

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We can stop holding our collective breath once again: NEH has offered to fund the Peirce Edition for two more years beginning in November 2001 (continuing from our present grant). We have been awarded \$100,000 plus \$25,000 in matching funds. This will enable us to continue our production without interruption. We are grateful to NEH for this recognition and vote of confidence and we are thankful to everyone who has supported our work (and especially those of you, whoever you are, who served as referees for our NEH grant application).

I am also very glad to report that the William James and John Dewey letters editions were funded—a good sign for those of us interested in pragmatism and classical American philosophy. Another promising sign is the popular success of Louis Menand's new book, *The Metaphysical Club*. This is a book most readers of this newsletter will want to read—not as a work of original scholarship but as an engaging account of the birth of pragmatism. Peirce scholars will be unhappy with many of Menand's characterizations of Peirce and with his skewing of the history of pragmatism to favor a story that tends to minimize Peirce's role—see Susan Haack's review of Menand's *Pragmatism: A Reader (New Criterion*, Nov. 1997, pp. 67–70) for a good idea of what Peirceans will object to—but I think we should pump up our *ataraxia* and admit that Menand has done us a favor. However much we may disagree with the specifics, he has succeeded in bringing the story of the birth of pragmatism vividly into the public consciousness, and Peirce is one of the group of four (along with Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., William James, and John Dewey) which he claims did more than any other group to prepare the American mind for the modern world following the spiritual and intellectual disruption of the Civil War and the ensuing industrialization.

Menand had to go out on many thin limbs to write a book like this, and when specialists from different areas within American philosophy go seriously to work on his book, he'll find that some of those limbs won't hold him. In fact, I think it is fair to say that serious scholars will be quite distressed with the confusion Menand's chapter on "Pragmatisms" will inculcate in unsuspecting readers. Menand's dismissing of Peirce as a determinist, while praising James and Dewey for holding that "no conclusion is foregone" and for teaching that "every problem is amenable to the exercise of . . . intelligent action," is little short of a scandal (see Menand, p. 372). I suppose it is Peirce's conception of the movement of thought toward "concrete reasonableness" that leads Menand to tag Peirce as a determinist, but as Dewey pointed out in his essay on Peirce reprinted in *Chance, Love, and Logic*, concrete reasonableness consists of habits of action developed over lifetimes of experience in the world—if anything, this conception reveals Peirce's belief in progress and his optimism about our capacity to learn, notwithstanding the uncertainty we must always acknowledge. But despite its shortcomings, the book brings much-needed attention to the origins and founders of pragmatism, and Menand's skillfully written tale persuasively conveys the importance of this crucial episode in the development of American culture. I only hope that Peirce scholars will take this

opportunity to help educate the public about parts of Peirce misrepresented or neglected by Menand.

As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, our editing work is progressing apace, with W8 well on its way to completion by the end of the year and with good headway on W9 and W10. We expect to publish W9 in 2003 and W10 in 2004. As I mentioned in my last report, we are exploring with François Latraverse's group in Montreal and with Helmut Pape's group in Germany how to set up external centers to work on W7 (the *Century Dictionary* volume) and W20 (the 1903 Lowell Lectures volume). In April, Professor Latraverse spent a week at PEP with his students Benoît Favreault and Marc Guastavino, studying the *Century Dictionary* materials and learning about our methods; Professor Pape will visit PEP in June.

As reported on the front page of this issue, Don D. Roberts has retired from the chairmanship of PEP's Board of Advisors. Professor Roberts has been such a key participant in PEP's work over the years that we were much relieved when he agreed to continue as a member of the board's Executive Committee. We were further relieved when we learned from Dean Saatkamp that Thomas L. Short had agreed to follow Roberts as Chairman of the Board. I may occasionally relinquish this page, or part of it, to Chairman Short so he can communicate his thoughts and concerns to our readers. At present, he has turned his attention to PEP's need for an endowment to stabilize our production capacity and to ensure the continuation of a research center built around our accumulated resources. One other item of news concerning the Board of Advisors: Jim Van Evra, from the University of Waterloo, has been appointed to its membership. Professor Van Evra's specialty is the history of logic and science. We are delighted that he has agreed to serve.

I want to conclude my report for this issue by congratulating another of our board members, Paul Weiss, for completing his 100th year! (See front-page article.) He celebrated his birthday on 19 May with a party in Washington, D.C. What is so special about Professor Weiss is not *just* that he is 100 years old, but that he is beginning his 101st year writing the third book of a four-book series. What an inspiration to us all! We should remember that it was Weiss's work with Charles Hartshorne on the first six volumes of the Harvard edition of Peirce's writings that was the effective beginning of Peirce Studies. We Peirceans are in his debt.

Nathan Houser

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