkeley, who treats all objects that come before the understanding when we think as if they are of the same kind, Peirce starts with the recognition that there are two types of unmediated ideas, or thought-signs: icons and indices (CP 6.339, c.1909). An icon, for Peirce, is a sign that derives its significance purely from it being an image (like a picture or diagram) of what it refers to. What an icon refers to must therefore resemble or conform to that image. It is precisely this requirement of resemblance that lies behind Berkeley's *adagium* that an idea can only be like another idea, as his defense of it reveals:

Again, I ask whether those supposed originals or external things, of which our ideas are the pictures or representations, be themselves perceivable or no? if they are, then they are ideas, and we have gained our point; but if you say they are not, I appeal to any one whether it be sense, to assert a colour is like something which is invisible; hard or soft, like something which is intangible; and so of the rest.<sup>21</sup>

Reflection upon our ideas, however, shows that not all our ideas function like this. Some of our ideas, Peirce notes, are indices in that they refer not through resemblance, but in virtue of a dynamical relation between the external object and the senses and memory of the subject (CP 2.305, 1901). Suppose, for instance, that someone points at a flash of light. The veridicality of this sign, i.e., the act of pointing, does not depend—as with an icon—on a likeness between this act and the phenomenon that is pointed at, but depends instead on the actual presence of, as Peirce formulates it:

some element of existence which, not merely by the likeness between its different apparitions, but by an inward force of identity, manifest[s] itself in the continuity of its apparition throughout time and in space, [as] distinct from everything else. (CP 3.460, 1897; cf. 8.314, 1909)

Put differently, indices indicate the presence of a brute actuality, a *then* and *there*, which *forces* itself upon the thinking mind.

After distinguishing these two types of unmediated thought-signs, Peirce acknowledges Berkeley's famous *adagium*, according to which an idea can never *resemble* something that is radically different from an idea, or, as Peirce formulates it, according to which "what we think of cannot possibly be of a different nature from thought itself" (CP 6.339, c.1909; cf. W 3.56, 1872). However, instead of agreeing with Berkeley that this shows that there can be no unthinking matter, Peirce concludes that it shows the exact opposite: "We must conclude, then, that the reason why different things have to be differently thought of is that their modes of metaphysical being are different" (*ibid.*). Put differently, the presence of indices among the objects that come before the understanding when we think, *reveals* the brute actuality of unthinking matter. Berkeley failed to see this, Peirce continues, and as a result he "blundered into his idealism" (*ibid.*).

Berkeley's argument, as it thus turns out, depends upon the mistaken belief that all our ideas are icons, i.e., that they can represent only by resembling or conforming to what it represents; something which is impossible with respect to Locke's *substratum*. However, given the refutation of nominalism discussed above, this 'brute actuality of unthinking matter' must be cognizable. This means that we must find a way in which it can be known that avoids the problems which nominalists ran into. As we will see, it is precisely at this point that Peirce's realism comes in.

What this crude analysis of Berkeley's view shows us, however, is *not* that Berkeley turns out to be a nominalist, but that his immaterialism, assuming Peirce's criticisms are correct, is untenable.<sup>22</sup> It is, moreover, during this process of carefully examining an alternative and investigating where and why exactly it goes wrong, that valuable information surfaces about what kind of view realism is to be. However, since Berkeley's view is only one example of a type-two theory, it would be incorrect to conclude from Peirce's criticism of Berkeley—assuming it is successful—that all type-two theories are untenable. There is without doubt much more work to be done here.

The third and the last option that needs to be discussed is the one which holds that although some reality is external to all thought not all reality is, thereby implying that some products of our thought are real as well. Peirce's realism clearly falls within this third category. According to it, *everything* is real which will become an object of the final opinion a community of investigators is destined to reach assuming inquiry continues long enough (CP 8.12, 1871). Such objects of the final opinion are independent of what anyone *in particular* thinks about them, as a result of which they satisfy the conditions specified in the Scotistic definition:

For the prejudice, incompetency or ignorance of any number of men, or of generations of men may postpone the agreement in the final opinion but can not make that final opinion to be other than it is to be. So it is quite independent of how any number of men think, and thereby is distinguished from other thoughts as completely as the external reality is. (W 3.46f., 1872)

Casting the issue in these terms has the distinct advantage that it allows for the absolute external causes of our perception, while at the same time avoiding the problems nominalists run into when they try to give an account of the relation between our cognitions and so-called incognizables, which is a key element of nominalistic theories.

Peirce's realism, moreover, does not only allow for externals, it also holds that there are externals. In his 1871 Berkeley review, Peirce writes of realism: "This theory is also highly favorable to a belief in external realities" (CP 8.13, 1871); and less than a year later: "realists need not, and should not deny, that the reality exists externally to the mind; nor have they historically done so, as a general thing" (W 3.29, 1872). Such an adherence to externals, however, is not required. We can very well conceive of a view that shares with realism the thesis that reality is the object of the final opinion, but which at the same time denies that there are any externals. The possibility of such a view, which would reside under the second option instead, indicates that an additional defense is necessary to establish that there are ex-

ternals. Peirce's argument that not all our ideas are icons, but that some are indices instead, is an example of such a defense.

As it turns out, realism is not the only view that falls within this third option. As noted above, also the view of the later Locke is an example of it. According to Locke, something is real when it is an original or archetype. On this principle not only externals are real, but also those ideas that are products of our thought which are not intended to conform to anything else, since these will be originals as well. This means that Locke also adheres to the view that some reality is external, but not all.

What motivated Locke to call some products of our thought real, was to save mathematics and moral philosophy from being dismissed as nothing but figments of our fancy. Our ideas of mathematics and moral philosophy, Locke argues, hold independently of whether they correspond with the external causes of perception, or as Locke calls it, with the "real being and existence of things" (III.xxx.1). Tully's offices are no less true, Locke argues, simply "because there is nobody in the world that exactly practices his rules" (IV.iv.8).

To avoid that mathematics and moral philosophy are dismissed as fiction, Locke introduces a second criterion of reality: all ideas, created by the understanding, that are consistent combinations of simple ideas, and which are not intended to represent anything on the level of the real being and existence of things, are real as well.

One could question, however, whether these products of our thought which Locke calls real do conform to the Scotistic definition, or whether "reality" is used here in a different sense. It seems to me, that the Scotistic definition does indeed apply here, and that the view of the later Locke must be seen as a genuine example of a type-three theory. The reason for this is the following. When a number of simple ideas are first combined, for instance such as to form the idea of adultery, this combination is from then on independent of what anyone in particular thinks about it, *including* the initial author of the combination; in this case, as Locke conceives it, Adam (III.vi.44). The only requirement is that the idea thus formed has characteristics that make it, as a mental event, distinct enough for it to be distinguished from others, and that these characteristics belong to it in the

sense that if they would be predicated of it, a truth results that is independent of whether anyone in particular—including, through retrospection, the author of the idea himself—ascertains it or not. To this Locke's complex ideas of modes comply.

Put differently, Locke's complex ideas of modes are at once internal, since they depend on what someone in particular thinks, and real, since they are independent of what anyone in particular thinks about them. This because they are mental events which *after* they are formed are independent of what anyone in particular may think about them, including the person who initially thought them (or construed them). From this it follows not only that the notions of reality and externality, as distinguished by Peirce, are indeed applicable to the later Locke, but also that the later Locke must be characterized as an exponent of the third option, as a result of which he cannot properly be classified a nominalist. Since Locke, moreover, does not conceive of reality as the object of a final opinion, he cannot properly be characterized a realist either.

In sum, the proper course of inquiry with regard to type-three theories is again to show that they are all either implicit forms of realism, or that they are else untenable. It is at this point that a distinction between realism and the wider class of which it is part becomes particularly useful, especially in the light of certain problems realism itself hits upon, such as the problem of buried secrets (CP 5.409, 1878). Recognizing this wider class of theories allows us, even in the case in which all type-one and type-two theories are proven to be wrong, to look for genuine alternatives to realism, besides adding refinements to the doctrine as it already stands. In this way the nominalism-realism dichotomy presented by Peirce seems to block the road of inquiry in a way the triadic division presented above does not.

In the foregoing I discussed only in the briefest terms a few alternatives to Peirce's realism. This already revealed that combining the notions of reality and externality is profitable and that we must look at a wider variety of alternatives than those left open by the nominalist-realist dichotomy that is maintained by Peirce. It appears further, that it is far from obvious that all theories turn out to be forms of either nominalism or realism that are not fully thought through, as

Peirce suggests. There seems to be in particular one class of theories that cannot be reduced to either nominalism or realism, namely those I labeled type-two theories. The only thing that can be done for this type of theories is to show that they are untenable, just as Peirce shows that nominalism is untenable. To examine these different types of theories is especially important since it brings to light the irreconcilable facts they hit upon, allowing us to monitor more closely the development from nominalism to realism, and providing us with a better picture of realism itself. This, in turn, will give us a better insight into what realism entails, and, possibly, into how it needs to be modified or by what kind of theory it needs to be replaced. Hence, there are good reasons to abandon Peirce's nominalist-realist dichotomy in favor of the triadic division presented above.

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NOTES:

References to the work of Charles S. Peirce take the following format:

W [vol#].[page#] refers to *Writings of Charles S. Peirce, a chronological edition*, ed. Max Fisch a.o. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982-).

CP [vol#].[paragraph#] refers to *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 8 vols, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1931-1958).

MS [manuscript#].[page#] refers to unpublished manuscripts as catalogued in Richard Robin, *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1967).

SS [page#] refers to *Semiotic and Significs: the Correspondence Between Charles S. Peirce and Lady Victoria Welby*, Charles S. Hardwick (ed.), Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1977.

NAT [vol#].[page#] refers to *Charles Sanders Peirce, Contributions to the Nation* (3 vols), Kenneth Laine Ketner & James Edward Cook (eds.), Graduate Studies, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, 1975-1979.

1. Special thanks go to Susan Haack and Risto Hilpinen for their comments on earlier versions, and to Anton Vos for his assistance in translating Scotus' definition of reality (see note 6, below). Responsibility for any mistakes or weaknesses, however, remains entirely my own.

2. See e.g. CP 6.107, 1892; CP 8.251, 1897; CP 4.1, 1898; CP 1.27, 1909.

3. Cf. W 2.439, 1870; CP 8.12, 1871; W 3.45f.,49,58, 1872; CP 5.405, 1878; CP 5.430, 1905; CP 6.328, 1909.

4. Despite his vigorous and continuous defense of realism, Peirce remains quite vague about what the doctrine itself stands for. In her study of Peirce's late writings on realism Lesley Friedman notes that at no time does Peirce provide a clear and consistent explanation of his realism (*C.S. Peirce's Final Realism: an Analysis of the Post-1895 Writings on Universals*, Dissertation, University of New York at Buffalo, 1993, page 2).

5. For a more detailed discussion of this interpretation of the nominalism-realism debate as well as Peirce's refutation of nominalism, see my "The Real Issue Between Nominalism and Realism, Peirce and Berkeley Reconsidered," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. XXXII (Summer, 1996), pp. 425-442.

6. MS 641.12, 1909. In subsequent draft of the same text, Peirce cites what he calls Scotus' quasi definition of reality:

*Ens reale quod distinguitur contra ens rationis, est illud quod ex se habet esse circumscripto omni operae intellectus, ut intellectus est.* (MS 642.11, 1909; the quotation, in a slightly moderated form, can be found in Duns Scotus, *Operi Omnia*, Vol. IV, page 246, line 9-11, Rome, 1956).

Unfortunately Peirce does not give us a translation of this so-called quasi definition. This is especially unfortunate since it can be read in different ways. The sentence can have *circumscripto omni* as ablative with *operae* as genitive, or it can have *circumscripto* as ablative with *omni operae* as dative and *intellectus* as genitive. The best translation seems to be the following: A real being as contrasted with a rational being is that which has its being of itself, assuming that we set apart every activity of the understanding insofar as it belongs to the understanding. An "activity of the understanding insofar as it belongs to the understanding," can then



be interpreted as a fiction; i.e., as a product of the understanding which is nothing but a product of the understanding. Reality, however, Peirce continues, is not independent of *all* thought, but only of *intellectus, ut intellectus est*. Peirce believes this last phrase to be a misreading for *intellectus, ut intellectum est*, on the ground that otherwise Scotus “would be denying the reality of states of mind and the like” (*ibid.*); that is, if one fantasizes about a mermaid, the mermaid may not be real, but the fact that one is fantasizing about a mermaid will be. There is no grammatical ground for this correction.

7. With respect to externality we can make a distinction similar to the one implicit in the Scotistic definition. Just as we can distinguish between being independent of what a particular individual or group of individuals thinks about it, and being independent of what anyone thinks about it, we can make a distinction between being external to a particular person's, or group of person's thought, and being external to all thought. It is the latter Peirce is interested in. Accordingly, in the second draft of the unpublished “Significs and Logic,” Peirce gives the following extensive definition of being external:

that which constitutes the externality of a Fact is that it would remain the very same Fact no matter what or how any given Mind or Group of Minds may Actually Feel, or Think, or Imagine, or within itself might do or suffer; no matter too what Capacities or Dispositions for Feeling, Thinking, Doing and Suffering, they might acquire or lose.  
(MS 642.16-7, 1909)

Further down on the same page, Peirce re-emphasizes that with externality he means: “External to every Mind that now or at any other time Actually, is, was, or will be” (*ibid.*).

8. The recognition that there is a development in Locke's thought comes rather late to Peirce. Around 1884, Peirce still holds that Locke “[n]ever changed [his opinions] unless perhaps very early” (W 5.69, 1884), and he locates Locke's first originality, his first great work, and his best work, all at the same date, namely the publication date of the *Essay*. In 1909, however, after discussing Locke's criticism of innate ideas, Peirce notes in contrast: “How surprisingly, however, Locke grew in philosophical power during the composition of the *Essay*” (CP 5.504n, 1909). Despite the development Peirce later

attributes to Locke, he still considers him a nominalist (SS 114, 1909).

9. This is confirmed by studying the drafts for the *Essay*. The passages in which Locke discusses his view on reality are in II.xxx, II.xxxi, and IV.iv. The first two concern late additions to Book II as can be seen from earlier drafts of the *Essay*. They are absent from what is called draft B, which is written in 1671 and which covers only what is to become the first two books of the *Essay*. The third major draft of the *Essay* to survive is draft C, which is dated four years before the *Essay* is printed. In this draft Locke puts his signature directly after chapter II.xxviii, suggesting that Book II was supposed to end there. Later Locke adds two additional chapters to this draft, the second of which is called “Of Real and Fantastical, Adequate and Inadequate Ideas” and corresponds to what is now II.xxx and II.xxxi. This shows that Locke’s discussion of the reality of ideas is a late addition to the *Essay*. See Peter H. Nidditch and G.A.J. Rogers (eds.), *Drafts for the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, and Other Philosophical Writings* (2 vols.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.

10. All references to Locke are to *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Peter H. Nidditch (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975) by book, chapter and section number. The term “idea” stands for “whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks” (I.i.8). It is important to distinguish this use from the use of the term to denote a mental state.

11. See e.g. CP 8.12, 1871; CP 5.408, 1877; CP 5.161, 1903.

12. Peirce repeatedly labels Locke a nominalist (CP 8.25, 1871; CP 4.50, 1893; CP 1.19, 1903; CP 5.499, 1905). Similarly, Peirce often calls Berkeley a nominalist (CP 8.10, 1871; CP 4.33, 1893; CP 4.1, 1898; CP 1.19, 1903; CP 5.181, 1903; MS 641.18, 1909), and even an extreme nominalist (CP 8.27,30 1871; CP 5.470, c.1906; SS 114, 1909).

13. Unless we allow the meaning of the term “nominalism” to inflate such as to make it apply to every view that is not realistic. I will not deny that there is such an inflatory tendency in Peirce’s use of the term. But this is something that is better avoided, as it covers up differences that might be significant.

14. For dating the latter manuscript, see Carl R. Hausman, “Peirce’s Evolutionary Realism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, vol. XXVII (11), p. 4n.7.

15. Peirce comments repeatedly on Berkeley’s denial of matter. See W 1.54, 1861; W 1.348, 1866, CP 8.33, 1871; NAT 3.38, 1902; MS

328.2-3, 1905; CP 5.470, c.1906; MS 318.23,3, 1907; CP 6.481, 1908; NE 3.192, 1911. Matter is already an important concept to the young Peirce. In his "Views of Chemistry sketched for Young Ladies," the chemistry student Peirce defines chemistry as "the Science of *Kinds of Matter*" (W 1.50, 1861; emphasis Peirce's), a view that remains with him (e.g., CP 1.25ff., 1902). Although Peirce continues to criticize Berkeley for his denial of matter, his view is wavering. At some places Peirce agrees with a repudiation of absolute matter. For instance, in an early draft of "Some Questions Concerning Faculties Claimed for Man," one of the questions is "Is matter necessary to reality," to which Peirce answers with a fierce "No!" (W 2.163, 1868; the question does not reappear in the published version; see also W 1.16, 1865).

16. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in A.A. Luce & T.E. Jessop (eds.), *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (IX vols.), Nelson, London, 148, vol. II, page 235 (emphasis added). See also *ibid* page 230, and his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Part I, § 48, in A.A. Luce & T.E. Jessop *op.cit.*, vol. II.

17. This is especially clear from the way in which it is formulated in MS 641.13f., 1909. See on this issue also W 2.162, 1868; CP 5.23, 1868; CP 7.442, c.1893. Explicit comments on what Peirce sees as Berkeley's definition of reality can be found also in S 104, n.p., n.d., where he writes:

1. *Berkeley's definition* (to be called below B's D) wrong. Because *vividness* (v) has degrees & Reality (R) not.
2. Because v. is changeable R not
3. Because concatenation (cc) has degrees
4. Because cc is changeable

18. Berkeley, *Principles*, Part I, § 8.

19. Berkeley, *Principles*, Part I, §§ 7, 26, 135.

20. In his 1901 review of Berkeley's *Works*, Peirce writes that Berkeley is "far better entitled to be considered the father of all modern philosophy than is Kant," with two notable exceptions, one of which is:

the doctrine that existence is not a form to be conceived, but a compulsive force to be experienced (which is prominent in Kant's refuta-

tions of Berkeley and of the ontological proof that there is a God; and indeed everywhere). (NAT 3.37, 1901; cf. MS 143.4, 1901; CP 8.103, 1901; CP 6.339, c.1909)

21.      Berkeley, *Principles*, Part I, § 8.

22.      In this particular case I think that Berkeley, in an attempt to save himself, does indeed fall back on a nominalism of some sorts, namely by admitting spirits, which come to play much of the same role as *substratum* does for Locke; this as opposed especially to Berkeley's early position in which a spirit is nothing but "a congeries of Perceptions" (George Berkeley, *Philosophical Commentaries*, in A.A. Luce & T.E. Jessop *op.cit.*, vol. I, entry 580; cf. entry 581 and 708).

