

# PEIRCE TODAY

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## Introduction

As difficult as it might be to prove, it seems reasonable to suppose that C. S. Peirce (1839-1914) is as widely read and carefully studied today as at any time in the past.<sup>1</sup> His name is quite broadly recognized, his writings intensely studied.<sup>2</sup> Hardly any serious student of philosophy is completely ignorant of him, having read at least one or two essays by Peirce (more likely than not, “The Fixation of Belief” [1877] and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” [1878]). His name is indeed familiar to many outside of philosophy. Though such a matter is hard (if not impossible) to ascertain, especially with accuracy and certainty, it is likely he is now better understood than ever before. It may even be that, alongside of this, his ideas are also more fundamentally misunderstood and irresponsibly deployed than they ever have been in the past. The reception, comprehension, and appraisal of a thinker by later generations tend never to be of one piece. Even so, this singular genius is truly a living presence on the contemporary scene, in the sense

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<sup>1</sup> This paper grew out of a presentation at the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Central European Pragmatist Forum (CEPF) at Comenius University (Bratislava, Slovakia) on June 7, 2010. I owe a debt of gratitude not only to Emil Visnovsky for the invitation to offer this sketch of Peirce but also the other participants for their thoughtful responses to this presentation (above all, John Ryder, James Campbell, Sami Pihlström, Susan Haack, and Emil). If this paper is better than that talk, it is in large part because of their questions, suggestions, and criticisms. In addition, Alexander Kremer’s encouragement, patience, editorial skills, and philosophical pluralism were critical in transforming this presentation into an essay for this journal.

<sup>2</sup> Since I take it as part of my task to provide contemporary readers, especially ones who might have little familiarity with Peirce’s thought, with both an orientation toward this pragmatist and a sense of the intimate connections among Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, I will take care to call attention to what I judge to be some of the most illuminating treatments of Peirce, also some of the connections among these pragmatists. Most of this will be done in footnotes.

that many of his most central ideas have shaped and continue to shape our intellectual outlook. Despite his influence and stature, there are questions regarding the *availability* of his philosophy (questions to be addressed in this essay). I am using this word broadly, to include the availability of Peirce's voluminous manuscripts, in the form and order in which they were at the time of his death in 1914<sup>3</sup>; that of his thought in the spirit in which it was out forth; and (closely related to the sense just noted) that of his thought in its inherent power to facilitate intellectual transformation.<sup>4</sup>

Given the many-sided character of Peirce's intellectual life and also given fundamental disagreements among even his most insightful interpreters, the task of portraying Peirce today is a daunting one.<sup>5</sup> Any attempt to sketch a portrait of C. S. Peirce today, especially within the limits of an essay, must be highly selective and somewhat idiosyncratic. My own inclination is to interpret Peirce's writings in light of their upshot, the most mature phase of his intellectual

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<sup>3</sup> See Nathan Houser, "The Fortunes and Mistunes of the Peirce Papers" in *Signs of Humanity*, volume 3, edited by Michel Balat and Janice Deledalle (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 1259-1268.

<sup>4</sup> From a Peirce perspective, signs (and thus texts) inherently possess the power to evoke and, in some measure, evoke and even sustain attention and solicitude. No one has written more insightfully and convincingly on this topic than Joseph Ransdell. See especially "Semiotic and Linguistics" in *The Signifying Animal: The Grammar of Language and Experience*, edited by Irmengard Rauch and Gerald F. Carr (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), pp. 135-185.

<sup>5</sup> To take an example of this, consider the often quite fundamental disagreements among Mats Bergman, Risto Hilpinen, Christopher Hookway, Felicia Kruse, James Liszka, Helmut Pape, Joseph Ransdell and T. L. Short regarding Peirce's theory of signs. See "Symposium: Peirce's Theory of Signs by T. L. Short" in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, volume 42, number 4 (Fall 2007), pp. 601-693. Also, consider the controversy regarding whether Peirce was in any sense a foundationalist. See, e.g., C. F. Delany, *Science, Knowledge, and Mind: A Study of the Philosophy of C. S. Peirce* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993); Susan Haack, "Reflections of a Critical Common-sensist," *Transactions*, 32, 3 (1996), pp. 359-373; T. L. Short, "Was Peirce a Weak Foundationalist?" *Transactions*, 36, 4 (2000), pp. 503-528; and Michael Forest, "Peirce and Semiotic Foundationalism," *Transactions*, 43, 4 (Fall 2007), pp. 728-744.

development (roughly, from 1898 until 1914).<sup>6</sup> This is the phase in which his thought is most profoundly pragmatist, formally semiotic, and still undeniably experimental.<sup>7</sup>

With respect to pragmatism in general and Peirce in particular, the emphasis on today seems appropriate.<sup>8</sup> This is true especially if the present is conceived as the site of an intersection between “a stubborn past and an insistent future,”<sup>9</sup> the temporally thick expanse *through which* we are moving (one containing within itself to some degree that *from which* the

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<sup>6</sup> On the issue of selective emphasis, no pragmatist – indeed, no philosopher with whom at least I am familiar – is better than John Dewey. In *Experience and Nature* (1925), he stresses: “Selective emphasis, choice, is inevitable whenever reflection occurs. Deception comes only when the presence and operation of choice [or section] is concealed, disguised, denied. Empirical method finds and points to the operation of choice as it does to any other event. Thus it protects us from conversion of eventual [or emergent] functions into antecedent existence: a conversion that may be said to be the philosophic fallacy ...” All references to this work are to the critical edition, i.e., *Later Works of John Dewey*, volume 1 (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1988), hereafter cited as (LW 1, followed by page number of text cited). In this instance, LW 1, 34. The critical point is to acknowledge the selective emphases structuring and directing specific interpretations, inquiries, or more generally engagements. In my own case on this occasion, this means acknowledging the emphasis on Peirce the pragmatist, commonsensist, phenomenologist, and experimentalist who was minutely attentive to the pervasive role distinct types of signs play in cognition, query, and indeed experience.

<sup>7</sup> Let one example for a list to which Peirce scholars might add indefinitely. In 1912 (i.e., two years before his death), writing with an infirm hand, Peirce. In *Peirce’s Theory of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), T. L. Short stresses, Peirce “was never satisfied with his own statements of the doctrine [of signs]; he was never finished any statement of it. Peirce wrote philosophy ‘like a scientist,’ setting out ideas not intended as final but to be applied and developed, perhaps by others” (p. xii). The expression quoted here by Short (“like a scientist”) are those of Victor Baker, a geologist, offered in conversation with Short. They are the nub of Baker’s attempt to explain (in Short’s words) “why he [Baker, a trained and practicing scientist] found reading Peirce more rewarding than reading other philosophers” (p. xii, note 3). Short confesses: “This got me thinking. I think it explains why philosophers find Peirce’s writings frustrating, and I think it indicates *how Peirce ought to be read*” (ibid; emphasis added). My purpose in detailing this that Short’s reflections bring into focus a point I want to stress throughout this paper – Peirce was, in philosophy and everywhere else, first and foremost an experimentalist. He ought to be read (as Short suggests) as such.

<sup>8</sup> Richard J. Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), p. 272. Also see my “Entangling Alliances and Critical Traditions: Reclaiming the Possibilities of Critique” in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, volume 12, number 2 (1998), pp. 114-133.

<sup>9</sup> John Dewey, “Philosophy and Civilization,” *Later Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1988), volume 3, p. 6. Hereafter cited as LW 3: 6.

present has come and also that *toward which* it is moving).<sup>10</sup> The “living present” is, to quote Peirce’s “Issues of Pragmaticism,”<sup>11</sup> “that Nascent State between the Determinate and the Indeterminate.”<sup>12</sup> Attempting to situate Peirce in the present accordingly involves seeing him as an integral part of just such a nascent state. There is in this figure something determinate with which we must come to terms, a degree of secondness resisting our efforts to make this thinker into our puppet or plaything,<sup>13</sup> but also something indeterminate, above all a philosophy *in the making* – thus, one calling for the conscientious exercise of our own theoretical imagination.

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<sup>10</sup> As Dewey puts it in “Events and the Future,” “every event, or going-on, has a phase of pastness, presentness, and futurity about it.” This essay was originally published in the *Journal of Philosophy*, volume 23 (13 May 1926, pp. 253-258, and reprinted in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, volume 2 (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1988), pp. 62-68 (hereafter cited as *LW 2*). I am citing the critical edition: *LW 2*, 68. See Bertrand Helm, *Time and Reality in American Philosophy* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985).

<sup>11</sup> It is significant that in “Issues in Pragmaticism,” an essay following the lecture in 1898 (“Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results”) given at Berkeley by William James, Peirce focuses on time. In “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), he considered hardness, weight, force, and reality as matters calling for pragmatic clarification – more precisely, as illustrations of how the pragmatic maxim itself *works*. But, in “Issues in Pragmaticism,” he notes: “A good question, for illustrating the nature of Pragmaticism, is, What is Time?” (*CP* 5.458). It is in the context of addressing this question that Peirce offers the characterization of the present quoted above.

<sup>12</sup> Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, volume 5 (“Pragmatism and Pragmaticism”) edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1934), paragraph #459. Also in *The Essential Peirce* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), volume 2 (1893-1913), edited by the Peirce Edition Project (PEP), p. 358. Cited hereafter as *EP 2*.

<sup>13</sup> In *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), Richard Rorty advocates “strong misreading.” Someone committed to such an approach “simply beats the text into a shape which will serve his own purpose. He makes the text refer to whatever is relevant to that purpose. He does this by imposing a vocabulary ... on the text which may have nothing to do with any vocabulary used in the text or by its author, and seeing what happens. The model here is not the curious collector of clever gadgets taking them apart to see what makes them work and carefully ignoring any extrinsic end which they may have, but the psychoanalyst blithely interpreting a dream or a joke as a symptom of homicidal mania” (p. 151). My own approach to interpretation (or “reading”) is markedly different from that of Rorty, though I too am disposed to argue that adopting insights from an author for purposes are than those animating this individual can be a fruitful and, hence, legitimate procedure. Cf. Justus Buchler, “The Accidents of Peirce’s System” in *The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 37, number 10 (May 9, 1940), pp. 264-269, especially p. 269.

What is generally true of the living present then is keenly true of the philosophical present – say, a philosopher *today*: “The consciousness of the present ... is that of a struggle over *what shall be*; and thus ... it is *the Nascent State of the Actual*” (CP 5.462; emphasis added).<sup>14</sup> The topic of Peirce today therefore translates into the question, what shall Peirce become here and now? This is only partly a question of what we are able to make of him, for it is also a question of what he is able to make of us.<sup>15</sup> The distinctively pragmatic prefix *re-* is almost certainly appropriate here,<sup>16</sup> for it is far more a case of Peirce re-making than simply making us. How might the study of Peirce re-make our approach and orientation to philosophy?

If at the end of his life William James was working on a book (*Some Problems of Philosophy*) modestly subtitled *A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy*, then it is even more appropriate that I at this juncture offer what is most accurately described as an attempt at a sketch of a portrait of Peirce. Such a sketch can only be essayed from one angle of vision. I

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<sup>14</sup> Insofar as the continuity between past and future is predominant, the consciousness of a struggle is muted; but insofar as there is conflict, hence a sense of rupture and discontinuity, this consciousness is heightened and intensified. In the intellectual world, at least as it is configured in our historical epoch, the sense of conflict tends to be focal.

<sup>15</sup> The situation here is analogous to the one described by Peirce himself when he is offering an account of the “man-sign” (in particular, when he is responding to the objection that we make language, language does not make us: “Man makes the word, and the word means nothing which the man has not made it mean, and that only to some men”): “But since man can think only by means of words or other external symbols [i.e., by symbols in principle capable of being made public or intersubjective], these [words] might turn round and say: ‘You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought.’ In fact, men and words reciprocally educate each other ...” These texts are to be found in “Consequences of Four Incapacities” in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, volume 5, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1934), paragraph #313; also in *The Essential Peirce*, volume 1, edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 54. Signs and thus texts exert *an agency of their own*. They are not so much inert stuff into which we, as divine creates, breathe semiotic (or intelligible) life.

<sup>16</sup> Think of such central words in the pragmatist lexicon as reconstruction, reparation, renovation, renewal, recovery, retrieval, reform, remediation, and reconciliation. Of course, the prefix *trans-* is equally central to pragmatism (e.g., transition, transaction, transformation, transfiguration, transitive, and translation)

highlight this point not to give myself license to present only my interpretation of a figure about whom so many others have written insightfully. For one thing, my interpretation is deeply indebted to various other expositors, including especially my elders Max H. Fisch, Murray G. Murphey, John E. Smith, Richard J. Bernstein, Carl R. Hausman, Joseph L. Esposito, Sandra Rosenthal, Susan Haack, Joseph Ransdell, and above all T. L. Short.<sup>17</sup> The work of Douglas Anderson, Nathan Houser, James Liszka, André De Tienne, Cornelius de Waal, and others too numerous to mention (for not doing so I apologize). For another thing, I do not take my interpretation to be simply mine. It squares in most respects, if not here and there in that of emphasis, with those of other interpreters, for the most part the very best of these (e.g., Smith, Ransdell, Short, Hausman, Haack, and Rosenthal). For yet another, a keen sense of alternative interpretations should inform the delicate task of the responsible interpreter.

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<sup>17</sup>Max H. Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986); Murray G. Murray, *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), though originally published by Harvard University Press in 1961; John E. Smith, *Themes in American Philosophy: Purpose, Experience, and Community* NY: Harper Torchbooks, (1970), *The Spirit of American Philosophy* [Revised Edition] (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1983), *Purpose and Thought: The Meaning of Pragmatism* (1984), *America's Philosophical Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), etc. Richard Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), also his edited volume *Perspectives on Peirce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010). Vincent G. Potter, *Charles S. Peirce on Norms and Ideals* (NY: Fordham University Press, 1997), originally published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 1967, also *Peirce's Philosophical Perspectives*, edited by Vincent M. Colapietro (NY: Fordham University Press, 1996); Joseph L. Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics: The Development of Peirce's Theory of Categories* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1980) and his articles in the *Transactions*; Sandra B. Rosenthal, *Speculative Pragmatism* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), *Peirce's Pragmatic Pluralism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994); Christopher Hookway, *Peirce* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), also his *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Carl R. Hausman's *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Joseph Ransdell's various articles, not least of all "Semiotics and Linguistics" (cited above); T. L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge, 2007) and numerous essays. The work of younger scholars such as Douglas R. Anderson, Michael Raposa, James J. Liszka, Felicia Kruse, Andre De Tienne, Cheryl Misak

However flawed or deficient is my work as an interpreter, the exemplar of such an interpreter has guided this work for more than four decades.<sup>18</sup> For such an interpreter, the overarching ideal is obtaining what Peirce himself calls “an interior understanding.”<sup>19</sup> As unfashionable as the ideal of such understanding might be in some circles today, the desirability and simply the possibility of grasping an author in accord with that individual’s textually inscribed aims, assertions, and arguments virtually define the demanding role of the responsible reader. Obtaining an interior understanding of Peirce’s characteristically intricate writings poses formidable challenges. “To read Peirce is,” as John E. Smith asserts, “to philosophize, for to follow his arguments it is necessary for the reader himself to be wrestling with the problems Peirce envisaged.”<sup>20</sup> Put differently, the reader can be nothing less than a co-inquirer. Peirce is quite explicit about this: the reader “must actually repeat my observations and experiments for

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<sup>18</sup> In fact, I self-consciously espoused two actual interpreters of American philosophy as exemplars of philosophical interpretation – John E. Smith and Richard J. Bernstein. It was relevant to me that both were careful students of Western philosophy, going back to the ancient Greeks, also that both devoted attention to such pivotal figures as Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ludwig Wittgenstein and a host of others. As a young scholar, Smith’s *The Spirit of American Philosophy* and Bernstein’s *Praxis and Action* were especially important and instructive to me. In sum, they have served as my models, hermeneutic but also philosophical. In an important essay on Dewey – “John Dewey: Philosopher of Experience – included in *Reason and God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), Smith suggests: “It is impossible to expound or interpret philosophical ideas without giving at least implicit critical judgment; but implicit criticism is not enough; appraisal of a more positive [or at least explicit] sort is called for” (p. 107). He concludes this essay with a rhetorical question and then an emphatic assertion, “what better tribute to a distinguished philosopher can one offer than the attempt to think his thoughts after him and thus become engaged in a critical way with the problems he faced?” “We respect most those philosophers,” Smith immediately adds, “we take seriously enough to criticize” (p. 114). The task of the interpreter, pragmatically conceived, is accordingly to make the work of an author *available* for judicious critique and creative appropriation. This is at least what I have learned from the example of Smith and Bernstein.

<sup>19</sup> *Peirce’s Contributions to the Nation*, edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Edward Cook (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press, 1975), volume I, page 33.

<sup>20</sup> John E. Smith, Foreword to Vincent G. Potter’s *C. S. Peirce on Norms and Ideals* (New Fordham University Press, 1997), p. xxv.

himself, or else I shall more utterly fail to convey my meaning than if I were to discourse of effects of chromatic decoration with a congenitally blind.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, more than typically is the case, readers of Peirce are drawn into a process of thinking wherein they must exercise a degree of phenomenological attention and logical acumen comparable to that of the author. The verbal argument is at most only stage setting; the heart of the drama is the invocation of experience and, indeed, the attempt to register accurately the felt force of relevant experience.<sup>22</sup>

In this sketch of Peirce, then, I hope to convey some sense of a vast, intricate terrain, quite apart from my favorite haunts and habitats within this expanse. But, in addition to conveying some sense of the actual terrain of Peirce studies, I will exercise my philosophical judgment regarding what remains most promising and fruiting for the ongoing appropriation of Peircean pragmatism. Peirce’s abiding relevance to the intellectual (not just the philosophical) world is a point about which thinkers and commentators who disagree about much else agree. His relevance cannot be gainsaid.

In addressing the topic of Peirce today, I am addressing both the current state of Peirce studies and the thought of Peirce itself.<sup>23</sup> I do not take my task to be simply surveying the work

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<sup>21</sup> *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, volume 1, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1931), paragraph #286. Hereafter this and all other volumes of the *Collected Papers* will be cited, as is customary, by CP 1.268 (volume 1, paragraph 286).

<sup>22</sup> In *Peirce’s Theory of Signs*, T. L. Short astutely points out that: “The same is true of Husserlian phenomenology and Descartes’ *Meditations*. These are not forms of philosophy that consist in verbal argumentation; rather words are used to direct the reader to his own experience, and it is that experience, and not the words themselves, which carries the burden” (2007, 71).

<sup>23</sup> Douglas Anderson, “Old Pragmatisms, New Histories,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, volume 47, number 4 (October 2009), pp. 489-521; also Sami Pihlström, “Peirce’s Place in the Pragmatist Tradition,” *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, edited by Cheryl Misak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 27-57. For an assessment of the latter collection in general, however, see Risto Hilpinen, “Notes on the *Cambridge Companion to Peirce*,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, volume 41, number 4 (Fall 2005), pp. 740-761.

of commentators, champions, and critics. Such a survey must always refer back to the writings of Peirce, not hesitating where instructive to highlight those respects in which they have been faithful to his texts and those others in which these texts have been slighted, distorted, or in some other way ineptly or unfairly handled.

Before doing so, however, allow me a word about the context of philosophy today, the context in which my reflections on Peirce today must be situated. From a Peircean perspective, even the best philosophy today is an excessively verbal enterprise.<sup>24</sup> We certainly cannot dispense with words, but words ought to be used by philosophers principally as invocations of experience, occasions for observation. Moreover, philosophy is, despite encouraging developments within the analytic tradition, still an unduly ahistoric (at times, anti-historical) discipline,<sup>25</sup> especially when one considers not simply the narrow history of philosophy but the inclusive history of culture.<sup>26</sup> So, too, it tends to be too insular a discipline. Professional

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<sup>24</sup> See T. L. Short, "Pierce on Science and Philosophy" in *Philosophical Topics* (2008). 2007; 2008

<sup>25</sup> It is significant that the editors of *Studies in the Logic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997) – Nathan Houser, Don Roberts, and James Van Evra – selected as an epigram for this collection of essays Augustus De Morgan's claim, "All the men who are now called discoverers, in every matter ruled by thought, have been men versed in the minds of their predecessors, and learned in what had been before them" (*A Budget of Paradoxes*, volume I, p. 5). Though this claim might need to be qualified, it is generally (if in a strict sense universally) true. In any event, it is manifestly true of the logician on whom the essays in this volume are focused. It is certainly noteworthy that, in "Charles Sanders Peirce," Josiah Royce (with W. Fergus Kernan), a scholar of vast erudition, two years after Peirce's death and the very year of his own, considered Peirce to be a philosopher who united very wide knowledge of the history of philosophy with a generally fair-minded disposition to a discriminating criticism of philosophers, and with a capricious, though generally very well restrained interest in philosophical polemic, whose arts he regarded with a general skepticism and pursued with a usual moderation" (*Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, volume 13 [1916], p. 701).

<sup>26</sup> A book such as Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), the exception which proves this rule, makes this painfully clear. He connects philosophical history not only with the broader intellectual currents

philosophers read in an extremely selective manner, very rarely paying serious attention to anyone outside of the hothouse tradition in which they were trained, even more infrequently taking notice of what is going on in other disciplines. What Michel Foucault observed in 1968 is, at least, as true today as it was then (more precisely, as true of philosophy in the United States and in countries significantly influenced by the dominant paradigm of Anglo-American philosophy now as it was of philosophy in France then): “Philosophers are generally very ignorant of all other disciplines outside their own.”<sup>27</sup> Finally, it is a discipline in which a love of truth is far from being manifest. To many within this discipline,<sup>28</sup> the idea (let alone the ideal) of truth is not infrequently something of an embarrassment.<sup>29</sup>

It is far from certain whether Peirce would be more successful in the contemporary academy than he was in that of his own day. It is equally uncertain whether his style or manner of philosophizing would be more congenial or acceptable to our contemporaries than his own. Neither of these points necessarily speaks against Peirce. He was and remains an unsettling philosopher even more than a difficult personality.<sup>30</sup> In honestly confronting the challenge of his

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but also the fine arts, religious developments, political upheavals, and even subtle shifts in everyday life.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live: Interviews 1966-84*, edited by Sylvère Lotringer (NY: Semiotext(e) Foreign Agent Series, 1989), p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> In his own time, Peirce observed: “Science and philosophy seem to have been changed in their cradles. For it is not knowing, but the love of learning [the passion to discover what we do *not* know], that characterizes the scientific man; while the ‘philosopher’ is a man with a system which he thinks embodies all that is best worth knowing. If a man burns to learn and sets himself to comparing his ideas with experimental results in order that he may correct those ideas, every scientific man will recognize him as a brother, no matter how small his knowledge may be” (*CP* 1.44).

<sup>29</sup> T. L. Short, “Pierce on Science and Philosophy” in *Philosophical Topics* (2008); also Susan Haack, *Putting Philosophy to Work: Inquiry and Its Place in Culture* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008), especially chapters 7, 9, and 10.

<sup>30</sup> For informative about, and insights into, Peirce’s character and personality, see Joseph Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life* [Revised and Expanded Edition] (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). As helpful as Brent’s biography is, it tends to allow a preoccupation with the

thought, we realize that continuing with business as usual is in many respects unjustifiable. As much as anything else, it means taking up anew the task of instituting a cooperative inquiry in which selfless concern for attaining a rational consensus about difficult questions is more than an irrational hope.<sup>31</sup> In light of such considerations, we are forced to conclude that the institutions and disciplines of our own day are likely no more welcoming to Peirce than those of his own. We might conclude from this, so much the worse for these institutions and disciplines!

But, then, Peirce did not seek disciples. He sought co-inquirers, philosophers who were animated by a contrite sense of their own fallibility but also a high sense in the possibility of *our* efforts to attain knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Such faith is just that – faith – and in order for it to flourish it must

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difficult and unattractive aspects of Peirce eclipse the admirable and even heroic ones. For Peirce's commitment to discovery was, in my judgment along with those of many others, was nothing less than heroic.

<sup>31</sup> In a late manuscript, included as an Appendix to volume 1 of the *Later Works of John Dewey*, that pragmatist sagely observes: "The adoption of an empirical method is no guarantee that all the things relevant to any particular conclusion will actually be found or pointed to. ...But the empirical method points out when and where and how things of a designated description have been arrived at. It places before others a map of the road that has been travelled; they may accordingly, if they will, re-travel the road to inspect the landscape for themselves. Thus the findings of one may be rectified and extended by the findings of others, with as much assurance as is humanly possible of confirmation, extension and verification. The adoption of empirical, or denotative, method would thus procure for philosophic reflection something of that cooperative tendency toward consensus which marks inquiry in the natural sciences" (*LW* 1, 389-390). Whether or not this is sufficient to transform philosophy into a science in any recognizable or acceptable sense, it certainly does insure that might come to embody "something of that cooperative tendency toward consensus" characteristic of sciences like physics, chemistry, astronomy, and biology.

<sup>32</sup> In *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, volume 1, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1931), we read as the conclusion of the Preface pieced together from several manuscripts by the editors: "Indeed, out of a 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). Earlier in this Preface, we read, "in brief, my philosophy may be described as the attempt of a physicist to make such conjecture as to the constitution as the constitution of the universe as the methods of science may permit, with the aid of all that has been done by previous philosophers" (*CP* 1.7). Such an endeavor marks a radical breach with the dominant tradition of Western philosophy, a tradition in which apodictic certain and demonstrative arguments tend to

be conjoined to hope and love. The texts in which Peirce expounds this doctrine are worthy of quoting at length. In his judgment,

logicality inexorably requires that our interests shall *not* be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation. It must reach, however vaguely, beyond this geological epoch, beyond all bounds. He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the world, is, as seems to me, illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in the social principle.<sup>33</sup>

In addition to this but also to our faith in our colleagues and, indeed, the possibility of our efforts and sacrifices converging with theirs to further our common undertaking, “there is nothing in the facts to forbid our having a *hope*, or calm and cheerful wish, that the community may last beyond any assignable date” (*CP* 2.654; also *EP* 1, 150). There is nothing in the facts to preclude the hope that our communal endeavor will approximate its defining objective before all potential members of this inclusive community are obliterated. Of course, Peirce is aware of how odd or even implausible his position must

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be defining ideals of this extensive tradition. On this point, Peirce is explicit – better, he is emphatic: “Demonstrative proof is not to be thought of. The demonstrations of the metaphysicians are all moonshine. The best that can be done is simply to supply a hypothesis, not devoid of all likelihood, in the general line of growth of scientific ideas, and capable of being verified or refuted by future observers” (*ibid.*).

<sup>33</sup> “The Doctrine of Chances” in *Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, volume 2, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1932), paragraph #654 (*CP* 2.654); also in *The Essential Peirce*, volume 1 (1867-1893), edited by Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 149 (*EP* 2, 149). What is especially salient in terms of the point being made is that Peirce argues for these points in the context of an otherwise highly technical discussion of induction.

sound, especially to tough-minded thinkers. He readily concedes: “*It may seem strange that I should put forward three sentiments, namely, interest in an indefinite community, recognition of the possibility of this interest being made supreme, and hope in an unlimited continuance of intellectual activity, as indispensable requirements of logic*” (CP 2.655; also EP 1, 150; emphasis added). But, he argues, this becomes plausible when we consider logic in the light of its service to inquiry (indeed, logic as a theory of inquiry, more precisely, as a normative theory of objective investigation<sup>34</sup>):

Yet, when we consider that logic depends on a mere struggle to escape doubt, which as it terminates, must begin in emotion, and that, furthermore, the only cause of our planting ourselves on reason is that other methods of escaping doubt [i.e., other modes of investigation] fail on account of the social impulse [see, e.g., “The Fixation of Belief,” specifically CP 5.378-381, also in EP 1, 116-118], why should we wonder to find social sentiment presupposed in reasonings?<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> By *objective inquiry* I simply mean that process of discovering what we do not know, ranging from the discovery of singular facts (e.g., where I misplaced my keys or who broke into my house) to that of laws. We not only undertake such inquiries but also we are in countless instances successful (I occasionally do find my keys, scientists sometimes hit upon the laws governing what we observe).

Arguably the most succinct and accurate overview of this part of Peirce’s contribution to philosophy is Elizabeth Cooke’s *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry: Fallibilism and Indeterminacy* (London: Continuum, 2006). Of course Cheryl Misak’s *Truth and the End of Inquiry* and other writings as well as Susan Haack’s expositions are very valuable resources, but better known ones – hence, my desire to make a point of stressing the value of Cooke’s study

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 10 (“Doubt: Affective States and the Regulation of Inquiry” in Christopher Hookway’s *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity<sup>36</sup> are thus transfigured by Peirce into logical sentiments indispensable for the conscientious pursuit of experimental inquiry (the only form of inquiry in which our way of proceeding exposes itself to the radical risk of fundamental error). The pursuit of knowledge and even knowledge itself are accordingly definable only in reference to an array of virtues.<sup>37</sup> In this respect as so many others, Peirce anticipated later developments, not least of all what is called today “virtue epistemology.”

Ideally, the reality of community – hence, that of the community of inquirers – is the concrete, growing embodiment of nothing less than faith, hope, and *caritas*. Actually, the community of inquirers is never anything more than a motley association of more or less companionable antagonists disposed to challenge, question, and refute one another. On countless occasions, however, the exchanges of these antagonists exemplify the exercise of the virtues requisite for discovering the truth. But the danger is always that such an association will provide little or nothing more than occasions for displays of cleverness, at the expense of others.

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<sup>36</sup>Peirce explicitly takes note of the correlation or coincidence (i.e., co-occurrence): “It interests me to note that these three sentiments seem to be pretty much the same as the famous trio of Charity, Faith, and Hope, which, in the estimation of St. Paul, are the finest and greatest of spiritual gifts. Neither Old nor New testament is a textbook of the logic of science, but the latter is certainly the highest existing authority in regard to the dispositions of heart which a man ought to have” (*CP* 2.654; or *EP* 1, 150-151).

<sup>37</sup> “The most vital factors in the method of modern science,” Peirce insists, “have not been the following of this or that logical prescription – although these have had their value too – but they have been the moral factors” (*CP* 7.86; cf. *CP* 2.82). It is instructive to recall what Peirce judges to be foremost among these factors: “First of these has been the genuine love of truth and conviction that nothing else could long endure” (*ibid.*). Cf. Susan Haack, “The First Rule of Reason” in *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Jacqueline Brunning and Paul Forster (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), pp. 241-\_\_\_’ also her “Concern for Truth: What It Means, Why It Matters” in *The Flight from Science and Reason*, edited by Paul R. Gross, Norman Levitt, and Martin W. Lewis (NY: New York Academy of Sciences, 1996), pp. 57-63.

When the youthful Peirce wrote of “the inhumanity of the polemical spirit.”<sup>38</sup> (W 1, 5), it is likely he wrote with a fuller wisdom than he consciously or personally possessed. When motley associations of companionable antagonists degenerate into predominantly polemical affairs, we witness not only the degradation of humanity but also the disfigurement of inquiry, at least in the Peircean sense. This most tough-minded of philosophers was also a tender-hearted person: he was, in his own words, a sentimental conservative.<sup>39</sup> The work of inquiry is, for such a conservative, indissociable from the cultivation of certain sentiments, indeed from the acquisition of certain virtues.

If the technical, formal side of Peirce is allowed to eclipse the human, moral side, then Peirce in his unsettling otherness, his irreducible singularity, will be unavailable to us today, above all, to us in our efforts to re-institute philosophical investigation as an experimental undertaking in which the discovery of novel truth is the soul of the entire endeavor. Unquestionably, the technical, formal side of this thinker deserves painstaking, critical attention. For the most part, it is almost certainly the side most worthy of our consideration (the theoretical or intellectual obstacles, as distinct from the emotional and cultural ones, are here the most formidable). Given the inherent difficulty of the intricate issues with which Peirce was preoccupied (e.g., continuity, meaning, and reality), also given his novel approach to these challenging topics, this side ought to be one to which minute scholarship and philosophical imagination are devoted. My only caution is that our understandable fascination with the theoretical intricacies and challenges of this side of Peirce not be allowed to thrust completely from view Peirce the avowed sentimentalist.

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<sup>38</sup> *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), volume 1, p. 5. Hereafter cited, as is customary, as W 1, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Christopher Hookway, *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism*. Also Haack

The simple fact (albeit for some the uncomfortable fact) is Peirce was an avowed sentimentalist and, in attempting to sketch his portrait, this aspect deserves to be highlighted, especially at a time when sentimentalism is among philosophers and other intellectuals in such disrepute.<sup>40</sup> His sentimentalism is an attempt to give sentiments, emotions, and feelings their due,<sup>41</sup> to grant in our philosophical accounts the affective dimension of human life the status and indeed centrality this dimension exhibits in our experience and practices.<sup>42</sup>

### **A Philosopher's Philosopher**

The strictly philosophical stature of Peirce today is more secure, his influence more pervasive and profound, his leading ideas more carefully explicated and accurately understood, than at any time before our own. The publication of a critical edition, although far from completion, has contributed greatly to this state of affairs. Especially since the time of the founding of the Charles S. Peirce Society in 1965, there has been a cumulative growth in the critical understanding of this singular genius. This is not to slight the work prior to the founding of this Society. Indeed, work published prior to the establishment of this organization richly rewards the careful reader, most notably Justus Buchler's *Charles Peirce's Empiricism* (1939),<sup>43</sup> Thomas Goudge's *The Thought of C. S. Peirce* (1950), W. B. Gallie's *Peirce and Pragmatism* (1952),

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<sup>40</sup> The same might be argued regarding Peirce's commitment to anthropomorphism. See especially *Collected Papers*, volume 1 and 5 (specifically CIP 1.316, 5.46-47, 121, 212, and 536).

<sup>41</sup> See David Savan, "Peirce's Semiotic Account of Emotion" in *Proceedings of the Charles S. Peirce Bicentennial Congress* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press, 1981), edited by K. L. Ketner et al, pp. 319-333; also chapters 9 ("Sentiment and Self-Control") and 10 ("Doubt: Affective States and the Regulation of Inquiry") in *Hookway, Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism*.

<sup>42</sup> In one place, he goes so far as to assert, "those things which are own hearts assure us are true, – such as the doctrine of love" (*MS* 862).

<sup>43</sup> It is rarely the case where an original philosopher in his own right also proves himself to be such a penetrating expositor of another thinker. But this is manifest true of Buchler vis-à-vis Peirce.

Manley Thompson's *The Pragmatic Philosophy of C. S. Peirce* (1953), and above all Murray G. Murphey's *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* (1961). Both the First Series (1952), edited by Philip P. Wiener and Frederic H. Young, and the Second Series (1964), edited by Edward C. Moore and Richard S. Robin, of *Studies in the Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce* contain essays worthy even today of careful attention.

In addition, the sesquicentennial celebration in 1989 of his birth did much to focus and solidify this growth, while the forthcoming centennial commemoration in 2014 of his death promises to accomplish nothing less than this with respect to the developments since 1989. A number of volumes were generated by this congress,<sup>44</sup> certainly not least of all a collection of the plenary sessions – *Peirce and Contemporary Thought: Philosophical Inquiries* (1995), edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner.<sup>45</sup> At the risk of slighting equally noteworthy scholars, allow me simply to list a number of individuals who in various disciplines, or from different countries, have contributed so significantly to the study of Peirce today: Milton Singer, Valentine Daniel, Eugene Halton, Hans Joas, Anne Freadman, Drude von der Fehr, Fernando Andatch, Dmitri Shalin, Anne-Lise Middelthon as well as younger scholars such as Susan Falls, Paul Kockelman, and Torill Strand.<sup>46</sup>; also of course Gerard Deledalle (France), Klaus Oehler

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<sup>44</sup> These include *Peirce and Value Theory: Peircean Ethics and Aesthetics*, edited by Herman Parrett (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1994); *From Time and Chance to Consciousness: Studies in the Metaphysics of Charles Peirce*, edited by Richard S. Robin (Oxford: Berg Publishers, Ltd., 1994); *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications, and Connections*, edited by Vincent M. Colapietro and Thomas Olshewsky (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> *Peirce and Contemporary Thought: Philosophical Inquiries* (1995), edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner (NY: Fordham University Press, 1995). A number of other volumes were generated by this sesquicentennial conference, including *Studies in the Logic of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Nathan Houser, Don Roberts, and James Van Evra (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997);

<sup>46</sup> Milton Singer's *Man's Glassy Essence: Explorations in Semiotic Anthropology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984); E. Valentine Daniel, *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil*

(Germany), Winfried Nöth (Germany), Helmut Pape (Germany), Santaella (Brazil), Umberto Eco (Italy), Teresa de Lauretis (Italy and the US), Susan Petrilli (Italy), Augusto Ponzio (Italy), Sami Pihlström (Finland), Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen (Finland), Mats Bergman (Finland), Torjus Midtgarden (Norway). In sum, the thought of Peirce is alive and well and living in philosophy and other disciplines.

Even so, it is likely that Peirce will remain for the most part a philosopher's philosopher. Dewey's characterization of Peirce as such a philosopher deserves to be recalled here. Indeed, Dewey is in general a very insightful interpreter of Peircean pragmatism. In a review in *The New Republic* (1937) of volumes 1-6 of *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, he suggested Peirce

flung abroad many stones, sometimes pebbles, sometimes boulders, when he was sowing germinal ideas. ... He united ... a disciplined mind and an undisciplined personality. The combination is an unusual one. Its product is the appearance in his writings of not only such difficulties as may be expected when a thinker is breaking new fields, but of perplexing contradictions and multitude of starts that get almost nowhere. Moreover, there is hardly any subject that he did not touch

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Way (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), also his *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>47</sup> John Dewey, *Later Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1991), volume 11, p. 479-480. This review of volumes 1-6 of the *Collected Papers* originally appear in *The New Republic*, 89 (3 February 1937), pp. 415-416. It was preceded in *The New Republic* (30 January 1935), pp. 338-339, by a review of volume 5 ("The Founder of Pragmatism"). This is reprinted in *LW* 11, pp. 421-424. Other insightful treatments by Dewey of Peirce are "Peirce's Theory of Quality" and "Peirce's Theory of Linguistic Signs, Thought, and Meaning." The former originally appeared in the *Journal of Philosophy*, volume 32 (1935), pp. 533-544, and was reprinted in *Later Works of John Dewey*, volume 11, pp. 86-94. The latter first appeared in also

This worked against Peirce's accessibility to most of the readership of *The New Republic*. At least this is Dewey's conclusion: "In consequence, Peirce will always remain a philosopher's philosopher. His ideas will reach the general public only through the mediations and translations of others."<sup>48</sup> (*LW* 11, 480). In truth, Peirce's availability even to other philosophers depends significantly upon the mediations and translations of those who have made his writings a focus of study.

A philosopher's philosopher is nonetheless a theorist's temptation. Accordingly, theoretically inclined representatives of other disciplines and discourses (e.g., sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, literary theory, and cultural studies) have been and will continue to be inclined to enlist Peirce's services in advancing their fields of study. The uses to which Peirce has been put will not necessarily accord with either the spirit of the letter of his writings.<sup>49</sup> But the uses most in accord with Peirce's aspirations and aims are not necessarily those determined by philosophers, in particular, by contemporary philosophers (and, among these, by philosophers who all too often all too slight and superficial acquaintance with the history of their own discipline). Consequently, philosophers have in this context no right to be proprietary (at least to be presumptively proprietary), especially since Peirce was always more than a philosopher. Peirce does not belong to them. There is in my judgment no better characterization of him than that of experimentalist: he was a thinker devoted to trying out new

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in the *Journal of Philosophy*, volume 43, pp. 85-95, and was printed in *Later Works of John Dewey*, volume 15, pp. 141-152.

<sup>48</sup> *LW*, 11, 480.

<sup>49</sup> Short generated something of a firestorm when pronounced, at the outset his book: "Peirce's theory of signs, or semeiotic, misunderstood by so many, has gotten in amongst the wrong crowd. It has been taken up by an interdisciplinary army of 'semioticians' whose views and aims are antithetical to Peirce's own, and meanwhile it has been shunned by those philosophers who are working in Peirce's own spirit on the very problems to which his semeiotic is addressed" (*Peirce's Theory of Signs*, p. ix).

ideas, thus to testing ideas in terms of their experimental consequences. As a result, he was more interested in opening fields of inquiry (think here of his study of signs or logic of vagueness) than in presenting in systematic form the certain conclusions of past investigations. He designed his classification of sciences as an *instrument* of inquiry. The same must be said of his theory of signs. Indeed, this is as true of any of his doctrines. Consider, for example, his *synechism* or doctrine of continuity. Synechism is first and foremost a principle of methodology.<sup>50</sup> In other words, Peirce's principal preoccupation was with the logic of discovery, not the logic of exposition – truths not yet known, not truth already captured and tagged. He judged philosophers in this own day to be excessively antiquarian – insufficiently inquisitive.

Though I have stressed that the formal, technical side of Peirce ought not to be allowed to eclipse the human, sentimental side, the former deserves sustained, systematic, and painstaking study. One reason for Peirceans to be encouraged today is that just this side of Peirce's contribution to philosophy has increasingly solicited such study. Peirce tended to identify himself simply as a logician<sup>51</sup> and Peirce the logician has been carefully studied by a number of trained and indeed gifted logicians, most prominently Jaakko Hintikka, Risto Hilpinen, Don Roberts, Randall Dipert, Robert Burch, Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, and Susan Haack. Peirce also was keen to identify himself as a scientist, insisting that he had his mind molded by his life in the laboratory" (*CP* 5. 411; also in *EP* 2, 331). *Peirce's Scientific Metaphysics: The Philosophy of*

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<sup>50</sup> In a characteristic pronouncement, Peirce asserts: "Synechism is not an ultimate and absolute metaphysical doctrine; it is a regulative principle of logic, prescribing what sort of hypothesis is fit to be entertained and examined" (*Collected Papers*, volume 6, #173 [*CP* 6.173]). But since he does not shy away from offering hypotheses in the context of metaphysics, it turns out that Peirce commits himself not only to the reality of continuity (continua *are* real) but also the more or less seamless character of countless realities. Even so, synechism is for him first and foremost a methodological counsel, not a metaphysical doctrine.

<sup>51</sup> This is somewhat misleading since what he meant by *logic* is wider than what is customarily designated by this term. In Peirce's writings it often signifies nothing less than the theory of signs (or semeiotic) in its entirety. Cf. Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Peirce*.

*Chance Law, and Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002) by Andrew Reynolds is one of the most important contributions to Peirce scholarship in recent decades. But the “laboratory life did not prevent the writer [i.e., Peirce] ... from becoming interested in methods of thinking” (*CP* 5.412; also in *EP* 2, 332). Quite the opposite, such a life made of Peirce above all else a philosopher preoccupied with questions regarding methods of inquiry, though hardly indifferent to the specific discoveries made concerning substantive issues. He characterized himself as “a life-long student of reasonings” (*CP* 3.415). This specific facet has also received considerable attention by some of his very best expositors (e.g., Haack, Short, Ransdell, Ketner, Delaney, and Hookway). In this regard, the work of Cheryl Misak and Peter Skagestad is also helpful. There is however a tendency on the part of analytically trained philosophers to fit Peirce to contemporary concerns and debates rather than re-envisioning the possibility of transforming contemporary philosophy in light of Peircean ideas. Misak mostly avoids doing so, but not entirely. The bid to make Peirce respectable to mainstream philosophy is, at once, admirable and risky: he certainly deserves a hearing from those who are part of what is in obvious respects are the best trained and most rigorous professional philosophers today, but *he* deserves a hearing (i.e., he does not deserve to be trimmed to the fashions of the day). This invites us to reflect on what I am inclined to identify as the availability of Peirce’s philosophy.

### **The Availability of Peirce Today**

For reasons quite apart from Peirce being a philosopher’s philosopher, his thought is still not optimally available to us today. As paradoxical as this might sound, I want to stress the degree to which Peirce’s philosophy is unavailable to us at present. It is illuminating to explore why this is the case. In framing the matter in this manner – in focusing on the availability of Peirce’s

thought – I am following the example of an essay by Stanley Cavell (“The Availability of the Later Wittgenstein”). “It is a vision as simple as it is difficult. ... To attempt the work of *showing* its simplicity [and thereby its difficulty] would be a real step in making available Wittgenstein’s later philosophy.”<sup>52</sup> (Cavell, 52). What Cavell asserts regarding Wittgenstein I am disposed to claim regarding Peirce: “The first thing to be said in accounting for his style is that he *writes*: he does not report, he does not write up results.” (70). “Nobody would forge a style so personal [or so forbidding] who had not wanted and needed to find the right expression for his thought” (ibid.). If anyone supposes that this comparison to the later Wittgenstein is strained or implausible, that individual should consider Peirce’s self-revelation: “what I write is done in the process of forming a conception” (MS 339).<sup>53</sup> In other words, writing was for Peirce, as it was for Wittgenstein, not a means of reporting what he had discovered, but a process of discovery.

First of all, Peirce’s writings are still not available to us. Despite the herculean effort of the Peirce Edition Project for a number of decades, the boxes of manuscripts acquired by Harvard University in 1914 from his widow Juliette<sup>54</sup> are now in greater disarray and incompleteness than they were at the time of that acquisition. Put otherwise, the manuscripts acquired by Harvard in 1914 are not exactly those possessed by us today.

Beyond this, Peirce’s thought is not optimally available to us. The principal reason is that (to invoke the counsel of Emerson) the spirit in which his texts are to be interpreted is the

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<sup>52</sup> Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* [Update Edition] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Short, *Peirce’s Theory of Signs*, p. 182.

<sup>54</sup> See Victor F. Lenzen, “Reminiscences of a Mission to Milford, Pennsylvania.” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 1, 1 (Spring 1965), 3-11. This is the first article in the inaugural issue of this important journal. It is an account of Lenzen’s visit to Milford, Pennsylvania, in behalf of Harvard to acquire Peirce’s papers and library from Juliette.

same spirit from which they flow.<sup>55</sup> This spirit is experimentalism, one inclusive of fallibilism.<sup>56</sup> But professional philosophers tend to hanker for deductive argumentation and conceptual closure far more than experimental proof and heuristic fecundity. Another reason is that the love of truth tends so often to be displaced by the love of notoriety or that of vainglory. Yet another reason is that the work of philosophers is carried out at too great a distance from the work of scientists (and this implies not only at too far a remove from the spirit of science but also a detailed familiarity with some of the best work in contemporary science). Professional philosophy is too often marred, if not destroyed, by vainglorious polemics.

The gulf between mainstream philosophy and the Peircean project, however, is not as wide as these considerations might be taken to imply. As Short notes, “there are deep affinities of aim and method between Peirce and analytic philosophers: each identify [sic.] philosophy as a cooperative mode of inquiry rightly dividing into numerable specialized studies, usually highly technical.”<sup>57</sup> “Neither is,” he immediately adds, “interested in amusing or in edifying a popular audience.” “All the same, Peirce was not an analytic philosopher.” The main reason is that he

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<sup>55</sup> “Whatever cumulative growth there has been in the stream of classical philosophy has been achieved,” Justus Buchler contends in “the Accidents of Peirce’s System,” “not by modifying a ready-made system, but by the partial or limited acceptance of a given philosopher’s work through discriminating selection, and this is where the homogeneity [or coherence] of the previous system was far greater than in Peirce” (*The Journal of Philosophy*, volume 37, number 10 (May 9, 1940), p. 265. “To strain principally for the conservation of his picturesque architectonic [as Paul Weiss does in “The Essence of Peirce’s System”] will scarcely be to provide the corrective which he [Peirce] lacked while alive. It would be better,” Buchler adds, “to honor him in the act, learning from the rich conceptions and potentialities of his thought by intelligent discrimination rather than by the esthetic contemplation of their dubious unity” (p. 269).

<sup>56</sup> The heart of fallibilism is no better identified than by William James in *The Will to Believe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), a book dedicated to Charles S. Peirce: “Our errors are surely not such awfully solemn things. In a world where we are so certain to incur them in spite of all our caution, a certain lightness of heart seems healthier than this excessive nervousness on their behalf. At any rate, it seems the fittest thing for the empirical [or experimental] philosopher” (p. p. 25).

<sup>57</sup> Short, “Peirce on Science and Philosophy,” p. 275.

did not identify philosophy “with verbal argument or with finesse and finality of verbal formulation.”<sup>58</sup>

Making Peirce’s thought available to us today practically means exposing ourselves to the radical risks of experimental inquiry. It means according observation, experience, and experimentation a much more prominent role in philosophical discourse than they tend to exhibit today. It involves being open and willing to learn to ask different questions than the ones we are accustomed to raise far more than seeking in his texts answers to our questions. The history of philosophy *is* a resource for insights and even answers to contemporary questions. But its deeper value is to explode the insular present, exposing our contemporary modes of query<sup>59</sup> to the potentially disorienting forces of alternative perspectives,

A candid look at the actual history of American pragmatism reveals something startling. Pragmatism was even in its inaugural phase more than an American philosophy. After all, the role accorded by Peirce to the Scottish psychologist Alexander Bain is quite telling here. On more than one occasion, Peirce recalled that “a skillful lawyer”<sup>60</sup> and spirited member of the Metaphysical Club, Nicholas St. John Green, urged upon Peirce and the other members “the importance of applying Bain’s definition of belief, as ‘that upon which a man is prepared to act.’ From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary; so that I am disposed to think

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Justus Buchler has proposed to use the word query in a very broad sense so that it encompasses not only inquiry in the Peircean and allied senses but also other forms of probing and interrogation (e.g., that of the composer at the piano playing now this, now that, as a means of exploring possibilities for the piece on which s/he is working). See his *Nature and Judgment* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1955), also *Toward a General Theory of Judgment* [Second, Revised Edition] (New York: Dover, 1979).. In order for Peirce’s theory of signs to attain the generality he sought, it might be necessary to make query rather than inquiry the central concern.

<sup>60</sup> It is noteworthy that today the resurgence of pragmatism includes a number of trained lawyers who are also legal theorists, most notably Richard Posner, Michael Sullivan, and Kory Spencer Sorrell. Of these, Sorrell is the one most deeply acquainted with Peircean pragmatism and indeed indebted in his own thinking to this particular pragmatist.

of him [Bain] as the grandfather of pragmatism” (CP 5.12).<sup>61</sup> Also, his genealogy of pragmatism is instructive. In one place (and there is no possibility of here quoting anything but one text), Peirce acknowledges: “Socrates bathed in these waters. Aristotle rejoices when he can find them. They run, where least one would expect them, beneath the dry rubbish-heaps of Spinoza” (CP 5.11). Here he also mentions John Locke, Immanuel Kant, George Berkeley, and Auguste Comte. Of equal importance, pragmatism in its Jamesian re-inauguration in 1898 was very quickly an international movement. Pragmatism today is as vibrantly represented in Finland, Italy, Germany, and other countries as in US.

Peirce today is as much as James, Dewey, and Mead an international figure. More or less contemporaneous with this gathering,<sup>62</sup> André de Tienne is lecturing in Japan on Peirce. This coincidence is hardly insignificant, for in a small way it points to a fact of large importance. So, to repeat, Peirce today is an international figure. A number of scholars from a number of countries find in his writings resources for addressing contemporary issues or reorienting contemporary debates.

To repeat, Peirce today is an international figure. For me, this is an occasion for celebration. One reason for this is that Peirce provides invaluable resources for developing a non-reductive naturalism. No one has done more to make these theoretical resources available to the contemporary world than T. L. Short. Short’s efforts, following the lead of Peirce, to show how thoroughgoing mechanism is inadequate to explain some of the most prominent phenomena

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<sup>61</sup> Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* (Third Edition), chapter 11, p. 505.

<sup>62</sup> As I noted at the outset, this essay grew out of a presentation at a meeting of CEPF taking place on June 7, 2010. As a way of keeping a sense of the contemporaneity of this sketch, I am retaining this occasional reference. On June 18, 2010, André De Tienne presented at Kyoto University a talk entitled “Peirce’s Conception of What Is Fundamental in Philosophy.” This is obviously but one example of Peirce’s international stature, but an illuminating one nonetheless (a scholar originally from Belgium, who now is Director of the Peirce Edition Project, lecturing at a major university in Japan being a noteworthy fact).

in the natural world are, at once, deeply Peircean and philosophically innovative in terms of the details of his argumentation.<sup>63</sup>

Another reason why Peirce's international stature is an occasion for celebration is that his philosophy invites – indeed, demands – interrogation of the limits of the naturalism for which his voluminous writings provide such indispensable resources. As unfashionable or embarrassing as Peirce's traditional theism makes many of his contemporary followers or readers (that is, *us* today), it helps us avoid being smug or, worse, militant naturalists who paint religion as never anything but malicious folly and who portray believers as (at best) benighted fools. Matters are, at least from a Peircean perspective, more complex and undecidable than this.

## Conclusion

In many circles, the resurgence of pragmatism has not entailed a renewal of interest in Peirce.<sup>64</sup> Critics of neo-pragmatism as often as neo-pragmatists themselves can be quite dismissive of Peirce. Peirce's "contribution to philosophy was," in Rorty's judgment, merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James."<sup>65</sup> Leaving a session of the annual meeting of SAAP, a

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<sup>63</sup> In addition to the relevant sections (most obviously Chapter 5 – "Final Causation") of *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, consult at least "Teleology in Nature" and "Darwin's Concept of Final Cause: Neither New nor Trivial." The former appeared in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, volume 20, number 4 (October 1983), pp. 311-320, the latter in *Biology and Philosophy*, 17 (2002), 323-340.

<sup>64</sup> This is of course not true of Richard J. Bernstein, from whom I have borrowed this expression. See "The Resurgence of Pragmatism," *Social Research* 59, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 813-40. For my critique of Bernstein's re-narration of the development of American pragmatism, see "Engaged Pluralism: Between Alterity and Sociality" in *The Pragmatic Century: Conversations with Richard J. Bernstein*, edited by Sheila Greve Davaney and Warren Frisina (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 39-68

<sup>65</sup> *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 161. This passage is found in "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," Rorty's Presidential Address to the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Society. "Peirce never made up his mind what he wanted a general theory of signs for, nor what it might look like, nor what its relation to either logic or epistemology was

friend of mine who is a Peircean caustically characterized the Society as a congregation of Dewey-eyed pragmatists<sup>66</sup> who at best suffer the presence of Peirceans. He was simply tired of being dismissed or patronized by Deweyans who were out to save the world. I can still hear him grumbling about these self-congratulatory Deweyans actually knowing quite little about Dewey and far less about the world.<sup>67</sup> Saving the world is unquestionably a praiseworthy undertaking. Undertaking to do so by talking to other philosophers however hardly seems to be the most effective way of achieving or even simply approximating one's objective. The charge by my friend was unfair, even if the frustration is not altogether unreasonable. But the outburst of irritation is emblematic of how more than a few Peirceans often feel about their treatment by other pragmatists. So, the growing community of Peirce scholars runs mostly, at least strikingly, parallel to the contemporary resurgence of the pragmatist perspective. There are of course intersections. Richard J. Bernstein is, for example, a contemporary pragmatist who is intimately knowledgeable of the main currents in contemporary thought, including neo- and paleo-pragmatism. While the main focus of his concern tends to be social and political philosophy, he is anything but dismissive of Peirce. Indeed, one of the best essays in recent years is Bernstein's "Experience after the Linguistic Turn."<sup>68</sup> The turn toward language need not entail the

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supposed to be." From Rorty's perspective, Peirce "remained the most Kantian of thinkers – the most convinced that philosophy gave us an all-embracing ahistorical context in which every other species of discourse could be assigned its proper place and rank" (p. 161).

<sup>66</sup> This caustic characterization of Deweyan pragmatists seems to have been coined by the historian John Patrick Diggins. In this regard see his *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994) but especially his contribution ("Pragmatism and Its Limits") to *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture*, edited by Morris Dickstein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>67</sup> In a recent issue of *The Nation*, Dewey was identified as one of the fifty most important progressives in the twentieth century (to be precise, he was ranked fifth, after in order from first downward Eugene Debs, Jane Addams,

<sup>68</sup> This is Chapter 6 of *The Pragmatic Turn* (Polity Press, 2010), pp. 125-152.

jettisoning of experience. Contra Rorty, we cannot do everything – and more – with the Wittgensteinian notion of language-game that the pragmatists were trying to do with experience. In no small measure, Bernstein here makes the case for retaining the pragmatist conception of human experience by means of Peirce’s categories. It is a nuanced and (in my judgment) compelling argument.

Peirce today invites us to read him not so much as a contemporary but as a contributor to philosophy the day after tomorrow.<sup>69</sup> If we are to go beyond Peirce, we first have to catch up to him.<sup>70</sup> Peirce today is still a philosopher who outdistances us, one whom we are yet trying to overtake.

Peirce was in some respects benighted and arguably even worse.<sup>71</sup> But he was also a philosophical genius and (in some respects) heroic individual, a thinker more profoundly a

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<sup>69</sup> “As philosophy finds its footing in this new millennium, there is,” Nathan Houser wrote in 2005, “some reason to suppose that Peirce will play a larger role in setting its course than anyone would have expected during most of the half-century that followed the 1951 publication of Quine’s ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’” (“Peirce in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, volume 41, number 4 [Fall 2005], p.729. Friedrich Nietzsche. Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Harvard University Press).

<sup>70</sup> In the Preface to *Peirce and Contemporary Thought: Philosophical Inquiries* (NY: Fordham University Press, 1995), K. L. Ketner astutely notes: “While the ideas of honoring pioneers and of seeking further progress surely appeal to all scientific intelligences, it is poor economy of research to dash ahead without being fully aware of the progress made by one’s ancestors. That is to say, how can we go beyond Peirce if we have not yet caught up to the waypoints he reached? That Peirce was ahead of his time, and in some respects is still ahead of our time, is a theme one finds recurring in serious Peirce scholarship” (p. xi).

<sup>71</sup> Even given the standards of his day, it is impossible for me not to cringe when I read in one of his letters to Victoria Lady Welby: “Being a convinced Pragmaticist in Semeiotic, naturally and necessarily nothing can appear to be sillier than rationalism; and folly in politics cannot go further than English liberalism. The people ought to be enslaved; only the slaveholders ought to practice the virtues that alone can maintain their rule.” *Semiotics and Significs*, edited by Charles S. Hardwick (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 78. The same is true when I read: “f they were to come to know me better they might learn to think me ultra-conservative. I am, for example, an old-fashioned christian, a believer in the efficacy of prayer, an opponent of female suffrage and of universal male suffrage, in favor of letting business-

*pragmatist* than many pragmatists today realize or appreciate.<sup>72</sup> One way in which this is evident is in terms of one of his principal philosophical preoccupations, the clarification of meaning. In what might strike some students of pragmatism as surprising, Peirce insists:

When one seeks to know what is meant by physical force, and finds that it is a real component acceleration of defined amount and direction that would exist whatever the original velocity, it is possible to press the question further and inquire what the meaning of acceleration is; and the answer to this must show that it is a habit of the person who predicates an acceleration, supposing him to use the term as others do. *For ordinary purposes, however, nothing is gained by carrying the analysis so far; because these ordinary commonsense concepts of everyday life, having guided the conduct of men ever since the race was developed, are by far more trustworthy than the exacter concepts of science; so that when great exactitude is not required they are the best terms of definition.* (EP 2, 433; emphasis added)

His writings from 1898 to his death in 1914, many of them not yet available in print, reveal as thoroughgoing and subtle a form of pragmatism as anyone has to date articulated and defended. He was moreover more radically an *experimentalist* than most philosophers today acknowledge or even glimpse. His indefatigable efforts to institute philosophy as a cooperative inquiry have done little to help transform the discipline of philosophy into a science. But is such a

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methods develop without the interference of law, a disbeliever in democracy, etc.” etc. (MS 645).

<sup>72</sup> Before I die I intend to write an essay entitled “Peirce Was a Pragmatist,” addressed primarily to those pragmatists who disparage Peirce *as a pragmatist*.

transformation either possible or even desirable?<sup>73</sup> Even if philosophy can never be transformed into a science – even if philosophy must always be an unruly family of barely coordinated discourses – it might nonetheless become more deeply and minutely experimental than it is today. Finally, Peirce was more of a *philosopher* than most contemporary philosophers are, since he was devoted to offering nothing less than a comprehensive account of the empirical world. For him such an account should take the form of an evolutionary cosmology.<sup>74</sup> But, as pursued by him, it involved an indefatigable effort to bring to methodological self-consciousness the most effective procedures by which the most reliable account of the empirical world is attainable

But Peirce truly was a pragmatist, in a principled and profound sense. The last years of his life his mind was on fire.<sup>75</sup> The oxygen feeding the blaze flowed from the various windows thrown open by a tireless investigator animated by a pragmatist sensibility. “The effect of pragmatism here is,” according to Peirce, “simply to open our minds to receiving any [relevant] evidence, not to furnish evidence” (*CP* 8.259). While Peirce was more than a pragmatist, everything else he was must be interpreted in reference to his pragmatism. He was a thoroughgoing anti-reductionist, so it would be especially ironic to reduce Peirce to nothing more than a pragmatist. But it would be equally ironic to deny him the title he more than anyone else

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<sup>73</sup> Vincent M. Colapietro, “Transforming Philosophy into a Science: Debilitating Chimera or Realizable Desideratum?” in *ACPQ*, volume LXXII, number 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 245-278.

Mats Bergman. Also Short, “Peirce on Science and Philosophy”

<sup>74</sup> In “The Architecture of Theories” (1891), the inaugural essay in a series of articles in *The Monist* outlining his cosmology, Peirce asserts, “philosophy requires thorough-going evolutionism or none” (*Collected Papers*, volume 6, #14 [*CP* 6.14]). While Peirce was a thoroughgoing evolutionist, he was in some respects a half-hearted Darwinian. See Philip P. Wiener, *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism*

<sup>75</sup> I borrow this expression from Robert D. Richardson’s biography, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). But it is as applicable to Peirce, especially during culminating phase of his intellectual life, as to Emerson.

deserves. What he wrote of semeiotic (he declared in a letter to Victoria Lady Welby that he was *a convinced Pragmatist in Semeiotic*) might with equal justice be written of his other doctrines and undertakings.

From Peirce's perspective, theory is a form of practice but it has an integrity and character of its own, so that it is not identifiable with (or reducible to) what we ordinarily call "practice."<sup>76</sup> Though often not recognized, the deconstruction of the dualism between theory and practice is as much a part of Peirce's project as it is of those of James or Dewey. There are without question occasions when he appears to draw an excessively sharp distinction between theory and practice, but what is all too seldom noticed is that he is doing so in order to protect the integrity of theory as an especially precarious and vulnerable form of human practice (all the more so in a culture deformed by its worship of "business" and practicality. In any event, Peirce in his own way grants primary to practice. Our loftiest theories presupposes instinctual attunement to the natural world: they are rooted in, and hence grow out of, our practical involvements, even though they in critical respects secure a functional autonomy from these immediate entanglements.

In the writings of Peirce, then, we encounter not only a nuanced formulation of the pragmatist position but also finely elaborated approaches to nothing less than phenomenology, a normative theory of objective inquiry, a theory of signs, and an at evolutionary cosmology. In addition, we find a subtle defensible of traditional theism and, what is likely to be of greater interest to contemporary philosophers, invaluable resources for articulating non-reductive naturalism in accord with recent developments in various sciences. Whether these doctrines

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<sup>76</sup> See H. S. Thayer, *Meaning and Action: A Critical Study of Pragmatism*; also Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*; Bergman, "Experience, Purpose, and the Value of Vagueness," *Communication Theory*, 19, 248-77; and Douglas R. Anderson, *Strands of System: The Philosophy of Charles Peirce* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1995)

cohere is of course a matter of ongoing debate. But philosophy today might benefit from more fully confronting Peirce in at least some of these respects.

This becomes manifest when we candidly assess where we stand today. Our understanding of nature is even today rather superficial and fragmentary.<sup>77</sup> In addition, our comprehension of our own status as natural beings is no less so. Finally, the question of God remains, as a question, at least as elusive and controversial as it has been in previous epochs of our intellectual history. There are nonetheless evident at every turn various attempts to address questions concerning nature, humanity, and divinity in a manner akin to Charles Peirce's experiential approach to philosophical issues. Those engaged in these queries might benefit from the hypotheses put forth by Peirce. But, in order to do so, these hypotheses and the context in which they make sense need to be made more available than they are today. Peirce today remains not only a somewhat elusive genius but also a somewhat unavailable author. His unavailability is, in part, the result of historical contingencies,<sup>78</sup> in part that of his own personal shortcomings,<sup>79</sup> and arguably in largest measure the result of *our* intellectual biases. We

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<sup>77</sup> Peirce was disposed to stress just how minuscule and fragmentary is our knowledge of nature and all else, including our individual selves. "But, in point of fact, notwithstanding all that has been discovered since Newton's time, his saying that we are little children picking up pretty pebbles on the beach while the whole ocean lies before us," Peirce urges, "remains substantially as true as ever, and will do so though we shovel up the pebbles by steam shovels and carry them off in carloads" (*CP* 1.117). To underscore the paucity of our knowledge, in his estimation, he adds: "An infinitesimal ratio may be multiplied indefinitely and remain infinitesimal still" (*ibid.*)

<sup>78</sup> See Nathan Houser, "The Fortunes and Mistunes of the Peirce Papers" in *Signs of Humanity*, volume 3, edited by Michel Balat and Janice Deledalle (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 1259-1268.

<sup>79</sup> See Paul Weiss, "Biography of Charles S. Peirce," *Perspectives on Peirce*, edited by Richard J. Bernstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 1-13 (especially pp.9-10); also Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* [Revised and Enlarged Edition] (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). Also see Richard J. Bernstein, "Action, Conduct, and Self-Control" in *Perspectives on Peirce*, pp. 90-91.

presume to have surpassed our ancestors.<sup>80</sup> We tend to judge them by our standards and achievements, not stopping long enough to consider whether we on occasion ought not to subject ourselves to judgment in light of their norms and accomplishments. But this presumption is, in the case of a thinker such as Peirce, unwarranted. This tendency to judge others,<sup>81</sup> without subjecting ourselves to their judgment, is in this instance worse than arrogant. It can only result in our impoverishment or worse – our stultification.

Of course Peirce's thought is today not completely unavailable to us (far from it), especially if we are willing to interpret it in the spirit in which it was put forth and, in addition, if we are industrious enough to consult his unpublished manuscripts.<sup>82</sup> This practically means that

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<sup>80</sup> In *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), Rorty writes: "The pragmatist ... thinks that the quest for a universal human community will be self-defeating if it tries to preserve the elements of every intellectual tradition, all the deep 'intuitions' everybody has ever had. It is not to be achieved by an attempt at commensuration, at a common vocabulary ... Rather it is to be reached, if at all, by acts of making rather than of finding – by poetic rather than Platonic achievement. The culture which will transcend, and thus unite, East and West, or the Earthlings and the Galactics, is not likely to be one which does equal justice to each, but one which looks back on both with *the amused condescension typical of later generations looking back at their ancestors*" (p. xxx; emphasis added).

<sup>81</sup> Regarding this tendency, it is not inappropriate to recall Peirce's own sage remark: "But a stay-at-home conscience does the most to render the world inhabitable" (*CP* 8.163).

<sup>82</sup> The insistence upon interpreting Peirce's thought in this spirit does not beg the question at the center of the dispute between Paul Weiss and Justus Buchler. On the one hand, we must strive to interpret Peirce in terms of his architectonic aspirations. On the other, we must take with equal seriousness his focused effort to address specific problems. In the letter to William James, quoted by Ralph Barton Perry in *The Thought and Character of William James*, volume II (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1935), Peirce proclaimed: "The only thing I have ever striven to do in philosophy has been to analyze sundry concepts with exactitude; and to do this it is necessary to use terms with strict scientific precision" (p. 438; cf. Buchler, "The Accidents of Peirce's System," p. 267). Whereas James might exclaim, "*Technical* writing on *philosophical* subjects ... is certainly a crime against the human race!" (op. cit., p. 387), Peirce would contend that the failure to write in this manner about such topics is a sin against philosophy. In fairness to James, however, it is imperative to recall here that, in *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), he acknowledges at the out of this series of lectures, after noting "the philosophy which is so important in each of us is not a technical matter," being "our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means," "yet here I stand desirous of interesting

his thought will be available to the community of inquirers “only through the mediations and translations” of those who have devoted themselves to interpreting Peirce in the manner in which he most fervently desired to be read. If we can elevate ourselves to such a hermeneutic, then his presence as a co-inquirer can increasingly become a critical force and the relevance of his writings to our undertakings can acquire an ever sharper cutting edge. And if we can do *this* then the possibility of transforming philosophy and, more generally, advancing inquiry in a number of fields becomes neither infinitely distant nor utterly fantastic. Peirce today is, as much as anything else, a set of questions – not least of all, the question of what his thought shall yet be and, inseparably tied to this, the question of how our encounters with his writings might re-make us in surprising ways (that is, the question of who *we* might yet become).<sup>83</sup> Given the cumulative growth of our understanding and appreciation of Peirce’s singular accomplishment, however, we have some sense of how these questions should be answered. If Peirce is taken to serve as an exemplar for how to conduct our inquiries, then we ought to strive to conjoin “speculative audacity”<sup>84</sup> and contrite fallibility, logical rigor and unembarrassed sentimentalism, self-control and self-surrender,<sup>85</sup> the cultivated naiveté of aesthetic perception<sup>86</sup> and the

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you in a philosophy which in no small measure *has to be technically treated*” (pp. 9-10; emphasis added).

<sup>83</sup> At the conclusion of “Consequences of Four Incapacities,” the second article in the cognition series published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Peirce insists: “The individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by his ignorance and error, *so far as he is anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be*, is only a negation” (Collected Papers, volume 5, #317; emphasis added [CP 5.317]). But individuals insofar as they are members of communities and, moreover, are beings whose futures hold possibilities of growth are more than this. Like life, philosophy is as much, if not more, in the transitions and transformations as anywhere else (cf. James).

<sup>84</sup> See Dewey, “Philosophy and Civilization” (LW 3, 10). Though the phrase is Dewey’s it seems even more applicable to Peirce than to him.

<sup>85</sup> See my *Peirce’s Approach to the Self* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 95-97.

disciplined generalizations of mathematical imagination,<sup>87</sup> the demand for experiential concreteness and the need for formal classification, the precision of abstract definition and the greater adequacy of pragmatic clarification, finally, painstaking treatment of particular questions and an orienting sense of the intimate connections among our various endeavors.

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<sup>86</sup> See John Dewey, *Experience and Nature. Later Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 198\_), volume 1, p. 40. Again, while the expression if Dewey's it applies at least with equal justice to Peirce.

<sup>87</sup> See Peirce's Lectures on Pragmatism (1903) – *CP* 5.42 (also in *EP* 2, 147-148).