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Peircean Modal Realism?

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1. Introduction: the metaphysically realist assumptions of contemporary modal realism¹

The purpose of this paper is to critically compare Charles Peirce's *metaphysics of the modalities* – or a “Peircean” approach to this metaphysical issue derived from his defense of *scholastic realism* – to the *modal realist* views defended by important twentieth century and contemporary philosophers. In this introductory section, I note that the contemporary discourse on modality is firmly rooted in metaphysical realism. In section 2, I suggest that the Peircean approach is closer to Kantian transcendental metaphysics. The contrast between metaphysical realism – or what Kant called “transcendental realism” – and the properly transcendental metaphysics in my view inherited by pragmatism turns out to be important, both generally and in the case of modality. Section 3 examines the possibility of interpreting Peirce's scholastic realism (a key doctrine in his modal theory) as

¹ In addition to the *Applying Peirce* conference (Helsinki, June 2007), parts of this material were presented at the conference on Peirce's normative thought in Opole, Poland (also June 2007). This paper is partly a fragment of the more comprehensive paper written for the Opole conference, and forthcoming in the volume based on that conference (a paper itself a part of a more comprehensive research on pragmatist metaphysics). See also Pihlström (2009), ch. 6. The following people, among others, have shaped my picture of Peirce (either by directly commenting on, or challenging, the views defended here or more generally and indirectly), which I gratefully acknowledge: Mats Bergman, Vincent Colapietro, Elizabeth Cooke, Leila Haaparanta, Peter H. Hare, Christopher Hookway, Nathan Houser, Ivo A. Ibr, Erkki Kilpinen, Heikki A. Kovalainen, James Liszka, Rosa Mayorga, Cheryl Misak, Dan Neshet, Ilkka Niiniluoto, Jukka Nikulainen, Jaime Nubiola, Mateusz Oleksy, Helmut Pape, Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, Henrik Rydenfelt, T. L. Short, Tommi Vehkavaara, and Kenneth R. Westphal. Thanks are also due to the participants of my seminar on Peirce's pragmatism and scholastic realism at the University of Tampere (spring 2007).

grounded in a naturalized form of transcendental argumentation. Section 4 concludes my discussion. Much of what I will say about pragmatism and scholastic realism is relatively familiar to Peirce scholars; nevertheless, I hope to be able to put these topics into a slightly novel perspective by emphasizing their Kantian background.

There is a variety of views available in the contemporary debate over the metaphysics of modality; I cannot do justice to the richness of this debate here. For example, actualists like D. M. Armstrong (1997, 2004) and possibilists, or possible worlds realists, like David Lewis (1986, 2001) sharply disagree with each other on the correct treatment of the metaphysics of possibility and necessity. While Armstrong maintains that only the actual world exists and that “possible worlds” can (fictionally) be constructed only as recombinations of the elements of the actual world, in such a way that the truthmakers for any truths about mere possibility (or about necessity) we need can be found among the denizens of the actual world, Lewis postulates a vast plurality of possible worlds, understood as complex concrete individuals. While Armstrong needs universals to account for the truthmakers of simple truths of predication (e.g., *a* is *F*), Lewis has no use for such repeatable entities, as he can employ properties as classes of concrete particulars distributed across possible worlds. Yet another influential theory is Alvin Plantinga’s (2003), according to whom possible worlds can be construed as abstract entities, maximal possible states of affairs, and things possess individual essences, properties they have in all possible worlds. In Plantinga’s view, Lewis’s possible worlds nominalism is not a realist theory about possibility at all but a form of “modal reductionism” (2003, ch. 10).

These and other modal metaphysicians² are, obviously, *metaphysical realists*, regardless of how violently they disagree with each other about the correct metaphysical picture of modalities, for instance, regarding such matters as possibilism vs. actualism, the nature of possible worlds, necessary vs. contingent truth, or transworld identity. Works by Armstrong, Lewis, Plantinga, and Stalnaker provide ample evidence of the widespread and virtually unquestioned assumption of metaphysical realism among modal metaphysicians. One need not embrace essentialism *à la* Saul Kripke (1980) in order to be a metaphysical realist in modal metaphysics. One can even be a modal fictionalist, as Armstrong is, and still construe one’s theory of modality under the auspices of a general system of metaphysical

² Compare also, e.g., the form of actualism defended in Stalnaker (2003).

realism, arguing that we only need to commit ourselves to the existence of actual states of affairs and their constituents.

Metaphysical realism is here understood roughly in the Putnamian sense, as a commitment to there being a way the world is “in itself”, and a complete, absolute truth about the way that world is, independently of human conceptual categorization or epistemic situations (Putnam, 1990; Pihlström, 1996). We might call someone a metaphysical realist, if s/he believes that “truth is supervenient on what things there are and which perfectly natural properties and relations they instantiate” (Lewis, 2001, p. 207). We are here interested in the specific applications this position may have to the issue of modality. No general discussion of metaphysical realism, or its particularly controversial issues such as truth, is possible.

2. An alternative conception of metaphysics

A *very* different treatment of modalities can be derived from Kantian transcendental metaphysics.³ Kantian essentially epistemic modalities, constituting one of the four groups of the categories of understanding, cannot be accounted for within metaphysical realism but require an “epistemologized” approach to metaphysics. Kant’s transcendental idealism is a major presupposition here. Yet, far from being a metaphysically neutral standpoint (as argued by Allison, 2004), it opens the doors for a reinterpreted form of metaphysical inquiry into the categorial structure of the human world, the fundamental structure(s) of any humanly categorized or categorizable world (Pihlström, 2006). “Methodological” interpretations of transcendental idealism, such as Allison’s, are correct to insist on the incoherence of metaphysical (transcendental) realism, and to abandon implausible “two worlds” accounts of the transcendental distinction between things in themselves and appearances, but they are wrong to construe Kant’s idealism in a thoroughly non-metaphysical fashion.

Arguably, the Peircean pragmatist can exploit the Kantian transcendental understanding of the nature and aims of metaphysics, instead of embracing metaphysical realism (about modalities, or generally). Peirce, who

³ On this specific theme in Kant scholarship, I have benefited from the work by Markku Leppäkoski (2001). This paper will make no contribution to the interpretation of Kant; nor will I try to settle the question of whether there can be *any* metaphysics within a Kantian framework critical of traditional (“pre-critical”) metaphysics, but the Kantian context of my proposal for a rival conception of metaphysics (and the metaphysics of modality in particular) must be acknowledged. For a more detailed case for “Kantian” readings of pragmatism, see Pihlström (2003); also cf. Pihlström (2006).

was undeniably a metaphysician,⁴ was also a Kantian of sorts, though his treatment of modalities may also require modification from the Kantian perspective. Here it is sufficient to note the analogy between Kantian and pragmatist approaches to metaphysics. Both ought to be seen as ways of examining the constitutive features of the world as a possible object of (human) experience, cognition, or inquiry. Although Peirce rejected a number of specific Kantian ideas, such as the aprioristic account of cognition (and of philosophy) and the notion of an incognizable thing in itself (EP 1:25 [1868]), the basic thrust of his metaphysics is not very far from Kant's. Throughout his discussions of reality, truth, and inquiry, at various stages, Peirce was interested in how we can know and (semiotically) represent reality as a possible object of cognition and inquiry. The "real", for him, may be "ideal"; the fundamental issue is not the structure of a mind-, cognition-, or inquiry-independent reality, but precisely the way(s) in which the structure of the world is open to us in inquiry and semiosis.

The Peircean pragmatist may argue for the reality of certain kinds of entities, or the ontological status – "objective reality", in Kantian terms – of certain (groups of) categories, such as modality, by referring to what we *must presuppose* in our inquiries into the world we inhabit. This pragmatic "need" may be construed as a quasi-transcendental *conditio sine qua non*; unless we, say, construe modalities realistically, we cannot really make sense of our efforts to inquire into the way the world *is*, in terms of its habits, regularities, and developmental tendencies. Unfortunately, *neither* the Kantian *nor* the Peircean approach seems to be acknowledged, let alone seriously elaborated on, in standard accounts of the metaphysics of modality today.⁵

⁴ Peirce seems to regard the view that metaphysics consists of "thoughts about thoughts" as both Aristotelian and Kantian: see EP 1:45–46 (1868); for his acknowledgment of the Kantian background of modal concepts, see also EP 2:283 (1903). Scholastic realism seems to be incorporated in Peirce's very concept of metaphysics, because in 1898 he defined metaphysics as "the science of being, not merely as given in physical experience, but of being in general, its laws and types" (EP 2:36). In the same lecture, we are told that the conclusions of metaphysics have a "necessity of matter", informing us "not merely how the things are but how from the very nature of being they *must be*" (EP 2:35). On metaphysical necessity and possibility, see also Lowe (1998, ch. 1).

⁵ For instance, the only reference to Peirce in Lewis's (2001) thick volume is to the "Peircean" idea of ideal scientific truth, discussed by Lewis in connection with a critique of Putnam's internal realism (2001, p. 69). Plantinga (2003) and Stalnaker (2003) are examples of recent studies of modality that fail to mention Peirce. Nor is the Peircean alternative acknowledged in textbooks, such as Loux's (2002), or in Lowe (1998) and Kim and Sosa (1998).

Peirce's approach to modality is different not only from actualism, such as Armstrong's (according to which the elements of the actual world suffice as truthmakers for truths about mere possibility), but also from the possibilism defended by Lewis (for whom possible worlds as concrete individuals enjoy their static existence disconnected from one another) and from the view Plantinga favors (connecting possible worlds *qua* states of affairs with propositions, yielding, again, a static rather than a dynamic picture of modalities). Armstrong's and Lewis's accounts might be seen as paradigmatically un-Peircean, even anti-Peircean, the former because it rejects "real" modalities (especially real possibilities) altogether and the latter because it treats possible worlds as separate and discontinuous. Peirce would also reject those approaches to modality that view possible worlds as mere logical or methodological devices devoid of metaphysical significance. Such a position would, like metaphysical actualisms, sacrifice *real* possibility and *real* generals.

Moreover, the relation between Peirce's pragmatism and his scholastic realism is tight; the two doctrines are more or less inseparable in his thought, enabling a unique combination of metaphysical inquiry and a critical perspective on metaphysics (which helps us to make the obvious point that pragmatism is *not* simply positivist instrumentalism):

[Pragmati(ci)sm] will serve to show that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish [...] or else is downright absurd [...]. In this regard, pragmatism is a species of prope-positivism. But what distinguishes it from other species is, first, its retention of a purified philosophy; secondly, its full acceptance of the main body of our instinctive beliefs; and thirdly, its strenuous insistence upon the truth of scholastic realism [...]. So, instead of merely jeering at metaphysics, like other prope-positivists [...], the pragmatist extracts from it a precious essence [...].

EP 2:338–339; CP 5.423 [1905]

Peirce can be read as implicitly contrasting "ontological metaphysics", by which he presumably means metaphysics employing the a priori (intuitive) method, such as traditional "pre-critical", rationalist metaphysics, to his own scientific – epistemically sophisticated rather than purely ontological – metaphysics, which is closer to Kant's transcendental philosophy than contemporary metaphysical realism.⁶ The passage quoted is not the only place where Peirce emphasizes the strong link between pragmati(ci)sm and scholastic realism (cf. CP 5.503–504, 8.208, 8.326), but it serves us in

⁶ I am grateful to Tommi Vehkavaara for a conversation on this point, and related ones.

our sketch of a Peircean conception of metaphysics and its applications to modality. My way of “extracting” the “precious essence” of metaphysics may diverge from Peirce’s own in crucial respects, but the important point is that pragmatism, far from being anti-metaphysical, allows and indeed encourages such an extraction.

3. Peirce’s scholastic realism, transcendently defended?

Peirce’s statements about scholastic realism may be found in several important writings, from his seminal 1868 papers (EP 1, chs. 2–4) and the 1871 Berkeley review (CP 8.7–38; EP 1, ch. 5; W 2:462–487) up to his late writings on pragmatism in and after 1905 (EP 2, chs. 24–28). He often describes his scholastic realism as “extreme” (CP 5.77n1, 5.470).⁷

Modal realism, realism about “real possibility”, is a key element of Peirce’s scholastic realism.⁸ Defining “the scholastic doctrine of realism” as the view that “there are real objects that are general”, Peirce argues that “the belief in this can hardly escape being accompanied by the acknowledgment that there are, besides, real *vagues*, and especially, real *possibilities*”, because “possibility being the denial of a necessity, which is a kind of generality, is vague like any other contradiction of a general” (EP 2:354; CP 5.453 [1905]). Returning to his example of the hardness of a diamond, discussed in the early formulation of pragmatism as a method of “making our ideas clear” in the well-known 1878 paper, Peirce reflects:

[T]he question is, not what did happen, but whether it would have been well to engage in any line of conduct whose successful issue depended upon whether that diamond would resist an attempt to scratch it, or whether all other logical means of determining how it ought to be classed *would* lead to the conclusion which [...] would be “the belief which alone could be the result of investigation carried *sufficiently far*.” Pragmatism makes the ultimate intellectual purport of what you please to consist in conceived conditional resolutions, or their substance; and therefore, the conditional propositions, with their hypothetical antecedents, in which such resolutions consist, being of the ultimate nature of meaning, must be capable of being true [...]. But that amounts to saying that possibility is sometimes of a real kind.

EP 2:354; CP 5.453 [1905]

⁷ See also, e.g., the following passages: CP 1.15–26, 3.93, 4.1ff., 5.59–65, 5.93–101, 5.312, 5.423, 5.430–433, 5.453ff., 5.502–504, 5.528, 8.208, 8.258, 8.266, and 8.326, as well as the relevant discussion in RLT.

⁸ See, e.g., EP 2:35 (1898); EP 2:354–357 (1905); EP 2:450 (1908); CP 5.453–454, 5.457, 5.527, 6.485; on Peirce’s progress, in 1896–97, toward the acknowledgment of real possibilities, see also CP 3.527, 8.308, as well as Fisch (1986, p. 194), and Houser (1998, p. xx).

The recognition of real possibility, Peirce observes, “is certainly indispensable to pragmatism” (CP 5.527; cf. EP 2:357 [1905]). The case of the hard diamond is revisited in Peirce’s oft-cited letter to Calderoni (c. 1905):

I myself went too far in the direction of nominalism when I said that it was a mere question of the convenience of speech whether we say that a diamond is hard when it is not pressed upon, or whether we say that it is soft until it is pressed upon. I now say that experiment will prove that the diamond is hard, as a positive fact. That is, it is a real fact that it would resist pressure, which amounts to extreme scholastic realism. CP 8.208⁹

According to Carl Hausman (1993, pp. 3–4), scholastic realism says that “there are repeatable conditions that are independent of mental acts and that function like rules for the ways particular things behave”.¹⁰ The contrast, clearly, is to nominalism, not idealism. Meaning – a pragmatic theory of which is a central context for the development of scholastic realism – depends on “*would-be’s*”, “patterns according to which occur the outcomes of actions and consequences relevant to the idea in question”; meanings are disclosed in “dispositional conditions, in habits, according to which the meaning or would-be could be expected to be exemplified if

⁹ The passage continues: “I deny that pragmatism as originally defined by me made the intellectual purport of symbols to consist in our conduct. On the contrary, I was most careful to say that it consists in our concept of what our conduct would be upon conceivable occasions.” It is not easy to determine what exactly the relation between pragmatism and scholastic realism is, though. As a logical maxim, pragmatism can hardly entail a metaphysical theory such as scholastic realism. Perhaps the relation is best construed as an *abductive* one: we arrive at scholastic realism as the only plausible hypothesis that might enable us, in accordance with the pragmatic maxim, to account for the meaning of rational (intellectual, scientific) concepts in terms of the conceivably practical bearings we may consider their objects to have. We might also say that the pragmatic maxim presupposes scholastic realism not as a purely logical principle but whenever the maxim is applied to any real concept. Again, I am grateful to Tommi Vehkavaara for this formulation.

¹⁰ Hausman (1993, 1999) is one of the Peirce scholars who find scholastic realism absolutely central in Peirce’s metaphysics and theory of meaning, indeed in his system as a whole. Thus, it will be useful for us to take a look at how Hausman – only as one example among the Peirce scholars who have been inspired by Peirce’s views on realism – characterizes scholastic realism. He does not confine himself to discussing Peirce’s scholastic realism but is interested in his “evolutionary realism” in a wider sense. Boler (2004, 2005) also sees scholastic realism as a part of a more general (and evolving) commitment to realism in Peirce. This paper will not deal with the controversy over the development of Peirce’s views on realism vs. nominalism. For a now classic statement of Peirce’s “progress”, see Fisch (1986); for further discussion, cf. Hookway (1985, pp. 112–117), Michael (1988), and Boler (2005). Nor can I discuss Peirce’s relations to his predecessors, such as the scholastics (see Boler, 1980, 2004; Mayorga, 2007).

the concept that articulates the meaning were put to the test" (1993, p. 7).¹¹ Peirce's postulation of repeatable conditions, rules, patterns, habits, dispositions, or "would-be's" is not a postulation of specific objects but of something that objects can exemplify or manifest.¹² These conditions are "regularities" that "render phenomena intelligible" (1993, p. 142). There is a teleological element in Peirce's dynamic, "developmental" generals: they are constantly "evolving", "tendencies that grow" (1993, p. 14; see pp. 26–27, 50–51). This distinguishes Peircean generals from traditional "fixed" universals (1993, p. 26), including Plato's Forms but also Aristotle's universals.¹³

In terms of the contemporary discourse on modality, Peirce is a modal realist, as he acknowledges "real possibilities – general modes of determination of existent particulars" (1993, p. 48). In his theory of meaning, it is crucial to distinguish *conceivable* practical bearings – something that *would* or *might* happen, if an object (e.g., a diamond) were subjected to certain experiential conditions (e.g., scratching), in order to find out whether a particular concept (e.g., hardness) applies to it or not – from what *actually* happens to any particular objects. Yet, although "possibility is sometimes of a real kind", Peirce cannot be understood as a Lewisian realist about "existing" possible worlds. He points out that philosophy deals with the "reality of potential being" in addition to the "reality of existence" (EP 2:35 [1898]). As in the case of universals, his picture of possibility is much more

¹¹ Hausman is here paraphrasing, in scholastically realist terms, the central ideas of "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (EP 1, W 3). On Peirce's "would-be's" and potentialities as "powers" of things irreducible to their actualizations, see, e.g., CP 1.414, 1.420, 4.172, 5.77n1, 5.428, 5.436, 5.527–528; on the Aristotelian and medieval sources of these views, cf. Boler (2005, pp. 20–21). As already noted, Peirce later found his 1878 view of hardness (CP 5.403; EP 1:132 ff.) too nominalistic (Boler, 2004, p. 72; Hookway, 2000, pp. 52–56).

¹² Hausman even says that there is a Platonic element in Peirce's realism, insofar as the Peircean "generals" are "reals, independent, dynamic, ordering conditions that are not exhausted by, but are effective with respect to, sequences in which particular empirical consequences are encountered" (1993, p. 8). Definitely Peirce rejects standard Platonism in arguing that his real generals are not independently existing things, "separately existing Ideas", but rather "modes of being in things" (Boler, 2005, p. 18). As he says, "no great realist held that a *universal* was a thing" (CP 1.27n, also quoted by Boler). Existence is the mode of being of Secondness, while reality is the mode of being of Thirdness, and nominalism conflates these two (CP 5.503 [1905]; see Boler, 2004, pp. 68–69). Even familiar physical objects, on Boler's reading, are for Peirce "lawlike processes, systems, *constituted* by Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness" (2004, p. 71). The structure of things must, with the Scholastics, be understood as analogous to the structure of thought (2004, p. 70). The notion of constitution here is, however, metaphysical in a rather traditional sense, not (at least not clearly) transcendental.

¹³ See further Hausman (1993), ch. 4 passim.

dynamic than that of most contemporary authors.¹⁴ He avoids, by means of his Thirdness and real generals, the game played by contemporary metaphysicians about whether to achieve ontological economy by postulating possible worlds and avoiding universals or, conversely, by postulating universals and avoiding unactualized possibilities. His real generals are able to do the job of both.¹⁵

As Hausman notes (1993, p. 165), real generals, real possibilities, and would-be's are intimately related to the "final opinion", the ideal end of scientific inquiry. Particular phenomena or objects, though intelligible as generals, never exhaust the latter. Scholastic realism – as well as synechism, the theory of continuity, also connected with it – is, for Peirce, a normative condition of thought, knowledge, intelligibility, and inquiry (1993, p. 168).¹⁶ The final opinion need never be actualized. It is an ideal, regulative, normative notion, providing a reason for continuing inquiry when faced by resistance. (1993, p. 217.) If, Peirce says, "Truth consists in satisfaction", then "it cannot be any *actual* satisfaction, but must be the satisfaction

¹⁴ Hausman (1993, p. 49) continues: "Thus, if something is not false or not known to be false, it is possible." This might strike a contemporary modal theorist as seriously misleading: aren't contingent falsehoods possibly true and contingent truths possibly false? Couldn't Peirce acknowledge this? Is this a problem for Peirce? Cf. CP 3.527 ("The Logic of Relatives") for Peirce's discussion of an epistemic definition of possibility. Indeed, a sharp distinction between possibility in a metaphysical sense and in an epistemic sense is foreign to Peirce, as it overlooks his way of seeing reality itself as epistemic – as the object of inquiry and, ultimately, of the final opinion. Furthermore, we should note that Peirce also has a "pure" notion of possibility, associated with Firstness, to be distinguished from laws, tendencies, or would-be's, which are cases of Thirdness. The latter, genuine "potentiality", is more fundamental than mere abstract pure possibility. Cf. Boler (2004, p. 72); see also CP 1.422. In Peircean evolutionary cosmology, there is a step from "undetermined and dimensionless potentiality to *determined* potentiality" (Houser 1992, p. xxxiii). On real possibilities, see also CP 4.547, 4.579–580. For Peirce's distinctions between various different notions of possibility, see, e.g., his "Notes on Metaphysics" (CP 6.371).

¹⁵ This "game" covers much of the dialectic between, say, Armstrong and Lewis, in which the common purpose by all parties to the debate is to maintain maximal ontological economy. By accepting universals into his ontology, Armstrong thinks he has a sufficiently rich furniture in the actual world to yield truthmakers for truths about mere possibility, without postulating real possibilities, while Lewis claims that possible worlds and properties as classes (of *possibilia*) can, nominalistically, perform the job traditionally performed by universals. Famously, W.V. Quine was even more austere a metaphysician, eliminating both universals and modalities from his ontology, because both lack his – strictly nominalist – spatio-temporal criteria of identity. For these dialectics, see the essays collected in Kim and Sosa (1998).

¹⁶ The Peircean view of truth, as emphasized by Misak (2004) and others, is that truth is what *would* be believed if inquiry were, or could be, continued indefinitely long, i.e., something upon which inquiry *would* not improve.

which *would* ultimately be found if the inquiry were pushed to its ultimate and indefeasible issue” (EP 2:450 [1908]).

An adequate conception of inquiry, understood as a process aiming at the settlement of belief, requires the notion of a final opinion, interpreted in terms of scholastic realism and the irreducible reality of possibilities, as *its* necessary condition for possibility – even if achieving the final opinion (truth) remains a mere hope. Generality is structurally present in the account of inquiry aiming at the fixing of a final opinion (cf. EP 1:88–91 [1871]). Since inquiry is actual, hence possible, its necessary condition, scholastic realism, must be satisfied (see EP 1:92 [1871]). Scholastic realism is needed to make sense of the very possibility of inquiry, insofar as inquiry is understood as aiming toward a final opinion whose object is “the real”, with the hope that this will be achieved. Nominalism would destroy the possibility of inquiry and lead to utter chaos. Hence, Peirce argues for scholastic realism not just abductively but in a Kantian transcendental fashion,¹⁷ examining the necessary conditions for the possibility of something we take for granted. Thus, his reflections sometimes mix transcendental and naturalized, abductive arguments.¹⁸ His abductive de-

¹⁷ Peirce, interestingly, points out an explicit connection between Kant and scholastic realism in the well-known passages of the 1871 Berkeley review discussing real generals and inquiry: “Indeed, what Kant called his Copernican step was precisely the passage from the nominalistic to the realistic view of reality. It was the essence of his philosophy to regard the real object as determined by the mind. That was nothing else than to consider every conception and intuition which enters necessarily into the experience of an object, and which is not transitory and accidental, as having objective validity.” (EP 1:90–91.)

¹⁸ In the passage just quoted (CP 5.430), Peirce talks about “experiential evidence”, which of course may legitimately lead us to think that his argument is not transcendental at all – at least not purely a priori or apodictic. See Haack (1992) for a discussion of Peirce’s defense of scholastic realism as an argument based on the possibility of science as genuine inquiry. For Haack, Peirce’s scholastic realism is a piece of “scientific metaphysics” abductively defended, whereas I have sought to mix up Peirce’s abductive and transcendental concerns in this regard (see Pihlström, 2003, ch. 3). A scholar more sensitive to transcendental construals of Peirce than Haack or Misak (among others) is Hookway; see his (2000, pp. 91ff., 106–107) for a discussion of the relevance of the rejection of nominalism to Peirce’s pragmatic view of truth. Hookway’s interpretation is not purely transcendental, though (2000, pp. 295–298). Esposito (2007, p. 13), in turn, explicitly reads Peirce’s views on synechism as harboring transcendental arguments: “Simply put, if continuity in nature embodying not mere contiguity but relational generality was not all-encompassing, then representability would not be achievable, and if entities called signs could not represent then experimentation would be impossible and abductive inference would always be a mere wild guess. However, it is indisputable that science advances, our knowledge deepens, and that our intuitive abductions often reveal truths once we more clearly understand the significance of the models shaping them.” Hence, synechism must be accepted as a necessary condition for the possibility of representability, abduction, and scientific progress. Let me note, further, that when referring to “transcendental” condi-

fense of scholastic realism can be seen as a naturalized transcendental argument, if we blur the dichotomy between transcendental and abductive arguments, and more generally between transcendental and naturalistic philosophy, including transcendental and naturalized, “scientific” metaphysics (Pihlström, 2003, ch. 3).

The Peircean account of modal realism is, then, again very different from the standard formulations, based on metaphysical realism, briefly described above, although in the end Peirce himself may also be too strongly tied to realism. Perhaps the Peircean philosopher ought to seek a middle way between metaphysical realism and full-blown, transcendently idealist, traditional Kantianism? Here I have, however, only established (I think) that this particular case can be used to examine whether, or how, a transcendental-cum-pragmatic metaphysics is possible.¹⁹

Let me address one final worry. Hookway (2000) and others emphasize the distinction between transcendently established principles and mere “hopes”. Now, shouldn’t we view modal (scholastic) realism itself as a mere regulative hope instead of a transcendently defensible (constitutive) thesis? We can, and should, understand the final opinion as a mere hope: it need never be actualized, and we need not believe that it will. But in order for inquiry to be possible, we have to maintain that hope – as a transcendental constraint for inquiry. It seems that the (mere) hope that there is a final opinion, or that we will, in our inquiry, end up with a view not to be replaced by another (better) view, regarding some specific question, can *only* be maintained, if we are committed to the principle(s) of modal and scholastic realism. This hope, though a mere hope, requires “real possibility”. It is important to make a distinction between hopes and transcendental principles, but it is equally important to inquire into the transcendental presuppositions of “mere hopes”. The hope that there is a final opinion transcendently presupposes scholastic (modal) realism, be-

tions, arguments, or considerations in a Peircean context I am not committing myself to Apel’s (1981) to my taste too foundationalist and not genuinely fallibilist version of transcendental pragmatism (for my reasons for keeping the Apelian approach at a distance, see Pihlström, 2003, ch. 7). For an insightful exploration of transcendental argumentation in Peirce, in the context originally shaped by Apel and Habermas, see Cooke (2005).

¹⁹ Let us note that I have a broader motivation for defending Peirce’s scholastic realism. “Real generals”, especially modalities, suitably interpreted, may be evoked to account for the notoriously problematic modal structure of transcendental reflection on the necessary conditions for the possibility of various given actualities (Pihlström, 2003, 2006). Insofar as the Peircean modalities can themselves be reconstructed along the lines of a transcendental metaphysics, a reflexive argumentative structure – but *not*, in my view, any vicious circularity – inevitably results.

cause generality cannot be reduced away from the final opinion. Thus, we ought to realize that the normative conditions for the possibility of inquiry may have metaphysical presuppositions.

These presuppositions are both pragmatic and transcendental. In pragmatism, no crude distinction between pragmatic and transcendental presuppositions must be drawn. Both can be seen as aspects of human ways of rendering the world we inhabit intelligible.²⁰

4. Concluding remarks

Pragmatists, Peircean or not, should not reject metaphysics but reinterpret it in a pragmatically adequate manner. The notion of possibility is of crucial importance not only to the applications of the pragmatic maxim but to metaphysics in general, as an inquiry into what is possible (Lowe, 1998). A lot depends on how the notion of possibility is construed; I would urge that a Peircean realist about possibility (potentiality) should base her/his realism on Kantian transcendental considerations, instead of metaphysically realist assumptions about, say, individual essences or concretely existing possible worlds.

Peirce's scholastic realism suggests one way of reaffirming the metaphysical seriousness of pragmatism, without full commitment to metaphysical realism. Tensions remain, however. Can metaphysical realism in the end be avoided (Pihlström, 2003, ch. 3)? Is transcendental idealism or transcendental argumentation a proper method for the metaphysics of modalities, and does it really work? Should the transcendental conditions invoked here be understood as merely regulative instead of understanding them as constitutive, or how might this Kantian distinction be reinterpreted in the present Peircean context? Furthermore, should we speak of (constitutive or regulative) conditions for the possibility of inquiry in general, or rather of conditions for successful inquiry? A detailed treatment of these questions is beyond the scope of this paper.²¹

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²⁰ In Pihlström (2004), I have further argued that the distinction between hopes and transcendental principles must be softened, if one prefers William James's pragmatism to Peirce's.

²¹ See, for further reflections, Pihlström (2003, 2006, 2007, 2009).

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