COMING ATTRACTIONS:
Peirce’s Work for the Century Dictionary

How did Peirce define “continuity”? What did he mean by “abduction,” “dialogism,” “homogeneity,” “phenomenon”? One way to find out is by studying the many manuscripts in which he wrote about or used those concepts. Another way is by consulting the Century Dictionary, for which he wrote or passed judgment on, by his own estimation, about 16,100 definitions (MS 1163: 2). Peirce spent many years of his life laboriously crafting definitions for the C.D., so much so that no student of his work can possibly afford to overlook such a significant resource. An important selection of Peirce’s contributions to the C.D. is slated to appear in vol. 7 of the critical edition. The complexity of the available materials is such that some years of work will be required before W7 can appear, and the volume will thus be published out of sequence. This article aims to describe the scope of Peirce’s dictionary work, and to explain the various editing problems awaiting us in the coming decade.

Peirce nurtured a lifelong interest in dictionaries and lexicography, and more generally in the classification of words. Knowledge of words and the ability to classify them requires long training, a truth the scholastically minded Peirce had learned quite early in his career (he developed such a respect for the history and proper usage of words that he wrote up an “ethics of terminology”). There are many documents that lay out his views about spelling, grammar, and etymology, views that are frequently relied on a background of comparative linguistics. No word could be either explained or defined without a thorough knowledge of its history and usage, and that conviction certainly contributed to turn Peirce into one of the most thorough lexicographers of his time.

The Century Co. emerged from Scribner’s & Co., a subsidiary of Charles Scribner’s & Sons, and was founded in 1881 by Roswell Smith, an Indiana lawyer and a major Scribner’s & Co. stockholder. Smith bought the subsidiary (renaming it in honor of New York’s well known Century Club) so that he could start publishing books and not just the Scribner’s Monthly magazine (a contractual limitation that was too profit-hampering). The magazine evolved into the very successful Century Illustrated Magazine. But the C.D. was to be the new company’s largest and most significant undertaking.

Smith had purchased the American rights to Charles Annandale’s enlarged edition of John Ogilvie’s Imperial Dictionary (based on Webster’s Dictionary, and first published in England in 1852) from Blackie & Son of Glasgow some time in 1881 or 1882, and the Century Co. published an American edition of the Imperial in 1883. Early in 1882 however, Smith proposed that the Century Co. adapt the Imperial to American needs, turning it into the most comprehensive and detailed American dictionary ever made. Smith appointed the great philologist William Dwight Whitney as editor-in-chief, and made his own relative Benjamin E. Smith (who succeeded Whitney in 1894) managing editor. B.E. Smith was a graduate assistant at the Johns Hopkins University at the time, and although he was not Peirce’s student he had presented two papers at the Metaphysical Club in February and March 1882. It seems likely that it was at Johns Hopkins, some time in 1882, that B.E. Smith recruited Peirce to become one of the main editorial contributors to the C.D. Peirce began working on definitions in 1883 and in the fall of that year, probably with the dictionary in mind, he added a new course on philosophical terminology (see Nathan Houser’s Introduction in W4: 1vi). Peirce was made responsible for six subject areas (only two other contributors were responsible for as many areas): logic, metaphysics, mathematics,
Peirce's extensive and continual research had a profound impact on the general direction of his thought.

Characteristically, Peirce did not hesitate to write several drafts of his definitions, especially when they bore on significant terms. Part of the difficulty was of course to classify the many shades of meaning for any given term, and to subcategorize them accordingly so as to allow the reader to distinguish them perceptively. As he put it, “the task of classifying all the words of language, or what’s the same thing, all the ideas that seek expression, is the most stupendous of logical tasks. Anybody but the most accomplished logician must break down in it utterly; and even for the strongest man it is the severest possible tax on the logical equipment and faculty” (CSP to B.E. Smith, L80: 39–40, summer 1897).

For Peirce a good definition must do two things: it has to state the signification of the definiendum (what is essential to its conception), and it has to give an explanation of how a given kind is distinguished from all other kinds. In September 1908 Peirce jotted down the following remark in his Logic Notebook: “A dictionary definition will be (or at any rate contains) a definition proper in the case of a scientific or other exact conception; but an ordinary word needs an explanation, not a definition which almost itself needs to be explained. . . . [A] definition proper offers as a substitute for a word whose difficulty consists in its prescriptive abstractness, a composite of words more abstract still, while an explanation familiarizes the mind with the use of the word by bringing together in the briefest terms possible the subclasses of occasions in which it is used and giving an interpretation of it in each of them” (MS 339: 574, 576). Peirce’s C.D. definition of the verb “to explain” similarly insists that the aim is to make something evident to the minds of others by analysis, description, interpretation, elucidation, and exemplification. Hence the great importance given to the selection of many quotations that show precisely the different classes of use of a definiendum—a “much superior method” (MS 339: 576) for which Peirce especially praised the Oxford Dictionary. Hunting for and selecting the most relevant quotations was thus one of the many activities that Peirce devoted himself (to (the Century editors also sent him hundreds of quotations compiled by their employees and pasted on paper slips).

Criticizing definitions and improving them was a major component of Peirce's methodological arsenal. Having spent years of his life composing definitions for the C.D., he spent many years studying the dictionary almost daily. He was occasionally called upon to review other dictionaries (e.g., the Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary in the Nation of 8 March 1894) or works about dictionaries (e.g., the review of R.O. Williams's Our Dictionaries, in the Nation, 30 October 1890). On such occasions Peirce would invariably subject the dictionaries to statistical comparisons, notably because “one of the first questions to be asked concerning a dictionary is whether it is well proportioned in the sense of doing equal justice to different parts of the alphabet” (Contributions to the Nation, part 2, p. 40, 8 March 1894). He thought, for instance, that the space occupied by the A in the Century was disproportionately large. He had great respect for Murray's Dictionary (the future OED), but no single work gained his complete approval. He was not impressed with the increasing number of words dictionaries claimed to define: “the strenuous effort of the good lexicographer is to keep down his vocabulary. In an ordinary dictionary of reference, 25,000 words comprise all that anybody ever looks out. The rest is obtrusive rubbish. Completeness is not to be thought of in any dictionary” (ibid.).

The correspondence between Peirce and the Century editors must have been vast, but unfortunately very little remains (the financial and editorial records of the Century Company, which ceased to exist in 1933 when it merged with Appleton, have apparently not been preserved), and the letters we do have mostly date from after 1891, after the first publication of the C.D. We may suppose, however, that the bulk of the correspondence consisted of notes reminding Peirce of deadlines for certain sets of definitions or for sending proofsheets back, notes asking for definition clarification, special requests (sometimes from other contributors), criticisms from Peirce regarding how entries (his or others') were being edited, etc. Peirce seems to have had occasional difficulties in getting entries as he intended them into the final publication. One particular instance involved his definition of the word “university,” phrased as follows: “An association of men for the purpose of study, which confers degrees which are acknowledged as valid throughout Christendom, is endowed, and is privileged by the state in order that the people may receive intellectual guidance, and that the theoretical problems may suppose, however, in the development of civilization may be resolved.” Century editors suggested a revision stressing that a university had been and continued to be an institution for instruction. Peirce replied that this view was badly mistaken, and that until Americans understood that a university had nothing
NOTE FROM PEP'S DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

As the individual directing the fundraising activities of the Peirce Edition Project, I often recall an old Frank and Ernest cartoon. In it, Frank stands clad as Moses holding the Ten Commandments and gazes heavenward. The caption reads, “What about funding?”

In the past I have used that cartoon to inform students that even the most divine and spiritual realities only exist in specific physical locations. (Indeed, one should recall that the giving of the commandments is followed by the world’s first documented capital campaign as the Israelites give jewels and gold for the construction of the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.) Leaving aside the question of the relative value of the Peirce Edition Project to that event, the need to pay for the intellectual, moral, and spiritual goods one values remains. It is a fact, perhaps an intractable one.

If the Chronological Edition of the Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce is to be completed, if the work of the PEP is to continue, then salaries have to be paid, manuscripts studied, equipment and supplies purchased, photocopies and trips made. The mere fact that we may value moral and intellectual goods more than material ones does not mean that the former exist outside of the realm of materiality. Those of us who lament the fact that Peirce labored under financial distress and wonder about how much more he could have accomplished and how much more significant his work would have been on the wider world, absent that distress, rarely conclude that he was better off without financial stability. We imagine how much better everything would have been if his situation had been different. We applaud those who gave money to ease his financial plight and deplore the behavior of those who, while outwardly lamenting his fate, did nothing, as though some university would hire him, the government pension him, or his family support him.

Too often, however, many of us manifest this attitude. We act as though because it would be more appropriate for some good to be provided from a common fund, then we need not do it. This view, even if correct, rarely accomplishes anything of value, regardless of how self-satisfied it makes us feel. It will not get the papers of Charles Sanders Peirce published, nor will it help to disseminate his ideas widely.

Those of us who care about Peirce, his work, and his legacy must be the ones to sustain them. We must demonstrate that concern through our support, both intellectual and material. Only by showing that it has value to us, can we then ask others to value it. This essentially is the meaning of the challenge grant from NEH. Such grants say, “Okay, here is some money to do your work, but you have to prove that the work is sufficiently important to others that they also will support it. Our resources are limited and numerous worthy projects clamor for them. Show us that people are so committed to what you do that we should fund you rather than another project, perhaps equally worthy.”

In a world of finite resources, those of us who know Peirce’s importance and the importance of the Peirce Edition Project must be those who help finance it. We must support the work, if we are to expect others to do so. Recently you should have received the annual appeal letter from the Peirce Edition Project asking you for a contribution. If you already have made your donation, thank you. If you have not yet done so, please take the time to do it now. Although we are nearing our goal for the NEH Challenge Grant, the deadline looms. Send you donation today and send the message that the legacy of Charles Sanders Peirce must be made available to the world. (Donations received too late for the NEH Challenge will be used to help build a Peirce Endowment.)

Edward L. Queen II

do to with instruction, there would never be a university in this country. The editors yielded, and Peirce’s definition was printed as he desired. But this was an exception, for the editors often made heavy revisions. The lack of surviving archives prevents us from assessing exactly the extent to which Peirce’s definitions were changed. At the end of his Monist article “Reply to the Necessitarians” Peirce warned his readers that strict philosophical definitions were in many cases not allowed by the C.D. editors; his definitions consequently “were necessarily rather vaguely expressed, in order to describe the popular usage of terms, and in some cases were modified by proofreaders or editors; . . . they are hardly such as I should give in a Philosophical Dictionary proper.”

How seriously we need to take this caveat is just one of the many problems PEP editors will face when tackling W7. There are six categories of materials that need consideration: (1) the surviving draft manuscripts and typescripts, which contain much writing that did not end up in the C.D.—such documents are the closest to Peirce’s hand; (2) the first edition of the C.D.; we have a complete photocopy of Peirce’s own prepublication set of the dictionary (called the interleaved copy)—Peirce used a green pencil to mark in the margin all the definitions he contributed in full or in part; (3) the interleaves of the interleaved copy, which are inserted blank sheets on which Peirce handwrote hundreds of additions, refinements, criticisms, etc., regarding definitions found on facing pages; (4) Peirce’s contributions to the 1909 two-volume Supplement; (5) the correspondence and other exchanges with various C.D. participants (B.E. Smith and Alan Risteen, for instance) and critics (Simon Newcomb); and (6) the various judgments Peirce passed at different times on the dictionary, scattered here and there throughout the papers. Each of these categories comes with its own set of selection and editing problems.

Will volume 7 constitute Peirce’s Philosophical Dictionary? No, that cannot be claimed. For one thing, the selected definitions will not be limited to those philosophical and logical. But even if it were, the readers would have to keep in mind that just about every definition Peirce provided was doctored by the Century editors, and that they rejected a great many of his contributions. We may of course assume that most editorial interventions did not alter the essence of Peirce’s definitions, but we can never be completely sure. At the same time, it is also true that Peirce used the C.D. to propagate certain tenets of his own philosophy. Thus will we find, in the 1909 Supplement, definitions for such purely Peircean conceptions as firstness, secondness, and thirdness, phaneron, universal phenomenon, and cenopythagorean phenomenology. To what extent he had a hand in the definition of pragmatism is unclear. We know that John Dewey assisted in defining the word (and related terms) and Max Fisch speculated that Dewey used Peirce’s interleaved definition when he constructed the entry. References to Peirce’s work, especially his 1905 Monist article, are given a prominent place, and “pragmatism” has a separate entry. Peirce even planned to extract entries from the C.D. as the basis for his own philosophical dictionary. But he never brought the project to fruition, and so W7 will have to serve as an imperfect completion of his unfulfilled dream.

Jeffrey R. Di Leo & André De Tienne

To Make Your Contribution

WRITE YOUR CHECK TO:

PEIRCE EDITION PROJECT

(acct. 29-920-05)

Send to

Peirce Edition Project, IUPUI
545 Cavanaugh Hall
425 University Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140

Contact Edward Queen (317-274-2173) or Gail Plater (317-278-1055) about gift options such as charitable gift annuities, life insurance, or bequests.
IN THE WORKS: The Lost Report

There have been many rewarding discoveries of Peirce manuscripts since Max Fisch began the systematicized search of public and private archives in the 1950s. The 1968 discovery of Peirce’s “Report on Gravity at the Smithsonian, Ann Arbor, Madison, and Cornell” (1889), known today simply as the Lost Report, represents one of the most significant finds of date. Now, nearly 30 years later (and more than a century after its suppression), the Lost Report is being edited for inclusion in Volume 6 of the Writings.

The 140 oversized typescript leaves of the report chronicle Peirce’s decade-long attempt to obtain gravity values across North America. His pioneering refinements in the design and use of gravity pendulums—the instrument used to measure gravity since Galileo’s time—were essential to the topographic and hydrographic mapping of the continent. Moreover, European geodesists were counting on Peirce to link his field stations with the international effort to establish the true figure of the earth. But Peirce was working without sufficient funding or computational support, and was only able to complete a report for his base station (the Smithsonian) and three field stations approximating an arc along the 43rd parallel.

Thousands of data sheets from these stations (and from stations occupied by Peirce along a vast meridional arc from Montreal to Key West) survive in Peirce’s Harvard papers and in the Coast Survey records deposited in the National Archives; these documents, as well as plentiful references to this work in Peirce’s official correspondence, led University of California (Berkeley) professor Victor Lenzen to pinpoint the existence of the Lost Report and to begin a exhaustive search for it. When investigations resulted in the discovery of the report by Coast Survey archivists, Lenzen became the first twentieth-century scientist to examine the document.

Lenzen, best known as a philosopher of science, was not unfamiliar with Peirce’s work; as a young graduate student, he had actually moved Peirce’s papers from Aribise to Harvard in 1915. In his analysis of the Lost Report, Lenzen discovered that Peirce presented his procedures and station values for gravity ahead of his data, in much the same way that a modern researcher provides a descriptive abstract as overview to a scientific publication.

As it turned out, Peirce’s “results first” approach provided the key to understanding why the Lost Report was suppressed. This form of presentation was not favored in the last century, and Peirce was directed to rewrite the report; he was also ordered to report on his other gravity stations as soon as possible. Peirce was unable or unwilling to comply with either directive. Citing his own misgivings and the negative reports of outside reviewers (Simon Newcomb’s proved least informed but most damaging), Survey Superintendent T.C. Mendenhall refused publication and, on the basis of Peirce’s lack of publishable production, asked for his resignation from the Survey in 1891. Much of the report data would eventually be used by Peirce’s Survey colleagues (without adequate attribution) to prepare more general reports on North American gravity stations; in 1894, Mendenhall would tell a congressional committee that Peirce’s gravity determinations were, simply inadequate.

Peirce accepted his dismissal with uncharacteristic calm—he had known for some years that a break with the Survey was inevitable. He had fought a losing battle against a dwindling budget since 1885, and his refusal to work in Washington stretched his working relationship with successive superintendents to the breaking point. But bureaucracy is rarely the match for genius over the long haul. When Victor Lenzen studied Peirce’s final value for gravity as determined in the Lost Report, he found that Peirce’s results were as close to computer-age determinations as the best published values presented in Europe or America prior to the twentieth century.

In 1977, the Lost Report was filmed as part of the Complete Published Works microfiche collection (P385, fiche 89-92). Ken Kethner’s decision to film this unpublished and unedited text is a fair indication of its continuing importance to Peirce scholars. Today, the Lost Report presents some interesting editing challenges as it is prepared to appear in print for the first time. The document that Peirce turned over to Mendenhall in November 1889 was a 140-page conflation of new and old typescript carbons. It evolved from three earlier forms of the work: reductions of the raw data for the stations, corrections for the field observations, and copies of the final report to the Survey.

Leaf 106 of the final typescript, assembled by Peirce from four partial leaves of the first typescript, begins the summary of final correction factors for the gravity stations.

---


Dear Professor Peirce,

Returning to my desk a few days ago after an absence in the West, several months ago, I was somewhat surprised to learn that nothing had come from you in the way of a report after the unfinished pendulum work in which you have been so long engaged, or anything showing that you were making any progress towards completing it. It is now about two years (I write without having the official correspondence at hand to refer to it) since you assumed me that the whole work could never be accomplished. A partial report referring to these four stations was received last year; it is true, in matter and form, very unsatisfactory and in a form not convenient for publication.

You have now devoted a number of years to this work without producing anything. As far as the office is aware, you in all communications in value with what it had asked.

---

"You have now devoted a number of years to this work without producing anything." Coast Survey Superintendent T.C. Mendenhall’s 21 September 1891 request for Peirce’s resignation cited failure to resubmit the 1889 gravity report as grounds for dismissal.
Lost Report — Continued from page 4

data from the gravity measurement sites; a handwritten draft of the report narrative and tables; and a typescript prepared directly from the draft. In January 1888, Peirce was pressured into turning over his report materials to the Coast Survey for review, which at that time included the reductions and at least part of the handwritten draft. In January 1889, lame-duck Superintendent Frank Thorn demanded another submission for review before he himself departed with the rest of the Cleveland administration’s appointees. Peirce sent in the data reductions, the handwritten draft, and a blue carbon of the first typescript draft. The package was massive and, perhaps intentionally, difficult to break down into its component parts. Each leaf was coded on the verso with a series of blue (ascending) and red (descending) numbers running from 1 to 2038. Peirce eventually supplied a Rosetta Stone of sorts—a document which identified each leaf by subject and sequence in the blue series.4

During 1889, corrections to the atmospheric data led Peirce to rework much of the report; his final submission of November 1889 consisted of 48 newly-typeset sheets interleaved with 80 of the old purple carbon sheets and 12 cut-and-paste sheets combining pieces of both the old and new typescripts. The handwritten draft, which a 5 February 1889 Coast Survey memo identifies as leaves 1776 through 1911 of the second submission, has never been found. Most of the first typescript (leaves 1912 to 2038 of the second submission) were used to construct the final conflation text, but a total of 18 unincorporated leaves from the first typescript survive in the Harvard Peirce Papers as MS 1096. Six handwritten draft leaves for brief narrative portions of the second typescript also survive in the Harvard Peirce Papers.

For Writings Volume 6, copy-text will be the final submission conflation of the first and second typescripts, which includes Peirce’s corrections and revisions throughout. The unincorporated leaves of the first typescript (MS 1096) include a version of the opening narrative that is very close to the final form, but Peirce’s decision not to incorporate these leaves into the conflated final report relegated them to pre-copy-text status. Significant passages from these draft materials will appear in annotations. The report’s tables will be abridged to eliminate repetitive data reductions, but all of Peirce’s narrative text will appear as submitted to the Coast Survey more than a century ago.

Jon Eller


2 Mendenhall’s testimony was printed in the 53rd Congress’s publication, Hearing Before the Committee on Naval Affairs, U. S. House of Representatives...on Bill H. R. 6358 (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1894), pp. 153–54.


4 National Archives Record Group 23, Entry 22 includes Peirce’s 1 February 1889 cover letter for 20 loose quarto books of working papers for the gravity report, his 2 February index of the blue verso number sequence arranged by gravity station and by the stages of calculations, and a 5 February internal memo identifying the two report drafts within the blue sequence.

Peirce in Spain

We learned from Max Fisch’s introduction to W2 that on 18 June 1870 Peirce sailed from New York for Europe to travel along the Mediterranean path of the total eclipse that would occur on 22 December 1870. Peirce’s assignment for the U.S. Coast Survey was to locate suitable sites for eclipse observation parties. One of the countries Peirce visited was Spain, but not much is known about his time there. Fortunately, Professor Jaime Nubiola, from the University of Navarra, is filling out this story: see in particular his account in a recent issue of the Transactions (1998, vol. 34). Through Nubiola’s efforts, we know that on 7 November, 1870, Peirce visited the magnificent Alhambra in Granada, where he signed the guest book—the only visitor to sign on that day (see the accompanying illustration). Years later, in his Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898, Peirce would remember with pleasure and awe the mathematical complexity and beauty of the decorations of the great 14th century Moorish palace. Thanks to Professor Nubiola for providing the indexical proof of Peirce’s visit.

Writings Errata

Roger Maddux (Iowa State) alerted us to some incorrect formulas in W4. On p. 340, the last line and also the 9th line from the bottom, the conversion cup has been omitted from the term on the left-hand side of each equation. On the following page, p. 341, the final el in the 3rd line from the bottom (the el in the 3rd formula down in the 3rd column of “twelve propositions” at the bottom of the page) should be complemented (should have a straight line over it). Prof. Maddux wondered whether these errors were Peirce’s. It turns out that the missing conversion cups on p. 340 were not only in Peirce’s manuscripts, but were also in our printer’s copy and galleys, but were dropped by the printer at some later stage. Unfortunately, we didn’t catch the mistake in our subsequent proofreadings. The complement bar over the el, on p. 341, was left out by Peirce and, therefore, should be added in the text and to the list of emendations. Thanks to Prof. Maddux for these corrections.

We welcome corrections to the Writings and will pass them along to the readers of the Newsletter.

Libro de Firmas de la Alhambra, 9.V.1829–20.I.73
BOOK NOTES (cont.)

Classic American Philosophers

This is a slightly updated reprint of the much-acclaimed 1951 collection by Fisch. His general introduction is a masterpiece still of immense value for students of American philosophy. Six philosophers are treated with key selections from their writings and with separate introductions by the section editors: Peirce with an introduction by Arthur Burks; James with an introduction by Paul Henle; Royce with an introduction by Otto Krausshar; Santayana with an introduction by Philip Rice; Dewey with an introduction by Gail Kennedy; and Whitehead with an introduction by Victor Lowe. This is the book that launched American philosophy as a vital field of study. It remains one of the best anthologies for college courses in classic American philosophy. The Fordham edition is from the American Philosophy Series started by Vincent Potter and now edited by Vincent Colapietro. It was prepared for Fordham by Nathan Houser, who adds a short preface and who made corrections as indicated by Fisch.

The American Pragmatists: C. S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey
A BBC production for Films for the Humanities & Sciences. (43 minutes, color)

In this program, Columbia University professor Sidney Morabissere discusses classic American pragmatism with Bryan Magee. In lively dialog, Morabissere and Magee debate the distinguishing features of the pragmatic thought of the principal pragmatists, Peirce, James, and Dewey, and reflect on the characters of these three great philosophers. Emphasis is placed on Peirce's fallibilism and his idea of truth as the final opinion of a community of inquirers; on James's idea of truth as contextualized by useful or satisfying conceptual schemes; and on Dewey's rejection of the spectator view of knowledge and on his theory of inquiry as the attempt to acquire warranted beliefs. Morabissere and Magee conclude rather abruptly with a brief discussion of Dewey's views on education. Although mainly a "talking heads" video—with occasional still photographs of the philosophers being discussed or of book covers—it is a good production and well-worth showing in a course on pragmatism or American philosophy.

Rorty & Pragmatism, The Philosopher Responds to His Critics

A nice collection of nine essays. Two of them are written by Rorty, and each of the others is followed by his often revealing response. Peirce is most extensively discussed by Richard Bernstein ("American Pragmatism: The Conflict of Narratives"). Rorty himself gestures to Peirce in the replies to his former thesis advisor Charles Hartshorne's "Rorty's Pragmatism and Farewell to the Age of Faith and Enlightenment," and to Susan Haack's "Vulgar Pragmatism: an Unifying Prospect." In the first he confesses to having been more impressed by the Peirce of "Evolutionary Love" than by the Peirce of "The Logic of Relatives," and in the second he briefly presents his view on "The Fixation of Belief" and opposes it to Haack's. The collection further includes essays by Thelma Lavine, James Gouinlock, Allen Hance, and Frank Farrell. The volume comes with a helpful introduction by Herman Saatkamp and contains a good index.

Pragmatism, Reason, & Norms; A Realistic Assessment

The essays in this collection all address the philosophy of John Dewey [1909+], a colleague of Max H. Fisch at the University of Illinois. Their central theme is the discussion of norms and social practices both in epistemology and in moral and social philosophy. The authors address issues in epistemology (realism, perception, testimony), logic, education, foundations of morality, philosophy of law, the pragmatic account of norms and their justification, and the pragmatic character of reason itself. The collection is a valuable addition to Pragmatism and Realism, a collection of Will's essays which is also edited by Westphal and appeared last year (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

La renovacion pragmatista de la filosofia analitica (The Pragmatist Renewal of Analytic Philosophy)

Contrary to what is often stated about the end of analytic philosophy, in this book Nubiola argues that the views of the later Wittgenstein and the rediscovery of Charles S. Peirce have been key elements in a renewal of the analytic tradition. Following mainly the lines suggested by Hilary Putnam, this renewal has a strong pragmatist flavor, which encourages the unity of philosophy and the responsibility of philosophical work. In contemporary philosophical reflection, a multilateral approach to the understanding of language and of our communicative practices has taken the central place formerly held by logic.

THE MYSTERY OF ARISBE

On Peirce's 150th birthday, 10 September 1998, the National Park Service held an open house to celebrate the completion of a four-year renovation of Arisbe, Peirce's Milford, Pennsylvania home. Joseph Brent delivered the main address to Park Service employees, local dignitaries and historians, and a few Peirce scholars who made their way to Milford for the ceremony. Although not a restoration, the Park Service attempted to maintain the character of Peirce's longtime domicile. Arisbe now houses the Research and Resource Planning Division of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. It is a tribute to Peirce that his home is the site of ongoing scientific work. Although no part of Peirce's home was reserved for a museum or memorial, visitors will be welcomed. Perhaps in the future the conference room, which occupies the place of Peirce's study, can be restored and used for Peirce Society gatherings. PEP contributed a copy of Peirce's quincentennial map for display at Arisbe.

This attention on Peirce's home provides an occasion to reflect on the mystery of its name. Why did Peirce choose to name his house Arisbe, known principally as an obscure city in the Troad, near Abdyus? Max Fisch explored different possibilities, having to do with the occurrence of the word in the Iliad and a connection with Arisbe the woman, the first wife of Priam; but what Fisch came to regard as the most significant was the fact that Arisbe was a colony of Miletus, the home of the first philosophers of Greece who first had sought the Arché, the First Principle of all things. "Of Peirce's three categories, it was Firstness that had given him the greatest difficulties, and it was only when Epicurus had helped him to a partial solution of them that he was ready to join the Greek cosmologists, and that his Arisbe too became a colony of Miletus."

Alan J. Iliff has speculated that "Arisbe" was an allusion to a passage from Book 9 of the Aeneid, in which Aeneas's besieged son Ascanius promises to reward two of his companions with two well wrought bowls Aeneas had taken when he conquered Arisbe, if only they could find Aeneas and bring him to their rescue. "The death of Peirce's father was not only personally devastating to
Several persons contributed answers or research leads to the questions asked in the last issue of PPNL. In particular, we want to recognize Don Hebert, Director of Theatre at Texas Baptist University, for valuable information about Steele MacKaye (Qu. 6), as well as Joseph Brent and Stephen Pollard. Thanks! Here are some solutions or suggestions.

Qu. 8. The mysterious fragment page (547: 12) that was the object of this question has now been identified. In it Peirce was criticizing a certain author for some faulty logical conceptions. We asked for an identification of that author and got several leads from our readers: the names of Leibniz, Ulrici, and Bradley were suggested. But it turns out that our original suspicion was the correct one: Peirce was criticizing Kant. We recently found the leaf that immediately follows 547: 12 in 839: 161, in which Peirce is clearly alluding to Kant. That other page had already been filed previously at the back of PEP MS 555, after pages 1366: 2–4, three pages that constitute Peirce’s first draft of an unpublished review of Kant’s Introduction to Logic, and his Essay on the Mistaken Subtly of the Four Figures translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott with a few notes by Coleridge (reprinted by Greenwood Press, 1963, 1972); that draft was published in W5: 258–59 (Fall-Winter 1885). The two pages 547: 12 and 839: 161 form an incomplete alternative draft of this book review. The paper they are written on is identical, and both versions, although very different in what they address, end on a short paragraph about Kant’s Essay on the Mistaken Subtly.

A reading of Kant’s Introduction to Logic confirmed this identification. In section VII, Kant indeed explains that the formal criteria of truth in logic are the principle of contradiction, which determines the logical possibility, and the principle of sufficient reason, which determines the logical actuality, of a cognition (p. 42). Kant identifies on the next page the three principles that serve as the universal logical criteria of truth: (1) the principle of contradiction and of identity by which the intrinsic possibility of a cognition is determined for problematical judgments, (2) the principle of sufficient reason on which the logical actuality of a cognition depends (making it usable in assertorical judgments), and (3) the principle of excluded middle on which the logical necessity of a cognition is based; it is the principle of apodictic judgments (pp. 42-43). It is precisely those assertions that Peirce criticizes in pages 547: 12 and 839: 61 (says Peirce: “the book abounds with similar instances of perverse ingenuity.”). Page 547: 12 has now been added to PEP MS 555, just before 839: 61.

Qu. 11. We quoted excerpts of two versions of the sixth chapter, “The Triad in Biological Development,” of “A Guess at the Riddle,” in one of which Peirce refers to a diagram showing curves of distribution of wealth among players at the end of the 19th, 400th, 900th, 1600th, and 2500th throws of a die. We asked whether anyone could try to recreate the missing diagram. We were very happy to receive an excellent contribution from Prof. Stephen Pollard, Truman State University (Missouri), who sent us on 22 May 1996 an elaborate document with his proposed solution. What follows is a form of Prof. Pollard’s chart, with a brief explanation. Readers who are interested in the full explanation may contact us.

The five successive curves (from highest to lowest) indicate the distribution of utility after 100, 400, 900, 1600, and 2500 throws. Since dollar amounts are not the best way to measure the utility of money (1 dollar has more utility for a poor man than for a rich man), the utility (x coordinate) is represented by the logarithm of the dollar amount. Peirce’s “moral wealth” differs from this utility only by a change of scale. Having transformed the x coordinates in this way, we have to modify the y coordinates too, since Peirce intended the curves to represent probability density functions. To do so, we only need to replace \( p(n,m) \) by \( m \) times \( p(n,m) \), where \( p(n,m) \) is the probability that a player has \( m \) dollars after \( n \) rounds of the game. As the number of rounds increases, the curves widen and flatten, while their maxima move further and further to the right. The widening represents an increasing disparity between the richest and poorest players. This does not mean that the wealth is distributed even more unequally. The game can be shown to produce an increasing degree of equality among richer and richer survivors as long as losers are somehow made to disappear.

Qu. 13. This is from Joseph Brent: It seems unlikely that the 15 May 1890 Nation review attacking Abbot’s The Way Out of Agnosticism is by Peirce—except superficially—for the following reasons: 1. It shows no understanding of and makes no reference to Abbot’s Scientific Theism (1885), whose definitions of realism Peirce used in the Century Dictionary (published the year before in 1889) and elsewhere. Furthermore, Peirce was a sympathetic friend of Abbot’s who, knowing the tragedies of his life, was not likely to use such a sarcastic tone with him as the review exhibits. 2. Peirce strongly defended Abbot against Royce’s attacks on him and The Way Out of Agnosticism in the pages of the Nation in November 1891 (see my biography pp. 215–19). 3. The last sentence of the first paragraph of the review, “The ‘way out,’ when sifted down to its real meaning, is simply ‘feeling,’ which is to stick to certain time-honored beliefs—no matter what facts, science, and the limits of human knowledge may say about our inability to take a rational attitude towards them one way or the other,” is Cartesian, not Peircean, in its radical division of mind from body. Furthermore, “feeling” is an odd word to use for Abbot’s scientific realism and its experiential basis. 4. In the second paragraph, the sentence, “Those who are in agnosticism generally remain, and those who come out of it generally defy the philosophy which tries to hold them in doubt, and so decide their convictions by sheer force of will,” sounds like cocktail party Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or James, but not like Peirce. 5. The reviewer uses “intuition” and “insight” much like Cartesian direct acts of knowledge which are self-evident truths we cannot doubt, as in the sentence in the third paragraph, “religion comes by insight, if it ever comes at all; and . . . philosophy does less to supply new truth than to supervene upon knowledge already acquired.” At the time of the review,
NEW QUESTIONS

Question 14.

On several occasions Peirce stresses that we should not underestimate the power of science. In an article written for The Christian Register, “On Science and Immortality” (reprinted as CP 6.548-556), he writes: “The history of science affords illustrations enough of the folly of saying that this, that, or the other can never be found out. . . . Legrendre said of a certain proposition in the theory of numbers that, while it appeared to be true, it was most likely beyond the powers of the human mind to prove it; yet the next writer on the subject gave six independent demonstrations of the theorem.” (CP 6.646, 1887).

Shortly after, Peirce repeals the same point in the unpublished “Reflections on the Logic of Science,” where he again cites Legrendre as an example: “Legrendre in his Théorie des nombres, after penetrating more deeply into the higher arithmetic, and after having studied the nature of mathematical proof more accurately than any man before him had ever done, gave it as his opinion that the demonstration of a certain proposition,—though the proposition itself seemed to be true,—was probably beyond the powers of the human mind. Yet the very next important book on the subject published a few years later gave six proofs of this theorem, resting upon as many different principles” (MS 246.4:1889).

Now here is the problem. The proposition in question is most likely the law of quadratic reciprocity of which Carl Gauss provides six proofs in his 1801 Disquisitiones arithmeticae. This proposition first surfaces in Legrendre’s “Recherches d’Analyse Indéterminée,” which appeared in Hist. Acad. Roy. des Sciences, 1785, pp. 513–17. According to its English translation, however, Legrendre’s claim is a far cry from the extreme statement ascribed to him by Peirce. Legrendre simply writes that the proposition is “quite difficult to prove,” and that “I content myself with outlining the means for proving the theorem” (see The History of Mathematics: A Reader, edited by John Fauvel and Jeremy Gray. New York: Macmillan Press, 1988, p. 500). The translation not only suggests that Legrendre believed that the proposition was provable, but also that he had at least some idea of how to prove it.

To make matters even more interesting, there are good indications that Legrendre actually formulated the proof well before Gauss did, perhaps even in his 1785 paper. So far we have only been able to examine the 1808 edition of the Essai sur la Théorie des Nombres. There Legrendre writes in the “Avertissement” to the second edition, that the proof of the law of quadratic reciprocity is slightly perfected (a été perfectionnée à quelques égards), clearly suggesting that the proof has been given in the first edition. On the next page Legrendre notes that much of what he wrote in the first edition finds a close analogue in Gauss’ Disquisitiones, including a “direct and very ingenious demonstration” of the law of reciprocity, which he includes in the new edition. Moreover, in the reprinted preface to the first edition, Legrendre refers to his 1785 paper, noting as one of its three main accomplishments the demonstration of the law of reciprocity, “la démonstration d’une loi générale qui existe entre deux nombres premiers quelconques, et qu’on peut appeler loi de reciprocité.”

This account, contra Peirce’s, is confirmed by W. W. Rouse Ball (A Short Account of the History of Mathematics, 4th ed., 1908, pp. 423–24), who writes: “The law of quadratic reciprocity, the theorem which connects any two odd primes, was first proved in this book Théorie des Nombres, but the result had been enunciated in a memoir of 1785 ‘Recherches d’Analyse Indéterminée.’ Gauss called the proposition ‘the gem of arithmetic,’ and no less than six separate proofs are to be found in his works.”

This leaves us with the following questions. First, did Legrendre indeed claim at one point that proving the theorem was beyond the powers of the human mind, as Peirce claims he did? It might be that some of the force of his language got lost in the translation. Admittedly, on page 393 of the second edition, Legrendre does speak of “almost insurmountable difficulties” (“des difficultés presqu’insurmontables”). Second, who was the first to provide the proof? Third, was there a persistent rumor, still very much alive in the 19th century, that Legrendre made the claim Peirce ascribes to him? Perhaps Legrendre made the claim when he was still a young man, and that he proved himself wrong in 1785. Or is this a case of a mistaken identity and is the statement made by another mathematician around this time? We would also be interested in photocopies of Legrendre’s 1785 paper and of the relevant section of the first edition of the Essai sur la Théorie des Nombres, as we have not yet been able to lay hands on these.

Question 15.

In a short piece entitled “Notes on the Question of the Existence of an External World” (in MS 971), Peirce makes a reference to W.K. Clifford. Peirce writes the following: “But what evidence is there that we can immediately know only what is ‘present’ to the mind? The idealists generally treat this as self-evident; but, as Clifford jestingly says, ‘It is evident’ is a phrase which only means ‘we do not know how to prove.’”

Can someone help us identify the source of this quotation?

RESEARCH GROUP ON SEMIOTIC EPISTEMOLOGY AND MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

University of Bielefeld

The Research Group is a part of the Institut für Didaktik der Mathematik at the University of Bielefeld. It studies the development of knowledge in historical and epistemological perspectives. The main interest is the relation between social and object-centered aspects of learning processes. One important thesis is that the process of learning mathematics can be used as a paradigm for discussing major problems of epistemology. The theoretical framework is provided by the philosophy of Charles S. Peirce and, in particular, by his considerations on the concept of sign, the process of generalization, and the role of continuity within the latter. The following projects are in progress. (1) Learning as a process of generalization (Michael Otte, Michael Hoffmann). (2) Peirce’s philosophy of mathematics in the context of his evolutionary realism. The Peircean principle of continuity (Otte, Hoffmann). With respect to the philosophy of mathematics, the thesis is that Peirce’s emphasis on the reality of generals, together with his semiotic model of the processuality of generalization, offers the possibility for a mathematical realism which is not reducible to the distinction of logicism, formalism, and intuitionism. And with respect to philosophy, the thesis is that the Peircean approach to the mathematical process of generalization can be understood as a paradigm which may be of special interest for problems of epistemology, ontology, and the development of social communities. Insofar as the concepts of processuality and evolution are based on the possibility of continuity, a main problem is the role of the concept of continuity in Peirce’s philosophy. (3) The symmetry of subjectivity and objectivity in scientific generalization. Studies concerning the foundation of scientific rationality in the mathematical philosophy of Charles S. Peirce and his followers (Otto, Thomas Mies, Hoffmann). (4) Didactical aspects in Wittgenstein’s philosophy of mathematics (Norbert Meder). (5) The Axiomatization of Arithmetic (Mircea Radu). (6) The interdependence of logic, ethics and aesthetics (Otte, Hoffmann).

For more information see http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/idm/arbeit/agsem.htm or contact Prof. Dr. Michael Otte or Dr. Michael Hoffmann, Institut für Didaktik der Mathematik, Universität Bielefeld, Postfach 100131, D-33501 Bielefeld. E-mail: michael.otte@post.uni-bielefeld.de, or: michael.hoffmann@post.uni-bielefeld.de.
DIRECTOR’S REPORT

More than two years have passed since I used this column to let you know how things are going at PEP, although through other means many of you will have learned about the most significant recent happenings. Let me run through them in quick review.

First in importance for the health of the edition was NEH's decision to award PEP a grant in 1997. It was our first federal grant since 1991, and along with some additional support from IUPUI and private contributors, it enabled us to return to a full production staff—and it is an excellent staff. Volume 2 of the Essential Peirce was published in the spring of ’98 as a PEP publication—its preparation provided the training necessary for the new staff members hired in ’97. Since then we have been making good progress with volumes 6 through 10 of the chronological edition. Volumes 11 and 12 are on track for completion in one-year intervals after that. W7, which will be devoted to Peirce’s work for the Century Dictionary, will be a special volume to be completed out of sequence at some later time. This production schedule depends on continuing funding at present levels. Our current NEH grant expires at the end of June and we will not know for a few weeks whether we will receive new funding. If we aren’t successful, our production schedule will have to be significantly cut back.

We have a new advisory board. The new board is composed of the following members: John D. Barlow, Professor of English & German and former Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI; Lucia Santaela Braga, Professor of Semiotics, Universidade Catolica de Sao Paulo, Brazil; Joseph L. Brent, Professor Emeritus of Intellectual History, University of the District of Columbia; Arthur W. Burks, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Electrical Engineering & Computer Science, University of Michigan; Vincent Ciolopietro, Professor of Philosophy, Penn State University; Don L. Cook, Professor Emeritus of English, Indiana University; Joseph Dauben, Professor of History of Science, CUNY; Gérard Deledalle, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy & Semiotics, University of Perpignan, France; Randall Dipert, Professor of Philosophy & English, United States Military Academy, West Point; Umberto Eco, Professor of Semiotics, University of Bologna, Italy; John Gallman, Director, Indiana University Press; Susan Haack, Professor of Philosophy, University of Miami (Florida); Karen Hanson, Professor of Philosophy, Indiana University; Peter Hare, Professor of Philosophy, SUNY at Buffalo; Robert H. Hirst, Director, Mark Twain Project, University of California at Berkeley; Christopher Hookway, Professor of Philosophy, University of Sheffield, England; Paul Nagy, Professor of Philosophy, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis; Klaus Oehler, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Hamburg, Germany; Helmut Pape, Professor of Philosophy, University of Hannover, Germany; Hillary Putnam, Professor of Philosophy, Harvard University; Don D. Roberts, Chair, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Waterloo, Ontario; Richard Robin, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Mount Holyoke College; Sandra Rosenthal, Professor of Philosophy, Loyola University; Israel Scheffler, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy & Education, Harvard University; Thomas A. Sebeok, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Linguistics & Anthropology, Indiana University; Thomas L. Short, Professor of Philosophy, Titusville, NJ; William A. Stanley, Chief Historian, Retired, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration; Paul Weiss, Sterling Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Yale University. PEP is extremely grateful to the board members who retired in 1998, after years of dedicated service: Professors Jo Ann Boydstun, Carolyn Eisele, Charles Hartshorne, Kenneth L. Ketner, and Richard A. Tursman. These individuals helped see the Peirce Project through some difficult times.

In April, a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board recommended that PEP establish an official research center to house the edition and to serve as an international center for Peirce scholarship. Such a center is expected to help fund raising and, also, to continue to make PEP resources available to scholars after the edition is completed. This is in process.

There are some staff changes to report. André De Tienne, whom many of you know, was put on tenure track in March 1997 as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at IUPUI. He was also promoted to Associate Editor for the critical edition. Last year, Cornelis de Waal joined our editorial staff as a Post-Doctoral Fellow/Visiting Assistant Editor and has an appointment as Adjunct Assistant Professor of Philosophy. Adam Kovach, a Project Research Associate, successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation and is now a Post-Doctoral Research Associate.

At the level of school administration we have a new Dean. Last summer, Herman Saatkamp, Jr., editor of the George Santayana Edition, became Dean of our School of Liberal Arts. This summer he will move the Santayana Edition to Indianapolis. The Peirce Project and the Santayana Project held a joint reception at the World Congress in Boston. A third edition, the Frederick Douglass Papers, also moved to IUPUI’s School of Liberal Arts. Together, these three editions form an unusual concentration, which is likely in the long run to work to the benefit of the Peirce Project. The impact in the short run, however, is uncertain. All three editions are funded by NEH and all three have applications pending.

I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to retired Dean John D. Barlow, who has been a strong advocate for the Peirce Project, and who has agreed to continue his support, even in his retirement, by serving on our advisory board.

Many of you helped us with our $80,000 NEH matching funds challenge. We have raised about $75,000 of the $80,000 we had to match—which leaves only $5,000 to be raised by April. Thank you! See Edward Queen’s accompanying note for how you can help us finish this match. In a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter, Dr. Queen will report on plans to establish an endowment fund to ensure that we can keep a full production staff in place during hard times, and to keep a Peirce Center going after the edition is finished.

Finally, thanks to Richard Miller, our Newsletter editor, for reviving this means of communication.

—Nathan Houser