Peircean transcendental dialectic: A tentative sketch of an absent feature in Peirce's deconstruction of Kant's transcendental philosophy

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Abstract: Though Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* didn't concern Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic", it is for both logical and contingent reasons not unreasonable to speculate about a Peircean "transcendental dialectic". In this essay, I will first outline Peirce's early account of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in order to suggest an explanation as to why Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* didn't concern Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic". I will then summarize Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in order to lay the ground for a tentative sketch of a Peircean "transcendental dialectic". On this ground, I will finally sketch a "transcendental dialectic" articulated in terms of the system of categories that Peirce identified as a result of his critique of Kant's system.

Keywords: *Transcendental dialectic; natural and unavoidable illusion; system of categories; Kant; Peirce.*

Introduction

At first sight, it might seem rather inappropriate to associate a "transcendental dialectic" with the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). In his writings,[2] in fact, Peirce refers to this concept virtually only once, in his early "Harvard Lecture on Kant", and this reference has a decidedly historical character, as it is part of his account of Kant's "Critic of the Pure Reason".[3] Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to speculate about a "Peircean transcendental dialectic" for basically two reasons: one logical, referring to the concept of "transcendental dialectic", and the other contingent, referring to a particular interpretation of Peirce's philosophy.

As to the logical reason, if a "transcendental dialectic" concerns a "natural and unavoidable illusion",[4] then it is legitimate to expect that there might be, corresponding to the "transcendental dialectic" articulated in terms on Kant's system of categories, a "transcendental dialectic"

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2 Cf. Writings of Charles S. Peirce, A Chronological Edition, Peirce Edition Project (eds.), Indiana University Press 1982ff, and Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, vols. 1–6, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Harvard University Press 1931–1935, and vols. 7–8, edited by Arthur W. Burks, Harvard University Press 1958. Following an established custom, the former edition will henceforth be referred to as W, followed by volume number and page number, whereas the latter edition will be referred to as CP, followed by volume number and paragraph number.

3 Cf. W1:244f (Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865]).

4 Cf. Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, translated and edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press 1997, A 298, B 354.

articulated in terms of Peirce's own system of categories, i.e. in terms of the system of categories that Peirce identified as a result of his critique of Kant's system. Furthermore, as to the contingent reason, if Karl-Otto Apel is right in that Peirce's "logic of inquiry was intended from the beginning – that is: since the deduction of the 'New List of Categories' in 1867 — *as a critical reconstruction (in the sense of setting up an equivalent*) of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason",[5] then it is legitimate to expect that there might be a Peircean "equivalent" to that part of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason that Kant called "Transcendental Dialectic". In particular, this expectation would be legitimate regardless of whether Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason is – as Apel suggested – a "reconstruction of the Kantian aim in a new medium"[6] or – as I have argued – a "deconstruction" that has this "new medium" as its most fundamental result.[7]

In the following, I will first outline Peirce's early account of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, in order to suggest an explanation as to why Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason didn't concern Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic". I will then summarize my own view of Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, in order to lay the ground for a tentative sketch of a Peircean "transcendental dialectic". On this ground, I will finally sketch a "transcendental dialectic" articulated in terms of the system of categories that Peirce identified as a result of his critique of Kant's system.

1. Peirce's early account of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

The account of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* that the early Peirce gave in his "Harvard Lecture on Kant" does not only contain Peirce's virtually only reference to the concept of "transcendental dialectic", but it also suggests an explanation as to why Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* concerned rather the "Transcendental Analytic" than the "Transcendental Dialectic". In fact, in his early "Harvard Lecture on Kant" Peirce didn't only distinguish between a "constructive part" of the "Critic of the Pure Reason", whose object is "to show that such conceptions as cause *et cetera* are valid up to a certain point", and a "destructive part", whose object is "to show that they are not valid beyond that point", but he also argued that "the destructive part of the *Critic* has done its work", whereas "the constructive part has doubled in importance and needfulness".[8] Accordingly, Peirce declared shortly afterwards in the same lecture that "[i]t is only the constructive portion or proof of the validity and applicability of causality &c. for possible objects of sense which concerns us at all and this is all contained in the Transcendental Analytic with the Preliminary Treatise on Transcendental Esthetic and the Introduction".[9]

5 Cf. Karl-Otto Apel: "From Kant to Peirce: The semiotical transformation of transcendental logic". In: L. W. Beck (Ed.), Proceedings of the Third International Kant Congress, Dodrecht: Springer 1972, p. 93f [German version: "Von Kant zu Peirce: Die semiotische Transformation der transzendentalen Logik". In: K.-O. Apel, Transformation der Philosophie, Bd. 2. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1973, p. 164].

6 Cf. Karl-Otto Apel: "Von Kant zu Peirce", op. cit., p. 165. The paragraph containing the quote is not part of the English version of this essay.

7 Cf. Thomas Hünefeldt: Peirces Dekonstruktion der Transzendentalphilosophie in eine phänomenologische Semiotik. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2002. For an English summary of the main theses of this book, see Thomas Hünefeldt: "Outline of a systematic approach to Peirce's transformation of Kant's transcendental philosophy", Kodikas/Code, 2003, vol. 26(1-2), p. 55-68.

8 Cf. Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865], W1:244.

9 Ibid., W1:245.

Consistent with this scope, Peirce went then on to explain the "preliminary distinctions" underlying this "constructive portion" contained in the "Transcendental Analytic", i.e. the distinction between "knowledge *a priori*" and "knowledge *a posteriori*", the distinction between "analytic" and "synthetic" judgments, and the distinction between "sensibility" and "understanding", in order to devote the rest of his lecture to an extensive critical discussion of "certain logical distinctions between different judgments, which play an important part in the main body of the *Critic*",[10] i.e. the logical distinctions involved in the traditional "table of judgments" underlying Kant's system of categories. As these logical distinctions "are objected to by modern logicians",[11] Peirce focused in his subsequent writings on developing a method of identifying the true system of categories.[12] These attempts eventually led to the identification of Peirce's "New List of Categories".[13]

Peirce's early writings thus suggest that Peirce was mainly interested in 'deconstructing' the "constructive part" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, corresponding to the "Transcendental Analytic with the Preliminary Treatise on Transcendental Esthetic and the Introduction", whereas he considered the "destructive part", corresponding to the "Transcendental Dialectic", to be essentially completed. In fact, for Peirce "the destructive part of the *Critic* has done its work", because "[d]ogmatism hardly is heared of today among men of science", thereby referring to a "dogmatism" such as that of "Wolf and all such metaphysicians as seek to prove or think they know the truth of doctrines of God, Freedom, and Immortality; which are according to Kant, part of man's *credo* not of his *scio*".[14] More precisely, as also evident from the explicit reference to "God, Freedom, and Immortality", the "dogmatism" that has been destroyed by the "the destructive part of the *Critic*" is a dogmatism concerning the "system of transcendental ideas" that Kant derived on the basis of his system of categories.

Now, the fact that this particular kind of dogmatism, which was particularly influential in the history of Western philosophy, has been destroyed by the "the destructive part of the *Critic*" doesn't imply that dogmatism *tout court* has been overcome. In particular, it doesn't imply that there cannot be other kinds of "transcendental ideas", and thus other kinds of dogmatisms, corresponding to other systems of categories, e.g. to the system of categories that Peirce identified as a result of his critique of Kant's system. In any case, even if the "transcendental ideas", and thus the dogmatisms, corresponding to different systems of categories were basically the same, "the destructive part" of the critical enterprise would have to be argued somewhat differently. Thus, Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of the "constructive part" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* eventually calls for a "critical reconstruction" of its "destructive part". In other words, Peirce "critical reconstruction" of Kant's "Transcendental Analytic with the Preliminary Treatise on Transcendental Esthetic and the Introduction" needs to be supplemented by a "critical reconstruction" of Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic".

10 Cf. ibid., W1:251ff.

11 Ibid., W1:251. Cf. also Logic Chapter I [MS115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:351f, where Peirce summarizes his critique of Kant's "table of the various logical functions of judgments".

12 Cf. in particular Logic Chapter I [MS105: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:351ff, Logic of the Sciences [MS113: Autumn-Winter 1865], W1:322ff, On a Method of Searching for the Categories [MS133: November-December 1866], W1:515ff.

13 Cf. On a New List of Categories [P32: 14.5.1867], W2:49ff.

14 Cf. Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865], W1:244.

As an appendix to the preceding discussion of Peirce's early account of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is worth noting that for the early Peirce the concept of "dialectic" is in more than one sense closely associated with the concept of "dogmatism". On the one hand, in fact, Peirce praised Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic", i.e. "the destructive part" of the "Critic of the Pure Reason", for its "powerfully beneficial" "anti-dogmatic" effects upon science.[15] On the other hand, however, he dismissed "dialectics" in general, defined as "a system which seeks to investigate truth by elaborate reasoning from *first principles*", as "a genuine outgrowth of dogmatism".[16] In particular, he criticized the dialectical method of Hegel's "Logic", because it "does not seem to give determinate solutions; but the results seem to be arbitrary; for whereas [Hegel] has finally arrived at the same divisions of the judgment as were made by Kant and currently received at Hegel's day, the more recent researches of logic have modified these and have shown them to be wrong".[17] Thus, the early Peirce clearly disapproved of "dialectics" as a way of reasoning, but approved of Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" because of its "anti-dogmatic" critique of dialectical reasoning understood as "reasoning from first principles".

2. Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

In this section I will briefly sketch my own view of Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. As we have seen, this "critical reconstruction" eventually amounts to a "critical reconstruction" of its "constructive part", which is "all contained in the Transcendental Analytic with the Preliminary Treatise on Transcendental Esthetic and the Introduction". In particular, this "critical reconstruction" concerns 1) Kant's "preliminary distinction" between "cognitions *a priori*" and "cognitions *a posteriori*", which is made in the "Introduction" of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and which underlies Kant's idea of a "Transcendental Philosophy", 2) Kant's "preliminary distinction" between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding", and 3) Kant's "System of all Principles of the Pure Understanding", including the "supreme principle of all use of the understanding". In the following, I will therefore sketch my view of Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of these three key features of the "constructive part" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Elsewhere I have argued that Peirce's "critical reconstruction" of these key features amounts to realizing Kant's intentions more consistently than Kant himself did.[18] Here I will limit myself to sketch its most important results.

15 Ibid.
16 Cf. /Treatise on Metaphysics/ [MS 70: 21 August 1861 – 30 March 1862], W1:65.
17 Cf. Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352.
18 Cf. Thomas Hünefeldt: Peirces Dekonstruktion…, op. cit.

2.1. Peirce's deconstruction of Kant's distinction between "cognitions a priori" and "cognitions a posteriori"

In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant introduces the distinction between "cognitions *a priori*" and "cognitions *a posteriori*" by means of the thesis that "although all our cognition commences *with* experience, yet it does not on that account all arise *from* experience".[19] In his "Harvard Lecture on Kant", Peirce interprets this thesis as the thesis that although "everything may be said to be *inferred from* experience", yet "everything is not *determined by* experience".[20] Thus, as for Kant a "cognition *a priori*" is a cognition that "commences with experience", but does not "arise from experience", so for Peirce a "cognition *a priori*" is a cognition that is "inferred from experience", but not "determined by experience". On the one hand, a "cognition *a priori*" is "inferred from experience" in the sense that it is "inferred by some process valid or fallacious from the impressions of sense".[21] On the other hand, a "cognition *a priori*" is not "determined by experience" in the sense that it "does not require experience to be as it is in order to afford data for the inference".[22] Due to the latter point, "[a] cognition *à priori* is one which any experience contains reason for and therefore which no experience determines".[23] Due to the former point, "cognitions *a priori*" are really a particular kind of "hypotheses",[24] namely hypotheses about what is the case in "any experience". This includes not only what is, or has been, actually experienced, but also what might possibly be experienced (e.g., in dreams, hallucinations, etc.). Therefore, "cognitions *a priori*" are for Peirce eventually hypotheses about what is the case in any conceivable world.

In order to properly understand Peirce's interpretation of Kant's distinction between "cognitions *a priori*" and "cognitions *a posteriori*" it is crucial to note that it is one thing to *define* a "cognition *a priori*", but it is another thing to *identify* a "cognition *a priori*". Any definition is arbitrary and eventually depends on the intentions with which it is introduced. Thus, potentially, a "cognition *a priori*" might be defined either – as Kant seems to suggest – in terms of causal determination, as a cognition that is not causally determined by experience, or – according to Peirce's interpretation of Kant – in terms of logical determination, as a cognition that is not logically determined by experience. However, Peirce rightly rejects the former definition, because it would compromise Kant's intentions from the beginning. In fact, defining a "cognition *a priori*" in terms of causal determination would "beg the whole question of causality at the outset",[25] i.e. it would already presuppose that causality is one of the categories that are to be identified.

In any case, regardless of how a "cognition *a priori*" is defined, there is no reason to suppose that the identification of a "cognition *a priori*" is infallible. Paradoxically, this would even be true if a "cognition *a priori*" were defined as an infallible cognition. Kant's transcendental approach is therefore entirely compatible with an unlimited fallibilism. In particular, it is entirely compatible with Peirce's view that the cognitions identified as "cognitions *a priori*" are a particular kind of "hypotheses", i.e. hypotheses about what is the case in any conceivable world.

19 Critique of Pure Reason, B 1.
20 Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS101: March-April 1865], W1:246. My emphasis.
21 Ibid., W1:246f.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Cf. Peirce's letter to Francis E. Abbot [5.2.1865], W1:159, where he explicitly compares Kant's "synthetic judgments à priori" to the "hypotheses" of "[s]cientific men".
25 Cf. Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865], W1:247.

Furthermore, if a "cognition *a priori*" is not defined – as Kant seems to suggest – as a cognition that is not causally determined by experience, but – according to Peirce's interpretation of Kant – as a cognition that is not logically determined by experience, then the identification of "cognitions *a priori*" doesn't imply any thesis concerning the ontological status of those features of experience that are the object of the cognitions identified as "cognitions *a priori*". In particular, it doesn't imply that these features (e.g., space and time) depend on the mind. In fact, it would rather be reasonable to suppose that much of what is supposed to be the case in any conceivable world (e.g., space and time) is also the case independently of the mind. However, this supposition is not immediately implied in the fact that there must be features that are the case in any conceivable world, and it would therefore have to be argued on other grounds. Thus, following Peirce's interpretation of Kant's distinction between "cognitions *a priori*" and "cognitions *a posteriori*", Kant's transcendental approach eventually amounts to a particular kind of phenomenological approach, namely to an approach that aims at identifying the system of all those states of affairs that are the case in any conceivable world. In fact, this is precisely the approach that the late Peirce called "phaneroscopy".[26]

2.2. Peirce's deconstruction of Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding"

Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding" is a distinction between two fundamental kinds of basic "cognitions *a priori*", which underlies the division of the *Critique of Pure Reason* into "Transcendental Aesthetic" and "Transcendendal Logic". Kant introduces this distinction by referring to "two stems of human cognition, [...] namely sensibility and understanding":[27] "sensibility" is "the capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects",[28] whereas "understanding" is "the faculty for bringing forth representations itself".[29] In his "Harvard Lecture on Kant", Peirce interprets Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding" eventually as a distinction between basic "cognitions *a priori*" concerning two different kinds of *unities*: principles of pure "sensibility" are basic "cognitions *a priori*" concerning the *dimensions* (all-encompassing unities) wherein a manifold of innerworldly beings may be distinguished, whereas principles of pure "understanding" are basic "cognitions *a priori*" concerning the *innerworldly beings* (discrete unities) that may be distinguished therein.[30] In other words, according to Peirce, Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding" eventually amounts to the distinction between basic cognitions concerning the *dimensions* of any conceivable world and basic cognitions concerning the *innerworldly beings* of any conceivable world.

26 Cf. Peirce's definition of "phaneroscopy" in his Adirondack Lectures, 1905, CP1:248: "By the phaneron I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. If you ask present when, and to whose mind, I reply that I leave these questions unanswered, never having entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds. So far as I have developed this science of phaneroscopy, it is occupied with the formal elements of the phaneron."

27 Cf. Critique of Pure Reason, A 15, B 29,

28 Ibid., A 19, B 33.

29 Ibid., A 51, B 75.

30 Cf. Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865], W1:248ff.

What has been said above about Peirce's interpretation of Kant's distinction between "cognitions *a priori*" and "cognitions *a posteriori*" may analogously also be said of Peirce's interpretation of Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principle of pure "understanding". In fact, Peirce's interpretation of the latter distinction is more consistent with Kant's intentions, because defining that distinction – as Kant seems to suggest – in terms of the distinction between two different "capacities" or "faculties" of *causing* "representations" would "beg the whole question of causality at the outset" and would thus compromise Kant's intentions from the beginning. Furthermore, following Peirce's interpretation of that distinction, the transcendental approach is not only entirely compatible with an unlimited fallibilism, but it also maintains a phenomenological 'epoché', on which basis it seems more reasonable to hold an ontological realism concerning the objects of "cognitions *a priori*".

2.3. Peirce's deconstruction of Kant's "System of all Principles of the Pure Understanding"

Having *defined* the distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding", Kant *identified* the former kind of principles in his "Transcendental Aesthetic" and the latter kind of principles in his "Transcendental Logic". Peirce agreed with Kant's identifying "space" and "time" as "pure forms of sensibility", but he radically objected to the list of categories underlying Kant's "system of all principles of the pure understanding" and to the method by means of which Kant had identified them. In particular, this method has for Peirce two main "defects":[31] first, "it affords no warrant for the correctness of the preliminary table", i.e. it affords no warrant for the correctness of the "table of judgments" underlying Kant's system of categories; second, "it does not display that direct reference to the unity of consistency which alone gives validity to the categories", i.e. it does not display a direct reference to what Kant called the "transcendental unity of apperception": the "unity of the *I think*".[32] Given that "recent researches of logic", including Peirce's own ones, had shown Kant's "table of judgments" to be "wrong",[33] Peirce developed an alternative method of identifying the system of categories, by means of which he eventually identified his "New List of Categories". This method starts from the "unity of consistency", in so far as it is "given by the conception of being",[34] and may be characterized as a 'recursively transcendental' method, because it consists in recursively identifying what "renders possible and justifies" the introduction of the conception that has been introduced last.[35] Starting from Peirce's interpretation of Kant's conception of principles of pure "understanding", I will in the following illustrate what seems to be the essential idea underlying this method, which Peirce himself described in various structurally analogous, but formally somewhat different ways.[36]

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31 Cf. Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:351.

32 The early Peirce repeatedly explicitly identified the "unity of consistency" with the "unity of the I think", or simply with "the I think". See, for example, Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352, Lowell Lecture IX [MS 130: November 1866], W1:471, Lowell Lecture XI [MS 132: November 1866], W1:495 and W1:500, and /On a Method of Searching for the Categories/ [MS 133: November - December 1866], W1:516.

33 Cf. Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352. As to Peirce's own critique of Kant's "table of judgment", see for example his Harvard Lecture on Kant [MS 101: March-April 1865], W1:251ff.

34 Cf. Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352.

35 Cf. /On a Method of Searching for the Categories/ [MS 133: November - December 1866], W1:520ff.

36 Cf. Logic of the Sciences [MS 113: Autumn-Winter 1865], W1:331ff, Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352ff, /On a Method of Searching for the Categories/ [MS 133: November - December 1866], W1:520ff, and On a New List of Categories [P32: 14.5.1867], W2:51ff.

According to Peirce's interpretation of Kant's distinction between principles of pure "sensibility" and principles of pure "understanding", principles of pure "understanding" are defined as cognitions concerning the innerworldly beings of any conceivable world. Therefore, what is to be identified in the context of Peirce's deconstruction of Kant's "System of all Principles of the Pure Understanding" is the system of all cognitions concerning the innerworldly beings of any conceivable world. In other words, what is to be identified in that context is the system of all states of affairs that are the case about any conceivable innerworldly being. In line with this radically phenomenological definition of what is to be identified, the starting point of Peirce's method of identifying the categories is a radically phenomenological, i.e. "purely impersonal" and "thoroughly unpsychological" interpretation of Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception", i.e. of the "original unity" that is the condition of the "possibility of a conjunction in general".[37]

Whereas Kant identifies this "original unity" with "the *I think*", i.e. with the conception "I think",[38] Peirce identifies it with "the conception of *being*": As for Kant "[t]he *I think* must be able to accompany all my representations",[39] so for Peirce "the conception of *being*" must be able to be predicated of whatever may be present. Both "the conception of *being*" and "the conception of *what is present in general*" (which Peirce calls "substance"), are for Peirce therefore "categories". However, these two "categories" have no "connotation" or "content", because they say nothing about the 'data' of which they are predicated, i.e. about that what may be present.[40] They simply express the "original-synthetic unity" that is the condition of the "possibility of a combination in general".[41] That is, they simply express the fact that the possibility to "combine" a manifold of phenomenological 'data' by means of another phenomenological 'datum' presupposes that all these 'data' are already "combined" in a unity that is not itself the result of such a "combination".

Starting from the conception of an innerworldly being, i.e. starting from nothing but what is implied in the radically phenomenological definition of what is to be identified, Peirce's recursively-transcendental method of identifying the system of categories may be illustrated as follows:[42]

- What renders possible and justifies reference to an innerworldly being is reference to something (a "quality") in virtue of which it may be individuated. Therefore, and in this sense, any conceivable innerworldly being has some "quality".
- What renders possible and justifies reference to a "quality" is reference to something (a "correlate") in relation to which an innerworldly being has that quality. Therefore, and in this sense, any conceivable innerworldly being is a "relate" that stands in "relation" to some "correlate".
- What renders possible and justifies reference to a "correlate" is reference to something (an "interpretant") which represents an innerworldly being as standing in "relation" to that "correlate". Therefore, and in this sense, any conceivable innerworldly being is a "representation" (or "sign") of an "object" with respect to an "interpretant".

37 Cf. Harvard Lecture VIII [MS 105: April-May 1865], W1:256, and Critique of Pure Reason, B 130f.

38 Cf. Critique of Pure Reason, B 131.

39 Ibid.

40 Cf. On a New List of Categories [P32: 14.5.1867], W2:49f.

41 Cf. Critique of Pure Reason, B 129ff.

42 Peirce described especially the first step of this method in rather different ways, which all lead to the same results. Cf. Logic of the Sciences [MS 113: Autumn-Winter 1865], W1:331ff, Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:352, /On a Method of Searching for the Categories/ [MS 133: November-December 1866], W1:521ff, and On a New List of Categories [P32: 14.5.1867], W2:52ff.

- What renders possible and justifies reference to an "interpretant" is the manifold and diversity of innerworldly beings. As this does not add any further information about what is the case about any conceivable innerworldly being, but has been presupposed from the beginning, the previous state of affairs completes the system of all states of affairs that are the case about any conceivable innerworldly being.

Peirce's recursively-transcendental method of identifying the system of categories thus results in a "uniform chain of conceptions",[43] which represent a system of basic states of affairs that are the case about any conceivable innerworldly being. This system is fundamental for at least two further key features of Peirce's philosophy, which can only be mentioned very briefly here. First, Peirce's categories "quality", "relation", and "representation" correspond to the categories "Firstness", "Secondness", and "Thirdness", which the late Peirce described phenomenologically in the context of his "phaneroscopy". In fact, whereas the former categories refer to basic states of affairs that are the case about any conceivable innerworldly being, the latter categories refer to the "modes of being"[44] of that what the former categories are about. Second, by recursively applying the system of categories to the three relates and the three partial relations involved in the triadic relation of "representation", Peirce derived a complex system of classes of "representations".[45] For example, by applying it to the relation between a "sign" and its "object", he derived his distinction between "icon", "index", and "symbol". Thus, Peirce's system of categories not only further determines his ontology, but it is also the basis of his semiotics.

3. A tentative sketch of a Peircean "transcendental dialectic"

Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" concerns a "natural and unavoidable illusion" which arises whenever we conceive of the "unconditioned",[46] i.e. whenever we look for an ultimate explanation that secures the systematic unity and completeness of knowledge. Conceiving of the "unconditioned" results is an "illusion" because it involves applying concepts that apply to possible experience to something which lies necessarily "beyond the boundaries of experience". This "illusion" is "natural and unavoidable" because it is natural and unavoidable to demand for the "unconditioned" and to conceive of it in terms of concepts that apply to any possible experience. Thus, Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" concerns a "natural and unavoidable illusion" that consists in conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of the "categories".

Now, as the "unconditioned" is conceived in relation to what is "conditioned", there will be as many ways of conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of the "categories" as there are ways of conceiving of a relation in terms of the "categories".[47] Accordingly, given the three modes of his category of "relation", Kant eventually identifies "*three classes*" of "concepts of pure reason (transcendental ideas)", "of which the *first* contains the absolute (unconditioned) *unity of the thinking subject*, the *second* the absolute *unity of the series of conditions of appearance*, the *third*

43 Cf. Logic Chapter I [MS 115: Winter-Spring 1866], W1:353.
44 Cf., for example, CP1.23-26 (1903) and Letter to Lady Welby [L463, 12.10.1904], CP8.328 (1904).
45 Cf., for example, Nomenclature and Division of Triadic Relations, as far as they are determined, 1903, CP2.233ff.
46 Cf. Critique of Pure Reason, A 307ff, B 364ff and A 322, B 379.
47 Cf. ibid., A 323, B 379: "There will be as many concepts of reason as there are species of relation represented by the understanding by means of the categories".

the absolute *unity of the condition of all objects of thought* in general".[48] For Kant, these three ways of conceiving of "the unconditioned" amount to the transcendental conceptions of the "soul", of the "world", and of "God".[49] By applying his system of four categories to the transcendental conceptions of the "soul" and of the "world", Kant furthermore identifies four "paralogisms" and four "antinomies" of "pure reason".[50] Together with the "three kinds of proof for the existence of Gods possible from pure speculative reason",[51] they represent the basic kinds of "dialectical inferences", which are the object of Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic".

This brief outline evidences the fact that key distinctions of Kant's "Transcendental Dialectic" are determined by his system of categories. Accordingly, these distinctions have become problematic to the extent that Kant's system of categories has been shown to be inconsistent and untenable. Nevertheless, the demand for the "unconditioned" is independent of which particular system of categories is being supposed, so that there may as well be a "transcendental dialectic" articulated in terms of another system of categories such as the one suggested by Peirce. In order to sketch a Peircean "transcendental dialectics", we therefore have to ask whether Peirce's approach itself implies reference to an "unconditioned" and which conceptions result from conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of Peirce's system of categories.

In Peirce's approach, reference to an "unconditioned" is implied in what Peirce calls the "unity of consistency" or "unity of *being*", i.e. in Peirce's phenomenological interpretation of Kant's "unity of the *I think*", which Peirce presupposes as the starting-point of his method of identifying the system of categories. In fact, this unity, which is expressed by the categories of "being" and "substance", i.e. by the supposition that "the conception of *being*" and "the conception of *what is present in general*" may be predicated of whatever may be present, is – in Kant's terms – a condition of the "possibility of a combination in general". As a condition that renders possible any "combination", this unity cannot be itself the result of a "combination", but it must be an "original-synthetic unity", and it cannot be the unity of something which can itself be "combined" with something else, but it must be a unity that comprises whatever may be "combined". Accordingly, it cannot be a unity that is "conditioned" by something else, but it must be an "unconditioned" unity that comprises whatever is "conditioned". It might therefore also be characterized as the "unconditioned" unity of the world, or more precisely – given Peirce's phenomenological approach, in general, and his phenomenological interpretation of this unity, in particular – as the "unconditioned" unity of the *phenomenological* world.

Now, as mentioned above, there will be as many ways of conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of the "categories" as there are ways of conceiving of a relation in terms of the "categories".

Peirce's system of categories implies that any conceivable innerworldly being is involved in two kinds of relation: 1) in a relation to something (a "correlate") in relation to which it has some "quality", and 2) in a relation to something (an "interpretant") which represents it as standing in relation to that "correlate". Accordingly, conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of Peirce's system of categories consists in conceiving of 1) an "unconditioned" "correlate" and 2) an "unconditioned" "interpretant".

48 Cf. ibid., A 334, B 391.
49 Cf. ibid., A 334f, B 391f.
50 Cf. ibid., A 341ff, B 399ff, and A 408ff, B 434ff, respectively.
51 Cf. ibid., A 590f, B 618f.

In other words, it consists in conceiving of 1) something in relation to which an innerworldly being has some "quality", but which is not itself an innerworldly being, and 2) something which represents an innerworldly being as standing in such a relation, but which is not itself an innerworldly being. As the resulting concepts resemble the traditional concepts of 1) a 'transcendental object' and 2) a 'transcendental subject', I shall in the following refer to them in these terms.

These two different ways of conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of Peirce's system of categories determine the way in which the unity of the phenomenological world is conceived. In fact, as any innerworldly being of the phenomenological world may be conceived in relation to 1) a 'transcendental object' and 2) a 'transcendental subject', so the unity of the phenomenological world may be conceived 1) as the unity of a 'transcendental object' and 2) as the unity of a 'transcendental subject'. The unity of the phenomenological world does then no longer appear as an absolutely "unconditioned" unity, but as a unity that is "conditioned" by 1) the "unconditioned" unity of the 'transcendental object' or 2) the "unconditioned" unity of the 'transcendental subject'.

All these "dialectical" concepts reduplicate when the phenomenological world is identified as a subjective world, i.e. as the world of a particular subject among others. Then, in fact, the phenomenological world appears as a subjective representation of an objective world wherein a plurality of subjects is supposed to coexist. Both any conceivable subjective world and any conceivable objective world, however, cannot be conceived otherwise than in terms of those features that are supposed to be the case in any conceivable world. Accordingly, not only the "categories" but also the "dialectical" concepts that result from conceiving of the "unconditioned" in terms of the categories must be supposed to apply to both any conceivable subjective world and any conceivable objective world. This implies, among others, a reduplication of the "dialectical" concept of a 'transcendental subject': On the one hand, in fact, it may refer to the 'transcendental subject' of a subjective world, and on the other hand it may refer to the 'transcendental subject' of the objective world. The resulting concepts resemble what Kant called the "transcendental conceptions" of the "soul" and of "God".

4. Conclusion

This tentative sketch of a Peircean "transcendental dialectic" suggests that some of the "dialectical" conceptions identified by Kant, e.g. the "transcendental ideas" of the "world", the "soul", and of "God", reemerge with similar content in a different systematic context. Other "dialectical" conceptions, such as those implied in Kant's "paralogisms" and "antinomies", do not seem to have a systematic equivalent in a Peircean "transcendental dialectic". Still other "dialectical" conceptions, such as the conception of a 'transcendental object' and a 'transcendental subject', emerge in the context of a Peircean "transcendental dialectic", but do not seem to have a systematic equivalent in Kant's "Transcendental Dialectics", though they are implied in his three "transcendental ideas".