BOOK NOTES

In this section we publish short descriptive notices of new books about Peirce or subjects likely to interest our readers. We cannot survey all new publications or prepare critical reviews, so we notice only those books sent by authors and publishers. When available, we reprint notices supplied with the books (often edited and supplemented with text from prefaces or introductions); otherwise we prepare our own brief announcements. Please note: we notice books only if they are sent as review copies to be deposited in the Project library. Prices and ISBNs are given when available.

Synechism. Aspetti del pensiero di Charles Sanders Peirce
Gianmatteo Mameli

In this dissertation, Mameli attempts to bring a Peircean answer to two major Kantian problems: (1) what is the nature of cognizability, intelligibility, and rationality and (2) how can we conciliate the many descriptions of the world provided by “hard scientists” with the commonsense view that sees the world as pervaded with aspects and properties that are full of meaning (the beautiful, the good, the just, the true). Mameli’s ambitious work divides into three parts. The first, based on Peirce’s classification of the sciences, provides a solid description of important parts of Peirce’s system, with a special focus on the relation between mathematics, semiotics, and metaphysics. The second part teems with presentations of formal models and technical concepts in order to reconstruct Peirce’s theory of the continuum and to show, among other things, how it differs from Cantorian theory. Mameli explores Peirce’s logic of relations and shows how it is connected to the continuum theory. The last part uses Peirce’s semiotic and metaphysical writings to build a synechistic theory about the knowability and the metaphysical structure of the world. Taken as a whole, Mameli’s dissertation offers to Italian readers a subtle and quite comprehensive account of Peirce’s philosophical system.

Charles S. Peirce: La lógica del descubrimiento
Gonzalo Génova

This little book, the product of a thesis for a “licencia” in philosophy, constitutes a clear and comprehensive historical and theoretical introduction to Peirce’s logic of abduction and discovery. In the first part Génova discusses Peirce’s logic of inference, starting with the early anti-intuitionist texts and continuing with the 1877–78 texts on the logic of science. The reader is introduced to Peirce’s classification of arguments and to the three types of inference and their syllogistic analysis. The second part is devoted to the logic of inquiry, and discusses the roles of induction and abduction in scientific investigation. The book ends with some considerations on our guessing instinct and Peirce’s fallibilism. A short bibliography closes the work.

“Il segno matematico in C. S. Peirce.”
(The Mathematical Sign in C. S. Peirce)
Susanna Marietti

Marietti’s dissertation begins with an analysis of Peirce’s notion of hypostatic abstraction and its role in his study of mathematical reasoning. The categorical deduction of Peirce’s 1867 On a New List of Categories is followed closely to show how this notion, although not yet explicitly formulated by Peirce, already plays a central role in his thought. Next, the notion of hypostatic abstraction—in its relation with philosophical realism—is set within the framework of mathematical reasoning. Within the same framework theorematic reasoning (which is related to hypostatic abstraction) is contrasted with corollarial reasoning. Marietti seeks to show how the distinction traced by Peirce between these two sorts of deductive reasoning provides a useful starting point to study the mathematical sign.

In chapter 2, the Peircean argument for the observational character of mathematics is considered. Mathematics is interpreted as an informational and experimental science, and the mathematician’s work is compared with that of empirical scientists. The notion of diagram is introduced and is considered in its indexical, symbolical, and iconical aspects. A comparison with Kantian philosophy, which is a recurrent theme in the dissertation, shows how for Peirce the mathematical diagram fulfills a role similar to that of the schemes in Kant’s philosophy, albeit in a speculative context that avoids the phenomenon–noumenon dualism. Marietti concludes the chapter with an explanation of the relation between logic and mathematics and Peirce’s constructive attitude toward deduction.

In chapter 3, mathematical and philosophical themes dealt with in the previous chapters are brought within Peirce’s wider synechistic pragmatism, with explicit reference to inductive sciences, metaphysics, and cosmology. Further, the problem of fallibilism in mathematics is considered. The concluding fourth chapter surveys some modern interpretations of Peircean themes dealt with in the dissertation.

“Modes of Being: A Comparison of the Realism Question in Charles Peirce and Contemporary Analytic Philosophy”
Catherine Legg
Dissertation, Australian National University, 1999

Legg explores Peirce’s “modes of being,” or categories, with particular reference to how commitment to them structures his realism. Peirce’s realism, Legg argues, is not so much a commitment to particular, existent entities as a commitment to a posteriori precification of meanings. In this it bears some semblance to a recent trend within analytic philosophy toward a meaning-externalism that rides on rigid designation, thereby giving birth to “a posteriori necessities”; though it differs insofar as Peirce understands such meaning-clarification as precification rather than identification.