

Demetra SFENDONI-MENTZOU, *Pragmatism-Rationalism-Empiricism. Theories of Knowledge* (in Greek, 3rd upgraded and enlarged edition), Thessaloniki, Ziti, 2012, 327 pp.

The problem of knowledge, one of the issues most discussed by philosophers, has marked the progression of philosophical thought from antiquity to our present day. Demetra Sfendoni-Mentzou's book, *Pragmatism-Rationalism-Empiricism: Theories of Knowledge*, undertakes the difficult enterprise to investigate this very basic issue, introducing a new, scientifically interesting analysis in the field of epistemology. The focus is on Charles S. Peirce's Pragmatic theory of knowledge and meaning, Peirce's critic of traditional epistemological systems of Rationalism and Empiricism, and his contribution in providing a solution, enriched with the scientific data of his time, to the problem of knowledge.

This third upgraded and enlarged edition of the book addresses, both to the specialist, and to the reader who has a general interest in this area, without at the same time sacrificing scientific validation. The author brings to light –mostly unknown to the philosophical community especially in Greece– aspects of Peirce's Pragmatism, as a result of her up to three decades research, parts of which have been published in international journals and collective volumes.

The author starts (chapter one) with the presentation of American Pragmatism's basic ideas, explaining at the same time how they were influenced by the development of science in several important fields. She then undertakes the task of exhibiting the central principles of Descartes' Rationalism (chapter two). Her aim is to show and explain the formulation of Peirce's theory of Pragmatism through his criticism of Cartesian apriorism / intuitionism. In chapter three the author presents, through an insightful appreciation of Peirce's theory of knowledge, the most notable parts of his critical rejection of the Cartesian Rationalism (universal doubt, *cogito* and self-consciousness, innate ideas, *a priori* knowledge, intuition, certainty). In chapters four, five and six follows the presentation of the main principles of John Locke's, George Berkeley's and David Hume's Empiricism, the emphasis being (chapter seven) on Peirce's rejection of Berkeley's nominalist-antirealist theory of knowledge.

Chapter eight is dedicated to an aspect of Peirce's philosophy, that has missed the attention of Peirce scholars, that of Peirce's Aristotelian - scholastic realism. The author highlights and analyzes the analogies between the three Peircean ontological categories –*Firstness*, *Secondness* and *Thirdness*– and Aristotle's ontological edifice. The emphasis is on the remarkable resemblance between the Aristotelian concept of potentiality (δυνάμει) and Peirce's ontological categories of *Firstness* and *Thirdness*. This important aspect of the Peircean philosophical thought helps us, according to the author, not only to understand the realist character of Peirce's ontology, but also to further investigate his philosophical

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thinking in general and in particular his theories of *Meaning*, *Truth* and *Scientific Inquiry* of his mature period.

The discussion of Peirce's Pragmatic theory of *Meaning* (chapter nine) is the cornerstone of the author's careful step from the more familiar paths of the traditional schools (Rationalism-Empiricism) to a profound analysis of the central features of Peirce's Pragmatism. The theory of *Truth* and *Scientific Inquiry* (chapters ten and eleven) constitutes one of the central themes of Peirce's solution to the problem of knowledge. Truth and reality are closely linked in Peirce's account, and the analysis of both leads to his famous definition of truth as the *ideal limit*, which has received controversial interpretations by Peirce scholars. In this context, the author elaborates a fruitful and original reconstruction of Peirce's theory of *Truth*, shading particular light not only on the idea of *final opinion*, but also on the inter-subjective community theory of *truth* and *scientific knowledge*, as opposed to Descartes' "atomism" / intuitionism / apriorism.

The last chapter (chapter twelve) «Truth and Fallibilism in C. S. Peirce's Theory», which constitutes a totally new chapter added in this third edition, serves also as an Epilogue. To this purpose, it includes an extremely useful for the reader synopsis of the paths that have been followed by the author, in her attempt to show the main points of difference between the solution to the problem of knowledge provided by classical Rationalism and Empiricism on the one hand and Peirce's Pragmatism on the other. The final conclusion, which is based on the analysis developed in the preceding chapters, is that Peirce's Pragmatic theory offers a qualitatively different and, at the same time, more fruitful and promising solution to the problem of knowledge.

The *Appendix* added in the third edition forms an interesting part of the book. In this, the reader can find two important texts in the history of Epistemology: a large part of Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Preface, Introduction: chapters I-IV, First Part: chapters I-CVII) and Peirce's famous article, «How to Make Our Ideas Clear», both translated into Greek by the author. This is done by the author with the purpose of providing the texts to the reader, passages of which she has been using in the chapters of the book, as she was explaining the relevant theories. This is a method of significant value, as it offers the reader the opportunity to be directly acquainted with the original texts of the theories presented and analyzed in the book. At the end of the book there is an extended recommended bibliography especially for the study of American Pragmatism and C. S. Peirce.

In conclusion, I should say that the book is a clear case of a comprehensive and original work, especially the chapters on Peirce's philosophy. The author, who is an expert on the work of the founder of Pragmatism, offers an extremely interesting material, presented with an admirable clarity, which helps the reader understand the traditionally raised problems in the field of epistemology and, at the same time, appreciate the solution offered by Charles S. Peirce. Furthermore, the book fills the gap in the Greek bibliography regarding, on the one hand, the work of perhaps the most significant American philosopher and, on the other, his deep affinity with Aristotle.

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