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Abstract: This article explores Walter Bryce Gallie's notion of "essentially contested concepts" from a viewpoint that has hitherto been neglected, namely its relation to the philosophy of Charles S. Peirce. As a matter of fact, Gallie was an authoritative reader of the American philosopher. All areas of his work are influenced by his attempt to take up and further articulate a major insight of Peirce's semiotics, namely the idea that symbols are inherently vague, and that their meaning is in a state of perpetual growth. At the same time, Gallie rejected another crucial tenet of Peirce's philosophy, that is, the idea that the growth of signs is regulated by the possibility of a final agreement among sign-users. Examining this ambivalent relation between the two authors will help us shed light on a question that was of crucial importance for Gallie: to what extent should we let our appreciation of concepts or beliefs depend on a historical examination of their meaning?
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