C. S. Peirce and the Primacy of Practice: Implications for Understanding Communication

Vincent Colapietro

Abstract: The author shows how Charles S. Peirce's theory of semiosis (or sign-activity, or sign-process) is directly relevant to the study of communication. To do so, however, he must remove three principal obstacles, ones impeding a proper understanding of Peirce's theoretical framework: the portrayal of Peirce as a thoroughgoing formalist; Peirce's own tendency to allow his preoccupation with science to constrain, to some extent, the scope of his semeiotic; and the attribution of agency to signs themselves. Having addressed these obstacles, the author highlights above all three methodological implications of a Peircean approach: the need for an explicitly phenomenological, normative, and ontological study of our communicative processes and practices. In addition, he reflects on classical pragmatism as a *living* tradition—hence, one requiring the resources of alternative and even rival traditions. He insists that no tradition is sufficient unto itself. This is—especially regarding questions of signs, communication, dialogue, and dissemination—true of pragmatism in general and Peirce's pragmaticism in particular. After arguing this point, the author highlights how we encounter, at the center of Peirce's pragmatism, an affirmation of the primacy of practice. This is, however, not the reductivist thesis it is all too often taken to be. Rather this affirmation is precisely intended to honor the irreducible heterogeneity of human practices.

Keywords: agency; critique; normativity; ontology; Peters, John Durham; phenomenology; semiosis (or sign-activity)

Introduction: Communicative Rationality

Nothing is more explicit in, and central to, Charles S. Peirce's writings than his theory of semiosis or sign-activity.[1] Please note: the focus of his concern is not on

[1] This is true even though there is a gap in his obvious engagement in elaborating a theory of signs (see Short 2007; Houser 1992; Freadman 2004). In this paper, and the presentation on which it was based, I have focused almost exclusively on Peirce's theory of signs. As Ivo Assad Ibri's (2022)

a kind of object, but on a form of process or activity. The emphasis falls decisively on semiosis, not signs. However this may be, Peirce's interest in communication might appear at least to some readers as implicit and even peripheral. It *is* for the most part implicit, but hardly peripheral (Ransdell 1998; Bergman 2004, 2009). Part of my task here is to suggest just how central communication is to Peirce's account of semiosis.[2]

This is, to some extent, recognized by scholars of both communication and Peirce. In a gathering such as this,[3] it seems especially appropriate to recall the judgment of John Durham Peters, a prominent theorist of communication. Since his understanding of communication is so deeply Peircean (Peters 1999, 114, 256–59, 267–68; 2015, 178, 214, 344, 369, 380–82, 385), allow me to quote Peters at some length. But, first, let me quote a brief and likely startling claim by Peirce himself: "It would, certainly, in one sense be extravagant to say that we can never tell what we are talking about; yet, in another sense, it is quite true" (CP 3.419). This suggests just how deep Peirce's fallibism cuts. In an especially noteworthy manner, Peters elaborates on the radical fallibility[4] woven into the very fabric of our communicative endeavors:

> Communication is a risky adventure without guarantees. Any kind of effort to make linkage via signs is a gamble on whatever scale it occurs. To the question, How can we know we have really communicated? there is no ultimate answer besides the pragmatic one that our subsequent actions seem to act in some kind of concert. All talk is an act of faith predicated on the future's ability to bring forth the worlds called for. Meaning is an incomplete project, open-ended and subject to radical revision by later events. (1999, 267)

After stressing these points, Peters quotes Peirce: "A sign is objectively *general*, in so far as, leaving open its effective interpretation indeterminate, it

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paper ("Communication in Light of Peirce's Pragmatic Synechism") at the 5th Biennial Philosophy of Communication Conference makes clear, however, other parts of Peirce's "system" are relevant to the exploration of communication. In fact, I bring in other parts of Peirce's philosophy in relation to his semeiotic. Even so, Prof. Ibri's approach complements my own.

[2] "There is nothing," as Max H. Fisch notes, "that may not be a sign; perhaps, in a sufficiently generalized sense, everything *is* a sign. . . . The fundamental distinction is not between things that are signs and things that are not, but between triadic or sign-*action* and dyadic or dynamical *action* ([CP] 5.473). So the fundamental conception [of Peirce's] semeiotic is not that of sign but that of semeiosis; and [consequently] semeiotic should be defined in terms of semeiosis rather than of sign, unless sign has antecedently been dined in terms of semeiosis" (1986, 330). Peirce's so-called theory of signs is truly a theory of semiosis, one in which the accent falls decisively on activity, generativity, and indeed creativity.

[3] This essay was first delivered as a keynote address at the 5th Biennial Philosophy of Communication Conference on Pragmatism sponsored by the Department of Communication & Rhetorical Studies and the Communication Ethics Institute at Duquesne University via Zoom on June 7, 2022.

[4] One of the most important functions of communication is indeed the very discovery that we do *not* know what we are asserting or arguing or otherwise trying to communicate. The presuppositions and implications, the import and reference of even our most assured claims, can be in principle otherwise than we take them to be. This is not skepticism; it is rather fallibilism and, in Peirce's hands, as Peters appreciates, it is a radical doctrine.

surrenders to the interpreter the right of completing the determination form himself" (quoted 1991, 267; Peirce, CP 5.505). No sign, however, escapes generality or, for that matter, vagueness[5] (generality and vagueness being, in Peirce's judgment, two distinct species of semiotic indeterminateness).[6] "Since all signs are general to varying degrees, person-to-person converse is like dissemination, closure taking place [if anywhere] at the receiving end. Peirce put it bluntly: 'No communication of one person to another can be entirely definite' or determinate" (Peters 1999, 268; Peirce quoted here by Peters, CP 5.506). Though Peirce would almost certainly be hesitant to endorse such a sharp contrast between dialogue and dissemination, as the one Peters tends to draw,[7] the radically fallible depiction of our communicative endeavors just quoted is unquestionably Peircean. More generally, Peirce's relevance to the field of communication cannot be gainsaid. The work of theorists in this field such as Peters, Richard Lanigan, Lenore Langsdorf, Andrew Smith, Isaac Catt, and Mats Bergman,[8] makes this clear. This is especially evident in their attention to the degree to which signs are inherently indeterminate and, closely allied to this, the ways in which they can be, for certain purposes, rendered contextually determinate. Irreducible indeterminacy does not preclude effective determination; rather it both demands and, paradoxically, facilitates processes whereby signs *in situ* are rendered more—and more effectively—determinate.

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[5] After defining objective generality, Peirce defines such vagueness: "A sign is objectively *vague*, in so far as, leaving its interpretation more or less indeterminate, it reserves for some other possible sign or experience the function of completing the determination" (CP 5.505). A sign or utterance leaves it up to the interpreter to identify the designatum (it effectively instructs the agent occupying this position or role, "Take your pick"), while the speaker or the utterer reserves the right to spell out more determinately the import of any attribution or ascription (in this regard, the sign or utterance in effect instructs those entangled in the exchange, "I, the utterer, get to say what this means"). Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen is very helpful in illuminating the game-theoretic dimensions of our sign exchanges (see Pietarinen 2006, especially Chapters 7 and 11).

[6] While Peters stresses here generality, vagueness is no less important as a species of indeterminancy. See Jarrett E. Brock's *C. S. Peirce's the Logic of Vagueness*, a dissertation at Illinois supervised by Max H. Fisch (Brock 1969), and a distillation of some of the main points in this study in "Principal Themes in Peirce's Logic of Vagueness" (Brock 1979). See also Ahti Pietarinen (2006). In other places in Peters, both in 1999 and elsewhere, he takes note of vagueness. From a Peircean perspective, however, generality and vagueness, distinct species of indeterminacy, are better considered together than treated separately.

[7] "There is," Peters insists, "no indignity or paradox in one-way communication. The marriage of true minds via dialogue is not the only option; in fact, lofty expectations about communication may blind us to the more subtle splendors of dissemination or suspended dialogue. Dialogue still reigns supreme in the minds of many as to what good communication might be, but dissemination presents a saner choice for our fundamental term. Dissemination is far friendlier to the weirdly diverse practices we signifying animals engage in and to our bumbling attempts to meet others with some fairness and kindness. Open scatter is more fundamental than coupled sharing; it is the stuff from which, on rare, splendid occasions, dialogue may arise. Dissemination is not wreckage; it is our lot" (Peters 1999, 62).

[8] To a degree possibly not matched by anyone else, Mats Bergman is at once a scholar of Peirce and a theorist of communication. He brings to the study of Peirce a deep and wide acquaintance with the literature on communication; he brings to his work in the field of communication an intimate and nuanced understanding of Peirce.

If we approach this from the opposite side, that of Peirce rather than the side of communication, we arrive at the same conclusion. As I did with Peters, please allow a single scholar to function representatively. The philosopher Joseph Ransdell's claim[9] regarding communication has not been taken up by very many Peirce scholars[10]: at the very heart of Peirce's project, we encounter a distinctive understanding of communicative processes (1997). This is, in my judgment, not only right but also fecund in ways yet to be appreciated. The seeds which Peirce has sown might have given rise to "a wild harvest" (CP 1.12)[11], but the fruits to be found therein are as nourishing as they are delectable. We have yet to gather fully the fruits of his labor and, moreover, to take the seeds from these fruits and plant them in soil adjacent to the fields in which he tilled, planted, and harvested his prodigious ideas (cf. Peters). On this occasion, I want simply to remove several of the obstacles to understanding his theory of signs (or semiosis) and, then, to draw out the implications of his understanding for an approach to communication. Jürgen Habermas's (1995) expression "communicative rationality" is especially felicitous. While the expression is his, its applicability to the form of rationality identified and explored by Ransdell is evident. Ours is a rationality formed in the matrix of communication, moreover, one disciplined in the exacting contexts of experimental inquiry.[12] Even before turning to either of these tasks (removing obstacles and identifying implications), I want to highlight several features of Peirce's general theory of signs and, above all, a tension at the heart of his semeiotic.[13]

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[9] Ransdell (1966) wrote his dissertation ("Charles Peirce: The Idea of Representation") at Columbia University and taught for many years in the Department of Philosophy at Texas Tech University.

[10] Again, the most notable exception is Mats Bergman.

[11] "The development of my ideas has been," Peirce disclosed near the end of the nineteenth century, "the industry of thirty years. . . . their ripening seemed so slow. But the harvest time has come, at last, and to me that harvest seems a wild one, but of course it is not I who have to pass judgment. It is not quite you, either, individual reader; it is experience and history" (CP 1.12).

[12] "From the Peircean point of view we begin," Ransdell (2000) noted in his Presidential Address to the Peirce Society ("Peirce and the Socratic Tradition"), "by regarding the sciences as communicational communities whose members share a commitment to finding out about something cooperatively, and we think of this primarily from the point of view of the scientific inquirers as such, who are always—that is, ideally—attempting to do what they can to promote a common acceptance of findings which will accumulate, notwithstanding the occasional setbacks when some part of what has accumulated has to be jettisoned. What makes the findings accumulate is that only those findings which actually come to be used in the ongoing course of inquiry count as accepted. Scientific findings are not accepted because somebody says 'This is acceptable', much less because somebody says 'I accept this,' regardless of who says it on what occasion or from what office. They are just accepted or not, and the only way we can tell if they are accepted is by finding out whether or not they actually function in the relevant intellectual community as premises or presuppositions used in further inquiry" (350). I am indebted to Gary Richmond and Benjamin Udell for an email exchange regarding various aspects of Joseph Ransdell's creative appropriation of Peircean insights, especially as it bears upon the topic of communication.

[13] "Semeiotic" was Peirce's preferred spelling. When referring specifically to his theory of signs, I will tend to follow him and use this spelling. However, when referring more generally to the field as it has developed after and, in many ways, independently of his work, I will use the more commonplace spelling, "semiotic."

As conceived by Peirce, a general theory of signs or, better, semiosis should provide indispensable resources for a diverse range of theoretical purposes.[14] One of those purposes is to provide a compelling account of communicative rationality, as this form of reason is evident in a *variety* of contexts (cf. Smith 1970 on living reason; Smith 1981).[15] While Peirce himself tended to focus on the specific context of theoretical (or heuristic) rationality, he was aware that the range of our rationality is hardly exhausted by its deployment in this field. There is more to *logos* than what *logos* reveals about itself in the context of *theoria*. What complicates this even more is that, for Peirce, *theoria* is, in one sense, itself a form of *praxis*. Our practices are irreducibly plural. This makes Peirce's insistence on the primacy of practice also an embrace of pluralism, specifically, of the distinct (though not necessarily separate or separable) forms of shared practices. The sciences constitute only one form of human practice among various other forms.

This is a point to which I will return. For the moment, however, I want to highlight one of the most salient features of communicative rationality. Such rationality is not principally a technical competence or formal capacity. It is rather first and foremost an expressly moral orientation toward sign exchanges. There is, at the heart of this orientation, a concept that Peirce calls *tuism* (from the Latin word *tu*). This concept asserts that all thought is dialogue and that, in turn, all dialogue is addressed to a "you."[16] *Tuism* is the "doctrine that all thought is addressed to a second person, or to one's future self as to a second person" (Peirce, quoted in Fisch 1982, xxix). In this entry to the *Century Dictionary*, Peirce was defining a doctrine which he himself espoused. It was one he had hit upon decades earlier. In some of their earliest exchanges, Peirce and his slightly younger friend William James appear to have discussed the former's fascination with the deeper implications of personal pronouns, perhaps especially with those of the variants of second-person pronouns. An entry in one of his friend's notebooks makes this clear: "The *Thou* idea, as Peirce calls it, dominates an entire realm of mental phenomena, embracing poetry, all direct intuition of nature, scientific *instincts*, relations of man to man, morality, &c" (Fisch 1982, xxix). James immediately adds: "An *analysis* must be into a triad; *me* and *it* require the complement of *thou*" (Fisch 1982, xxix; cf. Royce [1913] 1968 and Davidson 2009, especially Chapter 14). Even such a seemingly primordial relationship as that between the I and the not-I is one

[14] Such a theory certainly might bestow practical benefits. But Peirce's principal commitment was to a comprehensive *theory* specifically designed to facilitate experimental discoveries. Just as his doctrine of categories was crafted to guide and goad inquiry, so too his theory of signs was articulated for such a heuristic purpose.

[15] "Human reason has," Karl Marx wryly observed, "always existed, only not always in reasonable form" (Tucker 1978, 9). It seems appropriate, to me at least, to suggest that human rationality never appears in an entirely or purely reasonable form. Like the pathologies and perversions of communication, those of rationality are paradoxically the ones in which the very nature of reason is possibly most manifest. We discover what reason inherently is by observing what it dramatically fails to be. Of course, the pathologies and perversions of rationality are, of a piece, with those of communication. They are possibly one and the same.

[16] The title of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* is almost certainly better translated as *I and You*, since the German word he used was the informal one. In any event, Peirce was deliberate in using the informal variant of the second-person.

in which the mediation of yet another party (or third), taken as a *thou*, is ineliminable. That is, it is not simply a dyadic relationship; rather it is an irreducibly triadic one. It is hard to say whether James himself held that analysis of these phenomena "must be into a triad," or whether he was only reporting Peirce's conviction. We know this much: however it stood with James, Peirce was unabashedly committed to the "*thou* idea" and, intimately connected to this idea, the irreducible character of some triadic relationships.

An entry in one of Peirce's own notebooks written at roughly the same time (in fact, a year earlier) as that found in one of James's offers these suggestive comments: "I here, for the first time, begin a development of these conceptions [*I*, *It*, and *Thou*], hoping that this will be accompanied by a development of the souls of those who read" them. He moreover suggests, "THOU is an IT [an other] in which there is another I" (W 1, 45). While I looks in and "It looks out, Thou looks *through*, out and in again. I outwells, It inflows, Thou commingles" (W 1, 45, emphasis original; see Viola 2011). For our purpose, the intricacies and implications of these youthful reflections, as inherently fascinating as they are likely to be, fall outside the scope of our concern. They reveal something critical to Peirce's orientation. This facet of his approach makes it especially appropriate for a piece on him to appear in a journal focused on dialogical ethics.

Others—concrete, embodied, sentient, and expressive others—are encountered in a variety of contexts. While Peirce tended to be preoccupied with the community of inquirers, hence with his relationship to other rational agents as co-inquirers, this was certainly not the only relationship to which he attended. Peirce focused mainly on the context of theoretical inquiry, but the purpose of his semeiotic extended far beyond this (cf. Rorty 1982). The irreducibly different forms of human community were of interest to him,[17] including (as Michael Raposa along with Vincent Potter [1996] has shown) communities of religious worship.[18]

There is however a tension at the center of Peirce's efforts to elaborate a general theory of semiosis. On the one hand, his aim truly was to craft a *comprehensive* theory providing critical resources for describing, evaluating, and relating the heterogeneous forms of communicative rationality. On the other, he was, as already suggested, preoccupied with offering a finely detailed account of experimental inquiry. More precisely, his main focus was to provide a normative account of objective inquiry. Of course, a comprehensive theory of signs encompasses far more than science, but Peirce's preoccupation was to elaborate a semeiotic account of science. This tension is nowhere more evident than with respect to the ideal of convergence (see Bernstein 1988). Experimental inquiry is governed by a commitment to an ideal of consensus and, thus, one of convergence,

[17] It is illuminating and instructive to read Josiah Royce's efforts as extending those of Peirce. See especially his *The Problem of Christianity* (Royce [1913] 1968).

[18] Practical, moral, political, religious, heuristic (or theoretical), aesthetic, economic and other forms of communities are the most manifest contexts of human encounter and engagement (e.g., in a political community, I encounter others as citizens). For an instructive delineation of the most critical contexts of human mutuality, see John E. Smith's (1981) "Interpretation and the Religious Dimension of Experience."

an ideal not necessarily constitutive of other communicative practices. Perhaps our failure to appreciate the extent to which, say, the practical ideal of political deliberation is principled compromises grossly distorts our understanding of such deliberation. We imagine that we ought to be aiming at and even approximating consensus when, given the very nature of politics, consensus is for the most part neither possible nor desirable. In the arts the inapplicability of the ideal of consensus is even more evident.

Even *in* science, consensus and convergence are both practically more elusive than our highly idealized accounts of scientific investigation would have it *and* actually less important than the history of the sciences appears to attest. The extent to which scientists disagree—profoundly and possibly even intractably—is insufficiently appreciated. In addition, the history of science is, as Peirce noted, one of ramification: convergences contribute to the ceaseless *branching* of one science into various other disciplines, quickly evolving to the point where participants in one discipline can communicate with those in another only with great difficulty, if at all. While the tower of Babel might have been originally a symbol for the fragmentation of humanity into mutually incomprehensible communities, it can perhaps be taken for the inescapable fate of communicative rationality in the context of science. The irony is manifest: communicative rationality in one of the paradigmatic fields of human striving is in a sense doomed to result in mutual incomprehensibility or rational incommunicability. It is therefore imperative for the inquirer to be humble. The *ethos* of science encompasses the *humility* to acknowledge the extent to which a felt sense of solidarity and an equally sharp sense of incomprehensibility are compatible. For example, those engaged in cutting-edge research in biochemistry and those likewise engaged in ecology might occupy quite different worlds. They feel kinship despite not being conversant with the discourse of one another.

There is, then, implicit in Peirce's theory of semiosis an approach to communication in which the distinctive form of human rationality is explicated. Whatever traces of scientism there are in this theory, Peirce's comprehensive framework provides critical resources for describing, evaluating, and relating to one another the irreducibly *different* forms of communicative processes. Certain distortions might be built into the framework (e.g., Peirce's insistence on the ideals of consensus and convergence might be true of scientific inquiry but not of other forms of human communication). This framework however contains within itself principles of *self-correction* by which such distortions can be identified and eradicated. Indeed, communicative rationality as envisioned by Peirce is an *ongoing* process in which enhancements of self-consciousness, self-critique, and self-control are precisely what sustain the promise of our practices being rational (Colapietro 1989).

There was at the heart of Peirce's "quest of quests" (CP 1.568n) a normative account of objective inquiry. His theory of signs was for the most part designed to provide just such an account of inquiry. It is however difficult for many today to comprehend the very conception of semiosis (or sign-activity) proposed by Peirce. In part, this is because he ascribes agency to signs themselves, though in part other considerations obstruct our understanding of his semeiotic. Accordingly, some

care must be taken to remove several of the most commonplace obstructions to obtaining an interior understanding of Peircean semeiotic. Only then are we able to appreciate his contribution to the field of communication.

Obstacles to an Understanding of Peirce's Theory

We now turn to three of the main obstacles standing in the way of attaining "an interior understanding" of Peircean semeiotic (Peirce, CN 1, 33). After doing so, I will turn to my eventual task: the task of drawing out the implications of semiosis for an understanding of communication. Substantively, these implications include contextualism in general, the abiding need for a deliberate specification of the relevant contexts, and finally the dramatic interplay between the agency of sign-users and that of signs themselves. But methodologically these implications point to the need to approach the study of communication phenomenologically, normatively, and ontologically. On this occasion, my stress will be on these *methodological* implications more than substantive ones. This practically means highlighting phenomenology, critique, and ontology. A Peirce approach to our communicative practices must be expansively imagined, not narrowly conceived.

There are both obvious and subtle obstacles standing in the way of attaining an interior understanding of Peircean semeiotic. But three are, especially regarding communication, particularly noteworthy. The first two concern principally how Peirce tends to be misinterpreted, the third how signs themselves as conceived by Peirce are, given deeply engrained prejudices, misunderstood.[19] The first obstacle to understanding Peirce's theory concerns *formalism*, the second *theoreticism*, and the third the *agency of signs* themselves. Stated bluntly, Peirce was *not* a formalist; despite his advocacy of theory (his occasional tendency to set theoretical endeavors in sharpest contrast to practical affairs), he was a pragmatist (!),[20] that is, a theorist who both conceived theory as itself a form of practice and indeed appreciated the primacy of practice; and, finally, a semiotician who traced the roots of semiosis (or sign-activity) to rudimentary processes having nothing to do with conscious agency or deliberate actors (see Esposito 1979).

[19] Like Martin Heidegger, Peirce struggled to give signs and, by extension, language fully their due. When Heidegger asserted that language speaks, his claim was for many utterly incomprehensible and, if understood, manifestly implausible. *We*, human beings, speak. To grant language or signs the power to speak is to hypostatize or reify what is, at bottom, nothing more than the somewhat unique capacity of certain beings. Or so the story goes. Heidegger and, before him, Peirce set out to challenge this anthropocentric approach.

[20] The way Dewey (1991) makes this point is especially illuminating. He does so by contrasting Peirce to James, claiming that "Peirce was much more of a pragmatist in the literal sense" than James. What is this sense? It is the sense in which the word "expresses action or practice" (483). In Dewey's judgment, Peirce's pragmatism was more consistently and thoroughly focused on *practices* than James's. This is a remarkable and, from my perspective, accurate claim. This focus includes an affirmation of the primacy of practice.

Formalism

On the surface, it might seem as though Peirce's approach to signs is excessively formalistic and thus inadequately contextualist (Rorty 1982, 161). This is, however, not the case. Although he certainly might have made this aspect of his orientation more explicit, his emphasis is demonstrably contextualist. It is both rooted in and oriented to *contexts of practice*. On my reading, pragmatism entails contextualism, and, in turn, contextualism is partly defined by purpose. If my purpose is solely or primarily heuristic, the context in which I am acting is one of inquiry. If my purpose is principally concerned with my answerability to others, then the context is ethical and possibly religious.

It might be possible to identify forms of processes cutting across diverse contexts, perhaps even forms manifest in virtually any context. Such a bold claim is actually at the heart of Peirce's theory of signs. His theory, no less than other theories, of communication strives to reach the highest level of generality by identifying such forms. The center from which his theory radiates in all directions is his claim regarding the irreducibly triadic structure of sign-processes. Let's begin with a closely allied phenomenon, an act of giving. A gives B to C. Any such act encompasses both an act of divestiture and one of acquisition. These two dyadic relationships are integral to anything recognizable as giving: A gives B away, while C comes into possession of B. But the accidental conjunction my divesting myself of a possession and someone else coming along and acquiring it does not constitute an act of giving. There is an essential link here. In order words, there is an irreducibly triadic structure.

In this respect, signifying is akin to giving. The sign gives itself to another in such a way that something other than itself is also given to another. Signs are media of disclosure, however partial, perspectival, and, as a result of being partial and perspectival, distorted.

Theoreticism

It is crucial to appreciate the extent to which theoretical inquiry is a distinctive form of human practice. The *differential* perspective of the purely theoretical inquirer does not necessarily provide a model for the use of signs or the forms of communication characteristic (or typical) of other contexts or practices. Indeed, these other practices might throw more light on *theoria* than *theoria* throws on other forms of *praxis* (Smith 1981). For example, scientific inquiry might incorporate within itself a distinctive form of moral discourse, including a conscientious cultivation of specific virtues, not least of all veracity and trustworthiness or integrity. As a practice, science exhibits numerous and deep affinities to, and differences from, other shared practices. In being so singularly devoted to exploring the nature of experimental inquiry, in light of the history of our experimental explorations of especially the natural world, Peirce tended to be captivated by certain features of semiosis or sign-processes, ones already identified (e.g., the regulative ideal of communal consensus, to which I might add here the abiding willingness to challenge traditional authority and, in certain

respects, the systematic exclusion of humane feelings). It may be that *all* our practices are, at bottom, experimental. But it may also be that they are experimental in quite different ways. However that may be, the vastly extended family of purely heuristic endeavors, pursuits aiming at the discovery of the truth, do not readily provide a model for understanding the distinctive character of other human practices. Wittgenstein in his way, Heidegger in his, and the pragmatists in their manner strenuously argued for this realization. To assimilate, for example, religious worship to a disguised form of theoretical inquiry precludes the possibility of understanding practices of worship on their own terms. Not all human purposes are reducible to that of discovering the truth. Accordingly, not all practices are, in essence, instances or forms of *theoria*. It is far better to see *theoria* itself as a distinctive form of *praxis*, than all forms of praxis as concealed forms of *theoria*. The integrity of these theoretical endeavors no less than that of human practices in their irreducible heterogeneity demands approaching these topics from this perspective. As I understand it, then, the primacy of practice demands the rejection of *theoreticism*, though certainly not the denigration, much less the rejection, of theory as such.

The Agency of Signs

There is likely no larger obstacle to obtaining an interior understanding of Peirce's semeiotic than his insistence that signs themselves exercise a form of agency. Increasingly since the early modern period in Western thought, the human subject has presumed absolute sovereignty. This is nowhere more apparent than in the distinctively modern understanding of signs. To step back momentarily from this understanding, consider the proverb that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. It is utterly implausible, for some seemingly inconceivable, to imagine any alternative (beauty is in the form of the beheld or is in the transaction between perceiver and perceived, with the perceived object or event making an indispensable contribution). This is so even though some of the greatest minds in the classical period (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Moses Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas) rejected a thoroughly subjectivist account of beauty. Analogously, meaning has in modernity been traced to the impositions or attributions of the subject (or self). In themselves, the data are meaningless. They become meaningful only by being taken as such by the self in acts of interpretation, understood as acts of imposition. Significance reflects the agency of interpreters and utterers of signs, not the agency of sign themselves. To ascribe such agency to signs is indeed a seemingly wild claim, akin to animism. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein asks: "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life?—In use it is alive. Is life breathed into it there?—Or is its *use* its life" (1.432). While it is hard to ascertain just where Wittgenstein stands on this question, the modernist view is that *human* subjects breathe life into signs (cf. Ransdell 1980, 151, 173). In contrast, Peirce unabashedly holds that life and, thus, agency, inheres in signs themselves (see, e.g., CP 2.222, 302). It is undeniable that they have evolved to the point where minds have emerged with their own distinctive form of semiotic agency, above all, their capacity to monitor and control, to some extent, how they use signs. But the

control of our minds over the signs on which they so completely depend is far less than we imagine. The degree of our dependency on them is comparable to that of their dependency on us (see, e.g., CP 5.313–14). Symbols in particular have an *inherent* power it would be foolish to slight or overlook. Just as breathing is as much an affair of environing (thus, sustaining) conditions as it is an exercise of a physiological capacity, so too significance in its distinctively human forms is the conjoint achievement of the agency of signs and the agency of conscious, critical, and ingenious sign-users. Human imposition and institution of meaning is undeniably part of the story. But it is far from self-evident, at least to Peirce and his followers, that meaning originates by such acts. Put positively, the roots of significance must be traced more deeply than the acts and fiats of our subjectivity. Irreducibly triadic relationships are immanent in nature. They are in countless instances discovered, not created, by humans. *We* owe our intelligence to how signs have addressed us in fatefully challenging ways as much as signs owe their very being to our fiats and conventions. Such at least is Peirce's position, with its stress on the agency of signs themselves.

Peirce was truly a pragmatism, not a thoroughgoing formalist (though he uncertainly appreciated the value and power of formalizing some of our procedures and processes, in particular, our forms of reasoning and the complex patterns of interwoven inferences) (cf. Ransdell 2000, 349–50). Moreover, to interpret or appraise his semeiotic as the work of a thoroughgoing formalist is to miss its pragmatic character. The scope of his semeiotic encompasses far more than an account of science, though providing a detailed, comprehensive account of experimental investigation is at the center of his concern. Finally, his approach to signs is not anthropocentric. In it, the sovereign subject of modern thought is dethroned; the subjects—the signs themselves—are full accorded their rights and their status. We cannot understand Peirce's theory of semiosis unless we remove these obstacles from our path. But having unblocked our way, where does the road beckon?

Implications for the Theory of Communication

What *are* the implications of Peirce's pragmatist theory of signs that especially those of you who are trained in these fields (communication, rhetoric, and other institutionally recognized disciplines or discourses) would judge to be an adequate approach to communication? Of course, they are far too numerous even to identify. Allow me simply to highlight a handful of what I take to be the most important of these implications. Implicit in my identification of these is the structure of Peirce's system or classification of the sciences (the sciences of discovery are mathematics, phenomenology, the normative sciences—logic, ethics, and esthetics—metaphysics, and the special or *idioscopic* sciences) (cf. Kent 1987; Stuhr 1994). Those of you who are not familiar with this part of Peirce are not at a disadvantage in comprehending what I am suggesting.

If we are guided by Peirce's pragmatism, such a theory must be in its inaugural phase *descriptive* (or phenomenological) and, since the phenomena are

to a great extent historical, *historicist*. That is, it must focus phenomenologically on our historically evolved and evolving processes and practices of communication. In this regard, it must be both *synchronic* and *diachronic*: it must grasp systems as they function in the present (this is the synchronic perspective) *and* as they have evolved and indeed are currently in process of transforming themselves (this is the diachronic perspective). The inaugural and culminating focus of any such theory is the entire array of communicative processes, with equal regard for their irreducible heterogeneity and the most fundamental affinities between various processes (e.g., the respects in which scientific inquiry and artistic production are akin, despite being irreducibly different). Practices are phenomena and, as such, avail themselves to being described and re-described in diverse manners and from complementary perspectives. However, these phenomena are by their very nature *historical* and, hence, demand a narrative, including a genealogical, or Foucaultian, approach.

For the purposes of developing an adequate approach to our communicative practices especially, phenomenology and history are necessary but not sufficient: painstaking, nuanced descriptions and detailed, accurate histories are invaluable, but the possibility of multi-perspectival, "mobile" critiques is no less so. Such a theory must be inherently and insistently *critical* (and critical along at least these axes—logic, ethics broadly imagined, and esthetics). This insistence is the signature of Peirce's pragmatism. In its inherent development, the theory of communication must be critical and normative. The norms, ideals, principles, and values always already structuring and to some extent defining our communicative practices need to be made explicit and, beyond this, they need to be assessed in terms of their internal consistency, empirical adequacy, and ultimately practical fecundity (cf. Peters 1999).

The *emphasis on critique* ought not to eclipse *either* the inaugural work of phenomenology and history (we can rush too quickly to critique) or the culminating possibility of elaborating nothing less than an *ontology of becoming*. As I envision it, such an ontology of becoming would be inclusive of an account of the emergence, evolution, and self-transformations of our distinctive modes of self-making (our historically instituted and also improvisational forms of making sense of whatever we encounter in experience, whatever the context of encounter and engagement). As the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, Peirce identified as one of the great questions being pressed both inside and outside of science this one: *How do things grow*? (CP 7.267, no. 8). He takes this question to be related to his synechism (or doctrine of continuity): "Once you have embraced the principle of continuity no kind of explanation of things will [ever] satisfy you except that they *grew*" (CP 1.175). Of course, exploring *specifically* how something came into being and, in countless instances, ceased to be imposes an exacting challenge. Regarding the forms, functions, and effects of communication *and* the myriad media in the elemental sense in and through which these forms function, this challenge is especially exacting. Even so, the extent to which an adequate theory of communication requires even just a minimal sketch of an ontology is (I realize) far more disputable than either the need for a phenomenological inauguration or a normative development of communication studies. From

Peirce's perspective, however, such a theory would be incomplete if it stopped short of ontology.

Reversing the order, we are obligated to confront above all three questions: the *ontological* question, "What *is* the case?"; the *normative* questions, "How *ought* I to comport myself in the context of my inquiries into communication and, in addition to this reflexive query, what is the inescapably normative character of the communicative practices that I am investigating?"; finally, the *phenomenological* question, "What description of the context into which I am thrown enables me to orient myself, most effectively, to this context, especially when this context is taken to be first and foremost an arena of action?"

An historically inflected phenomenology, an explicitly normative orientation, and finally an ontology (specifically, an ontology of becoming, including *coming to be* intelligible) would be, from Peirce's perspective, the minimally requisite phases of any adequately articulated theory of communication. The word *phase*, however, must be carefully qualified. No one of the phases, especially the inaugural one, is ever superseded. The phenomenologist must resist the impulse uncritically to equate appearance with reality (phenomena with noumena), without prejudicing the question of the ways in which any phenomenon might be—indeed, *must* be—disclosive of reality. The ontological commitments of the phenomenologist are exposed and, to some extent, rendered problematic in the very course of that inquirer's endeavors. Even so, phenomenology is in itself not quite yet ontology, whatever momentous and unavoidable consequences regarding becoming and all else flow from its descriptions. In contrast, the ontologist must be a phenomenologist. The culminating phase, the ontological one, does not supersede—thus, does not leave behind—either the sensibility or the tools of the phenomenologist. Quite the contrary.

Peirce's pragmatist theory of signs needs to be read in conjunction with his semeiotic theory of pragmatism. Both need to be made more explicit than he often did. His formal doctrine of signs needs to be read as a thoroughly *pragmatist* doctrine, with the emphasis on the functions and efficacy of signs and the specific strategies of historically situated sign-users. No less so, his pragmatic approach to meaning needs to be read as a semeiotic doctrine. Accordingly, the title of his famous essay, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," needs to be translated into, "How to Make Our Signs Clearer." Like absolute certainty, absolute *clarity* is unattainable. For some purpose at hand, that is, *in some context*, it is possible to render our signs clearer. The degree of clarity needed is determined by the context of engagement in which the exchange of signs actually functions, unfolds and transforms itself.

Peircean pragmatism directs our attention to the *experiential contexts* in which our communicative practices must be situated in order to be understood. This is indeed the very heart of that pragmatism. A theoretical context as such is a delimiting field. His insistence on the primacy of practice does not preclude a recognition of the irreducibly distinctive character of our purely theoretical (or heuristic) endeavors. Put more simply, theory is itself a form of practice or, more

precisely, an extended family of human practices, complexly related to yet other shared practices.

There is nothing crude or reductionist in Peirce's insistence on the primacy of practice. His equal insistence on the inescapability of some more or less determinate context leaves open the question of our capacity to transcend, to some extent, possibly *any* specific or determinate context in which we are implicated. Effective emancipation from our inherited frameworks and even from our somatically inscribed norms (the cultural norms we have ineluctably *incorporated* into the innermost recesses of our embodied psyches)—effective emancipation from both such frameworks and such inscriptions—need not be illusory. The history of communication is, to some extent, however slight, one in which we have proven ingenious and courageous enough to *twist free* from external and internalized constraints. No theory of communication could ever be pragmatic were it not emancipatory.

Of course, Peirce falls short of offering a robust and even simply explicit account of pragmatic emancipation (or should I say emancipatory pragmatism?). But then, a philosophical tradition is not fully realized in its inaugural moment. *Later* figures—figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Jane Addams, Dewey and Rorty, Hans Joas and John Stuhr—are of course integral to the ongoing development of any intellectual tradition. The emancipatory promise of the pragmatist tradition mostly waited upon the children of Jane Addams (Charlene Haddock Siegfried's work; Shannon Sullivan) and the progeny of Du Bois (the work of Cornel West, Eddie Glaude, Jr., Paul Taylor, Lee McBride, and others). That is, feminist pragmatism and critical race pragmatism are those developments in which we can observe most clearly significant strides toward the fulfillment of the promise of emancipatory pragmatism.[21] Hence, these subsequent developments are at least as definitive of the pragmatist tradition as its inaugural—that is, its Peircean—phase. For a tradition so attuned to outcomes rather than origins, fruits rather than roots, these developments are arguably *more* important than its inauguration. This should not be taken as a slight to Peirce; rather it should be taken as recognition of just what figures such as Du Bois and Addams achieved, against even greater odds than those confronted by Peirce.

Classical Pragmatism as a Vital Tradition

Peirce insisted on the primacy of practice. We must begin and end with critical attention to our shared practices. Moreover, we must see ourselves first and foremost as situated practitioners, i.e., implicated participants in any number of intergenerational communities in which human autonomy, achievement, and transformation are alone possible.

[21] Cf. Magee 2004; but see McBride 2021. Lee McBride's book presents a forceful, nuanced, and eloquent case for emancipation in its most urgent contemporary sense (the struggle of the oppressed to win for themselves their lives and a world in which those lives matter).

For me, then, American pragmatism is a vital tradition and, virtually from its inception, it was at once local (distinctively American) and global or international. Part of its vitality is, I believe, its relevance to the study of communication. What I have tried to do is simply to identify some of the most important implications of Peircean pragmatism for communication studies. Please note: I am making a comparatively weak claim (no theoretical imperialism is implied in my advocacy of the relevance of this form of pragmatism for this field of study). The implications of Peirce's theory clearly point in directions other theories also point. In addition, they point in directions toward which students of communication have to some extent already moved. In this regard, Peirce is not necessarily indispensable (we might have and indeed many have arrived at my conclusions regarding communication without any help from Peirce), though he is, in my judgment, illuminating and (arguably) singularly instructive. The systematic (or architectonic) character of his approach (his guiding sense that the most effective movement of human inquiry is from phenomenology to ontology, by way of normativity) is extremely suggestive and possibly far more fecund than those unacquainted with the history of the sciences might imagine or appreciate.

No tradition or perspective is sufficient unto itself. This is as true of pragmatism as it is of any other tradition (Colapietro 2012). For an understanding of revolution, Marxists must look beyond the writings of Marx and others in their tradition. For an understanding of the workings of the unconscious, Freudians and other psychoanalysts must look beyond Freud and others in *this* tradition. Analogously, for an understanding of practice, sign-processes, experience, conduct, science and the host of other topics with which historical pragmatism has been preoccupied, contemporary adherents of the pragmatist tradition must look beyond Peirce, James, Dewey, Mead, even Du Bois, Addams, and look *to* such theorists as Heidegger and Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Emmanuel Levinas, Foucault and Deleuze, Wittgenstein and Austin, Susanne Langer and Toni Morrison. To repeat, no tradition is sufficient unto itself. The ways in which phenomenology, hermeneutics, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, feminist theory, critical race theory, and other perspectives complement pragmatism cannot be gainsaid. Put positively, they must be not only acknowledged but also celebrated. Pragmatists are as much pluralists as they are contextualists, and pluralism (despite what Robert Talisse and other misguided contemporary "pragmatists" argue) is integral to pragmatism. What a pragmatist emphasis on the primacy of practice entails is an acknowledgment and celebration of the *plurality* of traditions. These traditions and perspectives overlap in complex, ever shifting ways, optimally, to the mutual benefit of the intersecting traditions.

"The world is," William James (1978) suggests in his *Pragmatism*, "full of partial stories that run parallel to one another, beginning and ending at odd times. They mutually interlace and interfere at points, but we cannot unify them completely in our minds" (71). On this occasion, I have told what I realize is and could only be a very *partial* story, in several senses of that adjective. My only hope is that it was also an engaging and suggestive story, not least of all in pointing to *some* of the ways in which this tradition interlaces and interferes with other traditions, to the mutual benefit of these diverse orientations.

Conclusion

Peirce lived his final years as an enigmatic, reclusive genius. If I have done anything to make him more accessible and more of a participant in the *ongoing* community of diverse fields of critical studies, then my efforts have been, to that extent, pragmatically fulfilled. He was acutely aware of how difficult some of his auditors and readers found his utterances. He strove to be clear *and* precise, but his commitment to precision often made his lectures or writings, for some readers, inaccessible or at least extremely challenging. He was and "will always remain," as John Dewey (1991) noted, "a philosopher's philosopher": "His ideas will reach the general public only through the mediations and translations of others" (480). It is even true that his ideas will to a great extent reach scholars and theorists outside of philosophy "only through the mediations and translations of others." Even though the irony in this is manifest, it deserves to be stressed. This philosopher of mediation, moreover, a theorist as deeply committed to what John Durham Peters calls "elemental media"[22] as any writer in any epoch, needs himself to be mediated, in order that the import of his writings can more effectively be communicated!

Granting agency to signs and media apart from the intention and awareness of human sign-users does nothing to strip those users of their importance or

[22] Peters's point is essentially Peirce's: our tendency to focus exclusively on signs instituted and used by humans and other species of animals closely akin to ourselves occludes how pervasive and nearly primordial (see Esposito 1979) signs or media are. "Before a word is spoken, our togetherness," Peters (2015) insists, "is already supersaturated with meaning. The world does not need to be re-enchanted; it is already wondrous. The universe is full of data [arguably, best conceived as gifts—gifts of meaning (cf. Raposa 2020)]; why should we attend only to the narrow bandwidth of data [or media] made by humans, exceedingly fascinating and creative though they be. Science at its best is not the foe of wonder, but its vehicle" (381–82), or at least, one of its vehicles. For Peters (2015) no less than for Peirce, "meaning is *in* nature" (4, emphasis added). "A medium must not [simply] mean but be." Even among humans, "media of all kinds serve elemental roles. Once communication is understood not only as sending messages—certainly an essential function—but also as providing conditions for existence, media cease to be only studios and stations, messages and channels, and become infrastructures and [even] forms of life" (14). Media in this expansive and indeed "elemental" sense however fell prey to a historical development in the recent past: "The decisive break happened in the nineteenth century with the slow turn of media [and signs] into a conveyance of specifically human signals and meanings" (47). Part of the irony here is that, just at this time, Peirce was struggling to retain the older, wider sense of media. A recovery of this sense is, arguably, bound up (as Peters clearly implies) with a recovery or simply the discovery of Peirce. "The idea that media are message-bearing institutions . . . is relatively recent in intellectual history" (Peters 2015, 2). Especially at a time "when our most pervasive surrounding environment is technological and nature . . . is drenched with human manipulation," it is imperative to recover a concept of media deeper and wider than our contrivances and consciousness, our stipulations and demands. Indeed, especially at a time when "a culture of pathological convenience" (Grenell 2022, 8) structures the rituals of our everyday lives, though these rituals are not recognized as such, the need to begin to appreciate the extent to which media provide nothing less than conditions for our very lives is imperative.

indeed their responsibility.[23] Radical fallibilism and radical responsibility are not only compatible: they entail one another (cf. Arnett 2017). I am responsible for what I say and think even if my utterances and thoughts trace their roots to forces and factors deeper than the resources and resolves of my own agency and also carry implications *far* beyond anything I can imagine or anticipate. I am *practically* rooted in diverse histories, only some of which I am in a position to acknowledge, and implicated in fateful trajectories, only some of which I will ever have the resources to identify, however partially and perspectivally. The primacy of practice means, in part, being rooted in various histories and implicated in their open-ended trajectories. To imagine that I, in my isolation from others, take myself to be the author of my own being, rather than a co-author, often with less to contribute than other factors shaping the meaning of my utterances and thoughts, is nothing short of delusion.[24] To affirm the primacy of practice is, on my reading, to accept, with the degree of discernment only obtainable by means of humility, my radical dependence on elemental media and my own status as (to some extent) a medium of disclosure. I am at every moment being addressed by signs (cf. Buber 2002, 12–13), most of which I do not discern as such.[25] At every turn, human survival and flourishing have hinged on ecological literacy in a very practical sense. The primacy of practice *practically* encompasses attunement to what myriad natural signs convey, if only we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

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[23] Signs are, Peirce asserts, "the only things with which a human being can, without derogation, consent to have any transaction, being a sign himself" (CP 6.344). The self not only uses signs as media of disclosure but also is itself, in its innermost being, a medium of disclosure. This makes its innermost being an outreaching identity. Are "we shut up [or imprisoned] in a box of flesh and blood? When I communicate my thoughts and my sentiments to a friend with whom I am in sympathy, so that my feelings pass into him, do I not live in his brain [or psyche] as well as in my own,—most literally?" Peirce adds: "Each man has an identity which far transcends the mere animal;—an essence, a *meaning* as subtile as it may be. He cannot know his own essential significance; of his eye it is [as R. W. Emerson wrote in one of his poems] eyebeam. But that he truly has this outreaching identity . . . is the true and exact significance of the fact of sympathy—fellow feeling—together with all unselfish interests—and all that makes us feel that he has an absolute worth" (CP 7.591; cf. CP 8.38).

[24] Peirce goes so far as to call this "the metaphysics of wickedness." "If you embrace synechism [i.e., the doctrine of continuity], you must abjure this metaphysics of wickedness. In the first place, your neighbors are, in a measure, yourself, and in far greater measure than, without deep studies in psychology, you would believe. Really, the selfhood you like to attribute to yourself is, for the most part, the vulgarest delusion of vanity. In the second place, all men who resemble you and are in analogous circumstances, in a measure, yourself, though not quite in the same way in which your [more proximate] neighbors are" (CP 7.571). A seldom cited text regarding this topic is found in a chapter of *The Grand Logic* ("The Essence of Reasoning"): "There are those who believe in their own existence, because its opposite [is to them] inconceivable; yet the most balsamic of all the sweets of sweet philosophy is the lesson that personal existence [i.e., a purely or absolutely separate existence] is an illusion and a practical joke. Those who have loved themselves and not their neighbors will find themselves April fools when the great April opens the truth that neither [their personal] selves nor neighborselves were anything more than vicinities; while the love they would not entertain was the very essence of every scent" (CP 69; see also 6.355ff.).

[25] "Some signs," Peirce observes, "address themselves to us, so that we fully apprehend them [as signs]. But it is a paralyzed reason that does not acknowledge others that are not directly addressed to us [e.g., a dog growling at another dog], and that does not suppose still others of which we know nothing definite" (NEM IV, 299).

In turn, an appreciation of Peirce's relevance to communication includes an awareness that the media of communication far outstrip human consciousness, control, and (to some extent) even destructiveness.[26] For example, our careless, inattentive, and corrupt use of language maims but does not utterly destroy this inheritance and resource (however, cf. Morrison [1993] 2008, 199–202). In some fashion, these media possess a life of their own. The life of signs is itself a sign that neither their meaning nor their life depends entirely upon our attributions or especially our fiats. In other words, it is a sign of a life more encompassing and complex and even intimate to our own life than we ordinarily appreciate or dimly sense.[27] The muted, incomprehensible sounds and other signs first experienced by us in the womb are in effect an initiation into a life in which signs abound, though their meanings often prove extremely elusive. The practical recognition of feelings and perceptions *as signs* amounts to nothing less than crossing a threshold. Our intelligence practically comes into being with this recognition. The meanings of most signs are indeed to a great extent missed, though the practical import of some of the more salient signs is, especially for narrow or immediate purposes, effectively grasped (e.g., the capacity to sense one is in the presence of a predator). Were this not so, we would have long ago been extinct.

The primacy of practice enfolds within itself myriad forms of practical "literacy"—the capacity to utter and interpret signs in various contexts, for diverse purposes. Our "feel" for the salience and significance of aspects of the objects and events disclosed in our experience is deeply instinctual, though largely acquired. A mostly unacknowledged complex of innate dispositions makes possible the forms of habituation and hence of enculturation characteristic of *Homo sapiens*. This extensive complex of tacit practical skills itself makes possible our explicit theoretical endeavors, including our ability to make sense of the texts of an author such as Peirce and of the staggeringly vast array of phenomena such as those we encounter in our communicative processes and practices. When an author such as Peirce and a field such as communications intersect, mutual illumination is destined to occur. My hope is to have rendered this claim plausible—nothing more, but also nothing less.

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[26] What the pragmaticist adores "is *power*; not the sham power of brute force which, even in its own specialty of spoiling [or destroying] things, secures such slight results; but the creative power of reasonableness" (Peirce, CP 5.520). The power of signs to replicate themselves in some recognizable form is one thing, the power of signs to generate radical novelty (e.g., a new genre of literature or a new form of inquiry) is quite another. For Peirce, the accent must fall most of all on the *creative* power of our signifying practices.

[27] "*The love of life is*," Peirce insists, "*more than a love of sensuous life:* it is also a love of rational life" (MS 146, Winter 1867–68; published in W 2, 124, emphasis original). As such, "our love of life is not confined within the walls of our own body; but since our reason lives wherever it is active, primarily in our own brains but also in the brains of those who take up our thoughts and sentiments, it is a part of the love of life, to love our influence upon and fame with succeeding generations" (124). The love of rational life encompasses that of semiotic life, a love of signs specifically insofar as to contribute to the ongoing growth of our deliberate rationality or rational agency. Closely connected to this, "in intellectual life there is a tendency to value existence as the vehicle of forms" (Peirce, CP 5.440). That is, the life of reason is one in which the forms or media in and through which rationality is concretely realized are cherished.

***Vincent Colapietro**, PhD, is a Liberal Arts Research Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and African American Studies at Pennsylvania State University (University Park, PA, USA) and affiliated with the Center for the Humanities at the University of Rhode Island. One of his main areas of historical research is the pragmatist tradition, with special emphasis on Charles S. Peirce. A main focus of his systematic work is the articulation and application of a general theory of signs. Though devoted to developing a semiotic perspective rooted in Peirce's seminal work, Colapietro draws upon a number of authors and perspectives other than Peirce and pragmatism (including such authors as Bakhtin, Jakobson, and Bourdieu as well as such movements as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction). He is the author of* Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity *(1989),* A Glossary of Semiotics *(1993), and* Fateful Shapes of Human Freedom *(2003) as well as numerous essays. He has served as President of the Charles S. Peirce Society, the Metaphysical Society of America, and the Semiotic Society of America. A translation of his* Peirce's Approach to the Self *has just been published in Korean, and* Acción, sociabilidad, y drama: Un retrato pragmatista del animale humano, *a book based on a series of lectures given in Argentina, has recently been published. In 2018, Colapietro was recognized as a Thomas Sebeok Fellow by the Semiotic Society of America. As part of this honor, three of his essays were published in the* American Journal of Semiotics*: "Gestures of Acknowledge: Failures, Refusals. and Affirmations," "Theoretical Riffs on the Blues," and "The Music of Meaning" (an expanded version of his 2018 Sebeok Lecture). In addition, his essays have appeared in the* Journal of Philosophy, Review of Metaphysics, International Philosophical Quarterly, Philosophy & Literature, Cognitio, *and* European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy.

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