

# A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE PEIRCE STUDIES IN COLOMBIA

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*In honor of Fernando Zalamea*

## INTRODUCTION

In November of 2016, Fernando Zalamea summarized Colombian Peirce Studies from 1993 until 2016 in four ‘moments’ (Zalamea, 2018): (1) Emergence (1993-2001); (2) A development of Peirce community (2007-2014); of which is worth noting what he calls (3) The Ibagué School, and (4) New generations (2012-2016). And, he considered, as a balance of this period, that the most valuable contributions to Peirce Studies and community from Colombian Peirce scholars are: (1) the Journal *Cuadernos de Sistemática Peirceana* (Systematics Peircean Notebooks), (2) Niño’s PhD thesis on abduction, (3) Oostra’s invention of intuitionistic existential graphs, and (4) Vargas’ model of the Peircean continuum.

In this paper I assume and summarize Zalamea’s presentation and I would like to add some details to his (2018) work; particularly, (a) to propose an explanation for some of those results and, (b) to make an update of Peirce’s studies in Colombia of the last five years (2016-2020); including the organization of Conferences on Peirce.

Before beginning, let me mention, that we can distinguish three types of contributions to the Peirce Studies, depending on how they approach to Peirce's writings (this is inspired in Umberto Eco (1976).

- *Peirceology*: It tries to find out what Peirce 'really' meant. What, for instance, was his idea of 'interpretant' throughout his career. Here, Peirce's interpretation, framework and life are the object of study.
- *Peirceanism*: It tries to extend Peirce's ideas beyond Peirce but 'preserving' his goals. Here, Peirce's framework is the main frame for developing ideas he himself did not actually develop.
- *Peircism*: It tries to use Peirce's ideas as a steppingstone in order to deal with some theoretical or practical problems. Here, Peirce's framework is used as a tool, regardless of whether its use goes against or deviates from the original system.

In what follows, I would like to risk classifying Peirce studies in Colombia according to the above classification.

## THE FIRST SYSTEMATIC EFFORTS

MARILUZ RESTREPO

The first effort carried out by a Colombian Peircean scholar was made by Mariluz Restrepo, Professor at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. She is a graphic designer and was the only Colombian who participated in the Peirce Sesquicentennial Congress of 1989. Her *Ser-Signo-Interpretante* (1993) is the first

book on Peirce published by a Colombian author. The book covers Peirce's biography, semiotics and metaphysics. However, it was not well distributed, and had not much impact on Colombian Peirce's scholarship after its publication. It was updated in her (2010) book. The book is above all a Peircean study. However, other Restrepo's works are primarily Peirceist and she orients her efforts towards the application of Peirce's ideas with other semiotics, as in her work with Armando Silva about "urban imaginaries".

### *FERNANDO ZALAMEA*

Fernando Zalamea is a mathematician, philosopher, and culture analyst, born in Colombia in 1959. Recently, he was listed as one of the 100 outstanding global minds (Ricuperati, 2015). Around him and through him, the building of Peirce community in Colombia began.

Fernando Zalamea gave several seminars on Peirce between 1996 and 1999 at the Mathematics Department of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, mostly devoted to Peirce's mathematics, logic (existential graphs) and metaphysics.

With the experience of the seminars, Zalamea wrote two books on Peirce (2001, 2010), taking advantage of his expertise in mathematics, to explore Peirce proposals with the tools of contemporary mathematics. These, then, are Peircean works. These were jointly translated into English as *Peirce's logic of continuity. A Conceptual and Mathematical Approach* (2012). It is noteworthy that is the only work on Peirce produced in Colombia translated to English. There, Zalamea explores the logic of Peirce's continuum from two perspec-

tives: first, Peirce's conception of the continuum as an alternative to the Cantorian conception; and second, the original construction of topological logic —existential graphs— an alternative to the algebraic presentation of first order calculus. This is a significant work for the students of Peircean thought, because Zalamea manages to demonstrate in a sufficiently complete way (something not done by any expert before) how the general architecture of Peircean thought is reflected both in the logic of the continuum and in existential graphs.

### THE PEIRCE'S SYSTEMATICS CENTER

Fernando Zalamea collected a wide literature on Peirce, including primary sources such as the manuscripts, the Collected Papers, the Writings, etc., and more than 200 volumes on secondary literature (in English, Spanish, Italian, and French), besides all the volumes of the *Journal Transactions of the Charles Sanders Peirce Society*. In 2000 he donated this collection to the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and it is known as the Acervo Peirceano (*Peircean Archives*): [acervopeirceano.org](http://acervopeirceano.org). The Acervo Peirceano is, may be, the largest repository about Peirce in Latin America. With this repository accessible to the academic community some theses begun to appear soon.

Now, from seminars and some sporadic Peirce days (Jornadas Peirceanas) held in Bogotá from 2000-2005, in 2007, he made a call to some of his students, friends, and colleagues, in order form a community to study Peirce: the *Centro de Sistemática Peirceana* (Peirce Systematics Center). The purpose of the Center was “to use the pragmatic system of Peirce to produce new advances in

knowledge domains at the beginning of the 21st century”. In retrospective, the driving purpose was to create a Peircean Group. But soon was clear enough that there were Peirceological and Peircist interests too.

The members of the Center came from different domains of knowledge: Eugenio Andrade (Biology), Gonzalo Baquero (Philosophy), Carlos Garzón (Philosophy), Lorena Ham (Linguistics), Richard Kalil (Philosophy and Mathematics), Jaime Lozano (Economy), Alejandro Martín (Mathematics), Douglas Niño (Medicine/Philosophy/Semiotics), Arnold Oostra (Mathematics), Roberto Perry † (Phonetics), Laura Pinilla (Medicine), Miguel Ángel Riaño (Philosophy), Edison Torres (Philosophy), Fernando Zalamea (Mathematics).

The first task of the Center was to produce the *Cuadernos de Sistemática Peirceana* (Systematics Peircean Notebooks) as a Journal entirely devoted to Peirce. Members of the Center had an annual plan. The topics of research were presented by April, an oral presentation delivered in a closed meeting by August, drafts were sent by October, Bourbakian style meetings at November, and final papers were sent by February (Torres & Zalamea, 2013). The meetings had a strict methodology: all the participants travelled to a town 100Km away from Bogotá, called Villa de Leyva. There we ‘lived’ together three days. And during these three days, each one of us had 1 ½ - 2 hours for feedback. All the members had to make critical remarks and discuss all the papers. Discussions were very intense but did not leave hard feelings. With the feedback the group returned home and sent the final version of the papers three months later.

The first five volumes of the Systematics Peircean Notebooks (2009-2014) were written only by the members of the Center in Spanish. There were written 40 ar-

ticles. 3 on Mathematics, 4 on Existential Graphs, 6 on Phenomenology, 7 on Aesthetics, 8 on Semeiotics, 7 on Epistemology, 3 on Biology, 1 on Economics, and 1 was about Peirce's biography.

Individual contributions were as follows:

Eugenio Andrade (Biology), 2009a, 2011, 2012, 2013;  
 Gonzalo Baquero, (Semeiotics) 2012;  
 Carlos Garzón (Philosophy) 2009, 2010, 2011;  
 Lorena Ham (Anthropology), 2010, 2013;  
 Richard Kalil (Philosophy), 2011;  
 Jaime Lozano (Economics), 2011;  
 Alejandro Martín (Art Criticism), 2010;  
 Douglas Niño (Semiotics/Philosophy), 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013;  
 Arnold Oostra (Mathematics), 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013;  
 Roberto Perry† (Linguistics), 2009, 2010;  
 Laura Pinilla (Medicine), 2012;  
 Edison Torres (Philosophy), 2009, 2013;  
 Fernando Zalamea (Mathematics), 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013.

The impact of this community can be shown in its participation in the Peirce Centennial Congress at Lowell in 2014, of which Fernando Zalamea was co-organizer and keynote speaker.

Now it is time for proposing an explanation for these results: To my mind, it is important to notice that was a 'non-institutionalized' effort. Even if the members were members of different universities (as either, professors or students), the Peirce Systematics Center was not administered or managed under the umbrella of any institution but was financed and administered by Fer-

nando Zalamea. Thus, to most members, the work for producing the papers were extra and additional to the commitments acquired with their institutions. But, at the same time, they have not to do the bureaucratic paperwork for approving projects and monitoring budget executions, they had not to worry about if the final products were submitted in a indexed database journal; and they had the freedom to research themes that were relevant or interesting to them. The enjoy of inquiry compensated the extra work. Thus, a series of happy and coalescent circumstances let the formation of a common ground of commitment, perseverance, shared objectives, collaborative exchanges, and coordinated efforts.

Notwithstanding the previous collective effort, I will highlight some additional more ‘individual’ contributions, in this, also following Zalamea’s (2018) presentation:

Fernando Zalamea published three books on Peirce & Latin American culture (2000, 2006, 2009); and with Jaime Nubiola a book about Peircean Hispanic Studies before 2000 (2006). The first three works can be characterized as Peircists, while the last one as Peircean. Zalamea has oriented 8 undergraduate theses, 4 at Master level and 1 doctoral dissertation on Peirce.

Eugenio Andrade, a biologist, professor at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, wrote several articles on Biosemiotics; and a book on Peirce and evolution (2009): *The ontogeny of Evolutionary Thought*. Andrade’s works are mainly Peircist in spirit. Andrade has oriented 7 undergraduate theses and 2 at a Master level on Peirce.

Douglas Niño (I’m sorry for the immodesty of mentioning my own work) wrote a thesis on Peirce’s de-

velopment of Abduction, 1864-1911 (2008), which is an exercise of Peirceology. At the same time he advanced a research at the Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano on Peirce's Semiotics (2008a), which is Peircean in spirit; while the works which lead to the Agentive Semiotics proposal (2015) are more likely Peiracist. Besides, Niño edited a collective book (Niño, ed, 2008) completely devoted to Peirce's semiotics. This volume contains, for instance, Peirceological works (Niño, 2008a) and Peiracists works like those of (Baquero, Sánchez). Niño has oriented 1 undergraduate thesis, 2 at Master level and 1 doctoral dissertation on Peirce.

Now we need a section apart for Arnold Oostra and his school. Arnold Oostra, one of the members of the Centro de Sistemática Peirceana, is a very gifted mathematician. Legend says he got perfect grades in all the courses he took, as an undergraduate and graduate student. He began his permanent Seminar on Peirce since 2007 at the Universidad del Tolima (Ibagué), that is a capital of the province of Tolima (I would like to add that it is like Columbus, Ohio: small and beautiful). He and his students, on the one hand, has examined with contemporary mathematical tools Peirce's contributions to mathematics and logic; and on the other, they have extended Peircean ideas to contemporary mathematic fields. That is to say, Oostra's is a genuine exercise of strict Peirceanism. Oostra's and his school have studied the notation for the propositional connectives, trivalent logic, existential graphs (Alpha, Beta, Gamma), modal logics, non-classical logics, axioms and decision procedures. However, Oostra also has produced very fine works of Peirceology, like his detailed study of the quincuncial projection of the maps. (cf. Oostra 2001, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2016). In this effort, by march of 2020, he

has offered his seminar on Peirce during 21 periods, which have had more than 200 sessions (168 oriented by himself) and have had 407 assistants. Besides, he has supervised more than 20 undergraduate theses on Peircean mathematical issues.

However, it might be that the most important contribution of Oostra to the Peircean studies is his Intuitionistic Existential Graphs (2010, 2011). With the same rules of the original existential graphs plus one, Oostra has developed and proved the equivalence between intuitionistic propositional calculus and his Intuitionistic Graphs for Alpha and Beta. Examples of them can be found in his papers in the Peircean Systematics Notebooks.

### *BECOMING MULTI-LOCAL: THE NEW GENERATIONS*

Francisco Vargas is a mathematician, who was a pupil of Fernando Zalamea. In 2013 he proposed a model of Peirce's continuum. In Zalamea's words: "Vargas has built, in the context of the usual theory of ZF sets, a proper class where the properties of supermultitude, reflexivity, inextensibility, modality of the Peircean continuum are satisfied" (Zalamea, 2017). His model on the continuum can be found in his contribution to the CSP 7 (Vargas, 2015). Varga's can be viewed as a very fine piece of contemporary Peirceanism.

The original CSP was based in Bogotá (with the exception of Arnold Oostra, who —as was mentioned above— lives in Ibagué). Since 2012 there are new scholars who advanced doctoral studies on Peirce in the USA, Canada, Brazil, and Italy, and in coming back to Colombia, live in different cities, but are now part of an

enlarged, multi-local, and quasi-national Peircean Systematics Center.

This is a partial list of them and their works:

Fredy Pongutá, *Anticipaciones de la semiótica de Peirce en la lógica aristotélica*, (2012, published in 2016), who studied in Italy.

Alejandro Flórez, *Connections between the Philosophies of Aristotle and Peirce with Regard to Non-deductive Logic and Cognition Theory*, (2013), who studied under Douglas Anderson in the USA.

Julían Trujillo, *Un dendograma para el pragmatismo* (2015), who studied with Latraverse in Canada.

Alessandro Ballabio, *Los bordes de la experiencia creativa en C. S. Peirce y M. Merleau-Ponty* (2015), who studied under Zalamea in Colombia.

Juliana Acosta, *The Three Categories of Creative Freedom: God, Self-Control, and Community* (2016), who studied under Douglas Anderson in the USA.

Jaime Alfaro, *Peirce's Account of Assertion* (2016) who studied in Brazil.

Carlos Garzón, *El problema del regreso epistémico. Una solución pragmaticista* (2018), who studied in Colombia

Vladimir Sánchez, *aspectos filosóficos del pragmatismo y su proyección a la planeación estratégica publicitaria* (2018), who studied with Pongutá.

There are two more PhD theses in progress. One of Gustavo Arengas, about the mathematization of the pragmatic maxim (under the supervision of Zalamea) and the other by Dany González on Peirce's theory of Truth (under the supervision of Trujillo). There are besides, some theses of Master level on Peirce. For instance, the work

of Edison Torres, Lorena Ham, Laura Pinilla and Gonzalo Baquero.

### *THE ORGANIZATION OF CONFERENCES*

In this last section I want to highlight how the Peirce community in Colombia made contacts and relations with other communities. However, I will not stop at individual participations in international networks, but in the conferences on Peirce organized in Colombia. These are:

- *Peirce's Aesthetics*, 2014 (Bogotá; organized by Fernando Zalamea, at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia and Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano), which lead to CSP6
- *Peirce's Mathematics*, 2015 (Bogotá, organized by Fernando Zalamea, at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia), which lead to CSP7
- *Peirce's Existential Graphs*, 2016 (Bogotá, organized by Fernando Zalamea, at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia), which will lead to CSP8
- *Peirce's pragmatism (Comunidad, Pragmatismo y Verdad: el legado de Charles S. Peirce)* 2016, (Cali, organized by Julián Trujillo, at the Universidad del Valle); which lead to Trujillo, Ed. & Comp. (2018).
- *Peirce in Colombia*, 2019 (Medellín, organized by Carlos Garzón, Universidad de Antioquia); which will lead to CSP9.

Peircean Systematics Notebooks Volume 6, 7 and 8 were, then, written by scholars from around the world

and in other languages apart from Spanish (English, Italian, French), from international symposia held in Bogotá on Peirce.

Trujillo's compilation includes contributions of Colombian authors (Jorge Alejandro Flórez, Douglas Niño, and Fernando Zalamea); and well recognized Ibero American and North American scholars (Susan Haack, Catalina Hynes, Jaime Nubiola, Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, Paniel Reyes-Cárdenas, and Michael Shapiro).

The new volume of the CSP –that is, volume 9– is already edited. It has contributions of Colombian authors (Pedro Agudelo, Andrea Álvarez, Alessandro Balabio, Alejandro Flórez, Carlos Garzón, Dany González, Lorena Ham, Mariluz Restrepo J., Vladimir Sánchez, Edison Torres), and international and well recognized Latin-American scholars who write in Spanish (Sara Barrena, Paniel Reyes Cárdenas, Catalina Hynes). This volume collects some of the contributions of the Conference *Peirce in Colombia*, organized by Carlos Garzón in 2019, at the Universidad de Antioquia (Medellín), and it was coordinated by Alejandro Flórez at the Universidad de Caldas.

At the moment of writing this paper, it is open a Call for Papers for the *2nd Conference, Peirce in Latin America*, 2021 (Manizales), organized by Alejandro Flórez at the Universidad de Manizales (it was first planned for 2020, but postponed because of the Covid-19). It will another meeting in which a Colombian city will held an international and national Peircean scholars, which, I hope, continue to consolidate and root a more global Peircean community.

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