

Contents at a Glance and Rationale for My Doctoral Inquiry Titled “The Coimbra Jesuit Aristotelian Course as a Source of the Semiotic Logic of Charles S. Peirce”

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What the Coimbra Jesuit Aristotelian Course (henceforth Coimbra Course) has brought to the history of science is of a portentous magnitude, not only crossing inner and outer scientific boundaries but covering all the dimensions of human experience with its luminous reach. Back when the sixteenth century was passing and the seventeenth century was beginning, this affair was a bit less agreed upon, but nowadays it is hardly surprising to observe that whatever the access to reality, it will inevitably occur in a semiotic sense, i.e., by way of signs. The sciences, like the remaining human activities, are conditioned to be driven by the action of signs of this or that kind, and consequently all such activities are affected by the general studies on signs, that is, semiotic studies. We shall therefore introduce this inquiry by addressing a simple question: what is semiotics? Ever since John of St. Thomas it is clear that 1) all signs consist of a triadic ontological relation. It had already been recognized before that, at least since the publication of the final volume of the Coimbra Course, that 2) any thinking proceeds by way of the action of signs or semiosis. The way to access reality, as in thinking, lies in the sphere of semiosis or semiosphere, that is to say, it occurs through the immersion in a web of signs. This study is aimed at accessing reality through the understanding of the impact of the Coimbra Course on the semiotic logic of Charles S. Peirce, something that is only achievable as a result of our involvement in the semiosphere: a web of triadic ontological relations. As such, we are bound to provide an answer to the fundamental question: how do relations affect understanding? The aforementioned theses 1) and 2) are theses that Peirce and the semiotic community, closely modelled along the lines of the former, have made popular. The lead for the first one, which was first advanced by John of St. Thomas, was to be found by both him and Peirce in the *Dialectica* of the Coimbra Course, authored by Sebastião do Couto; the second thesis, a pioneering contribution by Couto to the history of science, was discovered by John of St. Thomas and Peirce in the same *Dialectica*. The Coimbra Course decisively shaped Peirce's triadic semiotic logic and the entire chain of studies

that, in his wake, unfolded semiotics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Accordingly, we will have to take a moment to shed some light on how logic and semiotics are intertwined and to portray the semiotic logic of Peirce. Next, we will sketch the landscape of the Scholastic Latin scholarship's effect on Peirce, extending beyond late Scholasticism, for not just the authors of the Coimbra Course but several other Latin philosophers have been instrumental in bringing Peirce's monumental corpus beyond the narrow margins of modernity. What we are concentrating on, however, is the Coimbra Course, a collective body of scholarship that spread far beyond the geographical limits of its origins to become an exemplary work of internationalization in the domain of philosophy, having played a significant role not only in the Jesuit colleges down through the centuries, but also for a large and as yet unaccounted-for line-up of eminent authors in the history of science from all over the world, most notably in Asian, European, and North American territories. In his studies, Peirce relied on more than one volume of the Coimbra Course, so it will not suffice to merely focus on the *Dialectica*. We shall, therefore, proceed with a description of the eight volumes of the Coimbra Course and how the Course came about, along with a presentation of the scholar behind the initial project and each of the four authors of the Course. To illustrate how the Coimbra Course's appeal has gone beyond (albeit quite thanks to) Peirce and the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, a case study of the impact of the Coimbra Course on the writings of John Deely will be included. In at least twenty-one works authored by John there are references to the Coimbra Course or its authors, and we will examine some of the most noteworthy examples. Besides revealing the emphasis placed on the Coimbra Course in North America even in the twenty-first century, such a study will also contribute to enriching our understanding of the relation between the Coimbra Course and Peirce, a matter that Deely himself has addressed only in a fairly superficial but still relevant way. Apart from Deely, a few other authors have noted the link between Peirce and the Coimbra Course. Yet the bulk of such handful of studies merely remarked in passing about the link. Even though some may be more valuable than others, the scholarly references to the link between Peirce and the Coimbra Course will be mentioned and reviewed here so as to establish where the community of inquiry stands on this particular issue. Some of Deely's references addressed above should, for the sake of brevity, not be touched upon again, unless it is worthwhile to go into them in greater detail. Only an encyclopedia entry directly and exclusively handles this issue. As it is authored by ourselves and has served as a preliminary exploration for the present study, laying down the foundations on which we are here to work, it will be used liberally so as to avert a systematic piling up of self-referential remarks. Only then Peirce's references to the Coimbra Course or its authors, some of which the literature has already noted while others were first noted by ourselves, will be historically layered, presented in their full extension, and carefully discussed on an item-by-item basis. Following all these steps, all the conditions will be met for us to formulate some conclusions about the bond existing between the semiotic logic of Peirce and the Coimbra Course.