

## Peirce in Finland

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to editorial needs of the volume, bibliography had to be reduced. You can find a complete bibliography at: [nordprag.org/hr/PeirceInFinland.html](http://nordprag.org/hr/PeirceInFinland.html)

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Acknowledgements: indicative of the liveliness of Finnish Peirce scholarship, despite the tight schedule in producing this article at the behest of the friendly editors, I had the benefit of helpful comments and suggestions from Mats Bergman, Erkki Kilpinen, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Sami Paavola, Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen and Sami Pihlström

- 1 Prior to the Second World War, Peirce was virtually unknown in Finnish philosophical discussions. This was not the case of pragmatism altogether. For example, James's ideas were well received and discussed in Finland at some length around the time of his death in 1910, including the translation of several of James's books and writings into Finnish. A central figure in this discussion was the most prominent Finnish philosopher at that time, Eino Kaila, who also founded the psychological laboratory at the University of Helsinki. Despite his affinities with the logical empiricism of the time, Kaila (1934) took a deep interest in the practical significance of metaphysical and religious views.
- 2 After the war, Finnish philosophical research concentrated heavily on the offspring of logical empiricism, what became to be called analytic philosophy, various developments in symbolic logic and Wittgenstein scholarship. References to Peirce remain scarce. Of Kaila's students, the Finnish philosophical giant of the time, Georg Henrik von Wright discussed Peirce in his dissertation (1941) and viewed pragmatists such as Peirce and James as precursors to the logical empiricist movement. The logician Oiva Ketonen –

whose views have close affinities with Dewey – also referred to the classical pragmatists in a similar vein (Ketonen 1954).

- 3 It is only during the past 20 years or so that pragmatism as a philosophical tradition has greatly grown in prominence both as a philosophical starting point and as a field of inquiry in Finland. In this development, Peirce has figured centrally. The Finnish reception of Peirce is in this sense in its first wave; but this wave is turning into a tide.
- 4 The development of the Finnish reception entails a couple of practical main points, which deserve to be mentioned. An interdisciplinary discussion group focused on pragmatism and Peirce's philosophy as well as their application in various fields of scientific inquiry, which in part ironically uses the name the Helsinki Metaphysical Club, was initiated in 1997 and continues to organize several talks each year ([helsinki.fi/peirce/MC](http://helsinki.fi/peirce/MC)).
- 5 The Finnish Peirce studies website Commens was opened in 2001, and in 2003, introduced the famed *Commens Dictionary of Peirce's Terms*. In 2014, the site was merged with the Brazilian *Digital Encyclopedia of Charles S. Peirce*, producing a comprehensive online resource, *Commens Digital Companion to C. S. Peirce* (<http://www.commens.org>).
- 6 With renewed interest, Finnish translations of and anthologies and books on pragmatism again began to be published, including a somewhat controversial translation of a number of Peirce's key writings. Nevertheless, a vast majority of the Finnish literature on Peirce is in languages open to a wider readership.
- 7 In 2005, with funding from the University of Helsinki and private Finnish foundations, a group of Peirce scholars started the Helsinki Peirce Research Centre at the University of Helsinki, organizing several international events – such as the conferences *Applying Peirce* (2007) and *Applying Peirce 2* (2014) – and conducting research into Peirce's writings, including his philosophical correspondence ([helsinki.fi/peirce/](http://helsinki.fi/peirce/)).
- 8 The Nordic Pragmatism Network ([nordprag.org](http://nordprag.org)), initiated in 2008, has organized dozens of international events in the Nordic countries, all of which have included talks on Peirce's philosophy.

## Peirce's Reception

- 9 Finnish philosophers are likely best known for their contributions in philosophical logic and philosophy of science. The background for the growing interest in Peirce is in the work of several Finnish philosophers working in these fields, most notably Risto Hilpinen, Jaakko Hintikka and Ilkka Niiniluoto. Hintikka and Hilpinen are also former Presidents of the Charles S. Peirce Society. In addition, Finland has a long tradition of semiotic inquiry, which has been advanced especially in art studies, but has long-term connections with Finnish Peirce scholars.
- 10 For heuristic purposes, I will distinguish three branches of Peirce's Finnish reception: (1) logic, (2) semiotics and its applications and (3) philosophy of science. Obviously, with Peirce's philosophical vision attempting to form a systematic whole, these inquiries cannot be completely distinguished – for example, Peirce's semiotics may well be taken to encompass both logic and much that falls into the purview of philosophy of science. Indeed, Finnish philosophers and scientists have often contributed to all three fields of inquiry, but with different emphases which the division will serve to underscore.

- 11 The literature is extensive, as indicated by the fact that three Finns won the Charles S. Peirce essay contest within seven years. Accordingly, the following references only include selected key publications.

## 1. Peirce's Logical Inventions

- 12 The Finnish reception largely begins with Hintikka (1976; 1980) and Hilpinen (1982; 1992), who pointed out that Peirce's semantics anticipated Hintikka's game-theoretical semantics. Hintikka has long held that Peirce's understanding of the logic of quantifiers far surpassed Frege's. Moreover, Hilpinen has dealt extensively with Peirce's existential graphs (Hilpinen 2011), and Hintikka has emphasized the importance of Peirce's distinction between two forms of deductive inference, theorematic and corollary reasoning (Hintikka 1980).
- 13 This work has in many ways been continued by Leila Haaparanta and Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen. Haaparanta has studied aspects of Peirce's logic and compared Peirce's views with those of Husserl (Haaparanta 1994). Pietarinen has explored Peirce's diagrammatic logic at length, elucidating the intricate analogies between Peirce's vision of reasoning between an Utterer and an Interpreter and game-theoretical semantics equipped with a later 20th century notion of strategy. He has further compared Peirce's views of the meaning (or reference) of proper names with competing semantic theories and views in the analytic tradition, as well as explored Peirce's so-called proof of pragmatism (Pietarinen 2004; 2006).
- 14 Abduction has been a prominent field of inquiry in Finland. Hintikka (1998) connected abduction with his interrogative model of (scientific) inquiry. Niiniluoto has defended abduction as serving an important role in scientific discovery and justification (Niiniluoto 2010). Sami Paavola's dissertation (2006) highlighted the strategic aspects of abduction and the logic of discovery. Paavola's extensive work (some of which in collaboration with Matti Sintonen and Kai Hakkarainen) has delineated different notions of abduction and their applications in e.g. discovery, learning processes, innovation and creativity (Paavola, Hakkarainen & Sintonen 2006).

## 2. Semiotics and its Applications

- 15 The first book-length study of Peirce published in Finland was Mats Bergman's *Meaning and Mediation* (2000a). Bergman's dissertation in philosophy (Bergman 2004) – the first dissertation focused on Peirce in Finland – as well as his articles and subsequent book on Peirce's philosophy of communication (Bergman 2009) constitute the most systematic Finnish contributions to the study of Peirce's theory of signs. Bergman has developed a view of Peirce's 'semeiotic' as an inquiry both grounded in everyday communication and aiming to improve communicative practices, and has explicated how this rhetorical approach can be applied to key questions in contemporary communication theory.
- 16 With an interest in diagrammatic logic, Finnish philosophers have scrutinized Peirce's notion of iconicity, often in contrast with the symbolic underpinnings of contemporary logic (see works by Haaparanta, Hilpinen, Paavola, Pietarinen).
- 17 Peirce's semiotic ideas have also been explored and applied in fields such as cognition studies and aesthetics by Pentti Määttänen (2007), theology by Heikki Kirjavainen (1999),

biosemiotics by Tommi Vehkavaara (2005), media studies and education by Merja Bauters (2006), translation by Eero Tarasti (2006) and Ritva Hartama-Heinonen (2012), scientific representation by Tarja Knuuttila (2010), literature by Harri Veivo (2011) and archaeology by Marko Marila (2013). Veikko Rantala's work on interpretation and conceptual change has also been informed by Peirce (e.g. Rantala 2002).

- 18 Of the Finnish scientists who have taken an interest in Peirce, Erkki Kilpinen's careful and erudite employment of Peirce's semiotics, pragmatism and the pragmatist view of action in sociology and sociological inquiry deserves special mention (Kilpinen 2000; 2010).

### 3. Pragmatism and Scientific Realism

- 19 Defenders of scientific realism find a natural ally in Peirce, whose views still continue to be a source for improvements in the contemporary discussion. Niiniluoto (1993) has argued that Peirce was the inventor of the inductive-probabilistic model of scientific explanation, antedating C. G. Hempel by almost a century. Niiniluoto's work on scientific progress and discovery, verisimilitude and his own critical scientific realism is heavily indebted to Peirce's ideas such as abduction and fallibilism, and indeed he has referred to Peirce as his philosophical champion (Niiniluoto 1993; 2010).
- 20 Sami Pihlström has developed a form of transcendental idealist pragmatism. While more inspired by William James and Hilary Putnam, Pihlström's work includes extensive commentary on Peirce, contrasting his views with those of other pragmatists (especially Pihlström 1998; 2004).
- 21 Henrik Rydenfelt has defended a pragmatic, non-representationalist realism, arguing that Peirce's realism and his notion of normative science point towards a form of normative (e.g. moral) realism with key advantages over competing views in the contemporary meta-ethical and epistemological debate (Rydenfelt 2011; 2014).

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