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agree with the emphasis on Peirce's afflictions and its effects, but place its origins as early as his 19th year. Nor do I think that what Pencak calls his "personal transgressions" are to be accounted for primarily by defects of character as he implies, but, instead, by neurological defects which were largely beyond his control, particularly severe manic-depressive illness. I accept Peirce's hypothesis that his extremes of behaviour and mood swings were the consequences of the "poison of biology," though he could not divine their causes which were not understood until the past decade.

The session was devoted to the perplexities of philosophical biography and it is specifically to that general enterprise that Colapietro addresses himself. Three connected ideas in Colapietro's account speak directly to my experience in writing the Peirce biography. The first is that biography is properly viewed as a semeiotic undertaking. The second is the idea that biography is dialogue: between the writer and the subject, between the writer and him-herself, and between the subject and him-herself utilizing a variety of texts. The third is that philosophical biography requires that kind of a dialogue in which "the biographer joins the subject as co-inquirer....no one can write a *philosophical* biography of Peirce who is not philosophically concerned with the possibility of articulating a truly general theory of signs..." In my experience, the process of doing a philosophical biography of Peirce was thoroughly recursive and in that process, I became increasingly involved in a self-conscious inquiry into the nature of semeiosis, especially as it requires continuous recourse to abductive reasoning with its constant play of musement.

My study of Peirce's life and thought has not ended. If anything, it has quickened and I continue to do research and to muse and to hypothesize. As I do so, I learn the world of Peirce's thoughts with more assurance and with increasing astonishment. I intend, as soon as feasible, to write a revised biography and I thank my four colleagues for the help they have already given me in their thoughtful commentaries on the enterprise so far.

PHILOSOPHICAL BIOGRAPHY: PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS ON A DISTINCTIVE FORM OF HISTORICAL INQUIRY

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Introduction

According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "there is properly no history, only biography" (1841 [1982], 153). For these preliminary reflections on philosophical biography, however, my own point of departure is, in a sense,[1] just the opposite: Biography is, properly understood, a distinctive form of historiography. Although I intend my reflections to bear *generally* upon the largely neglected topic of philosophical biography (Madden and Madden 1992, 609), the remarkable achievement of Joseph Brent's recent biography of Charles Peirce provides a specific focus to my preliminary exploration.

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[1] There is, however, a sense in which one of the main conclusions of these preliminary reflections is very close to what Emerson is claiming when he denies history in the name of biography. In order to see this, it is necessary to see the quotation from Emerson in its immediate context: "We are always coming up with the emphatic facts of history in our private experience and verifying them here. All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no history, only biography. Every mind must know the whole lesson for itself,—must go over the whole ground. What it does not see, what it does not live, it will not know." This is close to the point which I insist upon regarding any authentic authorship of a truly philosophical biography: what the biographer does not see, what s/he does not live, s/he cannot know and thus cannot narrate.

Even though Peirce in his theories of semiosis and inquiry stressed--perhaps even overemphasized--the future, he certainly did not deny either significance or reality to the past. He was quite explicit about this: "The past also is real,--*something* in it, at least. The future weeds it out; but the positive element is peculiar" (CP 7.667).[2] It seems reasonable to assume that the task of the historian in general and the biographer in particular is to get at the positive, peculiar element characteristic of some segment of a real[3] past. Much of what we take to be the past is a fabrication in the pejorative sense; all of it is a reconstruction in a neutral sense (one not begging the question of whether we can in any manner and measure know the past as such). Peirce's pragmatic realism (or prospective contextualism) was designed to do justice to both the *constraints* which the real exerts upon inquirers and the *constructions* upon which inquirers are compelled to rely in their investigation of the real (cf. Hookway 1985). The complex interplay between constraint and construction is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the work of historians and biographers.

As important as this interplay is, I cannot explore the topic on this occasion; for, in the limited time available to me, I especially want to address three points. The first concerns the practice of biography in general, the second concerns the biography of an intellectual (especially one whose own work bears directly upon exploring the textures and depths of human life), and the third concerns philosophical biography as an distinctive form of not only biographical writing but also of philosophical inquiry.

Narrative and Interpretive Biographies: A Tenable Distinction?

A reviewer of a new biography of the Marquis de Sade observes that the work under review "is a narrative rather than an interpretive biography" (Gray 1993, 107). The very distinction being drawn here might be neither as sharp nor as unproblematic as this reviewer's assertion appears to imply. In fact, the authors of a recent article on philosophical biography claim that: "It is a fallacy to think that biographical data consist of obvious facts given independently of any interpretive elements" (Madden and Madden 1992, 622). This would seem to suggest that the distinction between narrative and interpretive biography is untenable or, at best, highly problematic. At the very least, there is always implicit in any biographical narrative an interpretive scheme which guides the biographer in selecting, organizing, and highlighting the noteworthy events.

Principles of selection are operating, more or less consciously, at every stage of the process, beginning with the formation of the original though often tentative hypotheses guiding the course of research. The very notion of a human life is rooted in a hermeneutical awareness, so much so that the most basic facts are always already interpreted facts: they attain their status and significance only within the horizon of interpretation.

But, having said this, it seems undeniable that the broad consensus about the potentially most crucial facts regarding any human life allows us to draw a workable distinction between a narrative and an interpretive biography. To narrate the events of a life is, in itself, to plot these events in a certain way; and to plot these events, especially when some are taken to be especially revelatory or transformative or significant in some other way, is a rudimentary form of biographical interpretation. For efforts that go beyond these rudimentary forms and use (especially self-consciously use) interpretive schemes such as Peircean semeiotic or psychoanalytical theory need to appreciate for what they are: an essays in interpretation. Hence, when we insist that all biographies are on a continuum, we do not deny the deep and numerous differences between so-called narrative and interpretive biographies.

The need for what might be called a narrative biography is especially acute when no other biography yet exists, or when those that do are known to be incomplete, erroneous, or deficient in other respects bearing directly upon the narration of the life, or finally when new materials come to light or are made accessible for the first time. The need for more boldly interpretive treatments of a human life is felt in a variety of circumstances, not the least of which is when the life itself is tragic.

Regarding the life of Charles Peirce, then, there is the urgent twofold need to provide an accurate, detailed narration of this singular inquirer and, in addition, to offer hypotheses by which the details of this life might be rendered intelligible (inasmuch as this is possible). Brent meets both of these needs. Even so, the need for a fuller narrative (one more attentive to the twists and turns in the actual development of Peirce's intellectual life) and the need for even more fruitful hypotheses than that of the Dandy and left-handedness are still pressing, as Brent himself acutely knows. "Letters seem," as Virginia Woolf notes, "more than anything else to keep the past--out it comes, when one opens the box" (1936 [1980], volume 6, 90). Now that Brent and other biographers have access to more (all?) of Peirce's letters, they have fuller access to the positive, peculiar past which Brent has so vividly set before us in his recent biography.

The Test of Self-Interpretability

Let us suppose that an intellectual biography cannot help being an *interpretive* essay in which not only are the events of a life narrated but the significance of these events is explored. While the established conventions of biographical discourse more or less constrain the biographer to ascertain as best s/he can certain crucial facts (e.g., the date and place of birth, the circumstances in which the subject grew up, early interests and achievements, etc.), what facts are highlighted (e.g., left-handedness) and, in addition, what significance is attached to these facts depend upon the theoretical commitments and philosophical presuppositions of the biographer.

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[2] The context in which Peirce makes this remark is, no doubt, important for understanding its precise meaning and also for appreciating its distinctive force. But my contention is that what he is saying in a rather specific context can be generalized.

[3] Real and its cognates ought to be taken in their distinctively Peircean sense. On the most rudimentary level, the real is that which is opposed to the fictive: at the level of abstract definition it is that which is independent of what you, or I, or any other finite inquirer, or even actual and thus limited community of such inquirers happens to think; at the third and highest level of clarification, the real is that which an infinite community of self-critical inquirers would discover.

Do the ideas and theories of the person being written about illuminate the events and shape of the life being narrated? This question implies a double test, one for the biographer as well as one for the subject. Has the biographer used the subject's own ideas and theories as resources for narrating and exploring the subject's life? How fruitful are these resources for seeing the shape and probing the depths of the life? A simple example might make this clearer. Is there not something especially appropriate about a biography of Freud incorporating a psychoanalytical perspective on the life of Freud himself? If no such perspective is adopted at any point by the biographer, is this not a failing? Moreover, is there not something especially imperative about taking the ideas of an intellectual seriously, so much so that they are used as instruments of interpretation and possibly even of critique? The author of an intellectual biography unavoidably provides us with at least the materials for reading a person's ideas and theories in light of that person's life. Should not such an author also assist us in reading the life itself in light of the ideas and theories which were articulated and defended by the subject? And, in addition, should not the power and fecundity of these ideas and theories be tested in reference to the person whose life acquired shape and direction largely in the service of these ideas and theories? Just as a biography of Freud should include (though not necessarily be limited to) a psychoanalytical perspective, so too a biography of Peirce ought to include a semiotic perspective. The biographer ought deliberately to use Peirce's own theories as a possible resource for illuminating Peirce's life.

Philosophical Biography:
Joining the Subject as Co-Inquirer

The proximate genus of works like Joseph Brent's *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* is not biography, nor even intellectual biography; rather it is philosophical biography. This genre has recently been explored by Edward Madden and Marian Madden (1992). In "Philosophical Biography: The American Scene," they note that while this genre has been a thriving enterprise in this country, "[l]ess rich is the critical appraisal of this tradition" (609). The dearth of such appraisals is perhaps most evident in the fact that philosophers have given insufficient attention to the most basic issues, including "what should count as legitimate philosophical biography." In particular, philosophers have not undertaken an evaluative comparison of the three dominant approaches to this particular genre (classical biography, psychobiography, and milieu analysis). The authors of "Philosophical Biography" undertake just such a comparison, concluding that classical biography is the most appropriate form, psychobiography a highly problematic and even suspect form, and milieu analysis an often misguided but nonetheless potentially helpful form (622), of philosophical biography.

Their informed treatment of this neglected topic deserves careful consideration. In my judgment, the authors of "Philosophical Biography" too narrowly construe the possibilities of what should count as a legitimate approach to this genre. They are too dismissive of psycobiographical (especially psychoanalytical) approaches, and too begrudging in their acknowledgment of milieu analysis. Human agency is, especially from a semiotically informed perspective, always a complex interplay between competency and ignorance. We are always in some measure competent actors, knowing more or less clearly what we are doing. That is, we are never *absolutely* unwitting dupes. At the same time, we *are* to some extent unwitting participants in historical processes about which we are more or less oblivious (though not completely so). The motives of our actions are by no means transparent to us; far less, are the causes of our behavior. Yet, acknowledging the overdetermination of our consciousness and conduct does not entail denying that self-determination and self-definition are truly constitutive features of any human life.

Despite my differences with Edward and Marian Madden, it is crucial to appreciate the focus of their concern, namely, an unwillingness to lose sight of the subject's life as the unique achievement of a personal (though, to be sure, finite and fallible) agent. To interpret a life exclusively or even primarily in terms of either subpersonal or environmental factors and forces entails losing sight of the distinctive form of causal efficacy at the center of any human life--agential causality. The strenuous and indeed eloquent manner in which Madden and Madden insist upon the irreducibility of such causality is a healthy corrective to the reductivist tendencies so characteristic of contemporary historiography.

The relationship between biographer and subject is itself irreducibly a person-to-person encounter in which the autonomy and integrity of each are being in effect tested, often severely tested. It is, in certain respects, an inverted therapeutic relationship: whereas patients project onto their therapists unconscious hopes, fears, desires, antipathies, etc., so biographers in the process of reconstructing and narrating the lives of their subjects are inevitably tempted to project onto these lives their own hopes, fears, desires, etc. The recognition of this dimension of the relationship is crucial for the biographer to attain the degree of autonomy requisite to write honestly about the life *of another*.

In addition to this psychoanalytical dimension, there is (or should be) a philosophical dimension in the relationship of responsible authors of philosophical biographies to the actual thinkers about whom these authors are concerned. This dimension comes into view when we realize that the ideal form of philosophical biography is one in which the biographer joins the subject as a co-inquirer. To narrate a philosophical life is to participate in a unique process of philosophical reflection: an inability to feel the force of the intellectual concerns, struggles, achievements, frustrations, and failures constitutive of the philosopher's peculiar, positive past is nothing less than an inability to comprehend the subject as a philosopher. And to feel the force of these concerns, struggles, etc., is perforce to be caught up in some of the inquiries to which the subject devoted his life. For example, no one can write a *philosophical* biography of Charles Peirce who is not himself philosophically concerned with the possibility of articulating a truly general theory of signs or a theoretically adequate conception of continuity. To be indifferent to, say, semiosis is itself the sign of a discontinuity preclusive of authoring a biography of the co-founder of contemporary semiotics.

Conclusion

Qua historian, the task of the intellectual biographer is to get at the positive, peculiar reality of some actual person (cf. Perry); *qua* interpreter of a life, the task is to take special pains in using the subject's own ideas and theories to illuminate the subject's life. *Qua* philosophical biographer, the task of the historian is to join the subject as a co-inquirer, to be caught up in some of the investigations in and through which the life of the subject acquired its actual form and its fateful direction. In short, philosophical biographers can be nothing less than philosophical inquirers in their own right. This certainly does not imply agreement between biographer and subject. Indeed, disagreement among co-inquirers is inevitable. This is a fact which Peirce himself helps us to illuminate; and it is a fact to which this forum itself is also likely to attest. For whenever there is some motley association of companionable antagonists (a.k.a. the community of inquirers), there is likely to be lively disagreement; and, in turn, whenever such sparks fly, there is always the possibility of illumination.

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