

# Toward a Truly Pragmatic Theory of Signs: Reading Peirce's Semeiotic in Light of Dewey's Gloss

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## Introduction

In "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism" Richard Rorty contends that: "For all his genius ... Peirce never made up his mind what he wanted a general theory of signs for, nor what it might look like. ... His contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James" (1982:161).<sup><1></sup> But is it likely that a pragmatic thinker such as Peirce did not design his semeiotic for a purpose or that such an architectonic philosopher had no inkling about the shape of this theory? Part of my task is to suggest just how unlikely this is.

John Dewey is helpful for discerning the function, if not the form, of Charles Peirce's theory of signs. His *Knowing and the Known* is of a piece with other writings from roughly this time, most notably his reviews of Peirce's *Collected Papers* (of volume 1 in 1932; of volume 5 in 1935; and of volumes 1-6 in 1937), "Peirce's theory of quality" (1935), "The vanishing subject in the psychology of William James" (1940), "Ethical subject-matter and language" (1945), and "Peirce's theory of linguistic signs, thought, and meaning" (1946). In these writings, Dewey stresses the points Rorty apparently misses or dismisses as irrelevant to the questions at hand (What use could there be for a general theory of signs? What would be its appropriate form?). Put positively, Dewey aids us in seeing how to read in Peirce the movement toward a truly pragmatic theory of signs.

The thesis of my chapter is that Peirce's doctrine of pragmatism is formally semeiotic while his theory of signs is thoroughly pragmatic. The purpose of this chapter is simply to propose, rather than prove, this thesis, though in the process of doing so I hope to render this point plausible. Many of Peirce's series of articles have the structure of abduction, deduction, and induction, where the first moment is the formulation of a hypothesis, the second is the deduction of consequences whereby the hypothesis might be tested, and the third commences the process of testing the hypothesis. This chapter can be conceived as the first in such a potential series. The implications of my thesis would have to be formulated more fully and, then, tested more systematically than I can accomplish within the compass of this chapter. There is, nonetheless, /103/ value in pressing this hypothesis, especially since taking this guess seriously will help us plumb the depths of both Peirce's pragmatic commitments and Dewey's hermeneutic

insights.

In Dewey's judgment, Peirce was more of a pragmatist than James (*LW*11: 479-484): he transcended his Kantian youth and attained a pragmatic perspective of continuing relevance. In Rorty's judgment, however, Peirce's kinship to Kant marks his distance from James and Dewey. In effect, it disqualifies him as a pragmatist. He perhaps coined the word and undoubtedly inspired James (cf. Menand 2001: 204),<sup><2></sup> but his own architectonic aspiration allegedly betrays a philosophical temperament at odds with a truly pragmatic sensibility. This temperament is evident in Peirce's supposedly persistent efforts to secure an immutable foundation for human inquiry:

Peirce himself remained the most Kantian of thinkers—the most convinced that philosophy gave us an all-embracing a historic framework to which every other species of discourse could be assigned its proper place and rank. It was just this Kantian assumption that there was such a context ... against which James and Dewey reacted. (Rorty 1982:161)

There are unquestionably texts in Peirce that lend support to Rorty's interpretation of Peirce's project. One of these was placed by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss as the opening paragraph of volume 1 of the *Collected Papers* (Peirce 1931, hereafter abbreviated as *CP*): "To erect a philosophical edifice that shall outlast the vicissitudes of time, my care has been, not so much to set each brick with nicest accuracy, as to lay the foundations deep and passive" (*CP* 1.1).<sup><3></sup> But the aspiration to erect such an edifice is acknowledged, in the same paragraph (as it were, in the same breath), to outstrip any possibility of realization. Peirce's hope is to construct "a philosophy like that of Aristotle, that is to say, to outline a theory so comprehensive that, for a long time to come, the entire work of human reason ... shall appear as the filling up of its details" (*CP* 1.1 emphasis added).<sup><4></sup>

The first step toward such a comprehensive framework is the critical elaboration of a categorial scheme comparable to Aristotle's or Kant's doctrine of categories (*CP* 1.1).<sup><5></sup> But the use of such a framework is principally heuristic. For this framework is deliberately designed to guide and goad inquiry. Its purpose is not to offer transcendental grounds for our historical practices; rather it presupposes that these evolving practices alone provide the grounds for all of our theoretical endeavors, including whatever categorial framework or comprehensive systematization of human discourses we are able to devise.

Peirce's categories are, thus, heuristic. This is nowhere better seen than in Peirce's investigation of signs in their myriad forms and intertwined functions (Savan 1987-1988; Shapiro 1983). In turn, the use of such a theory of signs, in the immediate foreground of Peirce's most characteristic presentations, is to offer a normative theory of objective inquiry. Beyond this, a general theory of /104/ signs ought to provide conceptual and rhetorical resources for investigating the entire range of semiosis (or sign-action), not just the work of inquirers aiming at truth.<sup><6></sup> It should, for example, contribute as much to the interpretation of literary texts or other cultural artifacts as to the investigation of

natural phenomena (cf. Weinsheimer 1983; Short 1998).

### Pragmatism, modernism, and postmodernism

Given one theme in this volume, I feel obliged to address, albeit very briefly, pragmatism vis-a-vis both modernism and postmodernism. Pragmatism grants primacy to our practices. It does not reduce theory to practice but envisions theory itself as a mode of practice (see, e.g., Dewey's *Knowing and the Known*, LW 16: 250–251). Pragmatism also drives toward recognition of the irreducible plurality of human practices. An appreciation of this plurality makes clear the need for an ongoing, cooperative, and indeed inclusive exchange among representatives of quite divergent perspectives.

As we shall see, Peirce's theory of signs is pragmatic precisely because it accords primacy to our practices of investigation, interpretation, communication, and countless other analogous activities. Because it does so, this theory opens a field of inquiry too vast for any single inquirer and too protean for any one intellectual tradition. Dewey's reading of Peirce's theory brings these dimensions sharply into focus. He discerns in Peirce's writings on signs a movement toward an expressly pragmatic account.

Since this marks a movement away from mentalistic conceptions of signs, language, and meaning as well as a movement toward a thoroughly semeiotic conception of consciousness, mind, and subjectivity, it arguably points beyond modernism. More than this, Peirce's investigation of signs drives toward an explicitly situated, social, somatic, and semiotic understanding of human agents and their historical practices. In so doing, it should foster an appreciation of how Anthony Giddens, Clifford Geertz, Gianni Vattimo, Paul Ricoeur, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and countless others might be enlisted as co-inquirers rather than attacked as enemies. Such appreciation would push beyond postmodernism in its more fashionable forms (also pragmatism in its more contentious, less pluralistic forms). Let me illustrate this point by reference to one of these figures.

In his contribution to *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, a book based on a symposium held at the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris on 29 May 1993, Derrida emphasizes that deconstruction "shares much ... with certain *motifs* of pragmatism" (1996: 78). But he is quick to point out he "obviously cannot accept the public/private distinction in the way he [Rorty] uses it in relation to my work" (1996: 78). Derrida readily acknowledges, however, that his notion of the trace is "connected with a certain notion of labour, of doing"; and, thus, it shares much with a central motif of classical pragmatism. Moreover, "all the attention given [by him] to the performative /105/ dimension ... is also one of the places of affinity between deconstruction and pragmatism."

Derrida's attention to this dimension has, in his judgment, been used as a basis for a defamation of deconstructionists ("I am reproached—deconstructionists are reproached—with not arguing or not liking argumentation, etc. This is obviously a defamation"). This

defamation "derives from the fact that there is argumentation and argumentation"; that is, strategies of argumentation must always be assessed in terms of the contexts in which and the topics about which we are struggling to articulate our disagreements and ascertain the stakes in our differences—or perhaps to repress all of this and much more. Thus, I do not take Derrida to be in the least disingenuous when he announces that: "I think that the question of argumentation is here central, discussion is here central, and I think that the accusations often made against deconstruction derive from the fact that its raising the stakes of argumentation is not taken into account". At this point in his defense of deconstruction, Derrida takes a pragmatic turn, insisting "it is always a question of reconsidering the protocols and the contexts of argumentation, the questions of competence, the language of discussion, etc." In other words, we must conscientiously attend to what we are actually doing when we are engaging in argumentation with these others, in this context and about these topics: we must become clearer about what we are doing with words, especially when used as weapons. Should pragmatists not especially welcome the insights of a thinker so finely attentive to the performative dimension of our argumentative exchanges?

By means of this example, I simply wish to counteract the impulse to treat potentially helpful co-inquirers as opponents to be annihilated rather than allies to be joined. Even though I will have recourse to a number of such locutions, -isms are all too often banners under which warring tribes mount fierce charges against one another, they also function as the identification of targets at which to shoot. In philosophical warfare no less than in other human frenzies of mutual annihilation, however, each side ordinarily knows very little about the other: an almost total blindness in human beings contributes to the ease with which they dismiss, disfigure, defame, and destroy one another (James 1977). We are able to destroy others with such clear consciences because we have such utterly abstract, hence effectively emptied, conceptions of who they are and what they hold.

Though often himself personally irascible, Peirce denounced "the inhumanity of a polemical spirit" (*Writings of Charles S. Peirce* (Peirce 1982; hereafter abbreviated as *W*) 1: 5). To many people today, he must sound naive in advising that hatred ought not to be met with hatred, nor violence countered with violence, but rather love has the capacity to recognize "germs of loveliness [even] in the hateful". In our suspicious if not cynical time, Peirce must sound naive or worse when, beyond this, he claims love has the capacity to warm such germs into life and thereby to transfigure the hateful into the admirable ("Evolutionary Love," CP 6.289; also in *The Essential Peirce* (Peirce 1992, 1998; hereafter abbreviated as *EP*) 1: 354). /106/

Ideals are, however, operative even in a hermeneutics of suspicion, though such a hermeneutic often makes it difficult to acknowledge them, much less give a convincing account of their actual operation (Bernstein 1992a: 162, 165, 191). In contrast, Peirce explicitly supposed that ideals have the power to move us in accord with our rational agency. Their power to do so means that human conduct can be the result of rational suasion, not just brute force or blind necessity. There is, at the heart of Peirce's pragmatism, a robust affirmation of the capacity of rational agents to be moved by the

lure of ideals and, thus, to be moved in accord with their own integrity (cf. Colapietro 1989; Bernstein 1991:29-43). It is also at least implicit in the most obviously pragmatic part of his tripartite semeiotic, its third branch. For Peirce's theory of signs culminates in a branch of inquiry he identifies most usually as rhetoric (qualifying it as pure or speculative rhetoric), for it concerns the effects and power of signs to move and even shape discourses, practices, and institutions.<11> In certain respects, Dewey's *Logic* of 1938 is a contribution to this branch of semeiotic. But in complementary respects, Ricoeur, Foucault, Derrida, de Certeau, Giddens, Geertz, Vattimo, etc. provide invaluable resources for articulating a sufficiently thick account of discursive authority, competency, protocols, and contexts. In order to formulate a truly pragmatic theory of signs, then, we cannot limit ourselves to a narrowly circumscribed group of authors. Those of us who work out of the pragmatic tradition betray that tradition when we pit ourselves, might and main, against allegedly or even actually rival traditions, movements, or positions. We honor that tradition when we abandon myths of originary purity and forge alliances, cutting across diverse boundaries (ideological, disciplinary, linguistic, cultural, and national), for the sake of advancing inquiry and enhancing interpretation.

While Rorty admirably exhibits this spirit, he seems to miss what Dewey discerns—the pragmatic thrust of Peircean semeiotic. The trajectory of Peirce's theory of signs itself, thus, prompts us to move in diverse directions and to draw upon various resources, not the least of these resources being an incredibly heterogeneous group of contemporary authors all too glibly grouped together under the rubric postmodernists.

But at this point I will turn from where this trajectory might land us and focus eventually on this theory itself, as envisioned by Peirce and illuminated by Dewey, but immediately on the context in which it must be situated in order to be understood. This context is of course Peirce's philosophy, one Dewey insightfully identifies as "Critical Common-sensism" (*LW*11:480). Of Peirce, Dewey noted in his review of volume 1 of the *Collected Papers* that: "There is [in his own writings] no adequate presentation of his thought as a well developed whole" (*LW* 6: 274). For both attaining an interior understanding of Peirce's philosophical project and reorienting philosophy in the present, however, Dewey claims: "There is one aspect of Peirce's thought which comes out most clearly ... in his conception of philosophy itself, a conception which in my judgment is likely to be revived in the future and to dominate thought for a period at least" (*LW* 6:276). /107/

This conception comes into view when our attention fastens upon the fact that, for Peirce, "philosophy is that kind of common sense which has become critically aware of itself. It is based on observations which are within the range of every man's normal experience" (*LW* 6: 276). This view is all the more impressive because it is put forth by "a man who was so devoted to the sciences and learned in them." Its potential fecundity resides, above all else, in taking "the starting point and ultimate test" of philosophical reflection to be nothing other than "gross or macroscopic experience." Philosophical problems are human problems writ large, at least large enough to be legible to critically animated intelligence. They are only incidentally technical questions; when property

approached, they are irreducibly human problems. Accordingly, philosophy draws from science not its subject matter but its fallibilistic sensibility (*LW 6: 276*). It draws its subject matter from lived experience. There is more to Peirce's philosophy than commonsensism tempered and tutored by fallibilism; and Dewey takes note of what else there is. Yet he rightly stresses this conjunction.

### Commonsensism and Fallibilism

Dewey saw his own work in logic as an extension of Peirce's efforts in this field. He tried to rescue the study of signs, conceived as an integrated, pragmatic undertaking, from Charles Morris's act of kidnapping. Arguably, Dewey allowed his co-author Bentley to allow Morris to kidnap the field as well as the name, conceding Peirce's word and perhaps much else to Morris's usurpation. Early in their critique of Morris's theory of signs ("A Confused 'Semiotic'"), we are informed that:

From this point on I shall use the word semiotic to name, and to name only, the contents of the book before us [Charles Morris's *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (1946)]. I shall use the word semiosis to name, and to name only, those ranges of sign-process which semiotic identifies and portrays. It is evident that, so proceeding, the word 'semiocian' will name Professor Morris in his characteristic activity in person, and nothing else. (*Knowing and the Known, LW 16:211-212*)

But Dewey took pains to show that Peirce's integrated, pragmatic theory of signs was fundamentally at odds with Morris's fragmented, behavioristic theory. Finally, it is illuminating to recall that, in Dewey's judgment, "Peirce was much more of a pragmatist [than James] in the literal sense in which the word expresses action or practice" (*LW 11: 483*), for Peirce was concerned more with practice in its irreducible generality than experience in its utter singularity. Dewey appreciated what many Deweyans appear strenuously to suppress or deny—Peirce was a pragmatist. He eventually felt a philosophical kinship to the intimidating instructor at Johns Hopkins University toward whom he initially felt little affinity. In particular, Peirce's evolutionism, fallibilism, /108/ commonsensism, synechism, and indeed pragmatism were the doctrines prompting Dewey's eventual sense of intellectual kinship.

So too was Peirce's antipathy toward Cartesianism—toward (at least) subjectivism, dualism, intuitionism, and wholesale rejection of intellectual traditions. A central but neglected feature of this antipathy concerns Peirce's valorization of traditions and institutions.

Descartes marks the period when Philosophy put off childish things and began to be a conceited young man. By the time the young man has grown to be an old [at least an older] man, he will have learned that traditions are precious treasures, while iconoclastic inventions are always cheap and often nasty. (*CP 4.71*)

John Herman Randall, Jr., learned from Dewey what many of his other associates and students seem to have overlooked altogether: "What I have learned from them [my teachers] is presumably not what they intended to teach. Doubtless John Dewey did not set out to impress me with the overwhelming importance of tradition" (Randall 1958: 2). That is, however, what Dewey most forcefully taught Randall, in Randall's own judgment.

This valorization of traditions is as much a part of Dewey's as it is of Peirce's robust affirmation of our humanizing inheritances.<12> He fully appreciates that "knowledge is a function of association and communication; [that] it depends upon tradition, upon tools socially transmitted, developed and sanctioned" (LW 2:334). He contends that "no one would deny that personal mental growth is furthered in any branch of human undertaking by contact with the accumulated and sifted experience of others in that line" (LW2:56). Furthermore, he identifies tradition with "the customs, methods and working standards" of a calling such as carpentry or chemistry, plumbing or philosophy. Dewey stresses that initiation "into the tradition is the means by which the powers of learners are released and directed" (LW2; 56). As we shall see, the appeal to practice is almost always an appeal to a tradition, since human practices are the exponentially funded and sifted results of intergenerational undertakings. In brief, human practices are almost always traditional ones. Take, as an example, our linguistic practices. Words mean what they have come to mean over countless generations and what they might otherwise come to mean in an unknown future. The simplest use of a linguistic sign implicates us in a complex, extended history, though in countless circumstances linguistic competence and wholesale ignorance of this authorizing history are found together. But our natural languages are unquestionably intergenerational practices.

We are, from the outset, innovative in the very appropriation of our inheritance. But the range, character, and possibilities of our innovations point not simply to our individual ingenuity (cf. Vico). They disclose the riches inherent in our inheritance. Shakespeare and English are, for instance, in such /109/ immense debt to one another that the innovator greatly owes his status to his inheritance, while the language deeply owes its riches to this originator of words, phrases, and tropes. To realize this, we need but ask: Where would Shakespeare be without English or, in turn, English without Shakespeare?

The abuses of authority, especially enshrined, sanctified authority, always need to be weighed against the dangers of anarchy. In his general stance toward such questions, Dewey stands between James and Peirce. Of the three, James inclines most dramatically toward anarchism, being deeply suspicious of instituted authorities and especially large institutions,<13> also being habitually sympathetic to the outsider or even the outlaw. He tends to stress that "most human institutions, by the purely technical and professorial manner in which they come to be administered, end by being obstacles to the very purposes which their founders had in view" (McDermott 1977:516).

In contrast, Peirce was extremely attentive to the abiding need for acknowledged authorities (cf. Certeau 1997).<sup>14</sup> In concrete circumstances, there is often little or no possibility of drawing a sharp or even a very clear distinction between the authoritative and the authoritarian acceptable to everyone. But it is better to preserve the instituted authorities charged with overseeing our traditional institutions than to allow dread of authoritarianism to erase the effective exercise of appropriate authority. He was as opposed to what might be called cultural Cartesianism as he was to its philosophical form. Alexis de Tocqueville: "So, of all the countries in the world, America is the one in which the precepts of Descartes are least studied and best followed" (1969: 430). This is nowhere more evident than in the unhesitant claim of insular minds to omniscient expertise: "So each man narrowly shut up in himself, and from that basis, makes the pretension to judge the world" (Tocqueville 1969: 430). "The belief in the right to a private opinion[,] which is the essence of protestantism, is carried to a ridiculous excess in our community" (W2:356-357). The example Peirce uses to make this point concerns the authority of physicists being discounted by the general population and popular press (W 2: 357). Of course, there are frequently grounds for contesting the authority of scientists—indeed, the life of science is a process of contestation—but the manner, basis, and arrogance involved in this instance helped to convince Peirce that appropriate intellectual authority was a precarious cultural achievement. Like James, he was sensitive to the ways scientific ideologues have been inclined, in the name of Science, to browbeat ordinary persons out of their religious convictions; yet, unlike James, he was not sanguine about the uncontrolled clash of untutored impulses, intellectual and otherwise, usually leading to felicitous outcomes. It is likely that he would hear contemporary charges of paternalism as largely misguided attacks on authority, symptomatic of a culture in which the exercise of the authoritative, however legitimate, carries the sting of the authoritarian.

"To view institutions as enemies of freedom, and all conventions as slaveries, is, "in Dewey's judgment, "to deny the only means by which positive freedom in action can be secured" (MW 14:115). "Convention and custom /110/ are necessary to carrying forward impulse to any happy conclusion. A romantic return to nature and a freedom sought within the individual without regard to the existing environment finds its terminus in chaos" (MW 14: 115). "Not convention but stupid and rigid convention is the foe." The same may be said of tradition, institution, and authority.

Against the most popular reading of R. W. Emerson's transcendentalism, wherein the individual is unqualifiedly primordial and institutions are derivative, Dewey and to a greater degree Peirce stress the dependency of individual humans upon historical institutions or, more accurately, upon human communities in their historical embodiments (these concrete embodiments being later generational or traditional institutions, the historically instituted and sustained ways of framing and pursuing humanly recognizable ends and ideals). The individual is never truly in the position to take a stand within himself and, from the haven of interiority, to judge competently anything, let alone everything. The dialogical subject is, in contrast, an agent self-



consciously implicated in historical practices and responsive at least to other human beings. Thus, the dialogical subject of classical pragmatism ought never to be confused with the monological self of American individualism. To be true to themselves such subjects must be responsive to the alterity of their own histories (cf. Mazzotta 1997, on Vico),<sup><15></sup> but also to the criticisms, objections, and viewpoints of other humans.

Such subjects are always already caught up in activities and processes antedating their appearance and largely exceeding their control. In the course of initiating their own endeavors, ones sustained as well as frustrated by currents and forces for the most part too vast or too subtle to comprehend or to direct, they ineluctably discover their limits and liability to make mistakes.

In his reviews of the *Collected Papers*, Dewey highlighted Peirce's fallibilism and commonsensism. A central feature of common sense is an appreciation of fallibility as well as an awareness of finitude. The adage that "To err is human" is, after all, a commonsensical one. But the prior question of what the expression "common sense" means begs answering. Dewey brings into sharp focus the Peircean understanding of this protean term when he suggests that common sense consists, for Peirce, "not so much of a body of beliefs that are widely held as of the ideas that are forced upon us in the processes of living by the very nature of the world in which we live" (*LW* 11: 480). Dewey notes that Peirce attached great importance to our innate dispositions—our instinctual drives—"not as forms of knowledge but as the ways of acting out of which knowledge grows" (*LW* 1:480).

The Peircean advocacy of common sense is an explicitly critical, thus a consciously self-critical, advocacy, wherein one part of our cultural inheritance is frequently turned against another. The uncritical appeal to common sense is philosophical treason as much as uncommon nonsense. "Uncriticized common sense is both too vague to serve as a dependable guide to action in new conditions and too fixed to allow the free play of inquiry—which always /111/ begins in doubt" (*LW* 11: 480). Critical energies reduce excessive vagueness and liquify constraining fixities. Dewey reminds us that, for Peirce, the first rule of reason is to avoid blocking the road of inquiry.<sup><16></sup> "Uncriticized common sense is often the great block to inquiry."

Critical commonsensism is common sense tempered and tutored—thereby transformed—by a contrite fallibilism<sup><17></sup> best exemplified in the actual practice of experimental inquirers. In Peircean no less than Deweyan pragmatism, the transcendental question (What warrants and indeed grounds critique? What undergirds the possibility of criticism?) receives a commonsensical answer; our actual practices in their historical heterogeneity and complex intersections. There is no need or possibility of jumping outside the histories of these practices in order to comport ourselves more intelligently. For these histories contain within themselves resources sufficient unto the day. The critical commonsensist thus abandons the desperate search for an ahistoric framework for commensurating our intellectual disputes and cultural differences; s/he turns rather to the ongoing reconstruction of thick

histories, narrated by multiple voices and thus framed by diverse perspectives. In showing the bearing of these points on Peirce's theory of signs, I will have taken significant steps toward also showing his semeiotic to be a truly pragmatic theory.

### Dewey's gloss on Peirce's Semeiotic

Even today Peirce's pragmatism is known primarily through its earliest formulations, above all, "The fixation of belief" (1877) and "How to make our ideas clear" (1878). In his review of volume 5 of the *Collected Papers* ("Pragmatism and Pragmaticism"), however, Dewey noted in 1935 that Peirce's 1903 lectures on pragmatism are, "with the articles in the *Monist* dating from 1905 ... the most mature expression of his pragmaticist philosophy—as he finally called it to distinguish it from the pragmatism of James and the humanism of Schiller" (*LW* 11: 421-422).<sup><18></sup> If we interpret Peirce's pragmaticism in the light of these later writings, and in turn interpret his theory of signs in light of his pragmaticist philosophy, it is likely that we will have attained an interior understanding of Peircean semeiotic. Such, at least, is the advice of Dewey.

As we have already noted, Dewey saw his own work in logic as a development of Peirce's efforts in the field. The principal task of logical theory is neither the construction of an ideal language nor the formalization of inferential patterns. It is rather to provide a theory of inquiry designed to facilitate the practice of inquiry. Dewey concludes his essay "Peirce's theory of linguistic signs, thought, and meaning" (1946) by suggesting that, given the present state of logical theory, "Peirce has a great deal to say that is of value" (*LW* 15:152). Much of what Peirce has to say in this context concerns signs and symbols, linguistic and otherwise. Dewey immediately adds that: "There is potential advance contained in the present concern with language and "symbols" (*LW* 15:152). /112/

This advance is, however, likely to be sidetracked, because "language," "symbol" and a host of other words are used in accord with the epistemological obsessions of traditional philosophy. Such epistemological dichotomies as thought and language, immaterial minds and perceptible symbols, invariably lead investigation away from fruitful fields. Indeed, the tendency to treat signs and symbols as merely the external, accidental clothing of thought denigrates semiosis and mystifies thought. As Dewey points out, however, Peirce not only frequently uses the word "thought" (*LW* 15: 149) but also does so in a way seemingly enmeshed in the very tendencies he is struggling to eradicate (mentalism, subjectivism, and dualism). His theory of signs, nonetheless, points the way toward offering a truly semeiotic account of consciousness, mind, and psyche, rather than lapsing into the sterile position of trying to provide a mentalistic account of signs, symbols, and meaning. Signs are not made intelligible by referring them to the inaccessible acts of an occult power (cf. Wittgenstein); rather minds become intelligible by tracing their origin and development to publicly observable processes involving intersubjectively shared signs. Meaning is an irreducibly situated, social, somatic, and semeiotic affair (cf. Colapietro 1989; Halton 1986). It is inherent in the life of signs, as this life is itself manifest in communicative and indeed even perceptual processes.

When Dewey in 1946 called attention to the potential for advance in focusing on language and symbols (*LW* 15:152), he did so guardedly. His wariness was warranted. For, historically, the linguistic turn was a crucial phase in a process of turning away from the positions of classical pragmatism. In more recent years, however, those who were caught up in this movement have come to recognize that, in fundamental respects and surprising ways, Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead anticipated the positions to which Quine, Putnam, Davidson, Rorty, McDowell, and others have been led by what has been arguably the immanent dialectic of analytic philosophy (i.e., Anglo-American academic philosophy after the linguistic turn) (cf. Bernstein 1992b: 813-840). Of course, at least since *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), Richard Rorty has accorded Dewey a status comparable to Wittgenstein and Heidegger ("the three most important philosophers of our century" (Rorty 1979:5)).

The linguistic turn might mark a path of regression, in turning inquiry back in the direction of mentalism. Further, it might identify a circumvention, in diverting critical attention away from critical issues of human concern. But it might also mark the way forward, by opening new approaches to mind, meaning, and logic. For Dewey no less than for Peirce, however, it is more appropriate to speak of a semiotic turn rather than the linguistic turn, a turn toward signs in all of their variety and not just toward that form of symbolization so prominent in our lives. This is nowhere more clearly stated than in "Context and Thought":

If language is identified with speech, there is undoubtedly thought without speech. But if "language" is used to signify all kinds of signs and symbols, men assuredly there is no thought without language; white signs /113/ and symbols depend for their meaning upon the contextual situation in which they appear and are used. (*LW*64).

In sum, all thought is (as Peirce noted in some of his earliest publications) in signs, though not all thought is in language in its more restricted senses.

In Dewey no less than Peirce, the pragmatic turn encompasses the linguistic turn, since a turn toward the full range of human practices of course includes our linguistic practices, our historically instituted ways of speaking and writing. Moreover, the pragmatic turn is at once an experiential and a semiotic turn. For it is decisively a turn toward experience and also toward the manner in which our encounters are semiotically and technologically mediated (cf. *LW* 1:75f, 101-2, 105, 134). But this way of stating the matter is likely to be misleading, for it appears to imply that language and more generally signs and tools constitute a *tertium quid* (*LW* 15:152). The need for a *tertium quid* to bring together the outward domain of physical things and events, on the one hand, and the inward domain of psychical states and processes, on the other, only arises on the dualistic supposition of there being two separable realms. <19> There is one world in which functional, contextual, and thus variable distinctions between self and other, organism and environment, thought and thing, language and reality, are replete. There is not a world divided into two by an

absolute, ontological, and hence invariant distinction between mind and matter, or thought and thing. Language is not a bridge over an ontological chasm, but an empirical reality caught up with other such realities in complex, functional ways. In this world, there are organisms inseparably intertwined with their environments, though in many instances not confined to any specific region of their biological niche.<20> The boundaries between organisms and their environments are inherently vague. For certain purposes (e.g., the diagnosis and treatment of a disease), clear distinctions can be drawn. But our ability to institute clear and even precise distinctions depends upon abstracting, for a narrowly focused purpose, certain salient features of an incredibly complex and subtly integrated network of organic and environmental factors.

Part of the function of Peirce's synechism (or doctrine of continuity) was to orient inquiry toward connections and relationships, thus away from the chimerical quest for the ultimate units of theoretical analysis. His synechism was of a piece with his commonsensism for "we must begin with things in their complex entanglements rather than with simplifications made for the purpose of effective judgment and action" (*LW* 1: 387).<21> It "is needful that we return to the mixed and entangled things expressed by the term experience" (*LW* 1:388), the commonsensical world of macroscopic experience, in all its messiness, rather than the refined worlds of our theoretical reductions in all their elegance and simplicity.

Peirce's synechism was, as Dewey pointed out, also of a piece with his pragmatism. For he "was peculiarly and with intellectual conscientiousness, /114/ concerned with working out the implications of the idea of continuity" (*LW* 11: 423). Perhaps the best way to see this connection is to take the upshot of synechism to be, with reference to inquiry, the rejection of any notion that "the consequences, the practical effects... are so many independent particular items" (*LW* 11:423). These consequences must be just the opposite:

they are the establishment of habits of ever increasing generality, of what he (Peirce) terms "concrete reasonableness"—a reasonableness that is concrete because it does not consist in reasoning merely, but in ways of acting—that have an ever widening scope and ever deepening richness of meaning. (*UP* 11:423)

Though Dewey does not make the following two points explicitly, his gloss on Peirce's writings helps us to do so. First, Pragmatism is formally semeiotic: pragmatism concerns how to make our ideas clear, i.e., how to make certain signs in a distinct range of human engagements clearer than tacit familiarity or even abstract definitions ever can. Second, semeiotic is thoroughly pragmatic, that is, semeiotic concerns the purposes of investigators and arguably also interpreters. Its function is not to ground but to guide and goad inquiry, hence, it is not a foundational but a normative discourse, wherein the ultimate appeals are only provisionally ultimate. What grounds semeiotic are our practices of inquiry and interpretation, and what underlies these practices are processes continuous with processes observable

throughout the biosphere. But what grounds these practices themselves is nothing other than their own histories in the actuality of their own self-transformations. The theory of signs is a form of semiosis dependent upon more rudimentary, pervasive forms of this process. This theory is rooted in these processes; they are not grounded in it.

In "Pragmatism, language, and categories," Rorty argues for an affinity between Peirce and the later Wittgenstein bearing upon the primacy and irreducibility of our practices. In his judgment, these two philosophers replace the appeal to intuitions with the appeal to practice (see, e.g., Rorty 1961: 222). In this they exhibit their opposition to Cartesianism. Cartesianism is a form of intuitionism, for it ultimately appeals to intuitions, to self-warranting cognitions, in order to escape the snares of skepticism. Its intuitionism is thereby linked to its foundationalism: incorrigible cognitions alone can provide for the Cartesian an adequate (because unshakable) foundation for the edifice of human knowledge. Thus, the Cartesian hopes to arrest the infinite regress of conceivable doubts, by providing an unshakable foundation of cognitive certainty.

Peirce and Wittgenstein however accept "the regress of rules, habits, and signs standing behind rules, habits, and signs" (Rorty 1961: 222-223). This regress is not vicious. The fact that there is nothing underlying our rules, habits, and signs other than more of the same does not condemn us to skepticism, /115/ since inherent in them are the resources for self-criticism and self-correction. The pragmatic spirals constitutive of human practices make it manifest that the metaphor of being imprisoned in our practices is utterly inappropriate. Our practices are modes not of enclosure or confinement but of access and availability: they make available to us the world in which we move and breathe and have our being. The appeal to our self-corrective practices is sufficient, that to supposedly self-warranting cognitions is unnecessary. Because they are self-corrective, these practices are self-transformative.

Human agents are divided, implicated beings. One of the divisions constitutive of their being is that between the ideals with which they identify and whatever in them thwarts their efforts to realize these ideals (Plato, Aristotle, Saint Paul, Freud, Ricoeur). Another is that between their conscious selves and the darker regions of the human psyche not readily accessible to their conscious selves. Moreover, human agents are implicated in historical practices extending far back into an ancestral past and, thereby, implicating these mortal beings in a historical world of unimaginable scope (cf. Dewey's *A Common Faith*; also *Human Nature and Conduct*).

In turn, human practices are fatefully diremptive, intricately intertwined processes caught up in a natural world not of their own making but also not accessible apart from these processes. The limits of our world are defined by the limits of our action; and the limits of our action are defined by the range of our somatic involvements and their symbolic extensions. This makes our world somatically bounded yet symbolically boundless (Dewey, LW 4:121).<22>

## Formal rationality versus concrete reasonableness

Because of its apparent kinship with the infinite and the eternal, and also its alleged capacity to transcend entirely the local and the temporal (cf. Diggins 1994:439-440), our reason was characterized by Plato as the spark of divinity within us. But is it possible, especially in the wake of Darwin (cf. *Knowing and the Known*, LW 16: 184), to account for this capacity by referring to nothing other than natural processes, historical practices, individual habituation, ingenuity, and perseverance as well as the technological innovations this complex background makes possible? In brief, is it reasonable to hope that we can offer a thoroughly naturalistic and historicist, but experientially compelling, account of human reason? Arguably, such hope underlies James's conception of intelligent intelligence,<sup><23></sup> Dewey's notion of creative intelligence, and Peirce's vision of concrete reasonableness, though Dewey was more consistently naturalistic and historicist than either James or Peirce.

Even given its imperfections, science is not only the embodiment of reasonableness but also the product of an embodied, social, semiotic, and evolving reason. This is as true of the science of signs as it is of any other science. But the interpretations of Karl-Otto Apel, James Litzka, and others so stress the allegedly transcendental or formal character of Peircean semeiotic that they obscure from view the extent to which Peirce was, in his own /116/ words, "a convinced Pragmatist in Semeiotic." Peirce's theory of signs is not a monument to formal rationality, but an instrument of concrete reasonableness. His characterization of semeiotic as the formal doctrine of signs (CP 2.227; cf. Litzka 1996: 1-3) needs to be read in light of alternative characterizations and complementary emphases, the very ones to which Dewey is so finely attuned. When this is done, the seemingly lifeless forms of formal rationality are transfigured into the living forms of concrete reasonableness.

At the heart of Peirce's semeiotic is the conviction that "every symbol is a living thing, in a very strict sense ..." (CP 2.222). This conviction is fully expressed in an unpublished manuscript when he suggests a symbol "may have a rudimentary life, so that it can have a history, and gradually undergo a great change, while preserving a certain self-identity" (MS 290 [1905], quoted in Shapiro 1983: 92; cf. CP 2.302). Whereas formal rationality tends to kill what it tries to hold, forever in its grip, concrete reasonableness approaches ideas the way a solicitous gardener approaches flowers: "It is not by dealing out cold justice to the circle of my ideas that I can make them grow, but by cherishing and tending them as I would the flowers in my garden" ("Evolutionary love," CP 6.289; also in *EP* 1: 354). In so doing, concrete reasonableness takes these ideas—these signs—to have a life of their own with which we have somehow become entrusted.

Peirce was of course aware that, to modern ears, this must sound like "stark madness, or mysticism, or something equally devoid of reason and good sense" (MS 290:58, quoted in Colapietro 1989:113).<sup><24></sup> But he took this harsh judgment to be symptomatic of the systematic blindness of the deracinated consciousness of Western

modernity. An awareness more firmly and deeply rooted in nature and history would see this as an invaluable part of our ancestral wisdom. Anyone infused with such awareness would take the pronouncement of late modernity to be an aberration, the conviction of ancestral wisdom to be a gift. This is a truly gracious gift, for it allows us to be open to the reception of what nature and history themselves have to give.

In the background of Peirce's philosophy, then, there is what might be called a mystical naturalism (or naturalistic mysticism),<sup><25></sup> for his investigations were informed and animated by a sense of deep kinship (though not a thoroughgoing one) with the natural world.<sup><26></sup> I must turn, however, from this background to what is in the foreground of his theory of signs. My contention is that, in the foreground of Peirce's investigation into signs, we can glimpse a nuanced phenomenological sense of signs in their myriad forms, though this sense is quickly eclipsed in many of his writings by his efforts to formulate a truly comprehensive definition of sign or, better, semiosis (sign-activity).<sup><27></sup> This definition cannot but be abstract.

Precisely because semeiotic is "the quasi-necessary, or formal, doctrine of signs," it must begin with the manifest facts of macroscopic experience (CP 2.227); that is, it must begin commonsensically, calling our attention to what is observable by any normal human being during virtually every hour s/he is awake. We begin by observing "such signs as we know" and, on the basis of /117/ this familiarity, abstract what seem to us to be their necessary features. In addition, we test our abstract definitions and putative necessities against the direct disclosures of our everyday experience. The starting points and ultimate tests of our semeiotic investigations, then, are our shared experience (in a sense, our common sense, what the course of our lives has forced us as agents to acknowledge).<sup><28></sup>

In other words, signs have the status of pragma,<sup><29></sup> being integral to the business at hand (whatever it might be), the affairs in which we are caught up, the matters with which we are forced to deal in our endeavors, or these endeavors or affairs themselves (these being among the most prominent meanings of *πράγμα*).<sup><30></sup> Despite the prominence in Peirce's own writings of abstract definitions and also the emphasis of some commentators on the formal character of his semeiotic inquiries, Peirce begins his study of signs with the tacit familiarity and collateral experience of any competent sign-user (cf. Deledalle 2000:18-20). His formal attempts at abstract definition are self-consciously efforts to clarify what is implicit in the processes and practices in which he, as a sign-user, is ineluctably caught up. In addition, the conceptual clarification achieved by means of abstract definition is, for Peirce the pragmatist, inadequate: one must move beyond abstraction definition to pragmatic clarification. When this is done, signs are defined ultimately in terms of tendencies, processes, and practices culminating in habits, skills, and even artifacts such as books or computers. Most of the definitions of sign and semiosis upon which Peirce's commentators have focused are at the second level of clarity (they are unmistakably abstract definitions). But these presuppose a prior, tacit acquaintance with sign-processes and practices. In addition, these abstract definitions are themselves formulated for the purpose of carrying our inquiry into signs toward a higher level of

conceptual clarification, the one attained by the conscientious application of the pragmatic maxim. Peirce was a pragmatist in semeiotic. In part, this means that the investigator of signs cannot rest content with abstract definitions, but must translate even the most ethereal abstractions into, at least, imaginable lines of conceivable conduct.

There is no question that Peirce indulged in the play of ideas for its own sake, becoming utterly fascinated by the intricate fabrications of his own theoretical imagination. But part of his motivation here was the conviction that the work of reason is carried forward by the play of ideas (cf. chapter 6 ("The Play of Ideas") of *The Quest for Certainty*, LW 4:112ft). As a pragmatist he appreciated the value of not only humor<sup><31></sup> but also playfulness. The only work worthy of rational agents is some open-ended form of playful endeavor, in which the undertaking is not externally imposed upon but voluntarily espoused by these agents themselves, moreover, one in which intrinsic delight is taken even in the more arduous phases of This ongoing activity.

In addition, the only play worthy of us is a process in which not every move counts as competent or legitimate, it is not a process of pure firstness, devoid of challenging opponents or forceful opposition, but one in which self-imposed /118/ rules make possible an ongoing self-transformation. Play opens possibilities for confrontation with otherness and, in doing so, it generates possibilities of struggle, frustration, and in some respects defeat. Umberto Eco has proposed as a definition of sign anything that might be used to lie (1976:7). In contrast, I have suggested elsewhere that error rather than deception might be the key to understanding semiosis. Signs make mistakes possible: they are our humanly fallible takes so often revealed by experience to be mistakes.

If we return to the text in which Peirce defines semeiotic itself as a "quasi-necessary, or formal, doctrine," we see that such a conception of sign is clearly implicit even here. For in this passage Peirce identifies his focus as "what must be the characters of all signs used by a 'scientific' intelligence, that is to say, an intelligence capable of learning by experience" (CP 2. 227). But to learn by experience is, first and foremost, to learn from our errors, from the shocks and surprises involved in discovering, often painfully, that things run counter to our expectations (CP 5.51; cf. Dewey, LW11:423).

We have circled back to two important conclusions drawn in the previous section. First, pragmatism is a semeiotic doctrine since it concerns our use of signs. Second, semeiotic is a pragmatic affair since it is concerned, in the first instance, with pragmata and, in its crucial role in the complex economy of Peirce's philosophical investigations, with the continuous growth of concrete reasonableness. Its purpose is facilitating a finer and fuller attunement between the habits of human sign-users and those of the beings with which such agents conduct business.

Hence, pragmatism immediately concerns the intelligent use of signs and semeiotic



ultimately regards the deliberate crafting of the means requisite for the growth of concrete reasonableness. Pragmatism in its dissatisfaction with abstract definitions and semeiotic in its culmination in speculative rhetoric are, in effect, contributions to a critique of reason, being integral parts of a truly pragmatic critique of abstract rationality.

Concrete reasonableness obviously encompasses more than abstract rationality. Part of its concreteness resides in its willingness to acknowledge its status as a tradition and thus its historicity; another part resides in its drive toward fuller embodiment. Concrete reasonableness overlaps with what Dewey means by embodied intelligence. "The level of action fixed by embodied intelligence is," as he stresses, "always the important thing" (*LW 2*: 366). Intelligence in Dewey's sense or reasonableness in Peirce's is embodied principally in habits and artifacts.

The distinction between abstract rationality and concrete reasonableness overlaps with a number of other distinctions, including that between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*, <32> pure reason and narrative (or historical) reason (Ortega 1984: 118), formal and living reason. Since the distinction between formal and living reason has been articulated by a thinker deeply rooted in the tradition of pragmatism, it is especially pertinent to the one that is the focus of this section. Let us, accordingly, enlist the aid of John E. Smith in our efforts to mark a crucial difference. /119/

Smith stresses that, regarding "the nature of reason, we must distinguish between, first, formal reason ... and, second, living reason or reason as the quest on the path of the concrete self for [maximal] intelligibility" (1995: 111). "Formal reason ... is inadequate for disciplines [and practices] more intimately related to historical events and to the direct, felt experience of selves" (1995: 112). It is, however, ideally suited to those sciences, such as mathematics and logic, "in which it is not only unnecessary but detrimental to introduce the concerns of the individual thinking self into the situation" (1995: 111-112). But such abstract disciplines purchase their certainty and precision precisely by virtue of their formal abstractions from concrete affairs. Intelligent involvement in the historical affairs in and through which human lives, individually and communally, assume their actual form by virtue of participation, not abstraction, living reason thus "needs to be recovered, for it is the form of reason required for all the concrete rational pursuits in which men [and women] are engaged—art, morality, politics, and religion" (1995: 112).

The question arises, however, whether philosophy is, for Peirce, to be counted among these "concrete rational pursuits." In opposition to F.C.S. Schiller's humanism, envisioned as "a philosophy not purely intellectual because every department of man's nature must be voiced in it," Peirce was emphatic: "For my part, I beg to be excused from having any dealings with such a philosophy" (CP 5.537). His reason bears directly on our question: "I wish philosophy to be a strict science, passionless and severely fair." Schiller's judgment of such an endeavor is unequivocal: philosophers "have rendered philosophy like unto themselves, abstruse, arid, abstract, and abhorrent" (*Humanism: Philosophical Essays* (1903), quoted by Peirce, CP 5.537). But Peirce's

response to this judgment is equally pointed: "some branches of science are not in a healthy state if they are not abstruse, arid, and abstract." The context makes it clear that Peirce counted philosophy among these branches of science. Hence, it seems clear that, from Peirce's perspective, philosophy is not a concrete rational pursuit, but an abstract formal inquiry.

The matter is, however, not nearly so straightforward as this. There is little question that, in Peirce's writings, philosophy as *scientia* largely eclipses philosophy as *sapientia*. But, at the center of Peirce's philosophy, there is an *askesis*, a self-imposed discipline. But there is also a confidence that the insights derived from this discipline will contribute to wisdom. "The soul's deeper parts can only be reached through its surface" (CP 1.648). In this way, the insights obtained from "mathematics and philosophy and the other sciences ... will by slow percolation gradually reach the very core of one's being; and will come to influence our lives." Impersonal inquiry, where personal concerns are sacrificed for the overarching ideals of a communal undertaking (where one comes to identify oneself with the success of what transcends oneself), is a moral achievement of personal agents. An adequate understanding of human inquiry must do justice to both the possibility of impersonal inquiry and the nature of such a remarkable accomplishment./120/ Insofar as there is an imperative need to take historical account of the passionate engagements of fallible agents, the work of attaining such understanding falls to living, rather than formal, reason.

"Whatever the true definition of Pragmatism may be, I find it very hard to say; but it is a sort of instinctive attraction for living facts" (CP 5.64). Is it unreasonable to suggest that Peirce's own fascination with signs, with the life of signs in its myriad forms, displays just this "instinctive attraction for living facts"? Is it naive to suppose that Peirce's self-depiction ("a convinced Pragmaticist in Semeiotic") is a compensatory self-deception rather than a more or less accurate self-description? Further, do the general drift and most consistent emphases in Peirce's writings on signs warrant the view that "he never made up his mind what he wanted a general theory of signs for, nor what it might look like"?

## Conclusion

The concluding sentences of Dewey's review of volume 1 of Peirce's *Collected Papers* can serve to bring this chapter to its conclusion:

What professional philosophy most needs at the present time is new and fresh imagination. Only new imagination is capable of getting away from traditional positions and schools—realism, idealism, pragmatism, empiricism and the rest of them. Nothing much will happen in philosophy as long as the main object is defense of some formulated historic position. I do not know of any other thinker more calculated [better positioned] than Peirce to give emancipation from the intellectual fortification of the past and to arouse *fresh* imagination.<33> (LW6:227)

The emancipatory power of Peirce's philosophical imagination is nowhere more evident than in his pragmatic theory of signs.<34> Hence, one of the more seemingly arcane parts of Peirce's philosophy is, when properly understood, one of the most truly pragmatic and intellectually liberating. Here, as in many other instances, one figure in our history enables us to appreciate the value and ascertain the character of another's contribution. If it is true that the "invention of discovery of symbols is doubtless by far the single greatest event in the history of man" (*LW 4*: 121), arguably the event by which our ancestors attained the status of humanity, then the investigation of symbols and other species of signs is crucial for the cultivation of critical self-consciousness. At this stage in our history, the actual growth of concrete reasonableness virtually enforces such consciousness, though often in a disfigured or ineffective form. Herein lies the ultimate purpose of Peircean semeiotic. Its most proximate purpose is to help us differentiate the map from the terrain as well as immunize us from the paper doubts of philosophical skepticism. For veridical signs, reliable maps, and even veracious /121/ utterances abound, as do unwitting errors and deliberate deceptions.<35> These pragma provide investigators of signs with both their starting points and ultimate tests. Consequently, the coenoscopic science<36> of semeiotic as a distinct branch of philosophy is best understood as every other branch of philosophy should be—"that kind of common sense which has become critically aware of itself" (Dewey, *LW6*:276). What could be more pragmatic than common sense infused with critical awareness?

## NOTES

1. Rorty's recovery of pragmatism has been from at least this time a circumvention of Peirce. But, in one of his earliest publications, "Pragmatism, categories, and language" (1961), an essay from which I will draw a crucial distinction, he explored an affinity between Peirce and Wittgenstein. Dewey has however become for Rorty the paradigmatic pragmatist, whereas Peirce's differences from Wittgenstein and also from Dewey have prompted Rorty to see Peirce at best as a very problematic page in it. Even so, the distinction drawn by Rorty in "Pragmatism, categories, and language" between the intuitionist appeal to self-warranting cognitions and the pragmatist appeal to self-corrective practices helps us capture a crucial feature of Peirce's pragmatism.
2. After quoting a famous letter from William to Henry James, one in which the elder brother advises the younger how to deal with Peirce ("grasp firmly, push hard, make fun of him, and he is as pleasant at anyone"), Menand suggests James treated "Peirce the way Emerson treated other people's books: he skimmed them, in effect, for insight and stimulation, and abandoned the effort at complete comprehension" (Menand 2001:204).

3. In his review of volume 1 of the *Collected Papers*, Dewey calls attention to the fact that:

In one of his fragments, printed as a preface, he [Peirce] confesses to the ambition of setting forth a philosophy as deep and massive in its foundations as that of Aristotle. He wanted to outline, in terms of modern knowledge, a theory so comprehensive that the findings of thought in all fields, for a long time, would be used only as illustrative detail. The scheme was too grandiose to be carried out; it agreed neither with Peirce's own habits nor with his relations to other thinkers, to universities or publishers. (LW6:273-4)

In one of his other reviews, Dewey proposes that Peirce united "a disciplined mind and an undisciplined personality" (LW 11:479).

4. It is significant that Dewey focuses on the more modest formulation of this architectonic aspiration ("for a long time to come" (IW11:274)).

5. In *Process and Reality*, A.N. Whitehead (1978) defends a position very close to Peirce's own:

Philosophy will not regain its proper status until the gradual elaboration of categorial schemes, definitely stated at each stage of progress, is recognized as its proper objective. There may be rival schemes, inconsistent among themselves; each with its own merits and its own failures. It will then be the purpose of research to conciliate the differences. Metaphysical categories are /122/ not dogmatic statements of the obvious; they are tentative formulations of the ultimate generalities. (Whitehead 1978:8)

"Metaphysics is nothing but the description of the generalities which apply to all the details of practice" (1978:13).

"The ultimate test is always widespread, recurrent experience" (1978:17).

6. Peirce supposed that "by the True is meant that at which inquiry aims" (CP 5.557). Truth is a thoroughly practical notion, being defined as the desired outcome of a human practice.

7. The global characterization of a specific epoch, such as that of modernity or post-modernity (alternately, modernism or postmodernism), is pragmatically problematic. It is accordingly imperative to inquire into the motives and purposes animating us to devise formulae or slogans that would allegedly enable one to hold securely a vast stretch of historical time.

8. Such pragmatic turns are in fact quite commonplace in Derridean texts. For example, he responds in an interview to a question posed by Julia Kristeva regarding the concept of structure by asserting:

The case of the concept of structure ... is certainly more ambiguous [than even that of communication]. Everything depends upon how one sets it to work. Like the concept of the sign—and therefore of semiology—it can simultaneously confirm and shake logocentric and ethnocentric assuredness. It is not a question of junking these concepts, nor do we have the means of doing so. Doubtless it is more necessary, from within semiology, to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in new chains, and little by little modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations. (Derrida 1981 [1972]: 240)

9. William James makes just this point in reference to an invasion of the Philippines; "It is obvious that for our rulers in Washington the Filipinos have not existed as psychological quantities at all. ... We have treated [them] as if they were a painted picture, an amount of mere matter in our way. They are too remote from us ever to be realized as they exist in their inwardness" (Perry 1935: vol. II, 311). Of this invasion, he also wrote: "We are now openly engaged in crushing out the scariest thing in this great human world—the attempt of a people long enslaved to attain to the possession of itself, to organize its laws and government, to be free to follow its internal destinies according to its own ideals. Why, then, do we go on? First, the war fever; and then the pride which always refuses to back down when under fire" (Perry: vol. 2, 310).

10. In "The social value of the college bred," James proposed: "The ceaseless whisper of the more permanent ideals, the steady tug of truth and justice, give them but time, must warp the world in their direction" (1987 [1907]).

11. Peirce identified the first branch of semeiotic as pure or speculative grammar, since it deals with the most basic elements (cf. Fisch 1986: 373-390). But even here we can see the rhetorical dimension of Peirce's sign theory, for signs are conceived in reference to their capacity to generate interpretants, i.e., to produce effects. For seeing this more clearly and, indeed, for much else regarding Peirce's semeiotic, I owe a debt to Tom Short (in this instance, not a published essay but private correspondence). /123/

12. This is true because Dewey was nearly as pious as Peirce toward aspects of his inheritances, pious in the classical sense of this ambiguous word. George Santayana captures this sense when he writes: "Piety ... may be said to mean man's reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment" (1962:125). It is significant that, in the context of the US invasion of the Philippines in 1899, James exhibits a sentiment closely allied with this: "As if anything could be of

value anywhere that had no native historic roots" (Perry 1935: vol. II, 311). In a different context (while abroad giving the Gifford lectures), he wrote: "I long to steep myself in America again and let the broken rootlets make new adhesions to the native soil. A man coquetting with too many countries is as bad as a bigamist, and loses his soul altogether" (Perry 1935: vol. II, 316).

13. His sentiment is forcefully expressed when he states: "Damn great Empires! Including that of the Absolute. ... Give me individuals and their spheres of activity" (Perry 1935: vol II, 315).

I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms, and with the invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, and yet rending the hardest monuments of man's pride, if you give them time. The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against big organizations as such, national ones first and foremost. (Perry 1935: vol. II, 315)

14. In *The Metaphysical Club*, Louis Menand points out that: "Since the defining characteristic of modern life is social change—not onward or upward, but forward, and toward a future always in the making—the problem of legitimacy continually arises" (2001:431). Peirce was aware of this already in his own time. This indeed prompts his concern for conserving, or recovering, bases of legitimacy.

15. The present is other than the past and thus must be discerned as such. But the present is, in crucial respects, also other than itself, for there are unresolved contradictions constitutive of any historical time. By the alterity of their histories, hence, I mean both the present as other than the past and the present as other than itself.

16. Susan Haack (1997) has rightly called attention to a widespread misreading of the Peircean text to which Dewey is most likely referring in this review. "Upon this one, and in one sense this sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary, ... Do not block the way of inquiry" (CP 1.135). The first "rule" of reason then is the desire to learn, its corollary the frequently quoted maxim.

17. Peirce insists that, "out of contrite fallibilism, combined with a high faith in the reality of knowledge, and an intense desire to find things out, all my philosophy has always seemed to me to grow" (CP 1.14). In his review of the volume in which this text is found, Dewey suggests that "the peculiarity of Peirce is that in his thought the idea [of fallibility] is not connected with skepticism, and proneness to error is itself

taken to be a reliable indication of the state of the universe, instead of being a merely human trait. Peirce is not a skeptic, for he has an intense faith in the possibility of finding out, of learning—if only we will inquire and observe. The assertion of certainty is harmful precisely because it blocks the toad to the inquiry by which things are found out" (LW 6: 275). /124/

18. There are numerous unpublished manuscripts from this same period that also need to be consulted, but for the general student of pragmatism (in contrast to the specialist in Peircean pragmatism) one cannot do better than follow Dewey's advice.

19. In *Knowing and the Known*, Bentley recalls that:

Peirce very early in life (here Dewey adds in a footnote a reference to Peirce's "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man" (1868)] came to the conclusion that all thought was in signs and required a time. He was under the influence of the then fresh Darwinian discoveries and was striving to see the intellectual processes of men as taking place in this new natural field. His pragmatism, his theory of signs, and his search for a functional logic all lay in this line of growth. Peirce introduced the word "interpretant," not in order to maintain the old mentalistic view of thought, but for quite the opposite purpose, as device, in organization with other terminological devices, to show how "thought" or "ideas" as subjects of inquiry were not to be viewed as psychic substances or as psychically substantial, but were actually processes under way in human living. In contrast, semiotic [i.e., Morris] uses Peirce's term in accordance with its own notions as an aid to bring back sub rosa, the very thing that Peirce—and James and Dewey as well—spent a good part of their lives trying to get rid of. (LW 16: 238-239)

20. At the conclusion of chapter 1 ("Vagueness in Logic") of *Knowing and the Known*, Bentley stresses that "the man who talks and thinks and knows belongs to the world in which he has been evolved in all his talkings, thinkings and knowings; while at the same time this world in which he has been evolved is the world of his knowing" (LW 16: 45). Earlier in *The Quest for Certainty* (1929) Dewey had made an analogous point when he emphasized:

we do not have to go to knowledge to obtain an exclusive hold on reality. The world as we experience it is a real world. But it is not in its primary phases a world that is known, a world that is understood, and is intellectually coherent and secure. Knowing consists of operations that give experienced objects a form in which the relations, upon which the outward course of events depends, are securely experienced. It marks a transitional redirection and rearrangement of the real. It is intermediate and instrumental; it comes between a relatively casual and accidental

experience of existence and one relatively settled and defined. The knower is within the world of existence; his knowing, as experimental, marks an interaction of one existence with other existences. (LW 4: 235-236)

21. Though Dewey is here presenting his own position, not Peirce's, the view being put forth is one Peirce shared with Dewey.

22. In "The Poet" R.W. Emerson asserted that: "The symbol has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men" not merely poets (Emerson 1982: 276).

23. James defines intelligent intelligence as that form of consciousness that not only judges what is going on but also judges its own processes, criteria, and ideals of judgment: "It seems both to supply the means and the standard by which they are measured. It not only serves a final purpose, but brings a final purpose—posits, declares it" (Wilshire 1971:22). /125/

24. "Most of us, such is the depravity of the human heart, look askance at the notion that ideas have any power; although that some power they have we cannot but admit. The present work, on the other hand, will maintain the extreme position that every general idea has more or less power of working itself out into fact; some more so, some less so" (CP 2.149). Ideas, or signs, are neither inert nor lifeless, but dynamic and alive—dynamic because they are in a sense alive.

25. This is different from the ecstatic naturalism Robert Corrington (1993) attributes to Peirce.

26. "There is a reason, an interpretation, a logic, in the course of scientific advance, and this indisputably proves to him who has perceptions of rational or significant relations, that man's mind must have been attuned to the truth of things in order to discover what he has discovered. It is the very bedrock of logical truth" (CP 6,476). "It is somehow more than a mere figure of speech to say that nature fecundates the mind of man with ideas which, when those ideas grow up, will resemble their father, Nature" (CP 5.591; cf. CP 7.39,7.46). But this naturalism is not thoroughgoing since for Peirce it points toward a more or less traditional form of theism. Our kinship with nature is, in his thought, linked to the kinship between nature and divinity, where the divine is envisioned to be "vaguely like a man" (cf. chapter 11 of Potter 1996).

27. "The fundamental distinction is," as Max H. Fisch notes, "not between things that are signs and things that are not, but between triadic or sign-action and dyadic or dynamical action (5.473). So the fundamental conception of semeiotic is not that of



sign but that of semeiosis, and semeiotic should be defined in terms of semeiosis rather than of sign, unless sign has antecedently been defined in terms of semeiosis" (1986: 330). Joseph Ransdell (1976) and T.L. Short (1998) also stress this crucial point.

28. "Philosophers have exhibited proper ingenuity in pointing out holes in the beliefs of common sense, but they have also displayed improper ingenuity in ignoring the empirical things that every one has; the things that so denote themselves [that so force themselves upon our attention and lives] that they have to be dealt with" (Dewey, *LW* 1:374).

29. "Commonsense knowing has to do with the concerns of living; and nowadays living in an environment pervaded by the activities and consequences of scientific knowing invokes a wide-ranging, diversified network of communication. Articulate speech, written and printed words, indeed everything that happens may become a sign speaking to us as evidence of something else where scientific inquiry has taken it out of its specific, commonsense spatial-temporal setting" (Dewey. *LW*: 344-345).

30. "The English unpacking [of this term] ... is the deed, action, behavior, affair, pursuit, occupation, business, going concern. The Greek formula has several advantages over the Latin. The Latin *factum* emphasizes the completed actuality, the pastness, of the deed. The Greek *πράγμα* covers also an action still in course or not yet begun; and even a line of conduct that would be adopted under circumstances that may never arise. The Latin is retrospective; the Greek is, or may be, prospective" (Fisch 1986:223-224).

31. In his 1903 lectures on Pragmatism, Peirce claims "a bit of fun helps thought and tends to keep it pragmatical" (CP 71).

32. Emerson maintained that there is a whole philosophy implicit in the fundamental distinction between *Verstand* and *Vernunft* or understanding and reason. One way to read his transcendentalism is as an attempt to draw out fully the implications of this distinction. /126/

33. This is consonant with a plea issued at the conclusion of "Philosophy and civilization'" (1927b), "a plea for the casting off of that intellectual timidity which hampers the wings of imagination, a plea for speculative audacity, for more faith in ideas, sloughing off a cowardly reliance upon those partial ideas to which we are wont to give the name of facts" (*LW* 3: 10).

34. A sign of this is the fact that Peirce's writings on signs have had the widest influence. In particular, his trichotomy of icon, index, and symbol is encountered in numerous discourses.

35. James supposed that "the stronger force in politics is human scheming, and the schemers will capture every machinery that is set up against them" (Perry 1935: vol 2:298).

36. Peirce adopted the terminology of Jeremy Bentham for his own purposes; whereas the idioscopic sciences depend upon special observations, the coenosopic do not. The astronomer needs telescopes and other instruments, the anthropologist depends upon travel to sites often far distant, whereas philosophical reflection is limited to the everyday experience of normal human beings.

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