

Title: *Peirce, Kant, and Barbara*

Abstract: Both Kant and Peirce regard the syllogism in Barbara—composed of universal affirmative premises and a universal affirmative conclusion in the first figure—as the “natural” form of inferential reasoning. Whereas Kant’s preference for Barbara is usually explained away by appealing to his supposedly rigid adherence to Aristotelian–Scholastic formal logic, Peirce’s appears more surprising, given that he is often regarded as one of the founders of modern logic. I argue that, for both Kant and Peirce, the naturalness of Barbara rests on epistemological considerations concerning the relation between generality and particularity. Starting from an analysis of Peirce’s writings on syllogistic logic between 1866 and 1902, I reconstruct his interpretation of Barbara as the application of a general rule to a particular case. I then trace the implications of this interpretation, first for Peirce’s epistemology and then for his complex relationship with Kant. This analysis also sheds new light on Kant’s own relation to Barbara, showing that it cannot be reduced to mere adherence to tradition. Rather, it rests on the claim that the generality of a concept fulfils its natural function only insofar as the concept is employed in judgement and thereby applied to intuitions, which in turn refer to individuals.

Speaker: Francesco Pisano is a research fellow at the University of Naples Federico II and an adjunct professor at Niccolò Cusano University in Rome and the University of Perugia. His research focuses on the history of logic, particularly the history of transcendental logic in post-Kantian thought and the transitions between “philosophical” and “mathematical” logic in German and Anglophone contexts from the second half of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. He is also a co-organizer of the *History of Logic Seminar Series*.