THE ESSENTIAL PEIRCE

Selected Philosophical Writings

VOLUME 2
(1893–1913)

edited by the Peirce Edition Project

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Indiana University Press
BLOOMINGTON AND INDIANAPOLIS 1998
What Pragmatism Is

P 1078: The Monist 15 (April 1905): 161–81. [Published in CP 5: 411–37. Initially planned as a part of a review of Herbert Nickels's A Treatise on Cosmology, this paper was composed in the middle of the summer 1904. When it appeared in The Monist, it was supposed to be followed by two additional papers, "The Consequences of Pragmatism" and "The Evidences for Pragmatism," but this plan metamorphosed over the following two years, and even though two more papers appeared, the series was never concluded.] With this series, Peirce returns to his 1903 project to explain his pragmatism in a way that would distinguish it from popular variants and facilitate the exposition of its proof. He renames it "pragmatism," a name "ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers," and explores the underlying presuppositions, summing them up in the cryptic admonition: "Dismiss make-believers." A key belief is that learning, or mental development of any kind, has to begin with the "immense mass of cognition already formed." In an imagined dialog between a pragmatist and a critic, Peirce addresses concerns about the purpose and consequences of pragmatism, emphasizing the importance of experimentation and explaining how the meaning of every proposition lies in the future. He concludes by arguing that while the pragmatist regards Thirdness as an essential ingredient of reality, it can only govern through action, and action cannot arise except in feeling. It is the dependence of Thirdness on action (Secondness) and feeling (Firstness) that distinguishes pragmatism from the absolute idealism of Hegel.

The writer of this article has been led by much experience to believe that every physicist, and every chemist, and, in short, every master in any department of experimental science, has had his mind molded by his life in the laboratory to a degree that is little suspected. The experimentalist himself can hardly be fully aware of it, for the reason that the men whose intellects he really knows about are much like himself in this respect. With intellects of widely different training from his own, whose education has largely been a thing learned out of books, he will never become inwardly intimate, be he on ever so familiar terms with them; for he and they are as oil and water, and though they be shaken up together, it is remarkable how quickly they will go their several mental ways, without having gained more than a faint flavor from the association. Were those other men only to take skillful soundings of the experimentalist's mind,—which is just what they are unqualified to do, for
the most part,—they would soon discover that, excepting perhaps upon topics where his mind is tramelled by personal feeling or by his bringing up, his disposition is to think of everything just as everything is thought of in the laboratory, that is, as a question of experimentatation. Of course, no living man possesses in their fullness all the attributes characteristic of his type: it is not the typical doctor whom you will see every day driven in buggies or coupé, nor is it the typical pedagogue that will be met with in the first schoolroom you enter. But when you have found, or ideally constructed upon a basis of observation, the typical experimentalist, you will find that whatever assertion you may make to him, he will either understand as meaning that if a given prescription for an experiment ever can be and ever is carried out in act, an experience of a given description will result, or else he will see no sense at all in what you say. If you talk to him as Mr. Balfour talked not long ago to the British Association, saying that "the physicist seeks for something deeper than the laws connecting possible objects of experience," that "his object is a physical reality" unrevealed in experiments, and that the existence of such non-experiential reality "is the unalterable faith of science," to all such ontological meaning you will find the experimentalist mind to be color-blind. What adds to that confidence in which the writer owes to his conversations with experimentalists is that he himself may almost be said to have inhabited a laboratory from the age of six until long past maturity; and having all his life associated mostly with experimentalists, it has always been with a confident sense of understanding them and of being understood by them.

That laboratory life did not prevent the writer (who here and in what follows simply exemplifies the experimentalist type) from becoming interested in methods of thinking; and when he came to read metaphysics, although much of it seemed to him loosely reasoned and determined by accidental presuppositions, yet in the writings of some philosophers, especially Kant, Berkeley, and Spinoza, he sometimes came upon strains of thought that recalled the ways of thinking of the laboratory, so that he felt he might trust to them; all of which has been true of other laboratory-men.

Endeavoring, as a man of that type naturally would, to formulate what he so approved, he framed the theory that a conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is absolutely nothing more in it. For this doctrine he invented the name pragmatism. Some of his friends wished him to call it practicism or practicalism (perhaps on the ground that πρακτικός is better Greek than πραγματικός). But for one who had learned philosophy out of Kant, as the writer, along with nineteen out of every twenty experimentalists who have turned to philosophy, had done, and who still thought in Kantian terms most readily, praktisch and pragmatisch were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose. Now quite the most striking feature of the new theory was its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose; and that consideration was which determined the preference for the name pragmatism.

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Concerning the matter of philosophical nomenclature, there are a few plain considerations, which the writer has for many years longed to submit to the deliberate judgment of those few fellow-students of philosophy, who deplore the present state of that study, and who are intent upon rescuing it therefrom and bringing it to a condition like that of the natural sciences, where investigators, instead of contemplating each the work of most of the others as misdirected from beginning to end, cooperate, stand upon one another's shoulders, and multiply incontestable results; where every observation is repeated, and isolated observations go for little; where every hypothesis that merits attention is subjected to severe but fair examination, and only after the predictions to which it leads have been remarkably borne out by experience is trusted at all, and even then only provisionally; where a radically false step is rarely taken, even the most fatal of those theories which gain wide credence being true in their main experimental predictions. To those students, it is submitted that no study can become scientific in the sense described, until it provides itself with a suitable technical nomenclature, whose every term has a single definite meaning universally accepted among students of the subject, and whose vocabularies have no such sweetness or charms as might tempt loose writers to abuse them,—which is a virtue of scientific nomenclature too little appreciated. It is submitted that the experience of those sciences which have conquered the greatest difficulties of terminology, which are unquestionably the taxonomic sciences, chemistry, mineralogy, botany, zoology, has conclusively shown that the only way in which the requisite unanimity and requisite ruptures with individual habits and preferences can be brought about is so to shape the canons of terminology that they shall gain the support of moral principle and of every man's sense of decency; and that, in particular (under defined restrictions), the general feeling shall be that he who introduces a new conception into philosophy is under an obligation to invent acceptable terms to express it, and that when he has done so, the duty of his fellow-students is to accept those terms, and to resent any wrestling of them from their original meanings, as not only a gross discourtesy to him to whom philosophy was indebted for each conception, but also as an injury to philosophy itself; and furthermore, that once a conception has been supplied with suitable and sufficient words for its expression, no other technical terms denoting the same things, considered in the same relations,
should be countenanced. Should this suggestion find favor, it might be deemed needful that the philosophers in congress assembled should adopt, after due deliberation, convenient canons to limit the application of the principle. Thus, just as is done in chemistry, it might be wise to assign fixed meanings to certain prefixes and suffixes. For example, it might be agreed, perhaps, that the prefix prope- should mark a broad and rather indefinite extension of the meaning of the term to which it was prefixed; the name of a doctrine would naturally end in -ism, while -icism might mark a more strictly defined acceptance of that doctrine, etc. Then again, just as in biology no account is taken of terms antedating Linnaeus, so in philosophy it might be found best not to go back of the scholastic terminology. To illustrate another sort of limitation, it has probably never happened that any philosopher has attempted to give a general name to his own doctrine without that name's soon acquiring, in common philosophical usage, a signification much broader than was originally intended. Thus, special systems go by the names Kantianism, Benthamism, Comtianism, Spencerianism, etc., while transcendentalism, utilitarianism, positivism, evolutionism, synthetic philosophy, etc., have irrevocably and very conveniently been elevated to broader governments.

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After awaiting in vain, for a good many years, some particularly opportune conjunction of circumstances that might serve to recommend his notions of the ethics of terminology, the writer has now, at last, dragged them in over head and shoulders, on an occasion when he has no specific proposal to offer nor any feeling but satisfaction at the course usage has run without any canons or resolutions of a congress. His word “pragmatism” has gained general recognition in a generalized sense that seems to argue power of growth and vitality. The famed psychologist, James, first took it up, seeing that his “radical empiricism” substantially answered to the writer’s definition of pragmatism, albeit with a certain difference in the point of view.2 Next, the admirably clear and brilliant thinker, Mr. Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, casting about for a more attractive name for the “anthropomorphism” of his Riddles of the Sphinx, hit upon the same designation “pragmatism,” which in its original sense was in generic agreement with his own doctrine, for which he has since found the more appropriate specification “humanism,” while he still retains “pragmatism” in a somewhat wider sense.4 So far all went happily. But at present, the word begins to meet with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abused in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches. Sometimes the manners of the British have effloresced in scolding at the word as ill-chosen,—ill-chosen, that is, to express some meaning that it was rather designed to exclude. So then, the writer, finding his bantling “pragmatism” so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child goodbye and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word “pragmaticism,” which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers.*

Much as the writer has gained from the perusal of what other pragmatists have written, he still thinks there is a decisive advantage in his original conception of the doctrine. From this original form every truth that follows from any of the other forms can be deduced, while some errors can be avoided into which other pragmatists have fallen. The original view appears, too, to be a more compact and unitary conception than the others. But its capital merit, in the writer’s eyes, is that it more readily connects itself with a critical proof of its truth. Quite in accord with the logical order of investigation, it usually happens that one first forms an hypothesis that seems more and more reasonable the further one examines into it, but that only a good deal later gets crowned with an adequate proof. The present writer, having had the pragmatist theory under consideration for many years longer than most of its adherents, would naturally have given more attention to the proof of it. At any rate, in endeavoring to explain pragmatism, he may be excused for confining himself to that form of it that he knows best. In the present article there will be space only to explain just what this doctrine (which, in such hands as it has now fallen into, may probably play a pretty prominent part in the philosophical discussions of the coming years) really consists in. Should the exposition be found to interest readers of The Monist, they would certainly be much more interested in a second article which would give some samples of the manifold applications of practicalism (assuming it to be true) to the solution of problems of different kinds. After that, readers might be prepared to take an interest in a proof that the doctrine is true,—a proof which seems to the writer to leave no reasonable doubt on the subject, and to be the one contribution of value that he has to make to philosophy. For it would essentially involve the establishment of the truth of synecism.7

The bare definition of pragmaticism could convey no satisfactory comprehension of it to the most apprehensive of minds, but requires the commentary to be given below. Moreover, this definition takes no notice of one or two other doctrines without the previous acceptance (or virtual acceptance) of which pragmaticism itself would be a nullity. They are included as a part of the pragmatism of Schiller, but the present writer prefers not to mingle different propositions. The preliminary propositions had better be stated forthwith.

The difficulty in doing this is that no formal list of them has ever been made. They might all be included under the vague maxim, “Disarm make-believes.” Philosophers of very diverse stripes propose that philosophy shall

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* To show how recent the general use of the word “pragmatism” is, the writer may mention that, to the best of his belief, he never used it in copy for the press before today, except by particular request, in Baldwin’s Dictionary. Toward the end of 1890, when this part of the Century Dictionary appeared, he did not deem that the word had sufficient status to appear in that work. But he has used it continually in philosophical conversation since, perhaps, the mid-seventies.
take its start from one or another state of mind in which no man, least of all a beginner in philosophy, actually is. One proposes that you shall begin by doubting everything, and says that there is only one thing that you cannot doubt, as if doubting were “as easy as lying.” Another proposes that you should begin by observing “the first impressions of sense,” forgetting that our very perceptions are the results of cognitive elaboration. But in truth, there is but one state of mind from which you can “set out,” namely, the very state of mind in which you actually find yourself at the time you do “set out”—a state in which you are laden with an immense mass of cognition already formed, of which you cannot divest yourself if you would; and who knows whether, if you could, you would not have made all knowledge impossible to yourself? Do you call it doubting to write down on a piece of paper that you doubt? If so, doubt has nothing to do with any serious business. But do not make believe; if pedantry has not eaten all the reality out of you, recognize, as you must, that there is much that you do not doubt, in the least. Now, that which you do not at all doubt, you must and do regard as infallible, absolute truth. Here breaks in Mr. Make Believe: “What! Do you mean to say that one is to believe what is not true, or that what a man does not doubt is ipso facto true?” No, but unless he can make a thing white and black at once, he has to regard what he does not doubt as absolutely true. Now you, per hypothesis, are that man. “But you tell me there are scores of things I do not doubt. I really cannot persuade myself that there is not some one of them about which I am mistaken.” You are adding one of your make-believe facts, which, even if it were established, would only go to show that doubt has a limen, that is, is only called into being by a certain finite stimulus. You only puzzle yourself by talking of this metaphysical truth and metaphysical falsity, that you know nothing about. All you have any dealings with are your doubts and beliefs, with the course of life that forces new beliefs upon you and gives you power to doubt old beliefs. If your terms truth and falsity are taken in such senses as to be definable in terms of doubt and belief and the course of experience (as for example they would be, if you were to define the truth as that to a belief in which belief would tend if it were to tend indefinitely toward absolute fixity), well and good: in that case, you are only talking about doubt and belief. But if by truth and falsity you mean something not definable in terms of doubt and belief in any way, then you are talking of entities of whose existence you can know nothing, and which Ockham’s razor would clean shave off. Your problems would be greatly simplified, if, instead of saying that you want to know the “Truth,” you were simply to say that you want to attain a state of belief unassailable by doubt.

Belief is not a momentary mode of consciousness; it is a habit of mind essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious; and like

other habits, it is (until it meets with some surprise that begins its dissolution) perfectly self-satisfied. Doubt is of an altogether contrary genus. It is not a habit, but the privation of a habit. Now a privation of a habit, in order to be anything at all, must be a condition of erratic activity that in some way must get superseded by a habit.

Among the things which the reader, as a rational person, does not doubt, is that he not merely has habits, but also can exert a measure of self-control over his future actions; which means, however, not that he can impart to them any arbitrarily assignable character, but, on the contrary, that a process of self-preparation will tend to impart to action (when the occasion for it shall arise) one fixed character, which is indicated and perhaps roughly measured by the absence (or slightness) of the feeling of self-reproach, which subsequent reflection will induce. Now, this subsequent reflection is part of the self-preparation for action on the next occasion. Consequently, there is a tendency, as action is repeated again and again, for the action to approximate indefinitely toward the perfection of that fixed character, which would be marked by entire absence of self-reproach. The more closely this is approached, the less room for self-control there will be; and where no self-control is possible there will be no self-reproach.

These phenomena seem to be the fundamental characteristics which distinguish a rational being. Blame, in every case, appears to be a modification, often accomplished by a transference, or “projection,” of the primary feeling of self-reproach. Accordingly, we never blame anybody for what has been beyond his power of previous self-control. Now, thinking is a species of conduct which is largely subject to self-control. In all their features (which there is no room to describe here), logical self-control is a perfect mirror of ethical self-control,—unless it be rather a species under that genus. In accordance with this, what you cannot in the least help believing is not, justly speaking, wrong belief. In other words, for you it is the absolute truth. True, it is conceivable that what you cannot help believing today, you might find you thoroughly disbelieve tomorrow. But then there is a certain distinction between things you “cannot” do merely in the sense that nothing stimulates you to the great effort and endeavors that would be required, and things you cannot do because in their own nature they are insusceptible of being put into practice. In every stage of your excogitations, there is something of which you can only say, “I cannot think otherwise,” and your experientially based hypothesis is that the impossibility is of the second kind.

There is no reason why “thought,” in what has just been said, should be taken in that narrow sense in which silence and darkness are favorable to thought. It should rather be understood as covering all rational life, so that an experiment shall be an operation of thought. Of course, that ultimate state of habit to which the action of self-control ultimately tends, where no room is left for further self-control, is, in the case of thought, the state of fixed belief, or perfect knowledge.
Two things here are all-important to assure oneself of and to remember. The first is that a person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is "saying to himself," that is, saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language. The second thing to remember is that the man's circle of society (however widely or narrowly the phrase may be understood) is a sort of loosely compacted person, in some respects of higher rank than the person of an individual organism. It is these two things alone that render it possible for you, but only in the abstract, and in a Pickwickian sense, to distinguish between absolute truth and what you do not doubt.

Let us now hasten to the exposition of pragmatism itself. Here it will be convenient to imagine that somebody to whom the doctrine is new, but often preternatural perspicacity, asks questions of a pragmatist. Everything that might give a dramatic illusion must be stripped off, so that the result will be a sort of cross between a dialogue and a catechism, but a good deal like the latter—something rather painfully reminiscent of Mangnall's Historical Questions.

**Questioner:** I am astounded at your definition of your pragmatism, because last year I was assured by a person above all suspicion of warping the truth, himself a pragmatist, that your doctrine precisely was "that a conception is to be tested by its practical effects." You must surely, then, have entirely changed your definition very recently.

**Pragmatist:** If you turn to Vols. VI and VII of the Revue Philosophique, or to the Popular Science Monthly for November 1877 and January 1878, you will be able to judge for yourself whether the interpretation you mention was not then clearly excluded. The exact wording of the English enunciation (changing only the first person into the second) was: "Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings you conceive the object of your conception to have. Then your conception of those effects is the whole of your conception of the object."

**Questioner:** Well, what reason have you for asserting that this is so?

**Pragmatist:** That is what I specially desire to tell you. But the question had better be postponed until you clearly understand what those reasons profess to prove.

**Questioner:** What, then, is the raison d'être of the doctrine? What advantage is expected from it?

**Pragmatist:** It will serve to show that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish, one word being defined by other words, and they by still others, without any real conception ever being reached, or else is downright absurd; so that all such rubbish being swept away, what will remain of philosophy will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences, the truth about which can be reached without those interminable misunderstandings and disputes which have made the highest of the positive sciences mere amusement for idle intellects, a sort of chess, idle pleasure its purpose, and reading out of a book its method. In this regard, pragmatism is a species of propo-positivism. But what distinguishes it from other species is, first, its retention of a purified philosophy; secondly, its full acceptance of the main body of our instinctive beliefs; and thirdly, its strenuous insistence upon the truth of scholastic realism (or a close approximation to that, well-stated by the late Dr. Francis Ellingwood Abbot in the Introduction to his Scientific Theism†). So, instead of merely jeering at metaphysics, like other propo-opositivists, whether by long drawn-out parodies or otherwise, the pragmatist extracts from it a precious essence, which will serve to give life and light to cosmology and physics. At the same time, the moral applications of the doctrine are positive and potent; and there are many other uses of it not easily classified. On another occasion, instances may be given to show that it really has these effects.

**Questioner:** I hardly need to be convinced that your doctrine would wipe out metaphysics. Is it not as obvious that it must wipe out every proposition of science and everything that bears on the conduct of life? For you say that the only meaning that, for you, any assertion bears is that a certain experiment has resulted in a certain way: Nothing else but an experiment enters into the meaning. Tell me, then, how can an experiment, in itself, reveal anything more than that something once happened to an individual object and that subsequently some other individual event occurred?

**Pragmatist:** That question is, indeed, to the purpose—that the purpose being to correct any misapprehensions of pragmatism. You speak of an experiment in itself, emphasizing "in itself." You evidently think of each experiment as isolated from every other. It has not, for example, occurred to you, one might venture to surmise, that every connected series of experiments constitutes a single collective experiment. What are the essential ingredients of an experiment? First, of course, an experimenter of flesh and blood. Secondly, a verifiable hypothesis. This is a proposition* relating to the universe environing the experimenter, or to some well-known part of it and affirming or denying of this only some experimental possibility or impossibility. The third indispensable ingredient is a sincere doubt in the experimenter's mind as to the truth of that hypothesis. Passing over several ingredients on which we need not dwell, the purpose, the plan, and the resolve, we come to the act of choice by which the experimenter singles out certain identifiable objects to be operated upon. The next is the external (or quasi-external) act by which he

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*The writer, like most English logicians, invariably uses the word proposition, not as the Germans define their equivalent, Satz, as the language-expression of a judgment (Urtheil), but as that which is related to any assertion, whether mental and self-addressed or outwardly expressed, just as any possibility is related to its actualization. The difficulty of the, at best, difficult problem of the essential nature of a Proposition has been increased, for the Germans, by their Urtheil, confounding, under one designation, the mental assertion with the assertible.
modifies those objects. Next, comes the subsequent reaction of the world upon the experimenter in a perception; and finally, his recognition of the teaching of the experiment. While the two chief parts of the event itself are the action and the reaction, yet the unity of essence of the experiment lies in its purpose and plan, the ingredients passed over in the enumeration.

Another thing: in representing the pragmaticist as making rational meaning to consist in an experiment (which you speak of as an event in the past), you strikingly fail to catch his attitude of mind. Indeed, it is not in an experiment, but in experimental phenomena, that rational meaning is said to consist. When an experimentalist speaks of a phenomenon, such as “Hall’s phenomenon,” “Zecman’s phenomenon,” “Michelson’s phenomenon,” or “the chessboard phenomenon,” he does not mean any particular event that did happen to somebody in the dead past, but what surely will happen to everybody in the living future who shall fulfill certain conditions. The phenomenon consists in the fact that when an experimentalist shall come to act according to a certain scheme that he has in mind, then will something else happen, and shatter the doubts of sceptics, like the celestial fire upon the altar of Elijah.

And do not overlook the fact that the pragmaticist maxim says nothing of single experiments or of single experimental phenomena (for what is conditionally true in futuro can hardly be singular), but only speaks of general kinds of experimental phenomena. Its adherent does not shrink from speaking of general objects as real, since whatever is true represents a real. Now the laws of nature are true.

The rational meaning of every proposition lies in the future. How so? The meaning of a proposition is itself a proposition. Indeed, it is no other than the very proposition of which it is the meaning: it is a translation of it. But of the myriads of forms into which a proposition may be translated, what is that one which is to be called its very meaning? It is, according to the pragmaticist, that form in which the proposition becomes applicable to human conduct, not in these or those special circumstances, nor when one entertains this or that special design, but that form which is most directly applicable to self-control under every situation, and to every purpose. This is why he locates the meaning in future time; for future conduct is the only conduct that is subject to self-control. But in order that that form of the proposition which is to be taken as its meaning should be applicable to every situation and to every purpose upon which the proposition has any bearing, it must be simply the general description of all the experimental phenomena which the assertion of the proposition virtually predicts. For an experimental phenomenon is the fact asserted by the proposition that action of a certain description will have a certain kind of experimental result; and experimental results are the only results that can affect human conduct. No doubt, some unchanging idea may come to influence a man more than it had done; but only because some experience equivalent to an experiment has brought its truth home to him more intimately than before. Whenever a man acts purposely, he acts under a belief in some experimental phenomenon. Consequently, the sum of the experimental phenomena that a proposition implies makes up its entire bearing upon human conduct. Your question, then, of how a pragmaticist can attribute any meaning to any assertion other than that of a single occurrence is substantially answered.

**Questioner:** I see that pragmaticism is a thoroughgoing phenomenalism. Only why should you limit yourself to the phenomena of experimental science rather than embrace all observational science? Experiment, after all, is an uncommunicative informant. It never expatiates: it only answers “yes” or “no”; or rather it usually snaps out “No!” or, at best, only utters an inarticulate grunt for the negation of its “no.” The typical experimentalist is not much of an observer. It is the student of natural history to whom nature opens the treasury of her confidence, while she treats the cross-examining experimentalist with the reserve he merits. Why should your phenomenalism sound the meagre Jew’s harp of experiment rather than the glorious organ of observation?

**Pragmaticist:** Because pragmaticism is not definable as “thoroughgoing phenomenalism,” although the latter doctrine may be a kind of pragmatism. The richness of phenomena lies in their sensuous quality. Pragmatism does not intend to define the phenomenal equivalents of words and general ideas, but, on the contrary, eliminates their sentential element, and endeavors to define the rational purport, and this it finds in the purposive bearing of the word or proposition in question.

**Questioner:** Well, if you choose so to make Doing the Be-all and the End-all of human life, why do you not make meaning to consist simply in doing? Doing has to be done at a certain time upon a certain object. Individual objects and single events cover all reality, as everybody knows, and as a practicalist ought to be the first to insist. Yet, your meaning, as you have described it, is general. Thus, it is of the nature of a mere word and not a reality. You say yourself that your meaning of a proposition is only the same proposition in another dress. But a practical man’s meaning is the very thing he means. What do you make to be the meaning of “George Washington”?

**Pragmaticist:** Forcibly put! A good half dozen of your points must certainly be admitted. It must be admitted, in the first place, that if pragmatism really made Doing to be the Be-all and the End-all of life, that would be its death. For to say that we live for the mere sake of action, as action, regardless of the thought it carries out, would be to say that there is no such thing as rational purport. Secondly, it must be admitted that every proposition professes to be true of a certain real individual object, often the environing universe. Thirdly, it must be admitted that pragmaticism fails to furnish any translation or meaning of a proper name, or other designation of an individual object. Fourthly, the pragmaticist meaning is undoubtedly general; and it is equally indisputable that the general is of the nature of a word or sign. Fifthly, it must
be admitted that individuals alone exist; and sixthly, it may be admitted that the very meaning of a word or significant object ought to be the very essence or reality of what it signifies. But when, those admissions having been unreservedly made, you find the pragmaticist still constrained most earnestly to deny the force of your objection, you ought to infer that there is some consideration that has escaped you. Putting the admissions together, you will perceive that the pragmaticist grants that a proper name (although it is not customary to say that it has a meaning) has a certain denotive function peculiar, in each case, to that name and its equivalents; and that he grants that every assertion contains such a denotive or pointing-out function. In its peculiar individuality, the pragmaticist excludes this from the rational purport of the assertion, although the like of it, being common to all assertions, and so, being general and not individual, may enter into the pragmaticist purport. Whatever exists, ex-sists, that is, really acts upon other existents, so obtains a self-identity, and is definitely individual. As to the general, it will be a help to thought to notice that there are two ways of being general. A statue of a soldier on some village monument, in his overcoat and with his musket, is for each of a hundred families the image of its uncle, its sacrifice to the union. That statue, then, though it is itself single, represents any one man of whom a certain predicate may be true. It is objectively general. The word "soldier," whether spoken or written, is general in the same way; while the name "George Washington" is not so. But each of these two terms remains one and the same noun, whether it be spoken or written, and whenever and wherever it be spoken or written. This noun is not an existent thing; it is a type, or form, to which objects, both those that are externally existent and those which are imagined, may conform, but which none of them can exactly be. This is subjective generality. The pragmaticist purport is general in both ways.

As to reality, one finds it defined in various ways; but if that principle of terminological ethics that was proposed be accepted, the equivocal language will soon disappear. For realis and realitas are not ancient words. They were invented to be terms of philosophy in the thirteenth century, and the meaning they were intended to express is perfectly clear. That is real which has such and such characters, whether anybody thinks it to have those characters or not. At any rate, that is the sense in which the pragmaticist uses the word. Now, just as conduct controlled by ethical reason tends toward fixing certain habits of conduct, the nature of which (as to illustrate the meaning, peaceable habits and not quarrelsome habits) does not depend upon any accidental circumstances, and in that sense, may be said to be destined; so, thought, controlled by a rational experimental logic, tends to the fixation of certain opinions, equally destined, the nature of which will be the same in the end, however the perversity of thought of whole generations may cause the postponement of the ultimate fixation. If this be so, as every man of us virtually assumes that it is, in regard to each matter the truth of which he seriously discusses, then, according to the adopted definition of "real," the state of things which will be believed in that ultimate opinion is real. But, for the most part, such opinions will be general. Consequently, some general objects are real. (Of course, nobody ever thought that all generals were real; but the scholastics used to assume that generals were real when they had hardly any, or quite no, experimental evidence to support their assumption; and their fault lay just there, and not in holding that generals could be real.) One is struck with the inexactitude of thought even of analysts of power, when they touch upon modes of being. One will meet, for example, the virtual assumption that what is relative to thought cannot be real. But why not, exactly? Red is relative to sight, but the fact that this or that is in that relation to vision that we call being red is not itself relative to sight; it is a real fact.

Not only may generals be real, but they may also be physically efficient, not in every metaphysical sense, but in the commonsense conception in which human purposes are physically efficient. Aside from metaphysical nonsense, no sane man doubts that if I feel the air in my study to be stuffy, that thought may cause the window to be opened. My thought, be it granted, was an individual event. But what determined it to take the particular determination it did was in part the general fact that stuffy air is unwholesome, and in part other forms, concerning which Dr. Carus has caused so many men to reflect to advantage,—or rather, by which, and the general truth concerning which Dr. Carus's mind was determined to the forcible enunciation of so much truth. For truths, on the average, have a greater tendency to get believed than falsities have. Were it otherwise, considering that there are myriad of false hypotheses to account for any given phenomenon, against one sole true one (or if you will it so, against every true one), the first step toward genuine knowledge must have been next door to a miracle. So, then, when my window was opened, because of the truth that stuffy air is malsain, a physical effort was brought into existence by the efficiency of a general and nonexistent truth. This has a droll sound because it is unfamiliar; but exact analysis is with it and not against it; and it has, besides, the immense advantage of not blinding us to great facts,—such as that the ideas "justice" and "truth" are, notwithstanding the iniquity of the world, the mightiest of the forces that move it. Generality is, indeed, an indispensable ingredient of reality; for, merely individual existence or actuality without any regularity whatever is a nullity. Chaos is pure nothing.

"That which any true proposition asserts is real, in the sense of being as it is regardless of what you or I may think about it. Let this proposition be a general conditional proposition as to the future, and it is a real general such as is calculated really to influence human conduct; and such the pragmaticist holds to be the rational purport of every concept.

Accordingly, the pragmaticist does not make the summum bonum to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be destined, which is what we strive to express in calling them reasonable.
In its higher stages, evolution takes place more and more largely through self-control, and this gives the pragmatist a sort of justification for making the rational purport to be general.¹⁵

There is much more in elucidation of pragmatism that might be said to advantage, were it not for the dread of fatigueing the reader. It might, for example, have been well to show that the pragmaticist does not attribute any different essential mode of being to an event in the future from that which he would attribute to a similar event in the past, but only that the practical attitude of the thinker toward the two is different. It would also have been well to show that the pragmaticist does not make Forms to be the only realities in the world, any more than he makes the reasonable purport of a word to be the only kind of meaning there is. These things are, however, implicitly involved in what has been said. There is only one remark concerning the pragmaticist's conception of the relation of his formula to the first principles of logic which need detain the reader.

Aristotle's definition of universal predication,¹⁶ which is usually designated (like a papal bull or writ of court, from its opening words) as the Dic tum de omni, may be translated as follows: "We call a predication (be it affirmative or negative) universal, when, and only when, there is nothing among the existent individuals to which the subject affirmatively belongs, but to which the predicate will not likewise be referred (affirmatively or negatively, according as the universal predication is affirmative or negative)." The Greek is: λέγων δὲ τὸ κατὰ παντὸς κατηγορεῖσθαι ὅταν μηδὲν ἢ λαβεῖν τῶν τῶν ὑποκειμένων καθ' ὦθίταν ὥς λεγίσθεται καὶ τὸ κατὰ μηδὲν ὥς διοντός. The important words "existent individuals" have been introduced into the translation (which English idiom would not here permit to be literal); but it is plain that existent individuals were what Aristotle meant. The other departures from literalness only serve to give modern English forms of expression. Now, it is well known that propositions in formal logic go in pairs, the two of one pair being convertible into one of another by the interchange of the ideas of antecedent and consequent, subject and predicate, etc. The parallelism extends so far that it is often assumed to be perfect; but it is not quite so. The proper mate of this sort to the Dic tum de omni is the following definition of affirmative predication: We call a predication affirmative (be it universal or particular) when, and only when, there is nothing among the sensational effects that belong universally to the predicate which will not be (universally or particularly, according as the affirmative predication is universal or particular) said to belong to the subject. Now, this is substantially the essential proposition of pragmatism. Of course, its parallelism to the Dic tum de omni will only be admitted by a person who admits the truth of pragmatism.

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Suffer me to add one word more on this point.¹⁷ For if one cares at all to know what the pragmaticist theory consists in, one must understand that there is no other part of it to which the pragmaticist attaches quite as much importance as he does to the recognition in his doctrine of the utter inadequacy of action or volition or even of resolve or actual purpose, as materials out of which to construct a conditional purpose or the concept of conditional purpose. Had a purposed article concerning the principle of continuity and synthesizing the ideas of the other articles of a series in the early volumes of The Monist ever been written,¹⁸ it would have appeared how, with thorough consistency, that theory involved the recognition that continuity is an indispensable element of reality, and that continuity is simply what generality becomes in the logic of relatives, and thus, like generality, and more than generality, is an affair of thought, and is the essence of thought. Yet even in its truncated condition, an extra-intelligent reader might discern that the theory of those cosmological articles made reality to consist in something more than feeling and action could supply, inasmuch as the primeval chaos, where those two elements were present, was explicitly shown to be pure nothing. Now, the motive for alluding to that theory just here is that in this way one can put in a strong light a position which the pragmaticist holds and must hold, whether that cosmological theory be ultimately sustained or exploded, namely, that the third category,—the category of thought, representation, triadic relation, mediation, genuine Thirdness, Thirdness as such,—is an essential ingredient of reality, yet does not by itself constitute reality, since this category (which in that cosmology appears as the element of habit) can have no concrete being without action, as a separate object on which to work its government, just as action cannot exist without the immediate being of feeling on which to act. The truth is that pragmatism is closely allied to the Hegelian absolute idealism, from which, however, it is sanded by its vigorous denial that the third category (which Hegel degrades to a mere stage of thinking) suffices to make the world, or is even so much as self-sufficient. Had Hegel, instead of regarding the first two stages with his smile of contempt, held on to them as independent or distinct elements of the triune Reality, pragmatists might have looked up to him as the great vindicator of their truth. (Of course, the external trappings of his doctrine are only here and there of much significance.) For pragmatism belongs essentially to the triadic class of philosophical doctrines, and is much more essentially so than Hegelianism is. (Indeed, in one passage, at least, Hegel alludes to the triadic form of his exposition as to a mere fashion of dress.)

Postscript¹⁹

During the last five months, I have met with references to several objections to the above opinions, but not having been able to obtain the text of these objections, I do not think I ought to attempt to answer them. If gentlemen who attack either pragmatism in general or the variety of it which I entertain would only send me copies of what they write, more important readers they could easily find, but they could find none who would examine their arguments with a more grateful avidity for truth not yet apprehended, nor any who would be more sensible of their courtesy.
Issues of Pragmaticism

P 1080: The Monist 15 (October 1905), 481–99. Published in CP 5.438–63. Initially titled “The Consequences of Pragmaticism” as were several other earlier documents, Peirce changed the title in its last draft (MS 290). Only the last 44 pages of the 61-page manuscript, completed in June 1905, are today extant in the Open Court archives preserved at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale (Special Collections, The Morris Library). The text below reproduces pages 481–86 of the Monist article, and then follows the manuscript.] Peirce begins by restating his pragmatic maxim in semiotic terms, by identifying the meaning that pragmaticism seeks to enunciate as that of symbols rather than of conceptions. He devotes most of this article to a consideration of two long-held doctrines, now seen to be consequences of pragmaticism: critical common-sensism and scholastic realism. Peirce enumerates and discusses “six distinctive characters” of critical common-sensism, among them the important doctrine of vague ideas. He extends his realism to include the acceptance of “real vagues” and “real possibilities,” and he points out that “it is the reality of some possibilities that pragmaticism is most concerned to insist upon.” Because of this, Max Pisch has claimed that pragmaticism is pragmatism “purged of the nominalistic dross of its original exposition.”

Pragmatism was originally enounced in the form of a maxim, as follows: Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

I will restate this in other words, since oftimes one can thus eliminate some unsuspected source of perplexity to the reader. This time it shall be in the indicative mood, as follows: The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol.

Two doctrines that were defended by the writer about nine years before the formulation of pragmaticism may be treated as consequences of the latter belief. One of these may be called Critical Common-Sensism. It is a variety of the Philosophy of Common Sense, but is marked by six distinctive characters, which had better be enumerated at once.

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Character I. Critical Common-Sensism admits that there not only are indubitable propositions but also that there are indubitable inferences. In one sense, anything evident is indubitable; but the propositions and inferences which Critical Common-Sensism holds to be original, in the sense one cannot “go behind” them (as the lawyers say), are indubitable in the sense of being acritical. The term “reasoning” ought to be confined to such fixation of one belief by another as is reasonable, deliberate, self-controlled. A reasoning must be conscious; and this consciousness is not mere “immediate consciousness,” which (as I argued in 1868, Journal of Speculative Philosophy) is simple feeling viewed from another side, but is in its ultimate nature (meaning in that characteristic element of it that is not reducible to anything simpler), a sense of taking a habit, or disposition to respond to a given kind of stimulus in a given kind of way. As to the nature of that, some éclaircissements will appear below and again in my third paper, on the “Basis of Pragmaticism.” 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. The machinery of logical self-control works on the same plan as does moral self-control, in multiform detail. The greatest difference, perhaps, is that the latter serves to inhibit mad puttings forth of energy, while the former more characteristically insures us against the quandary of Buridan’s ass. The formation of habits under imaginary action (see the paper of January 1878) is one of the most essential ingredients of both; but in the logical process the imagination takes far wider flights, proportioned to the generality of the field of inquiry, being bounded in pure mathematics solely by the limits of its own powers, while in the moral process we consider only situations that may be apprehended or anticipated. For in moral life we are chiefly solicitous about our conduct and its inner springs, and the approval of conscience, while in intellectual life there is a tendency to value existence as the vehicle of forms. Certain obvious features of the phenomena of self-control (and especially of habit) can be expressed compactly and without any hypothetical addition, except what we distinctly rate as imagery, by saying that we have an occult nature of which and of its contents we can only judge by the conduct that it determines, and by phenomena of that conduct. All will assent to that (or all but the extreme nominalist), but anti-synesthetic thinkers wind themselves up in a factitious snarl by falsifying the phenomena in representing consciousness to be, as it were, a skin, a separate tissue, overlying an unconscious region of the occult nature, mind, soul, or physiological basis. It appears to me that in the present state of our knowledge a sound methodological prescribes that, in adhesion to the appearances, the difference is only relative and the demarcation not precise.

According to the maxim of Pragmaticism, to say that determination affects our occult nature is to say that it is capable of affecting deliberate conduct; and since we are conscious of what we do deliberately, we are conscious habitualiter of whatever hides in the depths of our nature; and it is presumable (and

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only presumable,* although curious instances are on record) that a sufficiently energetic effort of attention would bring it out. Consequently, to say that an operation of the mind is controlled is to say that it is, in a special sense, a conscious operation; and this no doubt is the consciousness of reasoning. For this theory requires that in reasoning we should be conscious, not only of the conclusion, and of our deliberate approval of it, but also of its being the result of the premises from which it does result, and furthermore that the inference is one of a possible class of inferences which conform to one guiding principle. Now in fact we find a well-marked class of mental operations, clearly of a different nature from any others which do possess just such properties. They alone deserve to be called *reasonings*; and if the reasoner is conscious, even vaguely, of what his guiding principle is, his reasoning should be called a *logical argumentation*. There are, however, cases in which we are conscious that a belief has been determined by another given belief, but are not conscious that it proceeds on any general principle. Such is St. Augustine's *cogito, ergo sum.* Such a process should be called, not a reasoning but an *acritical inference*. Again, there are cases in which one belief is determined by another, without our being at all aware of it. These should be called *associational suggestions of belief.*

Now the theory of Pragmatism was originally based, as anybody will see who examines the papers of November 1877 and January 1878, upon a study of that experience of the phenomena of self-control which is common to all grown men and women; and it seems evident that to some extent, at least, it must always be so based. For it is to conceptions of deliberate conduct that Pragmatism would trace the intellectual purport of symbols; and deliberate conduct is self-controlled conduct. Now control may itself be controlled, criticism itself subjected to criticism; and ideally there is no obvious definite limit to the sequence. But if one seriously inquires whether it is possible that a completed series of actual efforts should have been endless or beginningless (I will spare the reader the discussion), I think he can only conclude that (with some vagueness as to what constitutes an effort) this must be regarded as impossible. It will be found to follow that there are, besides perceptual judgments, original (i.e., indubitable because uncriticized) beliefs of a general and recurrent kind, as well as indubitable acritical inferences.

It is important for the reader to satisfy himself that genuine doubt always has an external origin, usually from surprise; and that it is as impossible for a man to create in himself a genuine doubt by such an act of the will as would suffice to imagine the condition of a mathematical theorem, as it would be for him to give himself a genuine surprise by a simple act of the will.

I beg my reader also to believe that it would be impossible for me to put into these articles over two percent of the pertinent thought which would be necessary in order to present the subject as I have worked it out. I can


only make a small selection of what it seems most desirable to submit to his judgment. Not only must all steps be omitted which he can be expected to supply for himself, but unfortunately much more that may cause him difficulty.

**Character II.** I do not remember that any of the old Scotch philosophers ever undertook to draw up a complete list of the original beliefs, but they certainly thought it a feasible thing, and that the list would hold good for the minds of all men from Adam down. For in those days Adam was an undoubted historical personage. Before any waft of the air of evolution had reached those coasts how could they think otherwise? When I first wrote, we were hardly orientated in the new ideas, and my impression was that the indubitable propositions changed with a thinking man from year to year. I made some studies preparatory to an investigation of the rapidity of these changes, but the matter was neglected, and it has been only during the last two years that I have completed a provisional inquiry* which shows me that the changes are so slight from generation to generation, though not imperceptible even in that short period, that I thought to own my adhesion, under inevitable modification, to the opinion of that subtle but well-balanced intellect, Thomas Reid, in the matter of Common Sense (as well as in regard to immediate perception, along with Kant).*

**Character III.** The Scotch philosophers recognized that the original beliefs, and the same thing is at least equally true of the acritical inferences, were of the general nature of instincts. But little as we know about instincts, even now, we are much better acquainted with them than were the men of the eighteenth century. We know, for example, that they can be somewhat modified in a very short time. The great facts have always been known; such as that instinct seldom errs, while reason goes wrong nearly half the time, if not more frequently. But one thing the Scotch failed to recognize is that the original beliefs only remain indubitable in their application to affairs that resemble those of a primitive mode of life. It is, for example, quite open to reasonable doubt whether the motions of planets are confined to three dimensions, although it is good methodic to presume that they are until some evidence to the contrary is forthcoming. On the other hand, as soon as we find that a belief shows symptoms of being instinctive, although it may seem to be dubitable, we must suspect that experiment would show that it is not really so; for in our artificial life, especially in that of a student, no mistake is more likely than that of taking a paper-doubt for the genuine metal. Take, for example, the belief in the criminality of incest. Biology will doubtless testify that the practice is unadvisable; but surely nothing that it has to say could warrant the intensity of our sentiment about it. When, however, we consider the thrill of horror which the idea excites in us, we find reason in that to consider it to be

*I wish I might hope, after finishing some more difficult work, to be able to resume this study and go to the bottom of the subject, which needs the qualities of age and does not call upon the powers of youth. A great range of reading is necessary; for it is the belief men betray and not that which they parade which has to be studied.
an instinct; and from that we may infer that if some rationalistic brother and sister were to marry, they would find that the conviction of horrible guilt could not be shaken off.

In contrast to this may be placed the belief that suicide is to be classed as murder. There are two pretty sure signs that this is not an instinctive belief. One is that it is substantially confined to the Christian world. The other is that when it comes to the point of actual self-debate, this belief seems to be completely expunged and ex-sponged from the mind. In reply to these powerful arguments, the main points urged are the authority of the Fathers of the Church and the undoubtedly intense instinctive clinging to life. The latter phenomenon is, however, entirely irrelevant. For though it is a wrench to part with life, which has its charms at the worst, just as it is to part with a tooth, yet there is no moral element in it whatever. As to the Christian tradition, it may be explained by the circumstances of the early Church. For Christianity, the most terrible earnest and most intolerant of religions (see The Book of Revelations of St. John the Divine), and it remained so until diluted with civilization—recognized no morality as worthy of an instant's consideration except Christian morality. Now the early Church had need of martyrs, i.e., witnesses, and if any man had done with life, it was abominable infidelity to leave it otherwise than as a witness to its power. This belief, then, should be set down as dubitable; and it will no sooner have been pronounced dubitable, than Reason will stamp it as false.

The Scotch school appears to have no such distinction concerning the limitations of dubitability and the consequent limitations of the jurisdiction of original belief.10

Character IV. By all odds, the most distinctive character of the Critical Common-Sensist, in contrast to the old Scotch philosopher, lies in his insistence that the critically indubitable is invariably vague.)

Logicians have been at fault in giving Vagueness the go-by, so far as not even to analyze it. The present writer has done his best to work out the Stoicheiology (or Stoicheiologia), Critic, and Methodudec of the subject, but can here only give a definition or two with some proposals respecting terminology.

Accurate writers have apparently made a distinction between the definite and the determinator. A subject is determinate in respect to any character which inheres in it or is (universally and affirmatively) predicated of it, as well as in respect to the negative of such character, these being the very same respect. In all other respects it is indeterminate. The definite shall be defined presently. A sign (under which designation I place every kind of thought,11 and not alone external signs) that is in any respect objectively indeterminate (i.e., whose object is undetermined by the sign itself) is objectively general in so far as it extends to the interpreter the privilege of carrying its determination further.8

Example: "Man is mortal." To the question, What man? the reply is that the proposition explicitly leaves it to you to apply its assertion to what man or men you will. A sign that is objectively indeterminate in any respect is objectively vague in so far as it reserves further determination to be made in some other conceivable sign, or at least does not appoint the interpreter as its deputy in this office. Example: "A man whom I could mention seems to be a little conceited." The suggestion here is that the man in view is the person addressed; but the utterer does not authorize such an interpretation or any other application of what she says. She can still say, if she likes, that she does not mean the person addressed. Every utterance naturally leaves the right of further exposition in the utterer; and therefore, in so far as a sign is indeterminate, it is vague, unless it is expressly or by a well-understood convention rendered general. Usually, an affirmative predication covers generally every essential character of the predicate, while a negative predication vaguely denies some essential character. In another sense, honest people, when not joking, intend to make the meaning of their words determinate, so that there shall be no latitude of interpretation at all. That is to say, the character of their meaning consists in the implications and non-implications of their words; and they intend to fix what is implied and what is not implied. They believe that they succeed in doing so, and if their chat is about the theory of numbers, perhaps they may. But the further their topics are from such presciss, or "abstract," subjects, the less possibility is there of such precision of speech. In so far as the implication is not determinate, it is usually left vague; but there are cases where an unwillingness to dwell on disagreeable subjects causes the utterer to leave the determination of the implication to the interpreter; as if one says, "That creature is filthy, in every sense of the term."

Perhaps a more scientific pair of definitions would be that anything is general in so far as the principle of excluded middle does not apply to it and is vague in so far as the principle of contradiction does not apply to it. Thus, although it is true that "Any proposition you please, once you have determined its identity, is either true or false"; yet so long as it remains indeterminate and so without identity, it need neither be true that any proposition you please is true, nor that any proposition you please is false. So likewise, while it is false that "A proposition whose identity I have determined is both true and false," yet until it is determinate, it may be true that a proposition is true and that a proposition is false.

In those respects in which a sign is not vague, it is said to be definite, and also with a slightly different mode of application, to be precise, a meaning probably due to presciss having been applied to curt denials and refusals. It

*Hamilton and a few other logicians understood the subject of a universal proposition in the collective sense; but every person who is well-read in logic is familiar with many passages in which the leading logicians explain with an iteration that would be superfluous if all readers were intelligent that such subject is distributively not collectively general. A term denoting a
negligible in formal logic), or universal (that is, general), or particular (as the medieval logicians say, that is, vague or indefinite). It is a curious fact that in the logic of relations it is the first and last quantifiers of a proposition that are of chief importance. To affirm of anything that it is a horse is to yield to it every essential character of a horse: to deny of anything that it is a horse is vaguely to refuse to it some one or more of those essential characters of the horse. There are, however, predicates that are unanalyzable in a given state of intelligence and experience. These are, therefore, determinately affirmed or denied. Thus, this same group of concepts reappears. Affirmation and denial are in themselves unaffected by these concepts, but it is to be remarked that there are cases in which we can have an apparently definite idea of a border line between affirmation and negation. Thus, a point of a surface may be in a region of that surface, or out of it, or on its boundary. This gives us an indirect and vague conception of an intermediacy between affirmation and denial in general, and consequently of an intermediate, or nascent state, between determination and indetermination. There must be a similar intermediacy between generality and vagueness. Indeed, in an article in the seventh volume of The Monist, there lies just beneath the surface of what is explicitly said, the idea of an endless series of such intermediacies. We shall find below some application for these reflections.

Character V. The Critical Common-Sensism will be further distinguished from the old Scotch philosopher by the great value he attaches to doubt, provided only that it be the weighty and noble metal itself and no counterfeit nor paper substitute. He is not content to ask himself whether he does doubt, but he invents a plan for attaining to doubt, elaborates it in detail, and then puts it into practice, although this may involve a solid month of hard work; and it is only after having gone through such an examination that he will pronounce a belief to be indubitable. Moreover, he fully acknowledges that even then it may be that some of his indubitable beliefs may be proved false.

The Critical Common-Sensism holds that there is less danger to heuristic science in believing too little than in believing too much. Yet for all that, the consequences to heuristics of believing too little may be no less than disaster.

Character VI. Critical Common-Sensism may fairly lay claim to this title for two sorts of reasons; namely, that on the one hand it subjects four opinions to rigid criticism: its own; that of the Scotch school; that of those who would base logic or metaphysics on psychology or any other special science; the least tenable of all the philosophical opinions that have any vogue; and that of Kant; while on the other hand it has bespied some claim to be called Critical from the fact that it is but a modification of Kantism. The present writer was a pure Kantist until he was forced by successive steps into Pragmatism. The Kantist has only to abjure from the bottom of his heart the
proposition that a thing-in-itself can, however indirectly, be conceived, and
then correct the details of Kant’s doctrine, and he will find himself to have
become a Critical Common-Sensist.

Another doctrine which is involved in Pragmaticism as an essential conse-
quence of it, but which the writer defended (Journal of Speculative Philosophy
1868, and North American Review 1871) before he had formulated, even in
his own mind, the principle of pragmaticism, is the scholastic doctrine of
realism. This is usually defined as the opinion that there are real objects that
are general, among the number being the modes of determination of existent
singulars, if, indeed, these be not the only such objects. But the belief in this
can hardly escape being accompanied by the acknowledgment that there are,
besides, real vagueness and especially real possibilities. For possibility being
the denial of a necessity, which is a kind of generality, is vague like any other con-
tradiction of a general. Indeed, it is the reality of some possibilities that prag-
maticism is most concerned to insist upon. The article of January 1878
deavored to close over this point as unsuited to the exoteric public
addressed; or perhaps the writer wavered in his own mind. He said that if a
diamond were to be formed in a bed of cotton wool, and were to be consumed
there without ever having been pressed upon by any hard edge or point, it
would be merely a question of nomenclature whether that diamond should be
said to have been hard or not. No doubt, this is true, except for the abomi-
able falsehood in the word merely, implying that symbols are unreal.
Nomenclature involves classification; and classification is true or false, and
the generals to which it refers are either reals in the one case, or figments
in the other. For if the reader will turn to the original maxim of pragmaticism at
the beginning of this article, he will see that the question is, not what did hap-
pen, but whether it would have been well to engage in any line of conduct
whose successful issue depended upon whether that diamond would resist an
attempt to scratch it, or whether all other logical means of determining how
it ought to be classed would lead to the conclusion which, to quote the very
words of that article, would be “the belief which alone could be the result of
investigation carried sufficiently far.” Pragmaticism makes the ultimate intel-
lectual purport of what you please to consist in conceived conditional resolu-
tions, or their substance; and therefore, the conditional propositions, with
their hypothetical antecedents, in which such resolutions consist, being of the
ultimate nature of meaning, must be capable of being true, that is, of express-
ing whatever there be which is such as the proposition expresses, independ-
ently of being thought to be so in any judgment, or being represented to be
so in any other symbol of any man or men. But that amounts to saying that
possibility is sometimes of a real kind.

Fully to understand this, it will be needful to analyze modality, and ascer-
tain in what it consists. In the simplest case, the most subjective meaning, if a
person does not know that a proposition is false, he calls it possible. If, how-
ever, he knows that it is true, it is much more than possible. Restricting the
word to its characteristic applicability, a state of things has the Modality of
the possible,—that is, of the merely possible,—only in case the contradictory
state of things is likewise possible, which proves possibility to be the vague
modality. One who knows that Harvard University has an office in State
Street, Boston, and has impression that it is at No. 30, but yet suspects that 50
is the number, would say “I think it is at No. 30, but it may be at No. 50,” for
“it is possibly at No. 50.” Thereupon, another, who does not doubt his recol-
clection, might chime in, “It actually is at No. 50,” or simply “it is at No. 50,” or
“it is at No. 50, de inaeuse.” Thereupon, the person who had first asked what the
number was might say, “Since you are so positive, it must be at No. 50,” or “I
know the first figure is 5. So, since we are both certain the second is a 0, why
50 it necessarily is.” That is to say, in this most subjective kind of Modality, that
which is known by direct recollection is in the Mode of Activity, the determi-
nate mode. But when knowledge is indeterminate among alternatives, either
there is one state of things which alone accords with them all, when this is in
the Mode of Necessity, or there is more than one state of things that no know-
ledge excludes, when each of these is in the Mode of Possibility.

Other kinds of subjective Modality refer to a Sign or Representamen
which is assumed to be true, but which does not include the Utterer’s (i.e.
the speaker’s, writer’s, thinker’s, or other symbolizer’s) total knowledge, the
different Modes being distinguished very much as above. There are other cases,
however, in which, justifiably or not, we certainly think of Modality as objec-
tive. A man says, “I can go to the seashore if I like.” Here is implied, to be sure,
his ignorance of how he will decide to act. But this is not the point of the
assertion. It is that, the complete determination of conduct in the act not yet
having taken place, the further determination of it belongs to the subject of the
action regardless of external circumstances. If he had said “I must go
where my employers may send me,” it would imply that the function of such
further determination lay elsewhere. In “You may do so and so,” and “You
must do so,” the “may” has the same force as “can” except that in the one case
freedom from particular circumstances is in question, and in the other free-
dom from a law or edict. Hence the phrase, “You may if you can.” I must say
that it is difficult for me to preserve my respect for the competence of a phi-
losopher whose dull logic, not penetrating beneath the surface, leaves him to
regard such phrases as misrepresentations of the truth. So an act of hypostatic
abstraction which in itself is no violation of logic, however it may lend itself to
a dress of superstition, may regard the collective tendencies to variability in
the world, under the name of Chance, as at one time having their way, and at
another time overcome by the element of order; so that, for example, a super-
stitious cashier, impressed by a bad dream, may say to himself of a Monday
morning, “May be, the bank has been robbed.” No doubt, he recognizes his
total ignorance in the matter. But besides that, he has in mind the absence of
any particular cause which should protect his bank more than others that are
robbed from time to time. He thinks of the variety in the universe as vaguely
analogous to the indecision of a person, and borrows from that analogy the garb of his thought. At the other extreme stand those who declare as inspired (for they have no rational proof of what they allege) that an actual's advice to an insurance company is based on nothing at all but ignorance.

Here is another example of objective possibility: "A pair of intersecting rays, i.e., unlimited straight lines conceived as movable objects, can (or may) move, without ceasing to intersect, so that one and the same hyperboloid shall be completely covered by the track of each of them." How shall we interpret this, remembering that the object spoken of, the pair of rays, is a pure creation of the Utterer's imagination, although it is required (and indeed, forced) to conform to the laws of space? Some minds will be better satisfied with a more subjective, or nominalistic, others with a more objective, realistic interpretation. But it must be confessed on all hands that whatever degree or kind of reality belongs to pure space belongs to the substance of that proposition, which merely expresses a property of space.

Let us now take up the case of that diamond which, having been crystalized upon a cushion of jewellers' cotton, was accidentally consumed by fire before the crystal of corundum that had been sent for had had time to arrive, and indeed without being subjected to any other pressure than that of the atmosphere and its own weight. The question is, Was that diamond really hard? Is it certain that no discernible actual fact determined it to be so. But is its hardness not, nevertheless, a real fact? To say, as the article of January 1878 seems to intend, that it is just as an arbitrary "usage of speech" chooses to arrange its thoughts, is as much as to decide against the reality of the property, since the real is that which is such as it is regardless of how it is, at any time, thought to be. Remember that this diamond's condition is not an isolated fact. There is no such thing; and an isolated fact could hardly be real. It is an unsevered, though precise, part of the unitary fact of nature. Being a diamond, it was a mass of pure carbon, in the form of a more or less transparent crystal (brittle, and of facile octahedral cleavage, unless it was of an unheard-of variety), which, if not twinned after one of the fashions in which diamonds may be twinned, took the shape of an octahedron, apparently regular (I need not go into minutiae), with grooved edges, and probably with some curved faces. Without being subjected to any considerable pressure, it could be found to be insoluble, very highly refractive, showing under radium rays (and perhaps under "dark light" and X-rays) a peculiar bluish phosphorescence, having as high a specific gravity as realgar or orpiment, and giving off during its combustion less heat than any other form of carbon would have done. From some of these properties hardness is believed to be inseparable. For like it they bespeak the high polymerization of the molecule. But however this may be, how can the hardness of all other diamonds fail to bespeak some real relation among the diamonds without which a piece of carbon would not be a diamond? Is it not a monstrous perversion of the word and concept real to say that the accident of the non-arrival of the corundum prevented the

hardness of the diamond from having the reality which it otherwise, with little doubt, would have had?

At the same time, we must dismiss the idea that the occult state of things (be it a relation among atoms or something else) which constitutes the reality of a diamond's hardness can possibly consist in anything but in the truth of a general conditional proposition. For to what else does the entire teaching of chemistry relate except to the "behavior" of different possible kinds of material substance? And what does that behavior consist in, except that if a substance of a certain kind should be exposed to an agency of a certain kind, a certain kind of sensible result would ensue, according to our experiences hitherto. As for the pragmatist, it is precisely his position that nothing else than this can be so much as meant by saying that an object possesses a character. He is therefore obliged to subscribe to the doctrine of a real Modality, including real Necessity and real Possibility.

A good question, for the purpose of illustrating the nature of Pragmatism, is, What is Time? It is not proposed to attack those most difficult problems connected with the psychology, the epistemology, or the metaphysics of Time, although it will be taken for granted, as it must be according to what has been said, that Time is real. The reader is only invited to the humber question of what we mean by Time, and not of every kind of meaning attached to Past, Present, and Future either. Certain peculiar feelings are associated with the three general determinations of Time; but those are to be sedulously put out of view. That the reference of events to Time is irresistible will be recognized; but as to how it may differ from other kinds of irresistibility is a question not here to be considered. The question to be considered is simply, What is the intellectual purport of the Past, Present, and Future? It can only be treated with the utmost brevity.

That Time is a particular variety of Objective Modality is too obvious for argumentation. The Past consists of the sum of fait accomplis, and this Accomplishment is the Existential Mode of Time. For the Past really acts upon us, and that it does, not at all in the way in which a Law or Principle influences us, but precisely as an Existential object acts. For instance, when a Nova Stella bursts out in the heavens, it acts upon one's eyes just as a light struck in the dark by one's own hands would; and yet it is an event which happened before the Pyramids were built. A neophyte may remark that its reaching the eyes, which is all we know, happens but a fraction of a second before we know it. But a moment's consideration will show him that he is losing sight of the question, which is not whether the distant Past can act upon us immediately, but whether it acts upon us just as any Existant does. The instance adduced (certainly a commonplace enough fact) proves conclusively that the mode of the Past is that of Actuality. Nothing of the sort is true of the Future, to compass the understanding of which it is indispensable that the reader should divest himself of his Necessitarianism,—at best, but a scientific theory,—and return to the Common-Sense State of Nature. Do you never
say to yourself, “I can do this or that as well tomorrow as today”? Your Necessitarianism is a theoretical pseudo-belief, a make-believe belief, that such a sentence does not express the real truth. That is only to stick to proclaiming the unreality of that Time, of which you are invited, be it reality or figment, to consider the meaning. You need not fear to compromise your darling theory by looking out at its windows. Be it true in theory or not, the unsophisticated conception is that everything in the Future is either destined, i.e., necessitated already, or is undecided, the contingent future of Aristotle. In other words, it is not Actual, since it does not act except through the idea of it, that is, as a law acts; but is either Necessary or Possible, which are of the same mode since (as remarked above) Negation being outside the category ofModality cannot produce a variation in Modality. As for the Present instant, it is so inscrutable that I wonder whether no sceptic has ever attacked its reality. I can fancy one of them dipping his pen in his blackest ink to commence the assault, and then suddenly reflecting that his entire life is in the Present,—the “living present,” as we say,—this instant when all hopes and fears concerning it come to their end, this Living Death in which we are born anew. It is plainly that Nascent State between the Determinate and the Indeterminate that was noticed above.

Pragmatism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct. How, then, does the Past bear upon conduct? The answer is self-evident: whenever we set out to do anything, we “go upon,” we base our conduct on facts already known, and for these we can only draw upon our memory. It is true that we may institute a new investigation for the purpose; but its discoveries will only become applicable to conduct after they have been made and reduced to a memorial maxim. In short, the Past is the sole storehouse of all our knowledge. When we say that we know that some state of things exists, we mean that it used to exist, whether just long enough for the news to reach the brain and be retransmitted to tongue or pen, or longer ago. Thus, from whatever point of view we contemplate the Past, it appears as the Existential Mode of Time.

How does the Future bear upon conduct? The answer is that future facts are the only facts that we can, in a measure, control; and whatever there may be in the Future that is not amenable to control are the things that we should be able to infer, or should be able to infer under favorable circumstances. There may be questions concerning which the pendulum of opinion never would cease to oscillate, however favorable circumstances may be. But if so, those questions are ipso facto not real questions, that is to say, are questions to which there is no true answer to be given. It is natural to use the future tense (and the conditional mood is but a mollified future) in drawing a conclusion or in stating a consequence. “If two unlimited straight lines in one plane are crossed by a third making the sum . . . then these straight lines will meet on the side, etc.” It cannot be denied that acritical inferences may refer to the Past in its capacity as past; but according to Pragmatism, the conclusion of a

Reasoning proper must refer to the Future. For its meaning refers to conduct, and since it is a reasoned conclusion must refer to deliberate conduct, which is controllable conduct. But the only controllable conduct is Future conduct. As for that part of the Past that lies beyond memory, the Pragmatist doctrine is that the meaning of its being believed to be in connection with the Past consists in the acceptance as truth of the conception that we ought to conduct ourselves according to it (like the meaning of any other belief). Thus, a belief that Christopher Columbus discovered America really refers to the Future. It is more difficult, it must be confessed, to account for beliefs that rest upon the double evidence of feeble but direct memory and upon rational inference. The difficulty does not seem insuperable; but it must be passed by.

What is the bearing of the Present instant upon conduct? Introspection is wholly a matter of inference. One is immediately conscious of his feelings, no doubt; but not that they are feelings of an ego. The self is only inferred. There is no time in the Present for any inference at all, least of all for inference concerning that very instant. Consequently the present object must be an external object, if there be any objective reference in it. The attitude of the Present is either conative or receptive. Supposing it to be perceptive, the perception must be immediately known as external—not indeed in the sense in which a hallucination is not external, but in the sense of being present regardless of the perceiver’s will or wish. Now this kind of externality is conative externality. Consequently, the attitude of the present instant (according to the testimony of Common Sense, which is plainly adopted throughout) can only be a Conative attitude. The consciousness of the Present is then that of a struggle over what shall be; and thus we emerge from the study with a confirmed belief that it is the Nascent State of the Actual.

But how is Temporal Modality distinguished from other Objective Modality? Not by any general character since Time is unique and sui generis. In other words there is only one Time. Sufficient attention has hardly been called to the surpassing truth of this for Time as compared with its truth for Space. Time, therefore, can only be identified by brute compulsion. But we must not go further.