

*Classical American
Pragmatism*

Its Contemporary Vitality

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University of Illinois Press

Urbana and Chicago

*Peirce's Guess at the Riddle of Rationality:
Deliberative Imagination as the Personal
Locus of Human Practice*

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Questions concerning the nature, scope, and function of reason have historically occupied a central place in philosophical discourse¹ and are presently still at the center of controversies involving such figures as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo, Alasdair MacIntyre, Hilary Putnam, Robert Nozick, John E. Smith, and Richard Rorty. In their own time, the three most important representatives of classical American pragmatism (Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey) devoted considerable attention to the chief questions concerning human reason; each did so in conjunction with defending his distinctive version of the pragmatic approach.² Thus, even though pragmatism has often been condemned as a form of irrationalism,³ its commitment to securing a firmer status and wider scope for dialogic reason and experimental intelligence has been and yet remains a defining feature of this philosophical movement.⁴ Frequent and derisive charges of naïveté and romanticism have not dissuaded pragmatists from championing a distinctive vision of human reason.⁵ This vision is at once realistic and idealistic, in the colloquial sense of these terms: realistic in its unblinking recognition of reason's historical character, precarious standing, and limited efficacy, yet idealistic in its uncompromising commitment to reason's critical function, ameliorative power, and often urgent need to enlarge our vision or deepen our understanding.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the vision of rationality sketched by Peirce, the originator of pragmatism. The texts most relevant to this purpose are not those embodying his first articulation of the pragmatic maxim (most prominently, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear"), papers in which this maxim is presented solely as an indispensable means of attaining conceptual clarity; rather, the most germane texts are those in which we encounter Peirce's eventual reformulations of the pragmatic approach.⁶ Specifically, the most relevant texts include "Lectures on Pragmatism" (a series commencing on March 26 and concluding on May 17, 1903), "What Pragmatism Is" (1905), "Issues of Pragmaticism" (1905), "Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism" (1906), and numerous unpublished manuscripts written mostly between 1898 and 1914 (1898 is the year in which James's "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" gained a wider audience for Peircean pragmatism, and 1914 is the year of Peirce's death). In these later writings, Peirce takes great pains to link pragmatism to critical commonsensism, Scholastic realism, tychism, synechism, and evolutionism.⁷ What takes shape in these writings may be treated as Peirce's considered opinion, the view to which he was led after many years of reading, reflection, experimentation, and debate (including self-interrogation [CP, 8:272]). Although it is in some respects undeveloped and may even be marred by other shortcomings, this position is worthy of careful consideration. My detailed exposition here is intended to facilitate just such consideration.

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From 1898 to 1914, then, Peirce was engaged in reformulating his views on pragmatism. It was principally in this context that he articulated his conception of reason. Central to its articulation are Peirce's efforts to distinguish his views from those of both James and Dewey. Whereas James emphasized the role of feeling or affectivity, Peirce stressed that rationality "does not consist in feeling in a certain way, but in acting in a certain way" (CP, 6:286; see also CP, 2:19–20, 2:165).⁸ Reason must be defined not in terms of how persons happen to feel but in terms of how agents ought to comport themselves in various and variable circumstances. How agents ought to comport themselves encompasses revising ends-in-view no less than modifying means (i.e., altering ends-in-the-making).⁹ So rationality concerns not only discovering efficient means for the realization of antecedently established ends but also assessing the relative merits of rival ends that have evolved and are yet evolving.¹⁰ The dramatic conflict of competing objectives is an integral part—if not the defining feature—of the distinguishable domains of human history (e.g., the political, the scientific, the technological, or the religious). Although the testimony of

feeling, passion, and emotion is clearly relevant to the comparative appraisal of rival ends, this testimony cannot be taken at face value; indeed, the rivalry among ends is characteristically experienced as a disconcerting conflict among divergent passions. This does not make ends simply subjective feelings; it does make feelings potentially instructive symptoms of commitments and of conflicts among commitments.

For Peirce at least, our rationality is exhibited not as much in immediate feelings (or affective immediacies) as in the ongoing mediations by which our spontaneous strivings are transformed into deliberate engagements.¹¹ For the most part, these mediations or interventions take the form of *recollecting* what we have done as well as of *imagining* what we might have done and, if analogous circumstances arise in the future, might yet do. As a result, our actions come to bear the stamp of our deliberations, especially of our retrospective self-assessments and our imaginative self-preparations. Our conduct is deliberate not because it necessarily involves stopping and deliberating before we act but because our past deliberations have shaped (and often profoundly transformed) our presently spontaneous acts. Prior deliberations have prepared us for present exigencies, often to such a degree that stopping to deliberate would be superfluous or worse (worse because the urgency of some situations does not allow us the luxury of deliberation). This indicates the immense and indispensable role of habits in human life, a fact deeply appreciated by Peirce.

Thoughtful persons deliberate when circumstances allow and tend to act thoughtfully (attentively, considerately, purposefully) even when the pressures of circumstance preclude the possibility of deliberation. In contrast, thoughtless persons squander opportunities to deliberate (like the White Rabbit, each insisting, "I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date") and exaggerate the extent to which extenuating circumstances rather than debilitating choices account for their all too characteristic thoughtlessness. At a certain point in our intellectual development, it is inadequate to excuse ourselves by insisting that we did not think that a particular omission would be irritating, or an insulting utterance hurtful, or an impulsive act disastrous. In general, being truly thoughtful requires us to discern our own tendencies toward thoughtlessness; it requires us to imagine, for the purpose of self-accountability, both the contexts in which *and* people to whom our habitual responses are most likely ingrained patterns of inattention and insensitivity.¹² Habits of sustained thoughtfulness, sharpened attentiveness, painstaking consideration, and so on are not random results but the cumulative effects of conscientious deliberation. The opposites of these habits are, in turn, the results of the failure to deliberate conscientiously, the failure to engage

in experiments of self-accountability. Our endeavors to hold ourselves accountable involve, as already noted, recollecting our irrevocable deeds and imagining dramatic enactments of our highest ideals. Deliberation is the transformative interplay of memory and imagination, especially when the virtue of courage informs memory's confrontations with past actualities and when ideals of conduct inspire imagination's dramas involving future possibilities. This interplay is transformative because it alters our habits of outward engagement as thoroughly as it does our habits of mental exertion and affective response (CP, 1:574). Deliberation, understood as the transformative interplay between memory and imagination, is the key to understanding reason in Peirce's sense: human rationality is, at bottom, the emergent capacity of imaginative deliberation. Such, at least, is my hypothesis concerning Peirce's own hypothesis regarding the nature of reason.

Although Peirce himself was perhaps closer to James and especially Dewey than he supposed, a word or two more about his own efforts to distance himself from these two other pragmatists will help us to appreciate the distinctiveness of Peirce's approach. In "The Sentiment of Rationality" James proposes that reasonableness resides first and foremost in a sentiment, specifically, the "feeling of sufficiency of the present moment, of its absoluteness,—this absence of all need to explain it[self], account for it[self], or justify it[self]."13 For Peirce, the trouble lies not so much with this particular proposal as with the general approach itself, the very attempt to explain rationality primarily in terms of feeling or sentiment. The explanation instead should focus on conducting oneself in a certain manner. But the range of what counts as conduct is defined by Peirce not in any narrow or superficial way (see, e.g., CP, 6:481). Conduct includes our inward musings and imaginative flights as well as our outward engagements and muscular exertions.

In contrast to Dewey, who emphasized a descriptive account in his relatively early essays on experimental logic, Peirce stressed that the nature of reason is best exhibited not by offering a descriptive account of reason's genesis but by providing a normative explication of reason's function (CP, 8:239–44). In a letter Peirce expressed to Dewey his deep misgivings about the descriptive, genetic approach: "You propose to substitute for the Normative Science which in my judgment is the greatest need of our age a 'Natural History' of thought or of experience. . . . I do not think that anything like a natural history can answer the terrible need that I see of checking the awful waste of thought, of time, of energy, going on, in consequence of men's not understanding the theory of inference" (CP, 8:239). Against James, Peirce stressed conduct over sentiment, whereas against Dewey, he emphasized an explicitly normative

rather than purely descriptive account of reasoning. But for Peirce, "reasoning is only a special kind of controlled conduct" (CP, 1:610). Thus, Peirce's objections to James and to Dewey are in fact linked in his approach to rationality, for the overarching goal of the Peircean approach is to conceive human reason in terms of a normative account of human conduct.

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As I just noted, the chief issue for normative inquiry concerns not the origin but the *function* of rationality, not how reason has come into being but how it can continue becoming what its evolving ideals demand or at least suggest. Yet here it is imperative to appreciate the extent to which the history of reason is a narrative of crises, confusions, and aporias.¹⁴ Hence, the very possibility of reason becoming what its own defining ideals, norms, and commitments demand or suggest is precisely what is called into question at certain critical junctures. Indeed, the search for truth has resulted, time and again, in despair over the possibility of this search itself. The open-ended history of our norm-governed activities (the enterprises in which critique and thus rationality play a prominent role) is fatefully punctuated by crises of a deep-cutting and far-reaching sort, crises in which nothing less than forms of life (in a sense, epochal worlds—e.g., the world of medieval Christendom or that of late modernity) are driven toward dissolution by their own *inherent* dynamic.¹⁵ Accordingly, the stultifications prominent in this history are always, in some manner and measure, self-stultifications. Skepticism is, for example, the outcome of an uncompromising commitment to what look like praiseworthy ideals and legitimate procedures. Just as these stultifications are self-stultifications, the revolutions by which a practice is enabled to carry on its work, in however altered form, are self-revisions and self-transformations.

If we take seriously the historicity of reason¹⁶ and, in particular, the centrality of crises and revolutions in the history of our investigations and institutions, what happens to the traditional hallmarks of human rationality (universality, necessity, certainty, objectivity, etc.)? That they need to be re-envisioned, perhaps radically, is accepted by virtually all pragmatists. In this connection, however, more traditionally inclined pragmatists feel that neopragmatism throws out the baby with the bathwater (i.e., it throws out any and every sense of objectivity with the acknowledgment that completely disinterested knowledge is unattainable), whereas neopragmatists suppose that these traditionalists suffer from a debilitating case of nostalgia for a constellation of discredited ideals.

For Peirce, acknowledging the historicity of reason does not entail reducing our norms and ideals to our present procedures and aspirations; even though these norms and ideals have emerged in the ongoing course of a tangled history, they nonetheless enable us to transcend, to some extent, our current practices and thereby to evaluate their effectiveness, worth, and so on.¹⁷ In short, their historical origin and status do not blunt their critical and ameliorative functions. For Rorty, however, acknowledging the historicity of reason *does* mean jettisoning our notion of intellectual progress and our hope for (no matter how modestly conceived) “transcendent” critique. Since this difference is one that truly makes a difference, and since it does so regarding our understanding of reason itself, it is worthy of discussion here. The contrast between Peirce and Rorty is especially instructive in this regard.

Rorty suggests that the rational is merely what we, given our traditions and training, happen to find persuasive.¹⁸ Of course, he knows that the matter is not this simple, for he grants that we can be persuaded in an *irrational* manner to adopt a belief or to undertake an action. That we can be persuaded by certain techniques or procedures (e.g., the omnipresent propaganda of our consumer society) does not necessarily establish our rationality; it very well might reveal our gullibility or naïveté. Hence, the rational cannot simply be equated with the persuasive.

Here it is important to stress that we often come to judge ourselves to have been gullible or naïve. Judgments of self-reproach are part of any effective process of rational self-mastery. Neither these judgments nor the perspectives from which they are made are, as far as mature agents are concerned, imposed primarily from outside. In these self-critical retrospections, such agents judge themselves chiefly in the light of their own commitments, norms, and ideals. So virtually everyone acknowledges practically (even if not verbally) the need to distinguish the rational from the persuasive.

But to ensure that the radical contingency of human reason is recognized and that any impulse to return to a foundationalist justification of our rhetorical practices is blocked, Rorty insists on being provocative: the rational is simply what *we* have come to accept as persuasive.¹⁹ This has undoubtedly changed in the course of our history; moreover, it is susceptible to further modifications. The indisputable fact is that, at present, we find certain considerations or appeals moving or even decisive, whereas rather different ones held sway in the past. Hence, what counts as persuasive is, at bottom, contingent; it currently takes this form (e.g., a parliamentary form of political deliberation), although it could have—indeed, historically has—taken very different forms. The vertigo induced by a sense of radical contingency (especially regarding our most cher-

ished beliefs and most basic principles) prompts us to seek something secure to grab. To avoid toppling over from this dizzying swirl, we often seek something not only stable but *absolutely* stable (see Plato on misology, *Phaedo* 89d). Philosophy in the Platonic sense was generated, in fact, by the felt need to unearth an absolutely secure basis for our moral, political, and intellectual claims. In other words, the anxious quest for ahistoric foundations was prompted by the disorientating sense of radical contingency. Rorty supposes that, unlike James and Dewey, Peirce is a Platonic philosopher in pragmatic (dis)guise; in this, however, he is mistaken, for Peirce is engaged not in the quest for absolute certainty but in the struggle for reliable, even if eventually revisable, beliefs.

Whereas the Platonic philosopher anxiously strives to overcome radical contingency, the Rortyeen pragmatist ironically embraces it along with others (e.g., postmodernists and deconstructionists) who have also acquired the hardness to live without “metaphysical comfort,”²⁰ that is, without the comforting assurance that there are divine—or a least suprahistorical and thus extrahuman—warrants for our beliefs and actions. “Pragmatists think that the history of attempts to isolate the True or the Good [or the Rational], or to define the word ‘good’ or ‘true’ [or ‘rational’], supports their suspicion that there is no interesting work to be done in this area.”²¹ It should be no surprise, then, that they “think it will not help to say something true to think about Truth, nor will it help to act well to think about Goodness, nor will it help to be rational to think about Rationality.”²²

In contrast to Rorty, Peirce thought that reflecting on the nature, status, and function(s) of reason *might* assist us in becoming more reasonable. Of course, Peirce was such a thoroughgoing fallibilist that he was acutely sensitive to the omnipresent possibility that thinking about rationality might degenerate into yet another exercise in showing off, or grasping power, or hurting others. There is no guarantee that, in our efforts to attain a clearer understanding of human reason, we will not manifest that all-too-human propensity to behave unreasonably. Even so, the history of philosophy does not present as bleak a picture as Rorty contends. However misguided has been the traditional philosophical quest to discover timeless essences and to secure unshakable foundations, this quest itself has in countless ways facilitated the cultivation of humane habits and, in particular, habits of deliberative imagination. Perhaps philosophical reflections on reason and the practical embodiment of reasonableness cannot be as quickly or completely severed from one another as Rorty insists. At the very least, Peirce, who himself made some extremely disparaging remarks about both reason and philosophy, would argue that the practical cultivation of reasonableness demands

nothing less than a high degree of reflexivity. It demands nothing less than a graded series of self-reflective processes by which agents make of themselves objects of ever more nuanced awareness and ever more responsible evaluation. In our *practical* efforts to cultivate reasonableness (at least if these efforts are thoroughgoing and sustained), the level of generality as well as of reflexivity toward which we are driven ensures that we will be ineluctably led toward, if not into, philosophical reflection. I previously suggested that reflecting on reason might assist us in becoming more reasonable; here I am suggesting that in our efforts to become more reasonable we are led toward philosophical queries regarding human reason (that is, queries of a highly general, reflexive, and self-critical kind).

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Peirce's own reflections on rationality radiate from a central insight, one most forcefully articulated in the last decade of his life. Specifically, it is in the context of his reformulation of pragmatism,²³ a context inclusive of a strenuous defense of critical commonsensism, that we encounter this insight. Consideration of this insight should help to clarify not only the points just made but also the principal shortcomings in the Rortyeian approach to human reason. Of far greater significance, this consideration can help us attain a fuller interpretation of Peirce and a finer understanding of reason itself.

In "Issues of Pragmaticism" (1905) Peirce recommends that "the term 'reasoning' ought to be confined to such fixation of one belief by another as is reasonable, deliberate, self-controlled" (CP, 5:440). It seems plausible to suggest that, for Peirce, the meaning of rationality is derived first and foremost from adverbs (modifiers of processes) and adjectives, not from verbs (the processes themselves) or nouns (the powers or capacities making possible the execution of such processes as fixing beliefs or drawing inferences). That is, *reasonably* and *reasonable* provide the principal clues for understanding reasoning and reason. The process of reasoning is, in Peirce's sense at least, not simply the fixation of one belief by another; the power of reason is not simply the capacity to fix one belief by means of other beliefs. The nature of both process and power is manifest in the *manner* in which beliefs are fixed, namely, deliberately. Reasonable beliefs are deliberately derived beliefs. Reasoning is a deliberative process in which all three modes of inference (abduction, deduction, and induction) operate; it is, however, a process defined by the manner of its execution. So, too, human reason itself is best characterized as the capacity to initiate, sustain, and refine deliberative practices.

In defining reasoning as a manner of fixing beliefs, Peirce is connecting this process to the phenomenon of acquiring habits. Since beliefs are

at bottom habits of action, the fixation of beliefs entails the acquisition of habits. Not only is reasoning a drama taking place against a more or less stable background of habits; its enactment bears crucially on this background, on both specific habits and their integrated functioning. The upshot of reasoning is generally the formation of a disposition.

The acquisition of habits is, according to Peirce, a ubiquitous feature of the natural world. Inorganic as well as organic beings display this capacity. A marked characteristic of certain biological organisms is nonetheless the speed with which they acquire and even alter habits (especially when they are young), as well as the extent to which the acquisition and integration of habits transform these organisms. The members of at least one biological species manifest a capacity to exert some degree of control over the formation and alteration of their own habits. That this control is neither direct nor complete does not reduce its significance. That imaginary exertions can precede and inform actual exertions enables embodied agents to circumvent the repercussions of ill-considered actions. To enact imaginatively various courses of possible conduct bears significantly on the acquisition and modification of habits. Our habits of diagrammatic and especially dramatic imagination²⁴ can evolve into ones of physical and social involvement. Of course, the figure of Walter Mitty helps to remind us that what is lived imaginatively is not necessarily enacted. Even so, Peirce is correct to remind us that "mere imagination would indeed be mere trifling; only no imagination is mere. 'More than all that is in thy custody, watch over thy phantasy,' said Solomon, 'For out of it are the issues of life'" (CP, 6:286).

Reasoning in Peirce's sense must be more or less conscious. In turn, consciousness in this connection means "a sense of taking a habit, or disposition to respond to a given kind of stimulus in a given kind of way."²⁵ This requires some unpacking. There are, for Peirce, three irreducible forms of human consciousness: feeling, resistance, and learning.²⁶ In addition to the immediate, incommunicable consciousness of qualities and to the forceful, dyadic consciousness of resistance, there is the felt sense of personal transformation (of acquiring a new habit or at least of having one's present habits strengthened, refined, or in some other way modified).

Sometimes Peirce refers to this third form of consciousness as "synthetic consciousness," sometimes as simply "learning." "But the secret of rational consciousness is not so much to be sought in the study of this one peculiar nucleolus, as in the review of the process of self-control in its entirety" (CP, 5:440). The suggestion that the review of this process holds the secret of our rationality is what I described earlier as the central insight from which radiates the Peircean account of human reason.²⁷

In Western thought, especially in the modern epoch, the link between

rationality and autonomy has often been highlighted. Whereas the dominant tendency within Western traditions has been to conceive rationality as the *basis* of autonomy (only rational agents can be self-legislative beings), Peirce took autonomy or self-legislation to be the very *meaning* of rationality. The phenomena of self-control (and for Peirce these phenomena include those of self-reproach, since such reproach alone makes such control possible) "seem to be the fundamental characteristics which distinguish a rational being" (CP, 5:419). Moreover, "the whole business of ratiocination, and all that makes us intellectual beings, is performed in imagination" (CP, 6:286). Finally, it is performed in imagination as a dramatic enactment of presumably possible yet characteristically exclusive undertakings: such imaginative dramas are enacted for the purpose of enhancing personal autonomy. That is, they are phases in a process of deliberation in its most authentic sense.

Thus, what makes human reason in the Peircean sense possible is, above all else, a collection of three factors: the initial capacity to acquire habits, the abiding (even if over time significantly reduced) capacity to acquire ever new habits, and the deliberate control over various phases of a process at once organic and moral. Underlying both our capacity to acquire habits at all and our need to acquire new habits, there is chance or spontaneity: neither human life nor any cosmic event is rigidly determined. Out of an evolving universe in which spontaneous occurrences disrupt established patterns of action and, in turn, embodied habits generate ever new occasions for chance, self-controlled agents emerge (see, e.g., CP, 5:511, 5:433, 5:442, 5:533). Self-control depends on the cultivation of effective, refined habits of action and imagination; such habits themselves depend on deliberation (CP, 5:477–79). Given the prominent role Peirce assigns to deliberation, we might describe his position in terms of *deliberative* rationality.²⁸ The deliberative model of human reason contrasts sharply with not only Richard Rorty's *rhetorical* model but also Brand Blanshard's *deductivist* model. Whereas Rorty maintains (as we have already seen) that "'rational' merely means 'persuasive,'"²⁹ Blanshard contends that in its narrowest and nuclear meaning reason "denotes the faculty and function of grasping *necessary* connections."³⁰ Neither persuasion nor deduction (the indubitable grasp of necessary connections) can explain satisfactorily the processes and practices of deliberation, whereas deliberative imagination provides us with an adequate model for comprehending rhetorically effective strategies³¹ as well as logically necessary inferences.³² Persuasion is either manipulative or respectful;³³ it is—at least in effect—an attempt either to usurp or to enhance someone's capacity for self-determination. In turn, inference is either warranted or not. But persuasion makes sense and carries weight

only for deliberative agents, actors who try conscientiously to orient themselves toward a future predictable in some respects yet unforeseeable in countless others. And errors in drawing inferences are detected best by means of mental experimentation on diagrammatic representations of inferential steps, these diagrams being either actually constructed or just imaginatively entertained (CP, 4:91).³⁴ Such mental experimentation, however, is simply another way of talking about imaginative deliberation.

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In *Speculative Pragmatism* Sandra Rosenthal suggests that "in philosophy, as elsewhere, . . . the threat of irrationality to overcome rationality requires a deepening to the roots of rationality, and the evolution, within a historically grounded community, of new organs of adjudication."³⁵ The crafting of new organs of truly rational adjudication is perforce a task drawing on tradition-shaped sensibilities and driving toward self-correcting traditions. One way in which traditions foster their own self-correction is by living dialogically their own conflicts and tensions; another is by engaging dialogically with other traditions (CP, 1:654, 1:673, 1:676, 6:426).³⁶ Moreover, the crafting of new organs of dialogical encounter is a task of the greatest moral and political significance, not only one of paramount intellectual and (even more narrowly) philosophical importance. Indeed, what Peirce himself said regarding the debate between nominalists and realists might, with equal justice, be said of the ongoing controversies surrounding human rationality: though the question "has its roots in the technicalities of logic, its branches reach about our life" (CP, 8:38). Although his own attention was largely absorbed in logical technicalities, and although his too unqualified veneration of certain traditions disposed him to moral blindness (think here of his attitudes toward the institution of slavery or toward the plight of women), his vision of rationality encompasses more than these technicalities. In turn, the resources of this vision itself provide the means for helping us to see our own blindnesses, a far more important matter than seeing the blindnesses of others. As Peirce himself forcefully makes this point, "a stay-at-home conscience does the most to render the earth habitable" (CP, 8:162).

To strike a Jamesian chord, an affective and somatic fluidity is of immense importance for envisioning a truly rational life,³⁷ far more important than Peirce himself seems to have recognized. The ability to experience the play of our emotions and the movements of our bodies as melodies—as complex, dynamic sequences in which dissonance is creatively put into the service of harmony³⁸—is an important benefit of deliberative imagination. To strike a Deweyan chord, a conscientious com-

mitment to institutional reforms is equally important for a truly rational life, again far more significant than Peirce would want to grant.

Even if rationality consists *primarily* in a certain way of acting, certain patterns of feeling (including those of fluidity and self-sufficiency) demand attention. Peirce explicitly recognizes this point: "How we feel is no matter; the question is what we shall do. But that feeling which is subservient to action and to the intelligence of action is correspondingly important" (CP, 6:286). He goes so far as to suggest that "all inward [or affective] life is more or less so subservient." But if this is so, his opposition to James on this score is far less thoroughgoing than he himself realizes.

Especially since rationality consists in the emergent capacity of imaginative deliberation, it requires the impetus and support of sustaining traditions of rigorous debate and consistent accountability. These traditions themselves require institutional embodiment for their maturation and even continuation; that is, they require a cultural status widely acknowledged and strenuously defended. Although Peirce recognizes this point as well, his deep antipathy toward facile gestures and, worse, the deracinating effects of so many cultural "reforms" disposes him to exaggerate the dangers of and to downplay the need for institutional reconstruction. He also certainly recognizes the need, especially in an individualistic culture, to foster authentic communities (a unity or togetherness that enhances, rather than frustrates, the uniqueness of the individuals brought together); practically, however, the fostering of genuine community and the reform of traditional institutions are of a piece—the one cannot be accomplished without the other.

Accordingly, any adequate vision of a truly rational life must encompass not only the cultivation of an aesthetic sensibility (in Peirce's rather idiosyncratic sense) but also a commitment to institutional reform. It must include not only a normative appreciation of the feelings of fluidity, harmony, dissonance, and so on but also a practical concern with the reconstruction of institutions.³⁹ The reason is not so much that providing genuine opportunities and requisite training for deliberative imagination is among the defining commitments of a democratic culture but that these opportunities and this training are sustaining conditions of dialogic reason itself and of its internalized form, deliberative imagination. Such reason is that form of rationality whose very integrity is undermined, if not destroyed, by arbitrary exclusion and unearned privilege. Although the community of self-critical inquirers and interpreters is *in practice* never anything more than a motley association of companionable antagonists, it must in principle never be anything less than a community inclusive of even (perhaps especially) those who challenge our most deeply cherished beliefs and, of even greater moment, our most

strongly accredited methods. Thus, arbitrary exclusions from what ideally should be the most inclusive deliberations possible (i.e., practically feasible), especially when such exclusions are institutionally enshrined and thus largely undetected, must be contested in the name of dialogic reason, not only in that of democratic culture. In previously highlighting Peirce's insistence that a theory of reason might assist us in acquiring the habits of reasonableness, I appreciate the extent to which Peirce's pragmatism must be read *in contrast* to Rorty's neopragmatism. In acknowledging here the need to incorporate into our account of reason, on the one hand, affective and somatic fluidity and, on the other, institutional and pedagogical concerns, I am in effect acknowledging that Peirce's treatment of rationality is best read *in conjunction with* such thinkers as James and Dewey. But that is another and far more involved story. Yet to highlight just this need for incorporating the Peircean vision of deliberative imagination in this wider context seems a fitting way to conclude my present discussion, if only because it reminds us of Peirce's own doctrine of fallibilism and also because it points us to a task at once central to the concerns of contemporary philosophers and rooted in the insights of the classical pragmatists themselves—namely, the task "of giving a sane and human description of the scope of reason."⁴⁰

Notes

1. Consider, for example, John Smith's characterization of the modern epoch in Western philosophy: "The story of modern philosophy is largely the story of the criticism of reason undertaken from many points of view and prompted by diverse motives" (John Smith, *America's Philosophical Vision* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992] 103–4).
2. Dewey, however, sought to substitute intelligence for reason (see John Dewey, *MW*, 12:259, and *LW*, 4:169–71; and Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991], 356–57, 360–61). Even so, his attempt to replace the traditional notion of reason with his own instrumentalist conception of intelligence can justifiably be construed as part of the debate to which I am referring here.
3. M. R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature: An Essay on the Meaning of Scientific Method* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931; rev. ed., Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1959). All references are to the revised edition.
4. John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," in *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* (New York: Holt, 1917); Richard Bernstein, "Pragmatism, Pluralism, and the Healing of Wounds," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 63, no. 3 (Nov. 1989): 5–18; Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatic Aesthetics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 142.
5. See, for example, Dewey, "Recovery of Philosophy."
6. Volume 5 of *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* contains Peirce's lectures on pragmatism as well as a number of the texts most germane to this topic. Volume

2 (1894–1914) of *The Essential Philosophical Writings*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, forthcoming), will contain many of these texts and, especially since it provides a critical edition of various key texts, will be very helpful for exploring Peirce's reconception of reason in the context of his pragmatism.

7. Max H. Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, ed. K. L. Ketner and C. Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

8. Although this text describes intelligence rather than reason as consisting in a mode of action (rather than a mode of feeling), Peirce does not tend (as Dewey does; see note 2) to draw a sharp distinction between the two terms. In fact, he often uses the two words as at least rough synonyms.

9. The expression "ends-in-view" and the characterization of means as ends-in-the-making are Deweyan rather than Peircean; nonetheless, they capture well crucial features of Peirce's own doctrine of developmental teleology (see note 10).

10. Like James and Dewey, Peirce did not suppose that the rational life consists primarily in the innovative pursuit of predetermined goals. Goals themselves emerge, ends evolve, in the course of history; in fact, history is first and foremost a story of transitions, a process in which one constellation of goals usurps the authority of another. Peirce's own phrase for such a process is "developmental teleology" (CP, 6:156; see also CP, 1:589). In *Democracy and Education* Dewey in effect illuminates this notion when he writes: "Progress is sometimes thought of as consisting in getting nearer to ends already sought. But this is a minor form of progress, for it requires only improvement of the means of action or technical advance. More important modes of progress consist in enriching prior purposes and in forming new ones. Desires are not a fixed quantity, nor does progress mean only an increased amount of satisfaction. With increased culture and new mastery of nature, new desires . . . show themselves, for intelligence perceives new possibilities of action. This projection of new possibilities leads to search for new means of execution, and progress takes place; while the discovery of objects not already used leads to suggestion of *new ends*" (John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* [New York: Macmillan, 1916], 223–24; emphasis added). See also John E. Smith, *America's Philosophical Vision*, 45–46; and Robert Nozick, *The Nature of Rationality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), chap. 5.

11. See John Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1932), 33.

12. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken, 1971).

13. William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," *Essays in Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 64. The essay originally appeared in *Mind* 4 (July): 317–46.

14. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed., enlarged (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Alasdair MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science" *Monist* 60 (1977): 453–71 (reprinted in *Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, ed. Gary Gutting [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988]); idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

15. John William Miller, *The Paradox of Cause and Other Essays* (New York: Norton, 1978); MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises"; idem, *Whose Justice?*

16. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?* 9.

17. Vincent Colapietro, "General Theories, Vague Utterances, and Fruitful Inquiries," in *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications and Connections*, ed. Vincent Colapietro and Thomas Olshewsky (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995).

18. Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, vol. 1 of *Philosophical Papers*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 220.

19. Cf. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 216, 134.

20. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 166.

21. *Ibid.*, xiv.

22. *Ibid.*, xv.

23. Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, 283–304, esp. 293–97.

24. It is not an exaggeration to say that the construction of and then experimentation on a diagram, followed by the observation of what are often startling consequences, have some of the rudimentary elements of a dramatic series. Hence, the continuity between diagrammatic and dramatic imagination needs to be acknowledged. On the one side, diagrammatic imagination might be legitimately construed as an instance of dramatic imagination; on the other, the abstractive skills fostered by diagrammatic imagination can in some respects facilitate the discernment and analysis of dramatic sequences. See Kenneth Laine Ketner, "Peirce on Diagrammatic Thought," in *Zeichen und Realität*, ed. Klaus Oehler (Tübingen: Stauffenberg, 1984).

25. Nathan Houser, "Peirce's General Taxonomy of Consciousness," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 19 (1983): 345.

26. See *ibid.*, 331–59.

27. According to Peirce, "the phenomena of reasoning are, in their general features, parallel to those of moral conduct. For reasoning is essentially thought that is under self-control, just as moral conduct is conduct under self-control. Indeed reasoning [itself] is a species of controlled conduct and as such necessarily partakes of the essential features of controlled conduct" (CP, 1:606; see also CP, 5:419). For a complete account of Peirce's mature view of human reason, at the very least it would be necessary (1) to explain *in detail* the process of self-control and (2) to illuminate how Peirce's general notion of deliberation provides a way of exhibiting the unity of theoretical and practical (or moral) reason. In our theoretical inquiries no less than in our practical undertakings, we are principally deliberative agents.

28. See Robert O. Johann, "Rationality, Justice, and Dominant Ends," in *The Value of Justice*, ed. Charles Kelbey (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 11–27. See also idem, "Morality, Judgment, and Prayer," in *New Dimensions in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Carl A. Raschke, *Journal of American Academy of Religion Thematic Studies* 49, no. 1 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1982): 53–70.

29. Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 220.

30. Brand Blanshard, *Reason and Analysis* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1962), 25 (emphasis added).

31. C. S. Peirce, "Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing, No. 1," ed. and intro. John Michael Krois, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11, no. 3 (Summer): 147–55.

32. Kenneth Laine Ketner, "The Best Example of Semeiosis and Its Use in Teaching Semiotics," *American Journal of Semiotics* 1, nos. 1–2 (1981): 47–83; idem, "Peirce on Diagrammatic Thought."

33. See, however, Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, vol. 2 of *Philosophical Papers*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 159–63.

34. See also Carolyn Eisele, "An Introduction to Peirce's Mathematical Semiotic," *American Journal of Semiotics* 2, nos. 1–2 (1983): 45–54; Ketner, "Best Example of Semeiosis"; idem, "Peirce on Diagrammatic Thought."

35. Sandra Rosenthal, *Speculative Pragmatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 203.

36. See also MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*; Bernstein, "Pragmatism, Pluralism"; and idem, *The New Constellation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).
37. Shusterman, *Pragmatic Aesthetics*, 127–28, 259–61.
38. A. N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 256–64.
39. See, e.g., John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (New York: Putnam, 1935); reprinted in Dewey, *LW*, 11:1–65. See also Vincent Colapietro, "The Reconstruction of Intuitions," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 4, no. 3 (1990): 237–48.
40. Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 126.

CHAPTER 2

*William James's Pragmatism:
Purpose, Practice, and Pluralism*

JOHN J. STUHR

If we said nothing in any degree new, why was our meaning so desperately hard to catch? (*MT*, 100)

Imagine a philosophy that seeks to make room for empiricists and rationalists, materialists and idealists, realists and antirealists, pluralists and monists, pessimists and optimists, believers and skeptics, possible-world logicians and this-world poets, and ancients, moderns, and post-moderns. William James set forth his pragmatism as just such a philosophy—a big-tent philosophy that has room for both tender-minded and tough-minded philosophers of all sorts of philosophical traditions, temperaments, and insights (*PM*, 13). To those unfamiliar with pragmatism, James urged in effect, "Come on in."

Accordingly, James's *Pragmatism*, published in 1907, is an invitation to take up his pragmatism. Before responding to this invitation, it is crucial to grasp James's own understanding of his book. First, James often asserted that his pragmatism was not philosophically novel or unique or unfamiliar. In this spirit, he subtitled the book "A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking" and dedicated the book to the memory of John Stuart Mill, "from whom," he says, "I first learned the pragmatic openness of mind and whom my fancy likes to picture as our leader were he alive to-day" (*PM*, 3). In this spirit, he wrote that the philosophical tendencies of pragmatism are "tendencies that have always existed in philosophy" (*PM*, 5). Finally, in this spirit, he declared that pragmatism "represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy," and asserted that