

**PRAGMATISM'S PROMISE, NATURALISM'S PROSPECTS:
FALLIBILISM AND THE "FREIGHTAGE OF ETERNITY"**

A Dissertation
Submitted
to the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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May, 2010

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the development of classical American pragmatism in the work of C.S. Peirce and Josiah Royce, and its convergence with the naturalist project that currently dominates anglophone philosophy. I argue that naturalism, as it is typically construed, either neglects or underestimates the importance of a rich and nuanced model of selfhood, one that captures not only the biological, but also the cultural features of human persons; what is needed is an account that shows how culture and human selves are themselves “natural.” John McDowell has recently offered a promising line of thought which pursues this intuition, but his model has faced heavy criticism and its viability remains questionable. My project, then, is an alternative account that incorporates the best of McDowell’s intuitions, but which is immune to the most common objections brought against his model.

I proceed by focusing on one aspect of what it means to be a human person that has enormous significance for all areas of philosophical inquiry and which has a rich, if often overlooked, philosophical history. This is the inherent finitude or ignorance which characterizes human knowledge and practice, what Peirce referred to as “fallibilism.” Peirce’s notion of fallibilism, which today remains his greatest legacy, tempers philosophical discussions of universal concepts such as truth and “the good” by way of considerations of scope and context, forcing such abstractions to find their place within the practical environments of actual lived existence. I offer that Peirce is perhaps a unique figure in the Western philosophical tradition with respect to the importance he gives to fallibilism and in his understanding the doctrine not only in terms of its negative

consequences, but also a positive theory that generates a practical response to the sort of existential crisis introduced by the recognition of human fallibility and finitude.

Ultimately, Peirce offers a naturalized model of the self which is both a semiotic artifact and communal in nature. The self is a sign that emerges within an interpretive community and which manifests itself as an individual primarily through its fallibility. As such, the self is a cultural artifact, but Peirce's metaphysics makes this a natural process continuous with those processes studied by natural sciences. As a scientist, he was committed to naturalism but not reductionism; his account, therefore, embraces the work of culture and the importance of cultural idioms which are often left out of modern naturalist projects. In this, Peirce offers a promising way to fulfill McDowell's project of "naturalizing" culture and "re-enchanting" nature, thereby eliminating the gap between "mind and the world."

However, despite its importance to his philosophical system, Peirce's explicit treatment of selfhood is notably unfocused. It is therefore necessary to couple his philosophical system with that of another of the classical pragmatists who was deeply influenced by Peirce's philosophy but who extended its development into detailed discussions of selfhood and community. The figure I have in mind is Josiah Royce.

Royce's philosophy hinges on two central notions, loyalty and community. Loyalty is, for Royce, the means by which individual selves are connected with communities and moral concerns. For Royce, loyalty is given first and foremost to an individual community. However his development of this concept comes to include loyalty to loyalty itself, thus making an individual's loyalty to a particular community continuous with a loyalty to a global community. Moreover, his account of community picks up on Peirce's semiotic theory of interpretation, and connects his account of the individual with Peirce's metaphysical and epistemological concerns. I read the theory of

selfhood Royce develops as providing the crucial element that Peirce's philosophical system requires but does not explicitly provide. Throughout this discussion, I show how this model is a promising direction for the future course of contemporary philosophical naturalism.

for Joe

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

“Our history enables us to suppose that it may be alright to act on the basis of incomplete knowledge if our culture has an effective way of telling us that our knowledge is incomplete, and also of telling us how to act in our state of ignorance.”

Wendell Berry¹

Although something akin to an eternal, universal and unchanging truth is the traditional object of our philosophical and scientific inquiry, history seems to indicate that such a truth will remain forever beyond our grasp; the story of human civilization is riddled with crisis and catastrophe, from famines and epidemics to world wars and the current threat of global environmental collapse. One of the principal lessons this history offers is that human beings are finite, their knowledge limited and their practices imperfect. However, despite the long career of its evidence, the consequences of this simple fact are often overlooked. In those cases when it is made central, the result is often a sterile and defeatist skepticism or a religious trust in a realm of being beyond the one in which we (most often, at least) find ourselves. This is because the recognition of the inherent fallibility of human knowledge carries with it a heavy burden: how do we proceed in making the practical decisions we are always faced with (many of them bearing on vital issues) knowing that we will always be acting on imperfect knowledge that is just as likely to be proven wrong in the long run as it is to be vindicated? To

¹ Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition* (New York: Counterpoint, 2000), 11.

borrow a formulation from C.S. Peirce, we can therefore view the primary task of philosophy as the development of a model of “inquiry which produces not merely scientific belief, which is always provisional, but also a living, practical belief, logically justified in crossing the Rubicon with all the freightage of eternity.”²

This tension, I offer, forms the space in which the most pressing concerns of the bulk of contemporary philosophy in the Western world. At present, philosophy in America (and much of the rest of the world) is dominated by two questions critical to its future development: what, precisely, is the most tenable and promising form of the naturalistic worldview; and, what direction should Anglo-American philosophy pursue in the wake of what seems to be the collapse of the analytic project? The first of these questions is, of course, not limited to philosophy alone; the search for a naturalist or naturalizing idiom which at once squares with the current understanding of scientific investigation and the reality it discloses while also adequately handling the distinctive cultural space that is equally part of the human world, cuts across nearly every discipline.

The second question, however, is more specific to the concerns of philosophy and has recently been answered by a renewed interest in Hegel and Hegelian philosophy (which, of course, had fallen into disfavor during the rise of analytic philosophy under the influence of Russell, the Vienna circle and others) and a revival of pragmatism.³ My project treats these concerns as a set, and I address them through the attempt to secure three interrelated goals, framed in terms of the tension Peirce identifies as the "freightage

² In citing Peirce's published works, I follow the standard conventions among Peirce scholars: *Collected Papers* (CP volume.paragraph); *Essential Peirce* (EP volume page); *Writings* (W volume: page); the reference cited here is EP II 449.

³ Sometimes both, which is unsurprising given the Hegelian themes which are present in the work of such classical Pragmatists as Dewey, Royce and, arguably to a lesser extent, Peirce.

of eternity": (1) the development of a naturalist idiom that adequately handles distinctions, traditionally treated as disjunctive, which form the poles of our theorizing, practices and human being (e.g., the natural and the cultural, mind and matter, practices and ideals, the finite and the infinite, realism and idealism); the outlines of which are found in (2) a new reading of a historically parochial philosophical movement (pragmatism) which is currently enjoying a global "revival" and is, perhaps uniquely, capable of capturing the best intuitions of the leading philosophical currents (primarily the analytic and continental) and facilitating greater exchange with non-western traditions; by (3) recapturing a central theme of classical pragmatism—fallibilism—which remains perhaps its greatest legacy but which is often misunderstood both in its nature and importance. This final goal not only facilitates the reading of pragmatism in favor, but also emerges as a crucial element in our attempts to address the first theme, viz. the prospects of philosophical naturalism.

Naturalism, Fallibilism and the Nature of "Nature"

Nearly all of twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy proceeds from a naturalism which, more often than not, is tacitly assumed but rarely articulated. Given this scope, it is no surprise that the question of what naturalism actually entails has become the preeminent concern in most, if not all, of the subfields of Western philosophy. As with any such strategic question, discussion of the matter follows distinctly partisan lines; there is, it seems, no agreed upon definition of "naturalism," and the accounts put forth by various discussants inevitably do more to advance specific partisan interests (e.g. reductionism, eliminativism, realism, etc.) than to develop a common problematic or discursive space. Perhaps the only common ground in such discussions is the minimal point that what is attempted in philosophical naturalism is a

more or less comprehensive idiom that adequately handles both the natural world, as it is conceived of existing independently of human thought and culture, as well as the intentional and normative structures that arise within the domain of human concerns, in a manner that does not introduce unbridgeable “gaps” between the two or any other metaphysical dualism. Such an idiom begins from the assumption that reality is mind-independent but intelligible, and that human persons and practices are, in some fashion, continuous with the natural world.

Although there is nothing that approaches an orthodox description or even history of what can rightfully be gathered under the heading “naturalism,” any attempt at its characterization must be able to define its central concept: the natural. Answering this demand is, of course, no simple task. Notions such as truth, the mental, the ethical and the like have always been fundamental to human practices, but it remains unclear as to how, exactly, they might be fitted to a discourse that only makes reference to the “natural” world. Typically, attempts to do so have been modeled after the natural sciences, the idea being that scientific investigation discloses a world that is not dependent upon any supernatural elements or principles, and given its successes, appears to be a promising standard for any inquiry. Thus, a naturalist account following these lines grants a certain preeminence to the world as science reveals it; the cultural, the intentional and the normative are appropriate subjects of discussion only insofar as they are able to show themselves as proper objects of this scientific investigation. This line of thought is perhaps best exemplified in the work of W.V.O. Quine, Wilfrid Sellars, Jaegwon Kim and Daniel Dennett.

This form of naturalism has its roots in a long-standing traditional view of the relationship between nature and human practices. Consider, as representative of this

view, William James' 1912 essay, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in which he describes a trip to rural North Carolina:

Some years ago, while journeying in the mountains of North Carolina, I passed by a large number of 'coves,' as they call them there, or heads of small valleys between the hills, which had been newly cleared and planted. The impression on my mind was one of unmitigated squalor. The settler had in every case cut down the more manageable trees, and left their charred stumps standing. The larger trees he had girdled and killed, in order that their foliage should not cast a shade. He had then built a log cabin, plastering its chinks with clay, and had set up a tall zigzag rail fence around the scene of his havoc, to keep the pigs and cattle out. Finally, he had irregularly planted the intervals between the stumps and trees with Indian corn, which grew among the chips; and there he dwelt with his wife and babes — an axe, a gun, a few utensils, and some pigs and chickens feeding in the woods, being the sum total of his possessions.⁴

It is clear in this passage that James takes a dim view of the "cultivation" he sees on the squatter's farm, a sentiment which follows from his understanding of the value of nature. James betrays his prejudices, likely influenced by the American Transcendentalist tradition, a romantic view in which nature is best left "natural," and valued as a source of sublime beauty or carefully and artistically molded into a New Englander's pastoral vision. James continues his account through an aesthetically-oriented discussion of the use of nature and the value of culture, desecrating the work of the farmer as a sort of devolution:

The forest had been destroyed; and what had 'improved' it out of existence was hideous, a sort of ulcer, without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature's beauty. Ugly, indeed, seemed the life of the squatter, scudding, as the sailors say, under bare poles, beginning again away back where our first ancestors started, and by hardly a single item the better off for all the achievements of the intervening generations.

⁴ William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings," in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912), 231-2.

Talk about going back to nature! I said to myself, oppressed by the dreariness, as I drove by. Talk of a country life for one's old age and for one's children! Never thus, with nothing but the bare ground and one's bare hands to fight the battle! Never, without the best spoils of culture woven in! The beauties and commodities gained by the centuries are sacred. They are our heritage and birthright. No modern person ought to be willing to live a day in such a state of rudimentariness and denudation.⁵

The crux of the story and the moral which James wishes to express in the piece comes immediately after this diatribe:

Then I said to the mountaineer who was driving me, "What sort of people are they who have to make these new clearings ? " " All of us," he replied. "Why, we ain't happy here, unless we are getting one of these coves under cultivation." I instantly felt that I had been losing the whole inward significance of the situation. Because to me the clearings spoke of naught but denudation, I thought that to those whose sturdy arms and obedient axes had made them they could tell no other story. But, when *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they thought of was personal victory. The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very paean of duty, struggle, and success. I had been as blind to the peculiar ideality of their conditions as they certainly would also have been to the ideality of mine, had they had a peep at my strange indoor academic ways of life at Cambridge.⁶

James is here endorsing a sort of pluralism in aesthetic and ethical discourse, the lesson being that the ideals pursued by actual persons are contingent upon disparate cultures and perspectives and that we would do well to recognize this fact and so overcome "a certain blindness" which afflicts all peoples. More important for our purposes, however, is the conception of nature he employs, which is evident both in his initial, unreflective judgment of the farm as well as the position expressed by his guide.

⁵ Ibid., 232-3.

⁶ Ibid., 233-4.

On this view, nature is that which is wholly independent of human influence or cultural, and the latter are seen as artificial productions; James mourns the loss of nature's beauty “without a single element of *artificial* grace to make up” for it.⁷

This view informs one variety of naturalism, indicative of a dominant intuition behind responses to the question, “what is the natural?” Traditional accounts—in the form of both reductive scientisms such as those explored by Richard Rorty, Daniel Dennett, and Richard Dawkins, as well as current “preservationist movements”—see the question as based upon the dichotomy between the natural and the artificial. On this account, the natural world is decidedly materialistic; it is characterized by being relatively fixed, law-like and is that which is completely devoid of human or cultural influence. As such, human cultures, practices, norms and the like are artificial constructs that are best explained away if science is to progress. We can follow John McDowell (who, in turn, borrows from Max Weber) and refer to this as a “disenchanted” picture of nature.

There is, however, a competing species of naturalism, one that takes those elements which are the source of artificiality according to the first naturalism to be themselves parts of a “re-enchanted” nature. This understanding replaces the contrast term “artificial” with the notion of “artificiality,” a concept meant to show the continuity between the natural and the cultural worlds. This line of thought, advocated by Joseph Margolis, John McDowell and the classical pragmatists, takes the primary concern of philosophical naturalism to be the analysis of the human person.⁸ I follow these thinkers and argue that the dominant trend in philosophical naturalism either

⁷ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁸ See, especially, Joseph Margolis, *The Arts and the Definition of the Human: Toward a Philosophical Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

neglects or underestimates the importance of an ample and nuanced model of selfhood, one that captures not only the biological, but also the cultural features of human persons. What is needed is an account that shows how culture and human selves are natural.

My project is, first, an articulation of such an account that focuses on one aspect of what it means to be a human person that has enormous significance for all areas of philosophical inquiry and which has a rich, if often overlooked, philosophical and theological history. This is the inherent finitude or ignorance which characterizes human knowledge and practice, what the father of American Pragmatism, C. S. Peirce, referred to as “fallibilism.” Peirce’s notion of fallibilism, which today remains perhaps his greatest legacy, tempers philosophical discussions of universal concepts such as truth and “the good” by way of considerations of scope and context, forcing such abstractions to find their place within the practical environments of actual lived existence. The principal case in which such ideals function is Peirce’s characterization of truth in the terms of infinite inquiry and the strong fallibilism which follows from it. Peirce famously offers a definition of truth as that which an infinite community of inquirers, over the course of an infinite inquiry, is fated to believe. However, while the definition of truth that Peirce offers is cast in ideal terms, the characterization of truth that is most often operative in his philosophy is qualified by his notion of fallibilism. Peirce arrives at this point through his emphasis on the finite and fallible characteristics of the human individual. For Peirce, then, the theory of the self and the theory of truth are inseparable; he is led to a discussion of selfhood through his account of truth and knowledge. In this, he offers a promising way to “naturalize” culture and “re-enchant” nature, thus eliminating the gap between “mind and the world,” both principal goals in the development of a naturalist idiom as well as in determining the future course of American philosophy.

“Subject-Naturalism”: Selfhood and Philosophical Naturalism

The nature and importance of the individual self has been a perennial obstacle faced by all attempts at naturalism. The self, like aesthetic and religious objects, seems to defy reduction; as such, any workable naturalism must be able to adequately handle its intentional and cultural significance. Moreover, as Huw Price has argued, a naturalist characterization of the self and its function in inquiry is a necessary preliminary to the construction of a naturalist model of the objects of inquiry. Price roughly characterizes naturalism as the view that “natural science constrains philosophy,” i.e. that the two disciplines cannot be separated and that “philosophy properly defers to science.”⁹ While this account may prove to be too limited (whether it is or not depends upon how broad a definition is granted to “science”), it does lead Price to an illuminating and fruitful distinction. Price distinguishes between a commonly held popular version of naturalism, which he takes to dominate current discussions of the issue, from a more fundamental and conceptually prior naturalism that avoids many of the objections raised by idealist or “anti-naturalist” theorists.

The more common form of naturalism, according to Price, involves the position that reality consists solely of that which is the proper object of scientific investigation, and that “all genuine knowledge is scientific knowledge.”¹⁰ Due to its focus on the object of study and knowledge, Price labels this view “object naturalism.” He contrasts this with what he terms “subject naturalism.” This lesser-known version of naturalism takes as its primary focus the nature of human beings, that is, it begins “with what science tells us

⁹ Huw Price, “Naturalism Without Representationalism,” in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. David Macarthur and Mario de Caro (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

about ourselves.”¹¹ Far from being just one among the set of all objects studied by science, Price argues, the human subject and its self-reflective relation to itself is a concern that inevitably precedes inquiry into the rest of the world. This is so, according to Price, because the position entailed by object naturalism must be “validated” from the position of subject naturalism; the problems addressed from the object naturalist perspective are, he argues, the products of the workings of human linguistic usage. The subject naturalist account begins with the view that language introduces the metaphysical and epistemological issues that object naturalism seeks to resolve; thus, any account that object naturalism might seek to give must answer to the self-reflective concerns from which such problems originate. We need not follow Price in taking deficiencies or limitations of language to be solely responsible for our philosophical problems (as Wittgenstein and Nietzsche have sometimes been read as saying). However, his point regarding the dependence of a naturalist idiom on the understanding of what it is to be a human person (and the importance of language to this relation) is well-taken.

As Darwin himself remarked in the concluding remarks to his *On the Origin of Species*, the “greatest difficulty which presents itself, when we are driven to the above conclusion on the origin of man [the theory of natural selection], is the high standard of intellectual power and of moral disposition which he has attained.”¹² Put in other words, we can say that Darwin is here remarking on the fact that the central problem that faces any attempt at a naturalized model of the human self is how to account for an agent’s acting on the basis of reasons. A model of the self which takes it to be just another object in “nature” cannot account for an agent acting on reasons as *reasons*, but rather sees such

¹¹ Ibid., 4, emphasis in the original.

¹² Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 390.

as the mechanical operation of natural forces; “ought,” under such an account is reduced to “is” and causal determinism threatens our intuitive distinctions regarding our own nature as persons. John McDowell offers a similar argument in his critique of any philosophical strategy that makes recourse to “the Given”:

But it is one thing to be exempt from blame on the ground that the position we find ourselves in can be traced ultimately to brute force, it is quite another thing to have a justification. In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications¹³

The aim of the non-reductive naturalist, then, is to account for how human persons find themselves “already in the space of reasons” (McDowell’s phrase, borrowed from Sellars), but in a manner that still allows for the constraint of such reasons by reality.

Reuniting Mind and World: John McDowell’s “Second nature”

In his provocative collection of lectures, *Mind and World*, McDowell sets himself the daunting task of revising the core intuitions behind the dominant epistemological accounts in the philosophical tradition. He sees this project as an attempt to “reconcile reason and nature” by “looking for a conception of our nature that includes a capacity to resonate to the structure of the space of reasons.”¹⁴ For McDowell, traditional accounts of nature, or “the realm of law,” characterize it as the domain of causal connections in which meaning and purpose have no place. The space of reasons, on the other hand, is the setting of Kantian “spontaneity,” the human subject’s freedom and relation to categories

¹³ John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 86, 109.

of meaning and normativity. McDowell aims to show how these two domains can be reconciled without reducing one to the other.

Reductive strategies, which McDowell classifies as either endorsing a “bald naturalism” or a “coherentism,” have led philosophical discussion to an unproductive oscillation, the poles of which are each incapable of adequately accounting for the intuitions central to the other. That is, within such oscillation, we are either left with an account of the world that does not allow for the *sui generis* character of the space of reasons (“bald naturalism”), or we are adrift in a “frictionless spinning in the void” in which our reasons are not answerable to anything “outside,” viz., reality (“coherentism”). McDowell wants to end this oscillation and “dismount the seesaw,” by introducing what he calls a “minimal empiricism.” His recasting of the relationship between reason and nature turns upon an alternative understanding of experience, one by which experience possesses conceptual content; as such, experience of the world is continuous with the space of reasons. McDowell’s insight, and a significant source of both his popularity and controversy, is the recognition that bridging the gap between reason and nature, or the space of reasons and the realm of law, requires an adapted characterization of the nature of the inquiring subject.

Faced with the “anxiety” that pervades philosophical accounts of our relationship to the world, McDowell claims that:

We can return to sanity if can recapture the Aristotelian idea that a normal mature human being is a rational animal, with its rationality part of its animal, and so natural, being, not a mysterious foothold in another realm. The way to do that is to realize that our nature is largely second nature.¹⁵

¹⁵ Ibid., 91.

McDowell takes this notion of “second nature” to be exemplified in Aristotle’s discussion of *phronesis*, or “practical wisdom.” Practical wisdom, McDowell says, is acquired by an individual in the form of ethical character. This ethical character introduces the subject into the space of reasons, specifically in terms of normativity. By becoming part of this domain, the subject acquires a “second nature” over and above its first nature as an animal within the realm of law. Second nature is, for McDowell, not something supernatural that is added to our mere animal being, but is, rather, the actualization of certain potentialities inherent to our animal nature. This is true even of our ability to act free from constraint, what medieval philosophy and Kant referred to as “spontaneity”: “[e]xercises of spontaneity belong to our mode of living. And our mode of living is our way of actualizing ourselves as animals...exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals.”¹⁶

Ethical demands are a “going concern”: they exist whether or not an individual chooses to recognize them, and into which the individual is initiated rather than constructs. This, McDowell believes, should be the same way in which the normativity of the space of reasons (the correctness or incorrectness of judgments) is to be understood:

So ‘practical wisdom’ is the right sort of thing to serve as a model for the understanding, the faculty that enables us to recognize and create the kind of intelligibility that is a matter of placement in the space of reasons.¹⁷

McDowell’s full account of second nature, then, involves the extension of Aristotle’s ethical model, taking it to be just one instance among many that compose the space of reasons. This leads McDowell to employ a concept borrowed from the German tradition, particularly Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Bildung*.

¹⁶ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷ Ibid., 79.

If we generalize the way Aristotle conceives the moulding of ethical character, we arrive at the notion of having one's eyes opened to reasons at large by acquiring a second nature. I cannot think of a good short English expression for this, but it is what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*.¹⁸

Bildung, McDowell claims, can be seen as a natural process that does not imply an ontological gap between reason and nature. That is, the "bare idea of *Bildung* ensures that the autonomy of meaning is not inhuman."¹⁹ Thus, in characterizing the human subject as a product of *Bildung*, McDowell is able to close the gap between the world and our knowledge of it.

McDowell and his Critics: The Insufficiency of the "Bare Idea of *Bildung*"

McDowell's invocation of *Bildung* and his corresponding Gadamerian line of thought, however, has become a focal point for much of the criticism of his account, both from thinkers working out of an analytic tradition as well as those who are more continental in their perspective. Richard J. Bernstein, for one, has called McDowell's recharacterization of nature "sketchy" and "filled with promissory notes."²⁰ Moreover, although Gadamer himself is mentioned only a few times in the exposition of *Mind and World*, he figures prominently in McDowell's defense against his critics. In responding to J.M. Bernstein's objection that his apparent failure to historicize his position is inconsistent with other parts of his account, McDowell says, "I do not elaborate the historicizing implications of my Gadamerian insistence that initiation into the space of

¹⁸ Ibid., 84.

¹⁹ Ibid., 95

²⁰ Richard J. Bernstein, "McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism," in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. Nicholas H. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 17.

reasons is initiation into tradition, but they are certainly there.”²¹ Although McDowell agrees with Bernstein’s characterization of his own take on the space of reasons, he does not see this as leading to the conclusion Bernstein himself reaches. McDowell claims that his employment of Gadamer prevents any objection of the sort that Bernstein voices:

In his conclusion, Bernstein notes, correctly, that I take the space of reasons to be ‘there for appreciating and refining once we have been induced into it.’ He says this ‘ignores the way in which practices shape contents.’ I do not ignore the way in which practices shape contents; the Gadamerian strand in my thinking is precisely an insistence on it.²²

In a reply to similar objections raised by Rüdiger Bubner, McDowell seems to characterize this Gadamerian strand as at least partially instantiated in his employment of *Bildung*. Thus, in response to Bubner’s claim that in discussing second nature we “consciously step back behind the level of reflection of modern *Bildung*,” he says, “talk of second nature can invoke everything implied by the modern concept of *Bildung*, including what permits us to value distinctive personality—an idea that makes sense only against the background of cultural formation.”²³

The central point of this line of objection is that McDowell’s notion of “second-nature,” which he takes to capture Gadamerian *Bildung*, is too thin to serve the task to which he puts it; a richer account of “the background of cultural formation” is needed to avoid a dualism between the intentional and the natural. McDowell provides a key insight in arguing that such an account is only enabled by a recharacterization of the human self. However, his favored model of two “natures” based on Aristotelian and Kantian (with a

²¹ John McDowell, “Responses” in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. Nicholas H. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 298.

²² Ibid. 300.

²³ Ibid., 296.

nod to Hegel) models is insufficient. In short, these objections contend that McDowell does not grasp the full import of Gadamer's hermeneutics, particularly with respect to the latter's ontological commitments regarding the nature of the self.

The controversy over McDowell's use of *Bildung* indicates that while he is correct in emphasizing the importance of the inquiring subject to the construction of a naturalist epistemology, he errs by employing a model of subjectivity that elides a great deal. Despite his use of Gadamer and Hegel, the picture of selfhood that he presents is almost exclusively Aristotelian and Kantian, and it is simply not clear that such a model can support the Gadamerian and Hegelian structures that McDowell introduces into his own account; notions such as *Bildung* rely upon a characterization of selfhood that goes beyond Kantian subjectivity. It is hard to see, then, how McDowell can employ them without also adopting the models of selfhood they implicate. Thus it seems that McDowell cannot use Gadamer in the way that he does without further explanation; the materials for the defense of his system are available, however he must make actual use of them, and this must take a form other than the "bare idea of *Bildung*."

The problem here is really one of the *nature* (or "second nature") of the human self. McDowell's model seems ill-equipped, ultimately, to deal with the thorny dilemmas that characterize much of the history of philosophy. One of the most common objections raised against his position is that it is unable to adequately handle the "pre-conceptual" abilities of animals and human infants. According to McDowell, the exercise of conceptual capacities is what accounts for our second nature, and thus differentiates humans from animals. However, it seems clear that our conceptual capacities so understood emerge from and are continuous with proto-forms of such capacities which are found in the (non-human) animal world. Peirce's account, I argue, particularly with respect to his doctrine of continuity and evolutionary framework, solves the problem of

humans, infants and animals that McDowell faces. (The details of this account are treated further in Chapters 4, 5 and 7.)

Consequently, I offer the suggestion that a more promising line for McDowell's purposes might be found by turning to Peirce's pragmatist philosophy. The central questions surrounding the naturalism debate as I have presented it were already the central concerns of Peirce, writing a century earlier. This affinity has already been remarked by Bernstein, but a full comparison which analyzes the differences between the two has yet to be undertaken.²⁴ Famously, Peirce's chief problem, to which he devoted the majority of his career, was between realism and nominalism. His answer, I believe, not only eliminates the gap between mind and nature, but does so in a way that captures the intuitions behind the criticism of McDowell's model. Many have claimed, as McDowell does, that spontaneity is already involved in receptivity, that experience is conceptual "all the way down," but few have shown in any convincing way, *how* this is so. This is why I advocate a turn to Peirce's pragmatism; his metaphysical speculation, eschewed by later pragmatists and at least partially responsible for his marginalization among most currents within Anglophone philosophy, provide the framework and tools or answering this "how" question and support for his claim that both spontaneity and law "exist in nature."²⁵

²⁴ Bernstein, "McDowell's Domesticated Hegelianism," 19.

²⁵ I reference Peirce's unpublished manuscripts by number according to Richard S. Robin's *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967). The quoted reference is from S954 The noted reference is from MS 954.

Peirce's Prescience: The Case for "Pragmatistic" Naturalism

Already in the late nineteenth century, Peirce saw that the progress of science had been hobbled by a stubborn insistence on reductionism and a mechanistic picture of the universe. What the scientific outlook needed, he argued, was a fresh perspective on the perennial question of how mind is related to matter. (That he was aware of the perennial nature of this question is seen in his framing of the question in the context of Presocratic thought.) In our contemporary idiom, we might characterize Peirce's project, especially in his 1890s *Monist* series, as both an attempt to free discussions of mind and culture from dualistic contexts as well as to extend the traditional scientific outlook to include non-mechanistic processes and irreducibly Intentional objects. Peirce accomplishes this by way of a model of mind and thought that is informed by the great scientific advance of his day, viz. evolution. Peirce's Darwinized philosophy is not a case for the argument that science gets nature wrong, but that we commonly misunderstand science itself.

Peirce's account is novel, heterodox and bold. He agrees with those who would take a reductionist approach to such questions in holding that "to explain a thing is to show how it may have resulted from something else," but he departs from such strategies in allowing that such explanation does not always result in a reduction of the explanandum to the explanans.²⁶ Reasons, for Peirce, are habits: they have a normative force insofar as there is no "live" doubt which causes us to distrust them. However, Peirce likewise characterizes the mechanical processes of the physical world as the operation of habit:

[I]f matter has no existence except as a specialization of mind, it follows that whatever affects matter according to regular laws is itself matter. But all mind is directly or indirectly connected with all matter, and acts in a

²⁶

Ibid.

more or less regular way; so that all mind more or less partakes of the nature of matter. Hence, it would be a mistake to conceive of the psychical and the physical aspects of matter as two aspects absolutely distinct. Viewing a thing from the outside, considering its relations of action and reaction with other things, it appears as matter. Viewing it from the inside, looking at its immediate character as feeling, it appears as consciousness.²⁷

There is, then, no disjunction between the “space of reasons” and the “realm of law,” or mind and matter, because habit is a feature exhibited by both:

[I]t is clear that nothing but a principle of habit, itself due to the growth by habit of an infinitesimal chance tendency toward habit-taking, is the only bridge that can span the chasm between the chance-medley of chaos and the cosmos of order and law.²⁸

For Peirce, thought is not restricted to human thought, and mind is something that pervades all of reality. This doctrine of continuity between mind and matter, part of what Peirce calls “synechism,” is the “metaphysical underpinning” which distinguishes his pragmatism, particularly his doctrine of fallibilism, from the pragmatisms of James, Dewey and the twentieth-century philosophies that follow.

But is Peirce’s pragmatism really equipped with a model of selfhood that is sufficient to answer the epistemological and metaphysical demands identified by McDowell? In his book, *Praxis and Action*, Bernstein criticizes Peirce on precisely this point, claiming that while Peirce’s philosophy significantly depends on an implicit model of selfhood, he does not provide an explicit account of what the self is.

What Peirce’s analysis demands at this point is a coherent theory of the self which would make sense of the idea of “self-control.” After all, what is it that exercises the control and is capable of reasonably adopting an ultimate end? Wherein are we to find the identity, unity and continuity of individual selves? Peirce does not really answer these questions with the

²⁷ CP 6.268.

²⁸ CP 6.262

same incisiveness that we find in other regions of his philosophy. Despite many important hints, Peirce has failed to work out an adequate theory of the self. Indeed, I believe that this was not only his failure, but the failure of the entire pragmatic movement.²⁹

Pace Bernstein, I argue that Peirce does offer a model of selfhood, even if it isn't as explicit as it could be. In its mature form, this is a model that draws upon his semiotics and metaphysics, but the core of it is to be found in his doctrine of fallibilism.

Ultimately, Peirce offers a naturalized model of the human person which is based on his semiotics and which is communal in nature. The self is a sign that emerges within an interpretive community and which manifests itself as an individual primarily through his or her fallibility. As such, the self is a cultural artifact, but Peirce's synechism and evolutionary cosmology make its development a natural process continuous with those processes studied by natural sciences. As a scientist, he was committed to naturalism but not reductionism; his account, therefore, embraces the work of culture and the importance of cultural idioms which are often left out of modern naturalist projects.

While I believe that there is a promising model of selfhood that informs Peirce's entire philosophy, I agree with Bernstein that this is not as fully developed as Peirce's own thought seems to require; despite its importance to his philosophical system, Peirce's explicit treatment of selfhood is notably unfocused. However, I disagree with Bernstein's claim that the formulation of an "adequate theory of the self" is a point of failure on the part of the entire (classical) pragmatic movement. There was at least one other classical pragmatist who was deeply influenced by Peirce's philosophy and who extended its development into detailed discussions of selfhood and community. The figure I have in mind is Josiah Royce.

²⁹ Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action: Contemporary Philosophies of Human Activity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 197.

Royce remains largely overlooked in current studies of classical American pragmatism, but this wasn't the case in his own time. Royce was not only one of the leading American (Hegelian) metaphysicians at the turn of the last century, but also the thinker whom Peirce felt was closest to his own "pragmaticism." In a 1902 letter to Christine Ladd-Franklin, Peirce says that "Royce's opinions developed in his 'World and the Individual' are extremely near to mine. His insistence on the element of purpose in intellectual concepts is essentially the pragmatistic position."³⁰ Between 1902 and 1903, Peirce and Royce renew a correspondence that would last until Peirce's death in 1914. Throughout this period, each thinker exercises a profound influence on the other; Peirce guides Royce to a study of logic and Royce inspires Peirce to more carefully examine the philosophy of Hegel.

Royce's knowledge of Hegel is of particular importance to the current project. As was shown above, McDowell's naturalism is most vulnerable in those areas where he appropriates the work of Hegel and Gadamer. These criticisms are enabled to a great extent by fundamental divisions in the reception and characterization of Hegel.

Perhaps more so than any other figure, at least since Descartes, Hegel marks a watershed in the development of western philosophy. The question of what, precisely, was the point he brought against Kant, and what that means for the future direction of philosophy, continues to reverberate and mark fracture points in the larger tradition that follows in his wake. Many of the leading trends in continental philosophy, notably those arising from Marxist and Existentialist traditions, directly arise from Hegel's emendation of Kantian transcendentalism; likewise, Hegel stands at the center of the Anglo-Analytic

³⁰ Charles Peirce, letter to Christine Ladd-Franklin, November 27, 1902, printed in Christine Ladd-Franklin, "Charles S. Peirce at the Johns Hopkins," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (1916): 715-722.

tradition, negatively and at its inception, as cynosure for the sort of philosophy that Russell and the logical positivists rejected.³¹ The viability of maintaining this negative influence is, however, increasingly being questioned, notably in the rise of what is sometimes referred to as “post-analytic” philosophy. Terry Pinkard, Robert Pippin and others have successfully reintroduced Hegel to an American Audience, largely by way of a focus on Hegel’s systematic philosophy and a domestication of his metaphysical excesses. Others, notably Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre, have incorporated Hegelian themes into their respective treatments of mainstream analytic problems. In a slightly different vein, “Pittsburgh Hegelians,” Robert Brandom and McDowell himself, have signaled their affinities with Hegel and each has produced texts intended to parallel or serve as propaedeutics to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Effectively, this has produced several “Hegels” within the philosophical tradition; the “Hegel” that Pippin and Pinkard have reintroduced into American philosophy seems to have little in common with the “Hegels” that informed, for example, Gadamer’s hermeneutics and Sartre’s existentialism. Seen in this light, Hegel becomes something like Abraham, the patriarch to which three of the most prominent religious traditions look

³¹ Peter Hylton, in an article in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, presents a slightly different version of this story, claiming that, at least at its inception, viz. in the work of Russell and Whitehead, analytic philosophy is best described as a rejection of *Kantian* idealism as seen *through* the lens of Hegel’s own critique, and only secondarily concerned with rejection of Hegelian idealism (“Hegel and Analytic Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, edited by Frederick C. Beiser, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 445-486. Whether or not one accepts Hylton’s account, it remains clear that how one characterizes the course of analytic philosophy depends, largely, on just what, exactly, one takes Hegel’s critique of Kant to be. Moreover, in light of the increasing dissatisfaction with, and potential failure of, the Analytic project, the subsequent turn to Hegel as a promising “new” direction, and the increased interest in reconciling or bridging Anglophone and Eurocentric philosophical trends, securing a more-or-less common account of Hegelianism is a preeminent concern for the next stage in western philosophy.

to as a principal figure and progenitor, but who simultaneously remains the principal locus of their partisan disagreement.

Royce was well aware of this parting of the ways in terms of Hegel scholarship.³² Unlike the figures glossed above, Royce's mature philosophy indicates a deep knowledge of several "sides" of Hegel. As such, his work offers a promising route for the incorporation of Hegelian themes in American philosophy which McDowell and others advocate, that does not fall prey to the objections raised by more continentally-oriented Hegelians such as Taylor.

Moreover, Royce's later philosophy provides a framework for overcoming the deficiency in Peirce's pragmatism identified by Bernstein, viz. that it lacks a developed model of selfhood. In response to his correspondence with Peirce, Royce moves directly to the central notions of his mature philosophy, Loyalty and Community, and he explicitly credits Peirce's logic of relations in his development of these concepts. Loyalty is, for Royce, the means by which individual selves are connected with communities and moral concerns. For Royce, loyalty is first and foremost to an individual community; his ethical account gives pride of place to local culture. However his development of this concept comes to include loyalty to loyalty itself, thus making an individual's loyalty to a particular community continuous with a loyalty to a global community. Moreover, his account of community picks up on Peirce's semiotic theory of interpretation, and connects his account of the individual with his metaphysical and epistemological concerns. We can therefore read the theory of selfhood Royce develops at this time as

³² For a detailed discussion of Royce's response to this, see John J. Kaag, "American Interpretations of Hegel: Josiah Royce's Philosophy of Loyalty" in *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 26, no.1 (January 2009).

providing the crucial element that Peirce's philosophical system requires but does not explicitly provide. Pursuing this intuition is one of the principal tasks of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

THE FUTURE OF FALLIBILISM

“We must all be pragmatists, but pragmatists in the end, not in the beginning”

C.I. Lewis³³

Pragmatism's Revival

Perhaps resulting from what many see as the “failure” of analytic philosophy, pragmatism has enjoyed a resurgence since the closing decades of the twentieth century. Prominent figures such as Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty and Cornell West have succeeded in bringing the work of the classical pragmatists to the forefront of mainstream philosophical discussions.³⁴ Of particular note are those who look to pragmatism for fresh insight regarding the central problems of contemporary, “post-analytic,” Anglophone philosophy. The most prominent of these problems, I would say, is the possibility of a naturalist idiom that adequately handles both the biological and broadly cultural features of human persons and practices in a manner that is free of the reductivism—famously identified by W. V. O. Quine as one of the “dogmas” of empiricism—which informs accounts such as those given by Daniel Dennett, Paul Churchland and Jaegwon Kim

³³ C.I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, (New York: Dover, 1956), 267.

³⁴ Unfortunately, this has often resulted in a division within pragmatist studies. There have always been able philosophers working in and on the pragmatist tradition, but their careful scholarship is often left out of the “mainstream” discussion I am examining here.

(despite Kim's "dualist" tendencies and his recent admission of an epiphenomenal mind).³⁵

In this, the revival of pragmatism can be seen as an attempt to complete a project analogous to that which John McDowell sets himself, namely, the reconciliation of "mind" and "world."³⁶

The various pragmatist-inspired accounts offered in this context are diverse—Putnam and Rorty famously diverge on key points such as the possibility and nature of objectivity, and Peter Godfrey-Smith's pairing of McDowell and Dewey takes a form closer to traditional analytic philosophy than either—but all seem to share a common feature: the model of pragmatism such accounts favor more closely resembles the work of John Dewey than any of the other classical pragmatists; the "father of American Pragmatism," C.S. Peirce is either ignored or rejected by such accounts.

Rorty is unabashedly forthcoming in his preference for Dewey over Peirce, claiming that, "whether or not Dewey is the most useful of the three classical pragmatists, Peirce seems to me the least useful."³⁷ Likewise, Putnam argues that Dewey is the

³⁵ For Quine's argument, see: W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951). For the standard forms of reductivism I have in mind see: Daniel Dennet, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1991); Paul Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986); Jaegwon Kim, *Physicalism, Or Something Near Enough*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

³⁶ This is, in fact, one of Peter Godfrey-Smith's recent projects, and he sees a fruitful link between McDowell and John Dewey.

³⁷ Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism as Anti-authoritarianism," in *A Companion to Pragmatism*, ed. John Shook and Joseph Margolis (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 260. I will leave aside, for now, an analysis of Rorty's reasons for dismissing Peirce in this fashion. He has in mind, primarily, a failure on Peirce's part to reconcile religion and science, which Rorty takes to be one of the primary objectives of classical pragmatism and which he thinks James and Dewey are much better equipped to handle. This charge, I would say, is easily refuted both in Peirce's own work as well as in several scholarly discussions of it.

principal figure we should look to in bringing about the “enlightenment” necessary for philosophy to move on:

we need a “third enlightenment,” one whose conception of knowledge is much more fallibilistic than that of the seventeenth and eighteenth century—fallibilistic and antimetaphysical, but without lapsing into skepticism. I described Dewey as, in many ways, the philosopher who points us in the direction we need for such a third enlightenment.³⁸

The argument I wish to make here is two-fold: first, that the favoring of Dewey over Peirce in this context is often motivated, or at least bolstered, by a characteristic misreading of Peirce’s philosophy, specifically his theory of truth; and, second, that the corrected Peircean model is actually more suited to the project these “Deweyans” are engaged in than their own “Deweyan” account. I will begin by addressing the misreading of Peirce, taking as its primary example Putnam’s recent work on ethics. I will then trace what I take to be the principal difference between the Deweyan model and Peirce’s own with respect to the doctrine of fallibilism which is the central theme of the revived pragmatism that Putnam offers. Finally, I show that this difference, a “metaphysical underpinning” that is present in Peirce’s fallibilism but not in Dewey’s, makes Peirce’s account much more suited to current philosophical concerns, notably the project of philosophical naturalism.

Putnam has the Wrong Theory of Peircean Truth

One of the principal objectives of Putnam’s most recent work is the “detailed rebuttal of the view that ‘fact is fact and value is value and never the twain shall meet.’”³⁹

³⁸ Hilary Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 110.

³⁹ Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), viii.

According to Putnam, such a rebuttal involves the dual-realization that science is not, as it is often characterized, merely concerned with a reality comprised of wholly objective facts which exist in isolation from valuations, and that values are not, as they are often taken to be, wholly subjective and personally or socially relative evaluations which are not determined by objective fact. Such a realization relies on overcoming a deep-rooted assumption regarding the respective natures of scientific facts and ethical values, namely, that consensus can be reached regarding the former but not the latter.

Some philosophers have suggested that the persistence of disagreement is, indeed, reason to think that there is no truth or justification to be found in ethics...And often they support this suggestion by painting a rosy picture of factual disagreement, in which all factual disagreements are said to be such that we can “converge” on a right answer, such that we can reach a consensus...But—and this is the point I want to emphasize—it isn’t just that *ethical* disagreements aren’t like that, *practical* disagreements *in general* aren’t like that, even when they are not ethical, or not obviously ethical.⁴⁰

Putnam associates this “convergence” model of scientific inquiry with Peirce’s theory of truth and this, I take it, is what leads Putnam to favor an “antimetaphysical,” Deweyan-styled pragmatism over Peirce’s own. Not only does such a convergence model underwrite a (false) dichotomy between facts and values, but it is itself in error about the very nature of scientific fact:

it is assumed...that questions of fact are, by their very nature, such that we can come to agreement about them (and perhaps such that we even *tend to* come into agreement about them). This idea was, famously, made the centerpiece of C. S. Peirce’s version of pragmatism. This idea is, I think, quite unwarranted, as is the idea that all ethical questions are, by their very nature, controversial.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology*, 30.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

I think that Putnam's misreading of Peirce begins with this gloss of Peirce's theory of truth. Peirce does, indeed, characterize truth as that which would be agreed upon by the totality of the community of inquirers at the end of infinite inquiry but such convergence is not of the sort that would lead to the fact/value dichotomy that Putnam is discussing. This is because Peirce takes a much different view of the "facts" that would enable (or possibly even demand) agreement over time under Putnam's account of convergence theories. To see how this is so, however, requires a deeper analysis both of Peircean inquiry as well as Putnam's reading of it.

Putnam explicitly treats Peirce's theory of truth in a section of *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy* with the frank title "Apel and Peirce have a Wrong Theory of Truth." There, he identifies the Peircean model as a version of "anti-realism," by which he means an account under which "it is metaphysically impossible for there to be any truths that are not verifiable by human beings."⁴² To clarify and support this characterization, Putnam turns to a set of arguments that have regularly been brought against Peirce's theory of truth.

In calling Peirce's model of truth "anti-realist," Putnam is explicitly ascribing to it the metaphysical claim that there are no truths that human inquiry can not verify. This is especially problematic, his argument goes, with respect to what have been referred to as "lost facts." These would include cases such as the number of leaves on all the plants in the hanging gardens of Babylon, or facts about the life of Abraham; that is, facts about which it seems no amount of future inquiry will ever lead to consensus or verification. The convergence theory Putnam finds in Peirce's account would mean that such unverifiable facts or truths couldn't count as truths at all, and this, Putnam says, is reason enough to dismiss the theory.

⁴² Putnam, *The Collapse*, 123.

It is...part of both science and common sense, and deeply embedded in the world views of both science and common sense, that it is a wholly contingent question whether every truth could, even “in principle,” be learned by beings such as ourselves, and it is deeply embedded in the theories of present-day science that for a number of reasons the answer to that question is that, as a matter of contingent empirical fact, there are *many* truths that are beyond the power of our species to ascertain.⁴³

Putnam is, however, in error in taking Peirce’s theory of truth to be committed to the metaphysical claim of anti-realism. In pointing to such lost facts and the “destruction of information” that would make a complete convergence or verification impossible, Putnam misconstrues the nature of the truth that Peirce locates at the end of infinite inquiry.

Peirce’s Evolutionary Metaphysics and Truth

Early in his career, Peirce famously offers a definition of truth as that which an infinite community of inquirers, over the course of an infinite inquiry, is fated to believe. As no stretch of finite inquiry could ever arrive at such an opinion, this definition effectively removes truth from the actual practice of inquiry. However, truth remains, even for Peirce himself, the goal of scientific inquiry. Peirce is in need, then, of a means by which to connect the ideal truth found at the end of infinite inquiry with the actual practice of inquiry in finite time which makes such truth its objective. We can, I believe, read much of Peirce’s later work as an attempt to produce just such an account. Moreover, the model he develops in his more mature philosophy avoids the criticism Putnam voices.

In a series of papers written for the *Monist* in early 1890s, Peirce presents a metaphysical account of the evolution of what he calls “Mind.” In that discussion he focuses on his principal notions of habit and growth. Drawing upon his earlier, more

⁴³ Ibid., 124.

epistemologically-focused theory of inquiry, Peirce develops his account of belief (inspired by the psychologist Alexander Bain) as habit. In those earlier papers (in which the definition of truth at the end of infinite inquiry first appears) Peirce claimed that belief was a disposition to act in certain ways in certain situations, a disposition which Peirce identifies as a habit. “Our beliefs guide our desires and shape our actions,” he says, and the “feeling of believing is a more or less sure indication of there being established in our nature some habit which will determine our actions”⁴⁴ In the *Monist* papers, nearly fifteen years later, Peirce extends the operation of habit to the level of the physical world and matter itself. Peirce argues that,

it would be a mistake to conceive of the psychical and the physical aspects of matter as two aspects absolutely distinct. Viewing a thing from the outside, considering its relations of action and reaction with other things, it appears as matter. Viewing it from the inside, looking at its immediate character as feeling, it appears as consciousness.⁴⁵

This is because the “mechanical laws” which govern matter “are nothing but acquired habits, like all the regularities of mind, including the tendency to take habits, itself.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Peirce says, “this action of habit is nothing but generalization, and generalization is nothing but the spreading of feelings.”⁴⁷ “Mind,” for Peirce, encompasses both physical reality and consciousness as acquired habit, is extended and external, in a reciprocal relationship with biology and culture, and wholly continuous with matter:

[T]he psychologists have not yet made it clear what Mind is. I do not mean its substratum; but they have not even made it clear what a psychical

44 CP 5.371

45 CP 6.268

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

phenomenon is. Far less has any notion of mind been established and generally acknowledged which can compare for an instant in distinctness to the dynamical conception of matter. Almost all the psychologists still tell us that mind is consciousness.mind on the contrary is essentially an external phenomenon. The error is very much like that which was so long prevalent that an electrical current moved through the metallic wire; while it is now known that that is just the only place from which it is cut off, being wholly external to the wire. Again, the psychologists undertake to locate various mental powers in the brain; and above all consider it as quite certain that the faculty of language resides in a certain lobe; but I believe it comes decidedly nearer the truth (though not really true) that language resides in the tongue. In my opinion it is much more true that the thoughts of a living writer are in any printed copy of his book than that they are in his brain.⁴⁸

Such Mind, Peirce holds, develops according to an evolutionary process that has both Darwinian and Lamarckian characteristics (this is the subject of Chapters 4, 5, 6). The central point for our purpose is that this evolution takes the form of the growth of habits by way of their generalization, or “the spreading of feelings.” The more such growth is extended, the more general the nature of the habit or law becomes. As human thought and inquiry are themselves a part of this process, it follows that their evolution will also tend towards increasing generalization. Thus, if we extend the evolution infinitely, along the lines of Peirce’s theory of truth, what is arrived at is of a wholly general nature. The problem of “lost facts” and convergence, then, falls away as an unfounded worry. For, the individual facts themselves are only abstractions from the general truth located at the end of inquiry. That is, in discussing truth Peirce does not have in mind a set of individual claims about the world (e.g. “there were precisely so many leaves on all the plants of the hanging gardens of Babylon on this date”) that could be compiled into a comprehensive account of the facts of reality. Rather, he takes truth to be the generalized order by which all that is represented by such facts is made continuous. This reflects his emphasis on the scientific method, the object of which he

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CP 7.364.

takes to be the articulation of general laws as well as his own articulation of the pragmatic(ist) maxim:

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.⁴⁹

What is truly novel and important about Peirce's account is that he extends scientific inquiry to cover not only the articulation of such general laws but an investigation of that which enables the very existence of those laws as well. Peirce's friend and colleague, Josiah Royce, gives a succinct and insightful description of this feature of Peirce's philosophy.

History, and especially the history of thought, and in particular of the various natural sciences, interested Peirce deeply. But his mind, when he thought of evolution, turned its attention to the matters which most fascinated him as a logician. He wanted to know not merely about the evolution of any one group of physical phenomena, whether stellar or terrestrial, whether organic or inorganic. He wanted to know about how the laws of nature came to be what they now are. For him the doctrine of evolution was to be, if it should succeed at all, a doctrine of the evolution of the laws of nature, a doctrine regarding how the world came to acquire not the plants, nor the animals, nor the solar systems, nor the Milky Way, that now it has, but how the laws of nature came to be what they are at all.⁵⁰

Royce is here writing after a period during which his philosophical system converges with Peirce's own, the result of what Frank M. Oppenheim calls Royce's

⁴⁹ CP 5.426, emphasis in the original

⁵⁰ Josiah Royce and Fergus Kernan, "Charles Sanders Peirce," *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13 no. 26 (Dec. 21, 1916), pp. 701-709; 702-3.

“Peircean insight.”⁵¹ Moreover, he had just finished collecting and surveying Peirce’s unpublished manuscripts, which had been acquired by Harvard following his death. Royce is thus in a position to offer a valuable insight into the whole of Peirce’s philosophy and its major themes and objectives, rather than the fragments of it that had been published and which were, as has often been noted, very often the incomplete working out of a continuously evolving system. Royce’s insight bears directly on the nature of Peirce’s evolutionary theory and its relation to his account of truth and inquiry. In so doing, he features a version of Peirce’s fallibilism that often goes unmarked by commentators.

Royce emphasizes Peirce’s characterization of laws of nature as approximations. This is the result both of the limited perspective offered by finite inquiry as well as the evolving nature of reality itself. Given that such laws are approximations, however, the convergence between fact and inquiry that underwrites Peirce’s account of truth takes a form that is different in significant ways from Putnam’s gloss of it. As inquiry progresses over time, the theories it produces will, according to Peirce, better agree with the facts revealed by observation. But, as Royce points out, this “is simply because the better we know nature, the more we can discover how to adjust theory *and* fact, one to the other.”⁵² Royce’s point here is that both theory and fact are subject to alteration and refinement over time under the Peircean model. Peircean “facts” do not stand as the unchanging raw data of scientific inquiry that Putnam takes them to be in formulating his anti-realist charge, for such would be entirely contrary to his evolutionary account of truth and inquiry. Again, to quote Royce,

⁵¹ See Frank M. Oppenheim, *Royce’s Mature Ethics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

⁵² Royce and Kernan, “Peirce,” 704, emphasis added.

if we extend our survey of nature from the instant to the year, from the year to the century, from the century to the geological period, or to the evolution of a stellar system, we get evidence that natural laws which hold with appreciable exactness and within the errors of probable observation, during short periods of time, no longer hold with such precision for very long periods of time. There is a reasonable inductive evidence that *the laws which nature follows are themselves only approximately true and are subject to evolution*, so that Newton's law of gravitation is presumably very nearly true at the present time for the present moon and planets, for the present stellar systems. But it is equally probable that this law is even now only a close approximation, not an absolutely necessary order of things. For similar inductive reasons, it becomes probable that, in so far as Newton's law of gravitation now holds true, it did not always hold true, and that this, like all other laws of nature, is a product of evolution.⁵³

More recently, Carl Hausman has emphasized this characteristic of Peirce's philosophy. As Hausman puts it,

although Peirce is clear about his conception of a convergence on a final, ordered universe and a perfected intelligibility, this convergence is not proposed as an actual future state, rather it is projected beyond any finite moment of time. Convergence, therefore, must evolve. Its terminus is an evolving, dynamical object.⁵⁴

Peirce's Realism

We are now in a position to see that, contrary to Putnam's "anti-realist" characterization, Peirce does not hold that only those facts which are verifiable by human inquiry are true; Peirce explicitly holds facts to be "real" in the sense that they are external to actual thought. However, their existence as individual facts expressed in propositions *is* dependent upon thought insofar as such thought is required to abstract them from the general "truth of the universe." Peirce himself clarifies this distinction in an unpublished manuscript drafted as a response to objections of the sort Putnam raises:

⁵³ Ibid., emphasis added..

⁵⁴ Carl Hausman, *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160.

Now if a proposition is true, the fact of which it is a possible assertion remains true and altogether such as it is, whatever men may opine about it, and is thus real. This fact is not the whole truth of the universe, but is a fragment broken away by thought. So the apprehension of the fact does depend upon how persons may think, which imparts to it a subjective element; but this does not make the characters fact to be in the least dependent upon how people may opine or pretend to opine about it. Although it is relative to human thought it is not dependent upon human thought as to its characters, as a fiction is. The case is analogous to that of cinnabar appearing red. Redness is a quality relative to human sensibility, but cinnabar does affect human sensibility in that way whether a person acknowledges it or lies about it. So, any fact represented in a true proposition is real; but this fact may be a general one; and we thus see that something general, although it does not exist, and although it is so relative to thought as to be of the nature of a sign, may nevertheless be real.⁵⁵

It is clear, then, that under Peirce's account, even if the propositions which assert the individual lost facts are themselves unverifiable, this does not mean that the facts themselves are without truth, for such truth is not the product of human inquiry alone but of the evolutionary spread of Mind on all levels of reality.

Two points warrant mention here. The first is that while this theory of truth is "ideal" in the sense that it will never be achieved in actual inquiry, it is not ideal in the sense that would make the physical world wholly a product of mental action. Peirce is indeed an "objective idealist" but he takes this to incorporate a variety of realism in which our thought still answers to an external reality which is independent of what we think about it.⁵⁶ "There are Real things," he says, "whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them."⁵⁷ Moreover, it is this realist stance that Peirce takes to be the characteristic feature of his favored scientific method of inquiry, as expressed in a famous passage from "The Fixation of Belief":

⁵⁵ MS 329.

⁵⁶ Pierce's objective idealism is treated in greater detail in Chapter 3.

⁵⁷ CP 5.384

To satisfy our doubts, therefore, it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency—by something upon which our thinking has no effect....Such is the method of science. Its fundamental hypothesis, restated in more familiar language, is this: There are Real things, whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them; those Reals affect our senses according to regular laws, and, though our sensations are as different as are our relations to the objects, yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really and truly are.⁵⁸

Peirce would later develop his account of these reals along the lines of Scotist realism and his own category of Secondness in a way that answers Putnam's charge regarding the truth of individual facts.

Most systems of philosophy maintain certain facts or principles as ultimate. In truth, any fact is in one sense ultimate—that is to say, in its isolated aggressive stubbornness and individual reality. What Scotus calls the hæcceities of things, the hereness and nowness of them, are indeed ultimate...There is also another class of facts of which it is not reasonable to expect an explanation, namely, facts of indeterminacy or variety. Why one definite kind of event is frequent and another rare, is a question to be asked, but a reason for the general fact that of events some kinds are common and some rare, it would be unfair to demand...Indeterminacy, then, or pure firstness, and hæcceity, or pure secondness, are facts not calling for and not capable of explanation. Indeterminacy affords us nothing to ask a question about; hæcceity is the *ultima ratio*, the brutal fact that will not be questioned. But every fact of a general or orderly nature calls for an explanation.⁵⁹

Peirce's Scholastic realism grants reality to individual facts but also construes the generals to be real, and the latter are what "call for explanation" and would comprise the truth found at the end of infinite inquiry. He says elsewhere that,

any fact represented in a true proposition is real; but this fact may be a general one; and we thus see that something general, although it does not

⁵⁸ W 2:253-4

⁵⁹ CP 1.405

exist, and although it is so relative to thought as to be of the nature of a sign, may nevertheless be real.⁶⁰

Peirce's distinction between the “real” and the “existent” here is critical.

“Reality,” for Peirce, “is that mode of being by virtue of which the real thing is as it is, irrespectively of what any mind or any definite collection of minds may represent it to be.”⁶¹ It is inextricably tied to his definition of truth and his pragmatic maxim. The “existent,” however, is that which is capable of entering into relations of Secondness with other parts of reality, i.e., that which “resists.” The distinction can be clarified, perhaps, by way of the example of the “stable island” transuranic elements proposed by Glenn T. Seaborg (elements with the “magic numbers” of protons and neutrons enabling them to exist as stable isotopes).⁶² Such elements are “real” in that they are continuous with the rest of nature (i.e., do not require explanation in terms of any extra- or supernatural processes) and whose natures would be independent of our hypothetical theorizations. However, no such element has yet been found or synthesized. Consequently, such elements do not (yet) actually interact with the rest of reality and so, according to Peirce's terminology, do not exist. By distinguishing the real and the existent in this way, Peirce's account remains a viable option for philosophical naturalism as it does not reduce the physical world to our picture of it.

The second point bears on Peirce's reliance upon order in his evolutionary account of the spread of habit. It might be objected that his taking the universe to be evolving towards order is unwarranted, even false, particularly in light of recent findings

⁶⁰ CP 5.384.

⁶¹ CP 5.565-566.

⁶² For discussion of such elements see: John Emsley, *Nature's Building Blocks*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), especially pp. 143, 144, 458.

which support the increase of entropy over order.⁶³ It should, however, be noted that Peirce was not wholly ignorant of the problem and did not take the tendency toward order to be absolute. His doctrine of tychism explicitly asserts that “chance” is operative in the universe throughout its evolution, and the metaphysical aspects of his fallibilism (treated below) indicate that his notion of stability is to a large degree simply a matter of “balancing” errors and struggle. Moreover, as the above discussion of Royce’s take on Peirce shows, the “order” towards which the universe evolves is itself changing and historied, and, at times, Peirce goes so far as to speculate that it is indeterminate:

When we busy ourselves to find the answer to a question, we are going upon the hope that there is an answer, which can be called *the* answer, that is, the final answer. It may be there is none...Now it is certainly conceivable that this world which we call the real world is not perfectly real but that there are things similarly indeterminate. We cannot be sure that it is not so.⁶⁴

However, a full discussion of this indeterminacy thesis would extend well beyond the scope of this chapter; it will be addressed further in Chapter 4.

To return to the topic at hand, it is clear that Putnam’s reading of Peirce’s theory of truth errs in taking it to endorse a convergence at the end of inquiry based on the accumulation of individual facts which, when taken together, yield accounts that successively approach the true in its ideal instantiation. I mean now to advance this argument one step further and show that not only is Putnam mistaken in dismissing Peirce for the reasons he does, but also that Peirce’s account is better suited to meeting the demands of Anglophone philosophy in the twenty-first century than his own,

⁶³ Putnam himself refers to this as a reason to mistrust the convergence theory of truth; see Putnam, *The Collapse*, 172 n. 27.

⁶⁴ CP 4.61. See, also, CP 8.43

Deweyan account. To do this requires pinpointing precisely what distinguishes the Peircean and Deweyan models.

Peirce and Dewey's opposed Fallibilisms

In contrasting the pragmatisms of Peirce and Dewey, I will focus on the notion of fallibilism as it is employed by each. The doctrine of fallibilism is the point at which the divergence is most evident, and is also the primary legacy of the classical pragmatism adopted by figures like Putnam. Moreover, as has recently been argued in an exchange between Joseph Margolis and Nathan Houser, fallibilism can be taken to be the “lynchpin” of Peirce’s philosophical system.⁶⁵ Consequently, fleshing out the notion as it appears in Peirce’s work not only serves to motivate my present argument regarding the respective promise of Peirce and Dewey, but also provides a focused point by which Peirce’s sprawling system can be related to the present concern of philosophical naturalism. I will begin with a discussion of Margolis’ “lynchpin” argument and conclude this chapter by showing its relevance to McDowell’s naturalist project.

Both Margolis and Houser agree that pragmatism will figure prominently in the future development of philosophy, and that the form it must take to do so will differ from the largely exegetical bent it demonstrated throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, both agree that a promising avenue for such development is opened when we take fallibilism to be the central theme that works as a sort of Ariadne’s thread tying together the many disparate works collectively called “pragmatism.” If we grant Houser and Margolis these claims (and I admit that more argument is needed to show that we

⁶⁵ Joseph Margolis, “Peirce’s Fallibilism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 34, no. 3 (1998): 535-569; Nathan Houser, “Peirce in the 21st Century,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no.4 (2005): 729-739, and Margolis, “Rethinking Peirce’s Fallibilism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 43, no.2 (2007): 229-249.

should), then the future of philosophy will be in large part a function of the future of fallibilism.

In his paper “Pierce’s Fallibilism,” Margolis characterizes Peirce’s doctrine as entailing “at least three serially nested themes.”⁶⁶ The first of these he refers to as “*fallibility*,” which is “the thesis that, with regard to any proposition, it is possible to hold a mistaken belief.”⁶⁷ Margolis calls the second theme “*self-corrective inquiry*,” which is the claim “that it is both possible and likely that, for any mistaken belief, a society of inquirers can, in a pertinently finite interval of time, discern its own mistakes and progress toward discovering the true state of affairs.”⁶⁸ These first two themes are present in both the fallibilisms of Peirce and Dewey, but Margolis takes the third to be unique to Peirce’s understanding of the concept. This differentiating theme is “addressed primarily to the *metaphysics of inquiry*, the *metaphysics of the inquiring self*,” and “concerns the convergent import of evolutionism, thirdness, the social constitution of the self, the growth of knowledge, and related doctrines that are almost never invoked in construing fallibilism as a (merely) epistemic thesis.”⁶⁹

It is the third of these themes, what Margolis calls Peirce’s “enabling metaphysics” that distinguishes Peircean fallibilism from its counterpart in Dewey’s philosophy. “[T]he Deweyan version,” Margolis says, “is no more than an unguarded *hope* regarding progressivism.”⁷⁰ Without equivalents to Peirce’s metaphysical doctrines of synechism and matter as “effete mind,” Dewey is led to a fallibilism that leaves

⁶⁶ Margolis, “Pierce’s Fallibilism,” 537.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 539.

⁷⁰ Ibid. emphasis in the original.

inquiry motivated solely by a sort of optimism rather than an abductively justified faith. The point which Margolis stresses here and returns to throughout the paper, is that Peirce's fallibilism rests on, and indeed is, a metaphysical (and not merely epistemological) theory. This metaphysical underpinning is the evolutionary account and Scholastic realism addressed above. As Douglas Anderson notes, "This Scholastic realism seems to be the crucial difference between Peirce's pragmatism and the pragmatism of his peers, since it generated the would-bes that define laws or the reason of things."⁷¹ Ignoring or misconstruing this metaphysical underpinning has led to the broadly "Deweyan" version of fallibilism that informs the work of figures like Putnam. Such "*Deweyan optimists...can only hope that science and morality (and the like) will be self-corrective: they can only hope that we will increase our theoretical and practical knowledge—on every scale that counts—if we but remain loyal to the self-corrective work of 'a critical community of inquirers.'*"⁷²

Of course, to charge Dewey as being overly optimistic is nothing new. Ellen Lyman Cabot, a student of Josiah Royce, remarked that

Dewey perhaps understates what Royce dwells on too much—the storm-stress aspects of life. Dewey's attitude is tremendously healthy . . .and he is not without feeling and appreciation as the half- unintentional touches in his books show. But could he possibly have such a wide sympathy as Royce with mystics and romanticists? Could he be as fair to them as Royce is? And if not is his position the best one! A healthy scorn for all things abstract and spiritual is a bracing tonic, but passion and pathos and the tragedy and mystery of life are real and sometimes so life-giving as to be the only world we can see and they must be met with understanding criticism not mere condemnation .⁷³

⁷¹ Douglas Anderson, *Strands of System: The Philosophy of Charles Peirce* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1995), 59.

⁷² Margolis, "Peirce's Fallibilism," 539, emphasis in the original.

⁷³ Ella Lyman Cabot, unpublished manuscript, MSA-139/320V, quoted in John Kaag, "Women and Forgotten Movements in American Philosophy: The Work of Ella

In *Ethics without Ontology*, Putnam tries to defend Dewey against such objections. He does so primarily by quoting a passage from Dewey's *Ethics*:

The good can never be demonstrated to the senses, nor be proved by calculations of personal profit. It involves a radical venture of the will in the interest of what is unseen and prudentially incalculable. But such optimism of will, such determination of the man that, so far as his choice is concerned, only the good shall be recognized as real, is very different from a sentimental refusal to look at the realities of the situation just as they are. In fact a certain intellectual pessimism, in the sense of a steadfast willingness to uncover sore points, to acknowledge and search for abuses, to note how presumed good often serves as the cloak for actual bad, is a necessary part of the moral optimism which actively devotes itself to making the right prevail. Any other view reduces the aspiration and hope, which are the essence of moral courage, to a cheerful animal buoyancy; and, in its failure to see the evil done to others in its thoughtless pursuit of what it calls good, is next door to brutality, to a brutality bathed in the atmosphere of sentimentality and flourishing in the catchwords of idealism.⁷⁴

This passage leads Putnam to characterize Dewey as a “strategic optimist”:

“Dewey was not someone with a blind faith in progress; he was, rather, a *strategic optimist*; and strategic optimism is something we badly need at the present time.”⁷⁵

Putnam refrains, however, from going into any detail as to what he means by “strategic optimism,” as opposed to a general optimism. Calling such optimism “strategic” does little, in my view, to address the spirit of the charge it is intended to meet. That is, in questioning whether Dewey might be “overly optimistic” one is saying that his claims that we can and are progressing are not justified by his metaphysical and epistemological

Lyman Cabot and Mary Parker Follett,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 44, no. 1 (2008), 137.

⁷⁴ John Dewey, *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 5, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 272, quoted in Hilary Putnam, *Ethics Without Ontology*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11.

⁷⁵ Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology*, 11.

accounts. To say that Dewey is “strategically optimistic” is just to remove these concerns by one level of discourse, so that the question is not whether or not we are justified in being optimistic with respect to any given circumstance, but whether the “strategy” that ultimately decides such optimism is itself justified.

Moreover, Putnam explicitly characterizes his pragmatic “third enlightenment” as “antimetaphysical.”⁷⁶ In doing so, however, he invites the objection Margolis raises, i.e. that without an enabling metaphysics, fallibilist inquiry can only be motivated by a stubborn optimism. This is because fallibilism, as a doctrine which holds that any (and all) of our individual beliefs could be wrong, undermines the possibility of the self-correction of those beliefs absent an account that shows how such self-correction can, and over time, will likely occur. This, again, is the demand that Peirce’s evolutionary theory is intended to meet.

Peirce’s Fallibilism and the Future of Philosophical Naturalism

Restoring the metaphysical underpinning to current employments of fallibilism not only secures the metaphysics of inquiry and the self that Margolis identifies as key to the future of pragmatism but also answers the demands of naturalism that are made evident in John McDowell’s work but which McDowell himself is unable to meet.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 110. It is worth noting that Dewey himself, at least in his younger years, may have been drawn to a position similar to the one Putnam characterizes as “antirealist.” In his contribution to a special edition of the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* devoted to Peirce’s philosophy, Dewey says: “And while my purpose is wholly expository I can not close without inquiring whether recourse to Peirce would not have a most beneficial influence in contemporary discussion. Do not a large part of our epistemological difficulties arise from an attempt to define the “real” as something given prior to reflective inquiry instead of as that which reflective inquiry is forced to reach and to which when it is reached belief can stably cling?” John Dewey, “The Pragmatism of Peirce,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 13, no. 26 (1916): 709-715.

As was noted in Chapter 1, McDowell's project focuses on the problem of how our conceptually structured beliefs and knowledge can be answerable to a world that is not itself composed of such structures. McDowell's answer to this question is a recharacterization of the human self along the lines of Aristotle's "second nature," which he equates with the German notion *Bildung*. However, while McDowell's version of second nature or *Bildung* explains how particular individuals or groups come to acquire the normative structures they do, it does not give an account of how such structures themselves arose. In fact, McDowell explicitly resists such inquiry, claiming that "we can regard the culture a human being is initiated into as a going concern; there is no particular reason why we should need to uncover or speculate about its history, let alone the origins of culture as such."⁷⁷ This is the point at which McDowell's account faces the most criticism; it yields the "thinness" Richard Bernstein complains of, and Peter Godfrey-Smith labels it a "weak spot in McDowell's account."⁷⁸

Surely all the *bare* fact of *Bildung* establishes is that normal processes of enculturation lead us to *finding it natural* to apply the framework, to exhibit certain habits. So one observation that can be made immediately is that the bare fact of *Bildung* does not preclude the framework we acquire by normal enculturation embodying factual commitments that are false. A process of enculturation *could* surely yield such a thing.⁷⁹

That Godfrey-Smith is able to gloss McDowell's understanding of *Bildung* as "framework" (and I do not think that he is being unjust to McDowell's usage in doing so) is particularly telling. Many of McDowell's critics have argued that his employment of

⁷⁷ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 123.

⁷⁸ Peter Godfrey-Smith, "Dewey Continuity, and McDowell," *Normativity and Nature*, ed. David MacArthur and Mario de Caro (Columbia: Columbia University Press, forthcoming, 2010). Available through Godfrey-Smith's website: <<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~pgs/>>; 13-14

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Bildung is problematically thin, and does not capture the notion as it is developed within the German tradition from which McDowell borrows it.

As discussed above, Bubner takes such an approach, and arrives at much the same conclusion as the other critics mentioned.

It must be made clear that *Bildung* as a modern concept assumes much more of the subject's power of spontaneity than what Aristotle had in mind with his talk of a second nature. Second nature, in which we are introduced to the practical challenge of ethical relations, reveals a static anthropology set against the background of the Greek *polis*...With "second nature" we consciously step back behind the level of reflection of a modern *Bildung*.⁸⁰

Bubner's argument is that McDowell cannot equate Aristotelian second nature with *Bildung* as it is developed in the German tradition, because the latter is a much richer, ontological concept that both reflects and incorporates the historied nature of human culture and development. Second nature, by contrast, is a "static anthropology" that resists the flux of history and at best serves to show how the particular normative framework Aristotle favors arises from the structure and concerns of the then contemporary Greek political life. What is missing is an explanation of how such normative structures themselves arose and *are* natural, rather than merely seeming natural to individuals raised to conform to particular norms.

What these objections share is a belief that McDowell must provide more by way of an explanation of how second nature does, in fact, connect with "first nature," that is, a metaphysical account of its development, and McDowell remains unwilling to provide such an account as if unwilling to admit the force of such objections. Thus, in response to Bubner's criticism, he simply asserts that, "talk of second nature can invoke everything implied by the modern concept of *Bildung*, including what permits us to value distinctive

⁸⁰ Rüdiger Bubner, "Bildung and Second Nature," in *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. Nicholas H. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 211.

personality—an idea that makes sense only against the background of cultural formation.”⁸¹

Although he makes no mention of Dewey, and certainly doesn't consider himself a Deweyan or pragmatist of any stripe, McDowell is here advancing a position that has much in common with the Deweyan account I identify in Putnam and his project in *Mind and World* dovetails nicely with Putnam's own in the two books cited above. Whereas Putnam was concerned with dissolving the (false) dichotomy between scientific facts and moral values, McDowell's interest lies in ending the oscillation within philosophy between theories that reduce the normative structures of reason to the mechanical operation of natural laws and those which absolve such normative structures from any responsibility to answer to reality as the natural sciences reveal it. McDowell sees this oscillation as itself resulting from a variant of the dialectic Putnam treats, and his preferred “relaxed naturalism” is meant to offer a third option that does away with the dichotomy, thereby “exorcising” the tradition. Moreover, as with the Deweyan line Putnam represents, McDowell takes it to be unnecessary (even detrimental) to provide a metaphysically-oriented account of how it is that our inquiry can be corrected by an external reality, and this opens him to the objection that second nature could, indeed, yield a “space of reasons” that does not, in fact, answer to such an external reality, even after the “realm of law” picture of nature has been exorcised.

Now, I am not claiming that McDowell *can't* provide such an account, but only that he doesn't, and I find this troubling, particularly in light of the criticism leveled at his model on precisely this point. I have already alluded to the difficulties that arise in attempting to naturalize the human person; our intuitions regarding the defining characteristics of personhood tend to contrast such features with what is taken to belong

⁸¹ McDowell, “Responses,” 296.

to non-human nature. Consequently, to simply reduce such characteristics to biological or mechanical processes is to do violence to the very concept of personhood. McDowell avoids this pitfall through recourse to second nature, but his account explains only how a particular individual comes to acquire a particular normative character within a particular society that already takes normativity and spontaneity for granted. The natural origins of such norms and reasons McDowell refuses to explain. But this is precisely the central problematic of naturalism. Where do such structures as allow for the acquisition of second nature themselves arise? If they are not linked to (first) nature itself in any strong way, and McDowell does not provide any explanation of how they are, then what is to stop their own “frictionless spinning?” McDowell, I claim, has only answered one half of the question naturalism poses, viz. how normativity in actual individual persons and societies can be seen as continuous with nature. The more fundamental question of how normativity and personhood themselves relate to nature he leaves unanswered.

It is for this reason that I favor a turn to Peirce in this context. According to Peirce, “to explain a thing is to show how it may have resulted from something else”; such an explanation of how human inquiry arises from and corresponds to the nature which is its subject is, I offer, precisely what Peirce means to do with the enabling metaphysics of his fallibilism. Moreover, while Peirce provides a promising “guess” at how we might view the human person as a natural artifact, continuous with the rest of nature, his strong fallibilism forces the recognition that the normative and meaning-laden structures which distinguish such personhood may often get ahead of themselves. That is, Peircean fallibilism makes the worry that any particular judgment or system of reasons may lack traction with reality an essential feature of personhood. To be a person, for Peirce, is to know that the a priori commitments and apparently “necessary” truths which precede and enable thought are themselves contingent developments proceeding from the practical demands of lived existence. As such, their being necessary extends only so far

as they continue to meet such demands. I am only hinting here at what will be further developed later in this project, but this hint captures the promise of Peirce's own version of pragmatism for the development of contemporary philosophical naturalism. It is only a promise now, but one I hope to make good on in what follows.

If what I have said holds, then I have given some indication for the superior promise of Peirce's pragmatism in contemporary philosophical concerns, and shown that this promise is to be found in the metaphysics that enable his fallibilism. The following chapters will give a deeper analysis of this enabling metaphysics and further develop the argument that fallibilism is the governing doctrine of Peirce's philosophy. I will proceed by first showing the importance of fallibilism to Peirce's philosophy when viewed as a whole by tracing its initial formulation in his treatment of Descartes and its development in the "doubt-belief" theory of inquiry.

CHAPTER 3

PEIRCE'S EXISTENTIALISM AND THE ORIGINS OF FALLIBILISM

“An objective uncertainty, held fast though appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person.”

Søren Kierkegaard⁸²

Unifying Peirce’s System: The Developmental, “Two-Peirce” and Existential Approaches

A considerable obstacle to any comprehensive account of Peirce’s philosophy is the apparent tension between his more straightforwardly scientific and empirical commitments and his speculative metaphysical interests. Peirce holds that the “reals” by which knowledge is measured are independent of what anyone takes them to be; however, he also maintains that reality itself is somehow the result of the “final” opinion arrived at by an ideal community. Peirce famously gives voice to this perplexing arrangement himself, saying that,

on the one hand, reality is independent, not necessarily of thought in general, but only of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it...on the other hand, though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks.⁸³

Many of the tensions detected in Peirce’s philosophy, then, come to light through attempts to establish, definitively, whether Peirce was a metaphysical realist or idealist; and, if either, of what stripe. Historically, there have been two interpretive approaches to

⁸² Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* vol. 1, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 203.

⁸³ CP 5.408

Peirce's philosophy meant to resolve these tensions.⁸⁴ The first, more prominent in early commentaries, might be called the "two Peirce" theory.⁸⁵ This account, which informs the work of Thomas Goudge, Justus Buchler, and Richard Rorty, takes Peirce to uphold incompatible doctrines, the result of which are certain critical and irresolvable contradictions or paradoxes. Adherents of the "two Peirce" theory tend to claim that Peirce was both an idealist and a realist, and that he offered conflicting views on various subjects. The second approach, first popularized by Murray Murphey and which, in various forms, dominates most current Peirce scholarship, casts these "contradictions" as byproducts of the evolution and development of Peirce's philosophical thought. Those who take this developmental stance typically argue that Peirce was more of an idealist in his early work (that spanning the period between 1868-1893) but moved toward a more stringent realism by the end of his career.

This chapter attempts the sketch of a third general account of Peirce's philosophy, one that captures the important intuitions of the leading alternatives and which, implicitly, informs a trend of Peirce scholarship that is increasingly gaining prominence. Taking a cue from David Savan's paper "Decision and Knowledge in Peirce," I will call the proposed third alternative an "existentialist" model of Peirce.⁸⁶ By "existentialist," I mean to indicate what Savan called "a semireligious view" that is connected to Peirce's phenomenology and which forms the core of his analysis of inquiry. I hasten to point out

⁸⁴ Of course, the argument can be made for many more (see, for example, the introduction to Carl Hausman, *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), and the two stances are not without some overlap. However, I find it useful and not inaccurate to divide all such theories broadly along the following lines and in virtue of their respective emphases.

⁸⁵ The term is Hausman's.

⁸⁶ David Savan, "Decision and Knowledge in Peirce," *Transactions of the Peirce Society* 1, no. 2 (1965): 35-51.

that, as is the case with Savan's employment of the term, "existentialist" is here used in a qualified sense, one that should not be too enthusiastically connected to the "-ism" of early twentieth century Eurocentric thought. The existentialist reading does, to be sure, exhibit a profound similarity with certain key themes in the work of Søren Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and others; perhaps most prominently in the shared emphasis on characterizing a certain mode of being and emphasizing the irreducibility of the human person.⁸⁷ However, as Savan observes, Peirce is notably and importantly different from these other figures in terms of temperament, technique and objectives.

What I mean to achieve by calling Peirce's philosophy "existentialist," then, is not a reduction of Classical American pragmatism to a separate line of European philosophy; nor do I mean to advance a "decentered" interpretation of intertextuality between apparently disparate works in the manner of post-modern dilettantism. Rather, this interpretation is meant to enable an account of Peirce that shows how his philosophical system is both tenable and fruitful, but not at the expense of "normalizing" his position by a de facto division into two positions, one youthful and one mature. Both the "two Peirce" and "developmental" approaches foster interpretations that often miss Peirce's unique position within the philosophical tradition, either eliding important themes in his work by locating them in earlier, rejected models, or by outright rejecting him as hopelessly inconsistent. This existentialist reading differs from the alternative accounts in locating a central concern of Peirce's that more strongly unites the work of different stages of his career, but does so in a manner that is relatively free from

⁸⁷ This, I assume but do not defend here, is the product of a shared problematic, i.e., the nature and implications of Hegel's critique of Kant and the post-Hegelian development of historical phenomenology. The parallels between Peirce's thought and Kierkegaard's are treated below.

tensions.⁸⁸ This unifying theme is, I argue, fallibilism, particularly as it motivates a model of selfhood that informs Peirce's thought and that emphasizes the finitude inherent in the human condition. The most prominent manifestation of this finitude, for Peirce, is the inquiring subject's relation to knowledge and truth.

I will treat this third, existentialist reading of Peirce primarily as it pertains to his early, "anti-Cartesian" papers and the formation of the doubt-belief theory of inquiry. First, I will show that Peirce's criticism of Descartes is not, as it is often portrayed, merely the rejection of Cartesian doubt, but rather involves the reformulation of such doubt in a manner that prefigures much of Peirce's later thought. I will then turn to Peirce's doubt-belief theory of inquiry, arguing that this account grows out of Peirce's criticism of Descartes, and that its real force, often overlooked, is an emphasis on the inherent and essential finitude of human knowledge. Finally, I will indicate some of the consequences of adopting the proposed line of interpretation.

Peirce's Treatment of Cartesian Doubt

Peirce's doctrine of fallibilism has its origins in an early series of papers published in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. In these papers, Peirce is concerned with, among other things, a treatment of Descartes' use of universal doubt as a method for grounding knowledge and answering the skeptical challenge. It remains an open

⁸⁸ Savan characterizes this existentialist strain in Peirce as "not a matter of remarks made loosely, accidentally, and in passing. It is fundamental, and Peirce is concerned with the problem throughout his life" (p. 50). However, he qualifies this claim by saying that "After 1893, and more clearly after 1898, Peirce attempted to deal with these problems in a rather different fashion, but I can not go into that now" (p. 50). It is my intuition that, while Peirce does alter his approach with respect to some of the concerns that the existentialist reading is meant to capture, this change does not amount to the development of a new system or a rejection of his earlier account, as many of the "developmental" interpretations seem to claim. See, for example: Murray Murphey, *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy*, (Idianapolis: Hackett, 1993).

question as to whether Peirce's reading of Descartes is at all accurate, but most commentators seem to agree that the crux of his objection rests on the impossibility of actually achieving a state of universal doubt; under the standard interpretation, Peirce's criticism turns on the distinction between "genuine" and "sham" or "paper" doubts, and the impossibility of willing oneself into a state of doubt.

This line of interpretation further maintains that, with respect to his theory of inquiry, and in contrast with the Cartesian model, for Peirce doubt arises as an irritant forced upon the inquirer through the obtrusion of reality upon the inquirer in a manner that does not accord with his beliefs. Such doubts, then, provide the motivation for inquiry which culminates in the fixation of belief in a way that dispels the original doubt. Briefly stated, doubt motivates inquiry, the goal of which is belief. Thus, though he agrees with Descartes that doubt occurs at the beginning of inquiry, Peirce holds that such doubt can not be willed into existence but must be produced in the course of actual experience. Consequently, it would seem that doubt, for Peirce, lacks the universal scope that it has in Descartes' account.

This characterization of doubt makes much of its affective nature and has led to treatments of Peirce's model that focus on doubt's psychological function, itself characterized as merely a mental state or propositional attitude. For example, according to Christopher Hookway, "Peirce treats doubt as a unified psychological state which embodies an epistemic evaluation and provides a reason for action."⁸⁹ Lesley Friedman, discussing Hookway's account, affirms the psychological nature of doubt, saying that "Doubt is not mere ignorance, nor consciousness of ignorance: it is necessary that the inquirer 'care to know' *and* 'feel' doubt. Only with this genuine doubt does the struggle

⁸⁹ Christopher Hookway, *Truth, Rationality and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 250-1.

leading to genuine inquiry begin, and only with the cessation of such doubt does inquiry end.”⁹⁰ By the standard interpretation, then, what distinguishes Peircean from Cartesian, or real from “paper,” doubts is that the former have a more compelling psychological quality for the subject.⁹¹

I argue, however, that while Peirce does emphasize the affective nature of doubt, focusing solely on this feature runs the risk of making Peirce’s treatment of doubt overly psychologistic.⁹² To be fair, Peirce did characterize his own early philosophy, which includes the doubt-belief theory of inquiry, as excessively psychological and naturalistic.⁹³ However, he was throughout his career concerned with avoiding psychologism (but not psychology); his later remarks might be better read as expressing his own sense of having failed to abide by such commitments than as a characterization

⁹⁰ Lesley Friedman, “Doubt & Inquiry: Peirce and Descartes Revisited,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35, no. 4 (1999): 729.

⁹¹ See also: Robert G Meyers, “Peirce on Cartesian Doubt,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 3, no 1 (1967): 13-23, for a model that follows this standard line of interpretation.

⁹² It should be noted that although she also seems to characterize doubt in psychological terms (viz. as propositional attitude), Susan Haack claims that such a causal function is not the full extent of doubt for Peirce, and that doubt has a logical role in inquiry as well. “This last point introduces an issue which deserves more sustained consideration, viz., the relation between causal and logical elements in the theory. Peirce’s (like Bain’s) account of doubt is, in part and explicitly, causal: doubt is the state that results from the inhibition of belief by some stimulus. But it is also, more covertly, logical; for Peirce seems to take it for granted that the kind of experience that will interrupt one’s belief is a falsifying experience, an experience, that is, which gives one grounds to believe something incompatible with what one already believes.” See Susan Haack, “Descartes, Peirce and the Cognitive Community,” *The Monist* 65, no. 2 (1982):156-181; 161

⁹³ See, especially, his comments in the Cambridge lectures of 1903 (CP 5.28+).

of the aim of his earlier project.⁹⁴ Moreover, the existentialist reading under consideration was originally intended to resist such psychologistic interpretations, as evidenced by Savan's claim that Peirce's phenomenology was meant to be a synthesis of his logic and theory of inquiry:

Some critics have fallen into the trap of supposing that Peirce is speaking of empirical psychological states and processes...But Peirce is, like his contemporaries Frege and Husserl, ardently opposed to psychologism in logic. The science of psychology and the empirically observable processes which it studies are dependent upon logic and, a fortiori, upon the conditions of logical investigation. Doubt, belief, and thought are conditions for the very existence of the mind.⁹⁵

As Savan notes, Peirce opposes "psychologism in logic," but he does not deny psychology a role in inquiry; Peirce regards Bain's psychological model as the source of inspiration for his own initial formulations of pragmatism. Savan's point is that Peirce resists psychologism in logic wherever it threatens to mislead us regarding the primacy of the logical function of doubt over affective states. This bears for instance on Peirce's distinction between the thought of any individual person and thought in general.

We see here that doubt, like thought, mind, truth and other central Peircean notions, has a dual role within his philosophy. On the one hand, it applies to the psychological states of individual inquirers, as described by the traditional accounts

⁹⁴ Moreover, as T.L. Short has pointed out regarding Peirce's 1902 criticism of his early work "The very word 'crude' and especially the subsequent talk of getting 'to the bottom of it' and finding 'the unity of the whole thing' imply the precise opposite of a rejection of what was said in 'Fixation.' They imply, rather, that the views presented there are to be retained. For views cannot be refined and deepened unless they are retained. To refine a doctrine is to retain it, in refined form." See T.L. Short, "Peirce on the Aim of Inquiry: Another Reading of 'Fixation,'" *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 36, no.1 (2000), 17.

⁹⁵ Savan, "Decision and Knowledge," 37-8. For a fuller discussion of Frege's and Husserl's antipsychologism, see J. N. Mohanty, "The Concept of 'Psychologism' in Frege and Husserl," in *Philosophy, Psychology and Psychologism*, edited by Dale Jacquette, 113-130, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands and Norwell, MA: Kluwer, 2003).

sketched above. However, doubt also functions as an integral component of the general logic of inquiry, and thus belongs to the nature of thought in general, and “does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks.”⁹⁶ It is this logical role that leads Savan to characterize doubt as a “condition for the very existence of the mind.”

The recognition of this dual nature of doubt (and related notions such as thought and truth), and the emphasis on its non-psychologistic function in the logic of inquiry, is the central point of the existentialist reading of Peirce. For, by taking doubt and belief to be conditions for the existence of the mind, Savan indicates that Peirce’s theory of inquiry is motivated by a model of consciousness and selfhood that resists psychological reductionism. In the next section I mean to flesh out Savan’s claim that doubt is a condition for the existence of the mind, and begin sketching an account of Peirce’s model of selfhood.

Peirce’s Fallibilist Model of the Individual

As was noted above, one of the principal criticisms that Peirce levels against Descartes is the impossibility of actually willing oneself to a state of hyperbolic doubt. However, Peirce also criticizes Descartes for the significance the latter grants to the individual. According to Peirce, the “Cartesian criterion” of truth, “amounts to this: ‘Whatever I am clearly convinced of, is true.’” Peirce rejects this notion as a form of psychologism, and claims that, “thus to make single individuals absolute judges of truth is most pernicious.”⁹⁷

For Peirce, in stark contrast to Descartes, the individual manifests itself, or is known, only through error and ignorance. In “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties

⁹⁶ CP 5.408

⁹⁷ CP 5.265

Claimed for Man,” Peirce gives us a narrative account of the genesis of the individual self by way of a description of a child who touches a hot stove despite the warning against such an action. This child “becomes aware of ignorance, and it is necessary to suppose a *self* in which this ignorance can inhere. So testimony gives the first dawning of self-consciousness.”⁹⁸ A little later in the same paper, Peirce develops this account, introducing notions of the private and error: “Thus, he adds to the conception of appearance as the actualization of fact, the conception of it as something *private* and valid only for one body. In short, *error* appears, and it can be explained only by supposing a *self* which is fallible.”⁹⁹

Put in a way that parallels, albeit in a perverted fashion, Descartes’ famous dictum, we might say with Savan that, “It is the conflict between our beliefs and hard facts which leads us to the recognition of error and doubt. Through error and doubt we come to an awareness of our own private selves, distinct from the external world and in opposition to it. *Dubito, ergo sum.*”¹⁰⁰ The upshot of all this is that if error leads to doubt and awareness of individuality, then it is prior to any individual psychology; doubt cannot be merely the psychological state that it is treated as in the standard account of Peirce’s theory of inquiry. A similar argument has been put forth by Elizabeth Cooke with respect to the hope that facilitates fallibilistic inquiry: “Aside from the particular content of the hope, be it success, progress, truth in the long run, it seems essential that some general hope is necessary for thought in general.”¹⁰¹ It becomes clear, then, that Peirce’s

⁹⁸ CP 5.233

⁹⁹ CP 5.234, emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁰ Savan, “Decision and Knowledge,” 45.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Cooke, “Transcendental Hope: Peirce, Hookway, and Pihlstrom on the Conditions for Inquiry,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no.3 (2005): 658.

treatment of doubt, belief, and hope extends far beyond the characterization of psychological states; the logical function they play shows that, even in his earliest published papers, Peirce was deeply concerned with a certain characterization of the self that emphasizes finitude and fallibility.

It is important to note, however, that in speaking of the individual, Peirce does not have in mind something akin to Kant's transcendental unity of apperception, but rather a more robust notion of selfhood. In fact, Peirce explicitly distinguishes this notion of the individual from that employed by Kant in the first Critique, saying that "Ignorance and error are all that distinguish our private selves from the absolute ego of pure apperception."¹⁰² While this may seem to be a minor point of difference, and certainly does not rise to the level of a full model of selfhood or its origins, this emphasis on the finitude and fallibility of the individual will have significant consequences for Peirce's later philosophy. As they appear here, they are no more than incipient marks of selfhood; Peirce has yet to give an account of how the self actually arises. He begins to formulate his account during the next stage of his career, which features the application of his triadic system of categories to questions of inquiry, metaphysics and phenomenology. These matters are taken up in subsequent chapters.

Peirce's "Insurance Theory of Induction"

In the context of Peirce's philosophy, "realism" is a term with two distinct senses and employed in different contexts. In one sense, the term is contrasted with "nominalism," and names the doctrine which espouses the existence of real generals or universals. Peirce is, without question a realist of this sort. In the other sense, "realism" is contrasted with "idealism" and signifies a metaphysics which upholds the existence of a

¹⁰² CP 5.235

mind-independent reality. The question of Peirce's realism in this second sense is an important consideration in unifying interpretations of Peirce's philosophy. Advocates of the "two Peirce" theory and the evolutionary model tend to characterize Peirce's later philosophy as taking an increasingly (metaphysically) realist turn: that is, a theory that features our ability to know the world as it is apart from thought, rather than as constituted (in some sense) by the inquiry of some (ideal) community. Such interpretations replace Peirce's "cheerful hope" and "contrite faith" (which are not construed psychologically) with the simple confidence that we are just on the edge of overtaking epistemological obstacles; here, Peirce is made to draw closer to the "Dewey" discussed in my first chapter. The limitless unknown becomes little more than the "yet-to-be-known." Peirce's insistence on the essential limitation or finitude of human inquiry dwindles into the casting such defining features as instead mere accidents of ongoing inquiry.

It is certainly easy to see why such a position might be favored. Peirce often speaks of the "fatedness" of the reality-constituting final opinion in his explanations of truth. In one passage, he goes so far as to claim that there probably exist many matters upon which this final opinion has already been reached.¹⁰³ And, in the oft-quoted passage from "The Fixation of Belief" that emphasizes the reliance of the scientific method on

¹⁰³ "The individual may not live to reach the truth; there is a residuum of error in every individual's opinions. No matter; it remains that there is a definite opinion to which the mind of man is, on the whole and in the long run, tending. On many questions the final agreement is already reached, on all it will be reached if time enough is given. The arbitrary will or other individual peculiarities of a sufficiently large number of minds may postpone the general agreement in that opinion indefinitely; but it cannot affect what the character of that opinion shall be when it is reached. This final opinion, then, is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think. Everything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else," (CP 8.12).

externally-existing “reals,” Peirce says: “by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain by reasoning how things really are, and any man, if he have sufficient experience and reason enough about it, will be led to the one true conclusion.”¹⁰⁴

Peirce goes too far here, and advances a claim his theory of truth and inquiry (even as formulated in this early paper) cannot actually support (in fact, contradicts). His primary purpose is to make inquiry social: his principal reason, for instance, for dismissing the method of tenacity is that “the social impulse is against” it.¹⁰⁵ The entire point of Peirce’s definition of truth as the opinion fated at the end of infinite inquiry is to separate the final “realist” notion of truth from the opinions of finite individuals who, it must be remembered, are marked by error and ignorance. It would be utterly contrary to this purpose were Peirce to concede that any individual could actually arrive at the truth. We must, then, read his qualification regarding “sufficient experience” to have infinite scope and thereby indicate that he doesn’t have in mind any actual, existing individual.

As Peirce defines them, truth, knowledge and reality are necessarily and immutably beyond the scope of actual, finite human knowledge and practice; the final opinion is distanced from actual practice and the actual individual or community by an infinite span of time and inquiry. We can, it seems, never have the second-order knowledge that our first-order beliefs actually count as true knowledge, because no matter how much inquiry has been conducted, there is still the possibility of conducting more. As Savan puts the matter,

We must hope that for each specific question an ultimate consensus will be reached. But on Peirce’s view, it makes no sense to suppose that we can possibly know when this consensus has been reached with regard to any

¹⁰⁴ W 3:254

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 250.

specific question...we may hope for genuine empirical knowledge, but we must not hope that we can ever know that we know.¹⁰⁶

The “hope” that Savan mentions here will become a key element in Peirce’s philosophy, and one that distinguishes his form of pragmatism from most of his contemporaries’. In the following chapters, I will show that Peirce’s evolutionary metaphysics can be read as an attempt to articulate the nature of, and justification for, this hope. The product of this entire account is Peirce’s doctrine of fallibilism, an early form of which is found in the theory of inquiry discussed here. This early form of fallibilism is a doctrine we might, following Josiah Royce, call the “Insurance Theory of Induction.”

In his survey of Peirce’s unpublished manuscripts, Royce identifies several “leading ideas” that run throughout Peirce’s “fragmentary” works. The second of these, Royce says,

dominated his highly remarkable and original version of inductive logic. I have sometimes ventured to call this doctrine by a name which Peirce himself, in some of his early papers, suggests by his illustrations, though I believe that he had never formally used it. This name is the ‘Insurance Theory of Induction.’...It was originally set forth in the series of articles in the *Popular Science Monthly* entitled ‘Illustrations of the Logic of Science.’¹⁰⁷

Peirce introduces the analogy Royce describes in “Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic: Further Consequences of Four Incapacities,” the last of the late 1860s cognition series of papers. There Peirce gives us a somewhat pessimistic account of knowledge, particularly in the context of inductive inferences:

it appears that we cannot say that the generality of inductions are true, but only that in the long run they approximate to the truth. This is the truth of the statement, that the universality of an inference from induction is only the analogue of true universality. Hence, also, it cannot be said that we know an inductive conclusion to be true, however loosely we state it; we

¹⁰⁶ Savan, “Decision and Knowledge,” 50.

¹⁰⁷ Royce and Kernan, “Charles Sanders Peirce,” 705

only know that by accepting inductive conclusions, in the long run our errors balance one another. In fact, insurance companies proceed upon induction;—they do not know what will happen to this or that policyholder; they only know that they are secure in the long run.¹⁰⁸

Later in the same paper, Peirce extends this characterization to cover all forms of knowledge:

for we have seen that that mode of inference which alone can teach us anything, or carry us at all beyond what was implied in our premises—in fact, does not give us to know any more than we knew before; only, we know that, by faithfully adhering to that mode of inference, we shall, on the whole, approximate to the truth. Each of us is an insurance company, in short.¹⁰⁹

Prefiguring his famous “final opinion” theory of truth, in this discussion Peirce characterizes sure knowledge as inherently beyond the grasp of actual inquirers; the best that such finite creatures can do is approximate the truth in such a way that their inevitable errors balance one another. This continues a theme found earlier in the paper that stresses the necessarily finite nature of human knowledge:

However much we know, more may come to be found out. Hence, all can never be known....the sum of all that will be known up to any time, however advanced, into the future, has a ratio less than any assignable ratio to all that may be known at a time still more advanced. This, however, does not, in the least, contradict the fact that everything is cognizable; it only contradicts a proposition, which no one can maintain, that it is possible to cognize everything, that is, that at some time all things will be known.¹¹⁰

This negative doctrine of knowledge is, I believe, a continuation of Peirce’s earlier treatment of Cartesian doubt, and precursor to what will later become fallibilism. Given the nature of knowledge, and the human inquirer, fallibilism is, for Peirce, much

108 CP 5.350

109 CP 5.354

110 CP 5.330

more than the simple qualification that any of my beliefs might be wrong; it qualifies the very methods by which knowledge is sought in actual practice.

According to Savan,

Here then is Peirce's universal and radical doubt, a doubt in some ways more radical than that of Descartes. Peirce is not only doubting all truths and all realities, he is doubting the only method by which, as he sees it, truth and reality can be given any meaning. The very indubitables of the precritical paradise are eaten away by doubt.¹¹¹

This "universal doubt" which Savan locates in Peirce is the crux of the existentialist reading I favor. What I mean by calling this view "existentialist" is seen most clearly when the above account is compared with one given by Kierkegaard over the course of several of his pseudonymous works.¹¹²

Fallibilism and "Objective Uncertainty"

Like Peirce, Kierkegaard criticizes Descartes on the subject of doubt, and takes this a point of departure for his own views on truth. Kierkegaard's earliest, and most sustained treatment of Cartesian doubt is found in *Johannes Climacus or De Ominibus*

¹¹¹ Savan, "Decision and Knowledge," 48.

¹¹² One must, of course, proceed with caution when conducting intertextual analyses that range over different pseudonymous authors within Kierkegaard's oeuvre. In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard famously begged of his readers that they attribute not a single word of his pseudonymous texts to himself but rather to those authors. However, when those texts are taken together, it becomes evident that, despite the differences in perspective, certain themes and ideas are seen to cross over from text to text and author to author. The result appears to be a dialogue of sorts, where identical themes are approached from differing points of view. Taking this into account, my discussion of Kierkegaard here attempts to trace certain themes and voices throughout key texts in his corpus in an attempt to construct a sort of "arranged" or "metanarrative" which, while belonging to no single voice uniquely (Kierkegaard own included) appears in each.

Dubitandum Est, an early work pieced together from preliminary drafts and journal entries, and posthumously published as an independent text.

Johannes Climacus is constructed as a narrative recounting the intellectual development of a young thinker from whom the work draws its title. This Climacus, Kierkegaard says in his notes, “does what we are all told to do—he *actually* doubts everything.”¹¹³ In the book, Kierkegaard begins to spell out a distinction between Cartesian doubt and something very close to doubt that is referred to in the text as “uncertainty,” a distinction which parallels Peirce’s own concern with the affective and logical aspects of doubt. Kierkegaard’s notes on the work point to active willing as the distinguishing factor between this uncertainty and the Cartesian doubt that the work criticizes. He says that Climacus “realized that in doubt there had to be an act of will, for otherwise doubting would become identical with being uncertain” and goes on to contrast this with uncertainty.¹¹⁴ Uncertainty, for Kierkegaard, is ubiquitous, owing to the nature of consciousness and its relation to the world and language. In this, it is the counterpart of the logical function of doubt I trace in Peirce.

Consciousness, as it is treated in *Johannes Climacus* and the corresponding journal entries, is inherently triadic, consisting of immediate reality, ideality (i.e. language and ideas) and their relation to one another in the individual.¹¹⁵ Such a relation necessarily engenders contradiction and generates the uncertainty that is isomorphic with

¹¹³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, ed., trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 325, emphasis added.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹¹⁵ This triadic model of consciousness is an even more striking resemblance between Peirce and Kierkegaard, but will not be treated here. The theme in Peirce’s philosophy is discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Peirce's own version of fallibilism. In Kierkegaard's words, "immediacy is reality; language is ideality; consciousness is contradiction. The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality."¹¹⁶ This is because "*Immediacy is precisely indeterminateness. In immediacy there is no relation, for as soon as there is relation, immediacy is canceled.*"¹¹⁷ This contradiction between reality and ideality, which is inherent to consciousness, is precisely what generates the possibility of doubt:

Therefore, as soon as I bring a reality into relation with an ideality, I have doubt... as soon as I posit a relation that manifests itself as a consequence—for the person who acts spontaneously does not suspect that there is anything called a consequence—then doubt is present; for even if there is no reflection on the consequence, so that the consequence itself is unimportant to one, this knowledge of the consequence is nevertheless an element of doubt.¹¹⁸

Awareness of the triadic nature of consciousness as relating the ideality and reality calls attention to the ultimate incompatibility, or at least incongruence, of these two terms. Doubt is not to be found in either, when taken separately, but only in their conjunction, which is found in consciousness. That is, "if there were nothing but dichotomies, doubt would not exist, for the possibility of doubt resides precisely in the third, which places the two in relation to each other."¹¹⁹

This does not, however, mean that doubt is somehow at odds with consciousness, or is something that is to be disposed of in the interests of promoting the triadic relation. Like Peirce, Kierkegaard takes such doubt to be a condition of thought. He says in his

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 168.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 167. This statement bears a very striking resemblance to Peirce's account of Firstness, particularly in his phenomenology; see Chapter 4.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 251.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 169.

notes, “The possibility of doubt is essential to existence, is the secret of human existence.”¹²⁰ He elaborates on this claim later in the text, saying that, “in a *stricter sense*, doubt is the beginning of the ethical, for as soon as I am to act, the interest lies with me inasmuch as I assume the responsibility and thereby acquire significance.”¹²¹

Clearly, then, an aspect of the essential importance of doubt for human existence is the role it plays in enabling or promoting a more “authentic” existence, i.e. , one in which the individual critically responds to norms and reasons and exercises spontaneity rather than merely parroting his or her fellows. Inherent to ethical existence is the assumption of responsibility. Such responsibility is sidestepped when knowledge, particularly that pertaining to the ethical, is merely received from another. The ethical, while a social function, requires appropriation by the individual in order for it, as well as the individual, to gain significance. Doubt, in some sense, provides the distance between student and teacher necessary for the actual possession of knowledge rather than the mere memorization of dogma. To uncritically adopt, or rather to be subsumed under, prevailing notions of the ethical is, for Kierkegaard, to lead an unauthentic existence, to be, in a sense, something less than fully human. Doubt, then, can be seen as necessary for authentic existence precisely through its engagement of the critical apparatus.¹²²

The second volume of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, which treats the ethical stage of life, continues this argument and concludes with a brief sermon entitled “The Edification Implied in the Thought that as Against God We are Always in the Wrong.” The at-first troublesome nature of the title, i.e., the putative edification to be found in the recognition

¹²⁰ Ibid., 256.

¹²¹ Ibid., 265.

¹²² Here, Kierkegaard draws close to Royce's Peircean-inspired ethical theory, his discussion of “imitation” in particular, which is treated in Chapter 6.

of one's own limitations and error, is, according to its author, Judge William, partially accounted for by the capacity of such a recognition to incapacitate the negative force of doubt. That is, the recognition that with respect to God, all human striving is inherently flawed, "proves its edifying power in a twofold way: partly by the fact that it checks doubt and allays the solicitude of doubt; partly by the fact that it animates to action."¹²³

In characterizing its edifying power, Judge William elevates the simple recognition of human limitation above truths that focus solely on the mundane and secularized aspects of human existence. Moreover, this recognition effects a qualitative change in the existence of the individual.

So, then, the thought that against God we are always in the wrong is not a truth you are compelled to recognize, not a comfort which assuages your pain, not a compensation for the loss of something better, but it is a joy in which you triumph over yourself and over the world, it is your delight, your anthem of praise, your divine worship, a demonstration that your love is a happy one, as only that love can be wherewith one loves God.¹²⁴

Thus, the edifying power of the "thought that against God we are always in the wrong" involves an overcoming of or "triumph" over both the world as well as the self viewed solely in terms of its relationship with that world. Such "triumph" is the product of a reorientation of the individual's relationship to the finite and the infinite.

Hence, to wish to be in the wrong is the expression of an infinite relationship; to wish to be in the right or to find it painful to be in the wrong is the expression for a finite relationship! So, then, it is edifying always to be in the wrong, for only the infinite edifies, not the finite!¹²⁵

¹²³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* vol. 2, trans. Walter Lowrie, (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 353.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 350.

Thus, the individual, for Kierkegaard, should actually desire and strive for the attitude of wanting to be in the wrong with respect to the divine, for only by such will the individual effect an infinite relationship. The contrast between finite and infinite relationships is a central aspect of the discussion of faith found in *Fear and Trembling*. In *Either/Or* doubt is cast as in the form of an uncertainty regarding all human striving, made objective in light of the human relationship to the divine. *Fear and Trembling* develops this notion and adds a new factor in the movement beyond such uncertainty, which is the movement of faith.

The final chapter in the Kierkegaardian account of doubt takes as its principle figure Socrates. Socrates appears in many of Kierkegaard's texts, both in a positive and negative light. In an early journal entry corresponding to *Johannes Climacus*, Kierkegaard situates Socrates with respect to the modern pursuit of a presuppositionless philosophy. "What modern philosophy has been so preoccupied with—to get all presuppositions removed in order to begin with nothing—Socrates did in his own way, in order to end with nothing."¹²⁶ Read in light of subsequent treatments of Socrates in Kierkegaard's texts, this Socratic "way" of abandoning presuppositions could be taken as referring to Socratic ignorance. Furthermore, this ignorance, understood as an objective uncertainty, plays a crucial role in the movement of faith. De Silentio, the author of *Fear and Trembling*, links the two through by way of their common characters as passions. In a footnote he remarks that "Even the well-known Socratic distinction between what one understands and what one does not understand, passion is required, and of course even more to make the characteristic Socratic movement, the movement, namely of ignorance."¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Kierkegaard, *Johannes*, 232.

¹²⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), 53n.

In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus revisits the account of Socrates he put forth in *Philosophical Fragments*, offering a more nuanced and complimentary portrayal of the gadfly of Athens. In this account, Climacus characterizes Socratic ignorance as an objective uncertainty, and equates it with a form of inwardness necessary for truth.

The Socratic ignorance was thus the expression, firmly maintained with all the passion of inwardness, of the relation of the eternal truth to an existing person, and therefore it must remain for him a paradox as long as he exists. Yet it is possible that in the Socratic ignorance there was more truth in Socrates than in the objective truth of the entire system that flirts with the demands of the times and adapts itself to assistant professors.¹²⁸

In this passage, Socrates' method of objective uncertainty is contrasted with the speculative doubt of the "system" as it is employed by "assistant professors" (a title commonly used in Kierkegaard's texts to refer to his contemporary and Hegelian, Hans Lassen Martensen). Socratic ignorance, he says, involves Judge William's recognition regarding the relationship between the human and divine perspectives. Truth, for Climacus, requires such a recognition: "truth is precisely the daring venture of choosing the objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite."¹²⁹ Thus truth, as Climacus defines it, is "*An objective uncertainty, held fast though appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person.*"¹³⁰ In this account of truth, Climacus makes the existence of the inquiring individual an essential component of epistemology. Thus, his definition of truth is qualified: it isn't the highest form of truth per se, but the highest form for any existing person and thus

¹²⁸ Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 202.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

engendering an objective uncertainty. According to Climacus, this definition of truth “is a paraphrasing of faith.”¹³¹

Consequently, the notion of faith operative in the *Postscript* contains within itself reference to the objective uncertainty of Socratic ignorance. That is, as is the case with Peirce, truth requires faith, which itself requires that the individual embrace objective uncertainty.

Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty, see to it that in the objective uncertainty I am ‘out on 70,000 fathoms of water’ and still have faith.¹³²

What I want to draw out here is Kierkegaard's intuition, which he shares with Peirce (despite their significant differences), that doubt, understood as objective uncertainty, is a critical element in inquiry, the relationship between the finite and infinite and practices and ideals, as well as the development of individual selfhood and ethical agency (the last of these themes is treated further in Chapter 6, in a discussion of Royce's development of Peirce's philosophy). Kierkegaard's argument here captures the essence of the reading of Peirce I favor and justifies calling it “existentialist.”¹³³ Doubt is, for both figures, preliminary to the development of their respective notions of fallibilism and “objective uncertainty.” The account of doubt, truth and inquiry that each gives is, I

¹³¹ Ibid., 204.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ I hasten to say that my goal is not to make Kierkegaard into a pragmatist, nor to cast Peirce as a sort of transplanted idealist; my intentions are, rather, to reconcile, as plausibly as possible, two prominent philosophical figures that have remained largely independent of one another in a manner that is fruitful for the continued development of pragmatism.

argue, essentially caught up with their respective understandings of selfhood. While both Kierkegaard and Peirce follow Descartes in taking doubt to be an essential step in the process of inquiry, neither actually adopts a fully Cartesian model of doubt; both distinguish between the universal and actual doubt that they attribute to Descartes and a more localized objective uncertainty that each takes to be the initial moment of inquiry. Peirce presents an account of the individual which, like Kierkegaard's own, makes the troublesome aspect of finitude central to one's actual existence as an individual person. Peirce's fallibilism, construed in the way I argue for, parallels the "objective uncertainty" Kierkegaard lauds in the *Postscript*, and both see a version of faith as essential to the individual's relationship to the truth and the connection between the finite and the infinite.

Consequences of Peirce's Existentialism

Several points become evident in the wake of this existentialist reading. First, it becomes clear just how important a positive model of selfhood is to Peirce's theory of inquiry, indeed his entire philosophy. Vincent Colapietro has recently argued for this point, tracing Peirce's departure from the Kantian model of the self and emphasizing the importance of practical identity to Peirce's philosophy.¹³⁴ Second, this reading makes fallibilism the "lynchpin" of Peirce's philosophy, as discussed above. The characterization of the human inquirer as essentially fallible, I propose, is a theme which unifies all of Peirce's work. In the early papers of the 1860s and '70s, this concern takes

¹³⁴ Vincent Colapietro, "Toward a Pragmatic Conception of Practical Identity" *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 42 no. 2 (2006): 173-205.

the form of a theory of inquiry; later, I argue, it remains central, underlying Peirce's metaphysical theory and semiotic.¹³⁵

This model also points the way to a more profitable reading of Peirce's criticism of Cartesian doubt. Peirce removes doubt from its critical position as groundwork for the foundation of assured knowledge in the Cartesian system, but he makes it just as critical to his own system. Doubt, along with the recognition of ignorance and error, is the individuating principle, as it were, the enabling condition of the individual self.¹³⁶ That is, while Peirce did indeed object to Descartes' universal doubt as a working skepticism placed at the beginning of inquiry, he was not content to cast doubt as merely a psychological state that provides the motivation or inspiration for inquiry. Rather, his reformulation of Cartesian doubt becomes a necessary condition underlying all inquiry and claims to knowledge.¹³⁷

But perhaps the most significant consequence is that any workable account of Peirce's philosophy must sharply distinguish (despite Peirce's own equivocations on the matter) truth as it must be in the ideal (i.e. "Truth" with a capital "T") from the fallible and evolving "truths" employed in actual practice. The former involves Peirce's description of what the concept of truth must be—i.e., what it will be found to be—in his

¹³⁵ Colapietro also makes this connection, in an earlier book: Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989).

¹³⁶ Again, this is only a mark of selfhood, and not a full model, the articulation of which is only latent in Peirce's philosophy and requires the addition of later work by figures such as Royce. I can only promise, here, to give a fuller account of this model in later chapters and connect it with my discussion of John McDowell's project.

¹³⁷ Douglas Anderson also characterizes fallibilism as a reformulation of Cartesian doubt. See: Douglas R. Anderson, "Peirce and Cartesian Rationalism," in *A Companion to Pragmatism*, eds. John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis (Boston: Blackwell, 2006): 154-165.

famous invocation of the ideal community, as the product of infinite inquiry. The latter notion, however, is what is captured in such statements as the insurance company analogy. There, finite inquiry does not produce truth, but settled belief (in the form of reasonable and viable but still defeasible truth-claims) and the sort of hope necessary for any practice or inquiry to even begin (for to treat nothing as even potentially true is to be unable to act at all). Such settled beliefs, however, are nonetheless contingent abstractions or generalizations from actual practice, to be evaluated according to their consequences, which, for Peirce, involves the avoidance of error (for the time being).

It may be objected that this distinction between the definition and application of truth would make truth defined in terms of an ideal community somehow superfluous, leading to an account that more closely resembles Dewey's "warranted assertability." Cheryl Misak, for one, seems to take such a line, advocating the abandonment of idealized forms of truth in reading Peirce's philosophy:

Peirce argued that a true belief is the belief we would come to, were we to inquire as far as we could on a matter. A true belief is a belief which could not be improved upon, a belief which would forever meet the challenges of reasons, argument, and evidence. Peirce initially put this idea in the following unhelpful way: a true belief is one which would be agreed upon at the hypothetical or 'fated' end of inquiry (See W 3, 273, 1878). It is this formulation which is usually attacked by those who see little value in the pragmatist view of truth. But a much better formulation is this: a true belief is one which would withstand doubt, were we to inquire as far as we fruitfully could into the matter. A true belief is such that, no matter how much further we were to investigate and debate, it would not be overturned by recalcitrant experience and argument (CP 5.569, 1901, 6.485, 1908). I have argued elsewhere¹³⁸ that this formulation, unlike the first, is not vulnerable to the standard objections to the pragmatist account of truth.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 49f.

¹³⁹ Cheryl Misak, "C.S. Peirce on Vital Matters," in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 150.

Recall, however, Peirce's theory of inquiry. He says that inquiry ceases in the absence of doubt and that the mind is content to hold as certain whatever beliefs it does not actively doubt. If truth as a concept is defined in such a way that it can never be practically attained by any finite inquirer, then a sort of universal irritation of doubt is introduced. Thus, the actual, finite inquirer is always confronted with an objective uncertainty, or "anxiety," if you will, regarding his or her attempts at reaching a true account. This is another sense in which doubt, functioning here as an objective uncertainty, is actually a condition for thought itself. As Savan argues, in the absence of such doubt, reason itself ceases to exist:

The perfect and complete knowledge of the ideal community would be the death of reason. What such an ideally knowledgeable community affirmed would necessarily exist, and what it denied would necessarily not be. The distinction between truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, would disappear...A world entirely without a spark of chance-spontaneity would be crystalline, perfectly rigid, and perfectly dead.¹⁴⁰

While Peirce allows for the future existence of such a world (at least as a heuristically valuable posit), this is not the world we know or one in which persons (as we commonly understand the term) could even exist.¹⁴¹ Consequently, some doubt of a form such as this seems necessary for the existence of reason and an evolving world, and therefore necessary for the existence of human persons.

Furthermore, ignoring the distinction between the two ways in which Peirce characterizes truth is what has led many commentators to read Peirce's mature philosophy as involving a strong realist departure from his early theory. Take, for example, Ilya Farber's objection to Peirce's definition of truth, which centers on the claim that "there is no way for a finite community of beings to be sure that it has found the best

¹⁴⁰ Savan, "Decision and Knowledge," 49.

¹⁴¹ The role such a posit does play is discussed below, especially in Chapters 4 and 7.

possible answer to a given empirical question.”¹⁴² Clearly, this objection fails to hold against Peirce's philosophy read along existentialist lines; for, as argued above, Peircean truth is such that it is never attained by any finite community, so the question of whether or not such a community has found the best possible answer is moot. Peirce does allow that we believe first-order claims when we have no reason to doubt them; however, his very definition of truth means that we can never have the second-order certainty that these claims are, in fact true.¹⁴³ This is only a first step in Peirce's epistemology, but it is an important one. The definition of truth, then, remains just that, the articulation of what the concept must entail, not a criterion by which to evaluate present, first-order answers to empirical questions.

The absence of this distinction is likewise behind Robert Meyers' claim that Peirce abandoned certain key aspects of his early theory, moving “from pragmatism to a more realist conception of truth.”¹⁴⁴ Central to Meyers' argument is his claim that Peirce eventually abandoned the idealist metaphysics that Meyers' takes to underpin the reliance of reality upon the final opinion. This is because the “idealist” version of the convergence theory has the following consequence:

¹⁴² Ilya Farber, “Peirce on Reality, Truth, and the convergence of Inquiry in the Limit,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no. 3 (2005): 556. This objection is also presented by Farber in the form of a “puzzle” for Peirce's account. He asks, “How could we—the community of rational inquirer—know when we have reached the ultimate answer to a particular question? What is the signal or condition that brings about an end to inquiry?” (p. 549).

¹⁴³ Friedman makes the same point: “[Peirce] is thus both an infallibilist (there are propositions that are doxastically irresistible, that cannot be doubted), and a fallibilist (we can never be certain that a belief is true or false)” (Friedman, “Doubt and Inquiry,” 730). A similar argument can be found in Cooke, “Transcendental Hope,” p. 665.

¹⁴⁴ Robert G. Meyers, “Peirce's ‘Cheerful Hope’ and the Varieties of Realism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no. 2 (2005): 322.

If a proposition is true and its object is real, it will eventually be believed by the community. This implies that *every* aspect of reality will be represented in the final opinion, every law, every experimental result, every historical fact, every missed appointment, and the number of hairs on every person's head.¹⁴⁵

This is essentially the argument from lost facts that Putnam advances and which is treated in the preceding chapter. Furthermore, we have already seen how the attainment of such a final opinion would spell the death of thought and reason, depriving inquiry of the irritation of doubt. The convergence theory must then be distinguished from the approximate truths that function to enable finite inquiry. However, Meyers argues that to make such a distinction is to allow for “the possibility that even in the long run, the community's beliefs and reality might diverge. [Peirce] could still hold that every question has a knowable answer, but he could no longer prove that it must have one.”¹⁴⁶ This, Meyers argues, forced Peirce's 1893 reformulation of his convergence theory, where he qualifies it as a “cheerful hope.”

However, the change from “great law” to “cheerful hope” does not, as Meyers argues, signal a shift to a realist philosophy from an earlier idealist position; it's meant, rather, to capture more accurately certain consequences of the earlier view. Already in the 1868 “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” Peirce had introduced the notion of hope that governs the 1893 definition of truth:

If there are some indications that something greatly for my interest, and which I have anticipated would happen, may not happen; and if, after weighing probabilities, and inventing safeguards, and straining for further information, I find myself unable to come to any fixed conclusion in reference to the future, in the place of that intellectual hypothetical inference which I seek, the feeling of *anxiety* arises. When something happens for

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 321.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 337.

which I cannot account, I *wonder*. When I endeavor to realize to myself what I never can do, a pleasure in the future, I *hope*.¹⁴⁷

Given a definition of truth that makes its achievement impossible for any actual community or finite inquiry, Peirce could not maintain, as the earlier wording might be taken to indicate, that the truth *will* be arrived at in actual inquiry, for such can never be carried to an infinite extent. Consequently, the animating principle must be a form of faith or hope. This does not, however, require that Peirce change his definition of truth as a concept, or abandon his pragmatism built around actual practices. As we have seen, such a definition of truth, and the universal doubt it introduces, is a necessary condition for inquiry and even thought. Hope is what allows for inquiry to proceed in the face of such doubt. This hope-driven theory of inquiry resists any disjunctive classification as “idealist” or “realist.” It is indeed the disjunction that obscures the truly novel and interesting aspects of Peirce's thought by normalizing his position. An existentialist reading of Peirce's positive model of selfhood and its importance to the rest of his philosophy begins to retrieve a more balanced account of both elements. It is in this spirit that I mean to interpret Peirce's unique position by way of a careful use of Savan's term “existentialist.”

Peirce's “Objective Idealism”

We are led to see that the question that confronts Peirce scholarship is the very one that Peirce himself faced; indeed, its answer proves to be one of the central concerns of present-day attempts to formulate a viable model of naturalism. For what, finally, is the relationship between thought and reality? How does inquiry reflect and model the ostensibly independent world that is its subject? To eliminate the space between the external world and the thought which characterizes it is typically to fall prey to one of

¹⁴⁷ CP 5.292, emphasis in the original.

two reductions. If the “real world” is wholly independent from thought, in a noumenal sense, then it is not clear how our inquiry, conceptually formed and articulated as it is, can ever adequately model or investigate that reality, or that it even *should* be able to do so. This is effectively Hegel’s objection to Kant’s transcendentalism. Moreover, such an approach would risk becoming dualistic on pain of completely eliding the significance, importance and reality of Intentional structures such as art, selfhood, and meaning. To identify thought and reality, however, seems to deprive inquiry of any objective standard. This, in turn, is Peirce’s objection to Hegelian philosophy. Peirce’s “objective idealism” (or at least early articulations of it) had meant to meet this dilemma head-on. Peirce answers critics of his account in an undated manuscript which bears the title “Logic. The Theory of Reasoning. Part I. Exact Logic. Introduction. What is Logic (EL)”:

I shall be told that I am uncritical, because a man can never escape from his own thoughts, so that a logic such as I conceive would be utterly inscrutable. I reply that it is not I but the so-called "critical philosophy" which is uncritical and drifts about without a rudder, in consequence of a confusion of ideas. The confusion is between thought, in general, and a particular man's thoughts in a particular stage of development. I grant that a man cannot think without thoughts; but every man is perpetually growing out of *his* thoughts. Our hope is, in reference to any particular object of study, that this development would in time result in the man's being more and more drawn out of the ways of thinking that are peculiarly his, and brought toward the same result toward which every other man would be brought. This ultimate destiny of opinion is quite independent of how you, I, or any man may persist in thinking. It is thought, but it is not my thought or yours, but is the thought that will conquer. It is this that every student hopes for. It is the Truth; and the reality of this truth lies, not at all in its being thought, but in the compulsion with which every thinker will be made to bow to it, a compulsion which constitutes it to be exterior to his thought. If this hope is altogether vain, if there is no such compulsion, or externality, then there is no true Knowledge at all and reasoning is altogether idle. If the hope is destined only partially to be realized, then there is an approximate reality and truth, which is not exact.¹⁴⁸

Several contemporary Peirce scholars and commentators have sought to re-fracture what Peirce joined in his own theory. To be fair, the debate is at least partially enabled by Peirce's own ambivalence. However, his answer to the problem is easily seen once fallibilism is taken to be the governing concept of his entire philosophy. It is my intuition that whatever doctrine Peirce actually held was one that is not easily classified according to the disjunctive characterizations of "idealism" and "realism." He was in his own time well-aware of the nature of the debate and I read his work as navigating between the two options in a way that captures the best intuitions of all sides. As such, there are indeed elements of his thought and work that would indicate his favoring a modified form of realism. However, there is just as much evidence of this sort that would support a reading of his philosophical system as a form of (objective) idealism. Perhaps Peirce himself had no final answer to the question. I think it likelier, however, that his answer was just of a form that did not easily lend itself to expression with the discursive space the debate has described. The point is that once these categories have been modified enough to allow for Peirce's thought to fit snugly within either, the payoff is minimal. To call Peirce a realist of a "very unique" or "special" variety really tells us nothing about what it was that Peirce thought, for the qualifications of "unique" and "special" come to dominate the concept of realism such that we might just as easily say it was an idealism of a unique variety that Peirce was espousing. To be sure, this does not mean that the question of realism and idealism is not important or is absent from this project; no responsible account of Peirce could ignore such issues. I simply mean to say that I see the argument over Peirce's realism as falling prey to the law of diminishing returns, and that the the continued efforts to answer, once and for all, the question of his realism have done more to distract scholarship of Peirce's philosophy than they have to increase our understanding of it.

As the passage from MS 735 shows, Peirce was unwavering in his doctrine that, ultimately, truth and reality cannot be located outside of thought in general, that thought “will conquer” (just how this is so is a function of Peirce’s metaphysical doctrine of Mind, a subject addressed in the following chapter). All of inquiry is meant to aim at such thought; but, as the above discussion of Peircean truth shows, no inquirer or finite community of inquirers, can ever claim to have arrived at it. This is the force of Peirce’s distinction between thought in general and any one person’s particular thought (or even any particular community of inquirers’ thought).

Thus, while Peirce’s theory of doubt and fallibilism is enabled and conditioned by a specific model of selfhood, his account is, ultimately, not psychologistic. On the contrary; his model prevents doubt (and belief and even hope) from being treated as no more than psychological states or propositional attitudes, by making them the conditions for the very existence of consciousness. As Peirce himself says, “We ought to say that we are in thought, and not that thoughts are in us.”¹⁴⁹ Peirce thus presents an account that, like traditional existentialist philosophies, is founded on a specific characterization of selfhood in which the defining features of the individual are limitation and finitude.

In the next chapter, I discuss Peirce’s account of the relationship between thought, truth and evolution, drawing on two of Peirce’s unpublished manuscripts to show how his metaphysical theory, including the doctrine of synechism and his triadic metaphysics, is governed by his fallibilism. The account he gives in his later metaphysical theory can, I argue, be construed as a “Darwinianized Hegelism” (to borrow Peirce’s own phrase) which provides the essential metaphysical underpinning for his fallibilism and a promising direction for philosophical naturalism in the twenty-first century.

¹⁴⁹ CP 5.389n.

CHAPTER 4

“DARWINIANIZED HEGELISM”:

FALLIBILISM, PHENOMENOLOGY AND NATURALISM

“We become human not just by being born *Homo sapiens*, but by relying on a complex network of artefacts: language and other symbolic systems, social conventions, tools in the context of their use—artefacts which are in a way extensions of ourselves, but which in turn we actualize in our personal lives.”

Marjorie Grene¹⁵⁰

In the decades immediately following his “Illustrations of the Logic of Science,” Peirce becomes increasingly occupied with the application of his triadic system of categories to metaphysics, semiotics and phenomenology (which he will eventually call “phaneroscopy”). A significant motivation for these forays, I offer, is what I have been calling the “existential crisis” his theory of truth introduces. Peirce places truth at the end of infinite inquiry; as such, it is beyond the grasp of any individual or community within finite time. Given that we can never know whether or not any given belief or accepted fact forms part of the final opinion, we must view all human inquiry as inherently fallible, admitting that any belief or body of accepted knowledge could be wrong, even radically so. However, Peirce's commitment to objectivity by way of scientifically-modeled inquiry requires that such provisional knowledge be self-correcting, that, in the long run, we will discover and correct false beliefs. Later pragmatists, particularly those following a Deweyan-styled instrumentalism, will be satisfied to end the account here, taking it as a matter of course that scientific inquiry will be sufficiently self-corrective for knowledge to progress. Peirce, however, feels the need for such a faith to be justified. To this end, he

¹⁵⁰ Marjorie Grene, “People and Other Animals,” in *The Understanding of Nature: Essays in the Philosophy of Biology* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1974): 358.

develops a nuanced evolutionary metaphysics that justifies and enables his theory of truth as the outcome of infinite inquiry.

In this chapter, I trace the development of this period in Peirce's thought, specifically as it pertains to his continued analysis of fallibilism and looking ahead to his account of selfhood (the subject of Chapter 5). I focus on his plan for a book, titled *A Guess at the Riddle*, and draw on several unpublished manuscripts. These manuscripts, which span the period between the late 1880s and 1904, indicate the direction in which Peirce intended to develop the project he begins in *A Guess*, and outline a promising system of fallibilist philosophy that brings together evolutionary cosmology, phenomenology and semiotics. This forms his naturalism, a synthesis of mind and nature which I will call, borrowing a phrase from Peirce, a “Darwinianized Hegelism.”

Peirce and the Sphynx: *A Guess at the Riddle*

From the late 1880s on, and particularly during what Max Fisch calls his “*Monist*” period, Peirce is at work to record a systematic account of his entire philosophical project. Two of the most famous attempts are a proposed book series, *The Principles of Philosophy*, and an incomplete monograph, *A Guess at the Riddle*. The second of these, of which only 60-some manuscript pages were completed, would, arguably, have been Peirce's principal work in speculative philosophy. In an alternate draft of the first page he claims that “this book, if ever written, as soon as it will be if I am in a situation to do it, will be one of the births of time.”¹⁵¹

As its title would suggest, the book was an attempt to uncover the “secret of the sphynx,” that is, “the meaning of man.”¹⁵² Peirce's “guess” is essentially the hypothesis

¹⁵¹ MS 909

¹⁵² CP 7.584

that thought is not limited to human consciousness alone and that the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness characterize the structure of all of reality; the planned book was divided into chapters demonstrating the applicability of the categories to various fields of human inquiry, including logic, metaphysics, biology and “pneumatology” (what Peirce also calls “sociology” and which takes as its subject matter “a sort of public spirit among the nerve cells”; the account bears a strong resemblance to Hegel's discussion of *Geist*).

In a draft of the first chapter of the *Guess*, titled “Trichotomy” or “One, Two, Three” (both also alternate titles for the book), Peirce gives a general account of the three categories, their interrelatedness and their roles in the evolution of the entire universe.

“The First,” he says,

is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The Second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The Third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other.¹⁵³

This outline of the categories immediately leads to a discussion of their relation to Peirce's doctrine of synechism and his evolutionary cosmology. As will become characteristic of his later work on the subject, Peirce here describes evolutionary theory as being much broader in scope than the merely biological model of natural selection; evolution in this broad sense is one of three alternative ways of modeling the career of the universe in its entirety, namely the one whose “creed is that the whole universe is approaching in the infinitely distance future a state having a general character different from that toward which we look back in the infinitely distant past,” and which makes “the absolute to consist in two distinct real points.”¹⁵⁴ The two points Peirce has in mind as

¹⁵³ EP I 248

¹⁵⁴ EP I 251

marking the infinite past and the infinite future are absolute manifestations of his categories of Firstness and Secondness, respectively. Thus, the ultimate starting point of the universe is, for Peirce, a state of pure, undifferentiated potentiality and the state to which everything is tending is one of absolute and “unalterable fixity”. This latter point is the state reflected in the “final opinion,” as well as the reality which corresponds to it, and would be the static “death of reason” identified by Savan and discussed in the previous chapter, for it is “the external dead thing that is preeminently second.”¹⁵⁵ Both points, as “absolute,” are unattainable limits of experience¹⁵⁶; the intervening span between them, which necessarily captures all finite stretches of time and is thus the only sort of state in which humans will ever find themselves, is characterized by Thirdness. Thirdness, however, can never achieve the absolute character of the two termini; those ultimate beginning and end points, like truth, will forever be beyond the reach of actual inquiry. As he goes on to say, “the third is of its own nature relative, and this is what we are always thinking, even when we aim at the first or second.”¹⁵⁷ Peirce is thus articulating a model under which all human knowledge and inquiry is shown to be a flux of interpretations that remain necessarily relative and subject to change.

Fallibilism as a Metaphysical Doctrine

A few years after writing the incomplete drafts for the *Guess*, Peirce was at work on a lecture the bulk of which (contained in CSP MS 955) explicitly details the fundamental role played by fallibilism in the doctrine of continuity and his account of evolution, two of the principal strands that compose his system and both central topics of

155 EP I 250

156 EP II 1

157 Ibid.

the *Guess*.¹⁵⁸ In so doing, Peirce extends his fallibilism, showing it to be not only an epistemological doctrine, but a metaphysical one as well.

Several passages in the *Guess* manuscript are echoed in MS 955, reflecting both Peirce's penchant for recycling earlier material in his lectures and papers, and his continued development of the project begun in that work. These similarities support the close affinity that the MS 955 lecture bears to the project of the *Guess*, despite there being no mention of the categories in the later lecture. The central argument of MS 955 bears on the limits of human reasoning: "there are three things to which we can never hope to attain by reasoning," Peirce says, "namely, absolute certainty, absolute exactitude, absolute universality."¹⁵⁹ These limitations follow from Peirce's evolutionary cosmology, sketched above: absolute certainty, exactitude and universality in reasoning are only possible given a static world and completed inquiry; as both are only found at the end of infinite inquiry, they are never attainable by actual human reasoning; as absolute, they are unattainable limits of experience. Consequently, "approximation must be the fabric out of which our philosophy has to be built."¹⁶⁰ However, due to the fact that human inquiry is only ever able to sample a portion of the universe, "we cannot be absolutely certain that our conclusions are even *approximately* true; for the sample may be utterly unlike the unsampled part of the collection."¹⁶¹ The finite nature of this

¹⁵⁸ In dating the manuscript to 1893, I follow the editors of the Peirce Edition Project who show that the 1897 date given by the editors of CP was in error. For a discussion of the reasons for the earlier date, see André De Tienne, "Scientific Fallibilism': Peirce's Forgotten Lecture of 1893," *Peirce Project Newsletter* 4, no.1 (Indianapolis: Peirce Edition Project, 2001): 4-5, 11. <http://www.iupui.edu/~peirce/news/4_1/4.1pdf.htm> .

¹⁵⁹ CP 1.141

¹⁶⁰ EP I 274

¹⁶¹ CP 1.141, emphasis added.

sampling process also holds with respect to future developments; Peirce's universe is constantly evolving and harbors an element of real chance, so no certainty or exactitude that might ever be achieved at any given point could be universalized to future points in time. This argument, then, reiterates the strong fallibilism identified in previous chapters, and Peirce takes it to have the consequence that “if exactitude, certitude, and universality are not to be attained by reasoning, there is certainly no other means by which they can be reached.”¹⁶² This logical argument (which also includes a list of alternative sources of certain, exact or universal knowledge which are each discounted in turn) reinforces the practical argument Peirce offers elsewhere, namely that nothing should be done to “block the road of inquiry” (as claims to certain and unchanging knowledge would). The lecture itself is, perhaps, one of Peirce's most explicit discussions of the force of his fallibilism and the consequences of the doctrine.

Peirce freely admits that his own account of fallibilism was commonplace even at that point in the history of thought, but he also indicates that the consequences of adopting such a strong fallibilism are often ignored. “Indeed, most everybody will admit it until he begins to see what is involved in the admission—and then most people will draw back...[The doctrine of fallibilism] will be denied by those who fear its consequences for science, for religion, and for morality.”¹⁶³ Tracing these consequences leads Peirce to a claim that is often overlooked in discussions of his thought, but which is particularly relevant to the present discussion. This claim explicitly links fallibilism with the doctrine of continuity (synechism), in a way that makes the former, rather than to the latter, primary: “The principle of continuity is the idea of fallibilism objectified. For fallibilism is the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it

¹⁶² CP 1.142

¹⁶³ CP 1.148

were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy. Now the doctrine of continuity is that *all things* so swim in continua.”¹⁶⁴

Peirce's characterization of synechism as the “idea of fallibilism objectified” is intriguing and warrants closer attention; the statement has significant ramifications for Peirce's philosophy as synechism, not fallibilism, is typically taken to be the governing doctrine of Peirce's philosophy. But the question immediately arises as to how an ostensibly negative and epistemological doctrine such as fallibilism could actually be an idea which, when “objectified,” accounts for the continuity of reality Peirce detects. At another point in MS 955, Peirce clarifies the relationship between the two concepts somewhat. There, he underscores the importance of empirical observation to synechism but shows that such observation gains its significance only when it precedes out of a strong fallibilism. “The doctrine of continuity rests upon observed fact as we have seen. But what opens our eyes to the significance of that fact is fallibilism.”¹⁶⁵

Peirce's remark that fallibilism “opens our eyes to the significance” of continuity should not be taken to mean that he sees fallibilism as merely awakening us to our need for a theory such as is provided by synechism. Rather, fallibilism reveals the continuity of all things because it is a particularly, perhaps even uniquely, apt reflection of the world revealed by advancements in the natural sciences throughout the 19th century. This is particularly evident in the development of models based on probability and statistics.

¹⁶⁴ CP 1.171, emphasis in the original

¹⁶⁵ CP 1.172

Peirce and Darwin: Tychism and the Law of Errors

The development of probability and statistics in the natural sciences was originally a response to what is often called “the law of errors.”¹⁶⁶ At the very beginning of the nineteenth century, advances in the field of astronomy were hampered by difficulties surrounding the measurement of astronomical bodies. Owing to various factors, such as atmospheric interference, imperfections in equipment, and human error, it proved impossible at the time to determine the exact location of such objects in a manner that would be invariably confirmed by future observation. The solution to this problem came in the form of a radical shift in approach; rather than concentrating on developing methods and technologies that would eliminate the error-producing factors in observation, astronomers of the time made the errors themselves the objects of observation and measurement. In order to determine the exact location of a star, then, all conflicting observations were collected and expressed as a group. This revealed a pattern of convergence among the data enabling the selection of a point of ideal convergence among all the observations. This point, even if it was not the product of any *actual* observation, became, at least for the sake of hypothesis, the accepted location of the star. What is important is that the solution produced through the law of errors integrates, rather than seeks to escape, ignorance and error. This is the insight that leads to the employment of statistically modeled and probabilistic approaches to science. As T.L. Short puts the matter, “probability,” in such cases, “is a measure of our ignorance.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ For a detailed account of the law of errors, its relationship to the development of statistical modeling and probability in the natural sciences as well as to Peirce's own thought, see Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), especially pp. 177-200.

¹⁶⁷ T.L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 121.

The success of this approach led to the development of models based on statistical calculation and probability which were then fruitfully applied to other fields in both the natural and social sciences. Two of these applications exercised a profound influence on Peirce's thought: the study of gasses and Darwin's theory of natural selection. In "The Fixation of Belief," he makes the connection between the two explicit:

Mr. Darwin proposed to apply the statistical method to biology. The same thing has been done in a widely different branch of science, the theory of gasses. Though unable to say what the movements of any particular molecule of gas would be on a certain hypothesis regarding the constitution of this class of bodies, Clausius and Maxwell were yet able, by the application of the doctrine of probabilities, to predict that in the long run such and such a proportion of the molecules would, under given circumstances, acquire such and such velocities...In like manner, Darwin, while unable to say what the operation of variation and natural selection in any individual case will be, demonstrated that in the long run they will adapt animals to their circumstances.¹⁶⁸

There is no question that Darwin had a significant influence on Peirce's thought, and that Peirce admired him as one of the leading scientists of his day. Although he was wary of characterizations of statistical modeling and probability that aspire toward deterministic mechanics, he seems to count Darwin's evolutionary insight as a crucial step towards an adequate philosophy. Moreover, he sees evolutionary theory as following from fallibilism. In MS 955 Peirce argues that, in addition to synechism, fallibilism entails the other central doctrine of his "guess," viz. evolution: "fallibilism cannot be appreciated in anything like its true significancy until evolution has been considered. This is what the world has been most thinking of for the last forty years—though old enough is the general idea itself."¹⁶⁹ In general, the interrelationship of fallibilism and evolution is

¹⁶⁸ W 3:244. For a thorough account of the relation between these applications of statistical modeling and Peirce's semiotic, see Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, especially pp. 117-144.

¹⁶⁹ CP 1.173

manifest in the continuity of the universe along the lines of Peirce's categories as discussed above. However, as his comment about the state of thought “for the last forty years” indicates, Peirce also has in mind a more specific application of the doctrine within the field of biology, prompted by the success of Darwin's theory of natural selection.

Peirce devotes several pages in MS 955 to an account of Darwinian evolution. This long passage closely resembles the section of the *Guess* manuscript comprising “Chapter VI. The Triad in Biological Development”; in the corresponding note, he claims that the purpose of this chapter is “to show the true nature of the Darwinian hypothesis.”¹⁷⁰ In both variations of the passage, Peirce illustrates Darwin's account by way of an analogy to a game of chance (in MS 955 it is “rouge et noir”—a french card game resembling blackjack and which is also called “Trente et Quarante”—and in the *Guess* manuscript it is a simple dice game in which players bet on whether an even or odd number will be rolled). In the analogy, a million players begin the game, each with one franc (or dollar) to bet. Each player, Peirce says, is analogous to a species (Peirce also uses the terms “race” and “form” in variant drafts) and as the game progresses certain proportions of the entire group achieve varying degrees of wealth while others “die out” due to a lack of funds (in one draft of MS 955 quite literally, “because all those whose fortunes are reduced to nothing go and blow their brains out”). The same can be said of species in Darwin's account, Peirce claims, “because all those [species] that sink below a certain level of rigor are wiped out” while the others profit. The comparison is meant to highlight the operation of chance within Darwin's theory. Development, which takes the form of wealth in the game and variety of species in Darwinian evolution, is the product of random processes (a roll of a die, shuffling of cards or suitability of a species

¹⁷⁰ EP I 246

to its environment). In a series of papers written and published during this same period, Peirce will call an evolutionary model such as this “tychasm,” that is, “evolution by fortuitous chance.”¹⁷¹

Although he is not satisfied that a tychastic model is adequate for the purpose of explaining the evolution of the universe at large, Peirce does allow that it captures an important element of reality: “there is little doubt,” he says in the *Guess*, “that the Darwinian theory indicates a real cause.”¹⁷² And this is one of the ways in which evolution reveals the “true significancy” of fallibilism. For, the operation of real chance within the development of species in particular, and the universe in general, means that the precise nature of the end of that process is not latent in earlier stages, can only be guessed at, and may turn out to be radically different than one would suppose at any point along the development. Just as there is no guarantee that a player in the richest bracket by the third hand of the game will even be present by the ninth (and very little to support a guess about either outcome) and no way of knowing with certainty that current species will be suitably adapted to their environments in the future, so too are our ideas about the world subject to certain chance processes that may result in their extinction. Real chance introduces an ever-present logical cause for doubt, even when this doubt does not rise to the level of an irritation that motivates actual inquiry (i.e., does not become a “real” doubt in Peirce's terminology).

Moreover, the value of the statistical method, as developed in Darwinian theory, is shown in its applicability to aspects of reality that are not subject to description by way of mechanical laws. As was seen with respect to the law of errors, and as T.L. Short has argued, the value of statistical modeling lies not in its capacity to compensate for present

¹⁷¹ EP I 362

¹⁷² EP I 270

deficiencies in knowledge and measurement; rather, it is valuable because it accurately describes aspects of the universe that are not subject to mechanical or law-like representation no matter how advanced our knowledge and measurements become: “Even were more exact methods available, they would not suffice. For they would not explain what is explained statistically, which is a different aspect of reality, a different phenomenon.”¹⁷³ In fact, the development of statistical modeling in science and mathematics may even be the inspiration for Peirce's firm belief that there is an element of real chance operative in the universe. As he will later say in a draft for his *Grand Logic*, there is an element of indeterminacy pervading all reality, owing to the evolutionary development from pure potentiality to absolute finality; reality is a matter of degree for Peirce, and this means that not all of the universe is as yet fully determinate.

Recall the passage quoted in Chapter 2:

When we busy ourselves to find the answer to a question, we are going upon the hope that there is an answer, which can be called *the* answer, that is, the final answer. It may be there is none...Now it is certainly conceivable that this world which we call the real world is not perfectly real but that there are things similarly indeterminate. We cannot be sure that it is not so.¹⁷⁴

Peirce's understanding of indeterminacy leads back, again, to fallibilism; such indeterminacy, if it exists, leaves us with no other way to characterize our inquiry and provisional knowledge and the question of whether or not there even is such indeterminacy cannot be answered with certainty, thus reinforcing a fallibilist attitude. Moreover, in an argument that is strikingly relevant to current discussions of naturalism, Peirce denies the existence of mechanical laws which would govern *all* the fundamental processes of reality. This intuition has been picked up most recently by McDowell, who

¹⁷³ Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 125.

¹⁷⁴ CP 4.61

advocates a form of naturalism which holds that “what the modern scientific revolution yielded was clarity about the realm of law, and that is not the same as clarity *about nature*.”¹⁷⁵

However, indeterminacy and chance are not the only elements observable in the universe and which philosophy, as a science, must come to grips with. In fact, they are, according to Peirce, not even the proper objects of philosophical explanation. This leaves us with the question, of course, as to exactly what is. This is a question that occurred to Peirce as well, and in other work from the same period, he develops an answer.

Spontaneity, Law and Growth

In a manuscript that is likely an early draft for what will become Peirce's 1890s *Monist* series, and which predates the lecture partially contained in 955,¹⁷⁶ Peirce poses the question, “what shall we ask that evolution explain?”¹⁷⁷ He begins his reply by first remarking “that two elements of nature are manifest—Spontaneity and Law.”¹⁷⁸ In what follows, Peirce offers a familiar argument against nominalism, a doctrine which he understands to deny one of these manifest elements, (*viz.* spontaneity), and continues by claiming that such a position is “illogical.” Nominalism is illogical in this context because it denies the spirit of fallibilism: “We never can be warranted in saying that

¹⁷⁵ John McDowell, *The Engaged Intellect* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2009): 261.

¹⁷⁶ My reasoning here is as follows: the various texts contain similar subject matter, but in this manuscript, Peirce uses the term “form” to correspond to Darwin's use of “species.” Variant drafts of MS 955 also use “form” in this sense, but they were later crossed out and replaced by “race”; the most mature drafts of the material contain only the latter term.

¹⁷⁷ MS 954

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

anything is absolutely exact. [The nominalists] can have no justification for the denial of spontaneity or for saying its existence is improbable.”¹⁷⁹ More damning than this, however, is what Peirce sees as the positive evidence for the manifestation of spontaneity in nature. This, he says, is to be found in the “most obtrusive fact in nature,” namely its “variety and multiplicity,”¹⁸⁰ a feature that is often (ironically) overlooked because of its sheer ubiquity. Such variety, Peirce claims, cannot be accounted for, either in the sense of production or development, by the remaining feature of nature (the one the nominalists do not deny), mechanical law. This is because such laws amount to prescriptions that govern the regularity of a “fixed result” occurring under certain circumstances and would not produce the variety observed. Peirce concludes that “All this multiplicity, then, was either the work of a spontaneous will, or else it was without any definite cause, that is exists by its own spontaneity.”¹⁸¹

However, after having vouchsafed the reality of spontaneity, Peirce immediately makes the claim that this spontaneity is not the proper object of inquiry and explanation: “to ask that spontaneity should be explained is illogical and indeed absurd.”¹⁸² He does not further elaborate this claim here, but does give an argument to the same end in the *Guess* manuscript, relating it to the categories:

There is...[a] class of facts of which it is not reasonable to expect an explanation, namely, facts of indeterminacy or variety. Why one definite kind of event is frequent and another rare, is a question to be asked, but a reason for the general fact that of events some are kinds are common and some rare, it would be unfair to demand. If all births took place on a given day of the week, or if there were always more on Sundays than on

179 Ibid.

180 Ibid.

181 Ibid.

182 Ibid.

Mondays, that would be a fact to be accounted for, but that they happen in about equal proportions on all the days requires no particular explanation.¹⁸³

This is because indeterminacy and variety are forms of “pure firstness,” and while the “first is full of life and variety...that variety is only potential; it is not definitely there.”¹⁸⁴ Like pure Secondness, as manifested, for example, in the ultimate “hereness and nowness” of an existing individual (what Peirce, following Scotus, calls its *haecceity*), these facts do not exhibit the logic of relations, or mediation of Thirdness of which all thought and explanation consists. “Indeterminacy affords us nothing to ask a question about; haecceity is the *ultima ratio*, the brutal fact that will not be questioned.”¹⁸⁵

In contrast to spontaneity, “that law be explained is a natural and proper demand of the Spirit of Inquiry”; to deny the possibility of such an explanation is to violate the “first rule” of inquiry, as Peirce would have it, and is to “block the path of inquiry.” As I argued in Chapter 2, only such law could be the object of rational inquiry, and the possibility of such inquiry secures the reality of generals: “intelligibility, or reason objectified, is what makes thirdness genuine.”¹⁸⁶ Peirce's speculation on the nature such an explanation must take leads him to a central concept in his discussion of continuity and evolution during this period: growth. For Peirce, laws grow; as such, he makes “some principle of growth more fundamental than any mechanical law.”¹⁸⁷

183 EP I 275

184 EP I 257

185 EP I 275

186 EP I 255

187 Ibid. Peirce's understanding of growth as more fundamental than mechanical law will have significant consequences for current discussions of philosophical naturalism; it prefigures a central claim of McDowell's model and offers a promising course for avoiding reductionism and eliminativism in naturalism. This is discussed in Chapter 6.

Agapasm and the Growth of Law

The growth of law and its immediate consequence, the claim that “matter is mind which has come under the almost complete domination of habit,”¹⁸⁸ is the central thesis of Peirce's evolutionary cosmology and is articulated in depth in a series of papers published in the early 1890s in the *Monist*. It is there that he introduces the terms “tychasm” and “anancasm” to characterize the evolutionary theories based on fortuitous variation and mechanical necessity, respectively, and contrasts them with his own favored model “agapasm.” Peirce initially frames this discussion in terms of an opposition between what he takes to be the central ideas of the Darwin and Hegel, and associates his own agapasm with the views of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.

Peirce finds tychastic theories unsatisfactory because, while he upholds the presence of real chance in the universe, chance alone is insufficient to account for growth, particularly with respect to the growth of ideas as described in his “Law of Mind.” Anancastic theories, on the other hand, ignore the presence and importance of chance and make all growth and development the product of static and mechanistic laws that underlie the changing universe but are themselves not subject to the processes of evolution. In this, they are the metaphysical counterparts of the a priori method for settling belief Peirce rejects in “The Fixation of Belief.” Moreover, as he shows elsewhere, such laws are unable to account for real growth and development. With these objections in mind, Peirce turns to a variation of Lamarck's account as a promising alternative model capable of explaining the extra-biological operation of evolution. However, he is quick to conclude that Lamarck's account is not without its own deficiencies. In the same paper, Peirce calls Lamarck's theory “nonsense” because habit

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

“is inertia” and therefore unable to motivate growth in the way that Lamarck takes it to do.

Peirce's final model is, then, a dialectical synthesis of tychasm and anacasm which he calls agapasm, and associates with Lamarck. However, Peirce makes virtually no mention of Lamarck after this first series of papers on evolution in the early 1890s. My intuition is that what drew Peirce to Lamarck's account (imperfect though it was even for his own purposes) he eventually finds, by way of a late correspondence with Royce, in a more appropriate form in Hegel.¹⁸⁹ Thus, in his mature period, Peirce's evolutionary metaphysics might be accurately described as akin to what he takes to be Hegelian philosophy, but one that is tempered by the best science of the day and which better captures the contingency and chance which pervades reality. He gets this tempering line of thought from Darwinian natural selection.

Peirce and Hegel

The precise relationship of Peirce's philosophy to Hegel's own is decidedly unclear, despite some of Peirce's own remarks to the contrary.¹⁹⁰ However, the subject has only recently received sustained attention. Recent developments in the scholarship of both figures seems to indicate that, as Robert Stern remarks, they had much more in common than Peirce himself originally thought, and that Peirce's criticisms of Hegel are at times “implausible” and “suggest that he may have had little understanding of his opponent's thought.”¹⁹¹ Stern himself has begun an account of Peirce's relationship to

¹⁸⁹ This argument is developed further in Chapter 5.

¹⁹⁰ Take, for example, his claim to “reject [Hegel's] philosophy in toto” (EP I 256)

¹⁹¹ Robert Stern, “Peirce, Hegel, and the Category of Secondness,” *Inquiry* 50 no. 2 (April 2007): 132. See, also, Stern's paper “Peirce on Hegel: Nominalist or Realist?” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41 no. 1 (Winter 2005): 65-99.

and criticisms of Hegel by way of Peirce's categories. While I agree with Stern's overall project to show that Peirce and Hegel are not as opposed to one another as Peirce sometimes claims, and that such claims are often a result of Peirce's lack of familiarity with of Hegel's philosophy, I believe that Stern ends his story too soon in taking Peirce to remain a critic of Hegel (and Royce). A full discussion of whether or not Peirce is at all accurate in his assessment of Hegel would extend well beyond the scope of the current project. Nevertheless, we can trace a shift in attitude within Peirce's own account, as he comes to view Hegel's philosophy as in line with his own. Consequently, in what follows I will limit my discussion to the influence of Hegelian themes, as Peirce understood them, on pragmatism, leaving aside the question as to whether or not these reflect an accurate reading of Hegel's own philosophy.

In one of his many contributions to *The Nation*, the primary source of income for the then-destitute family, Peirce speculates about a promising direction for philosophy that draws on his fallibilist theory of truth and inquiry:

An a-priori philosophy ought not to pronounce in advance upon the truth of anything which is capable of verification or refutation by subsequent experience. But beyond the realm of verification truth and falsity lose their meanings. Hence the moment a philosopher, upon a-priori or epistemological grounds, enunciates any proposition whatever as true, we are warned to be upon our guard against some jugglery. Where we have no scientifically observed facts to go upon, the prudent thing is to confess our downright ignorance. Even where we have such facts, we are subject to a probable error. From this pregnant fact, if one only takes it to heart, can be developed a whole Darwinianized Hegelism, having fruitful suggestions and indications for the prosecution of science and for the conduct of life.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Charles Peirce, "Ritchie's Darwin and Hegel," in *Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to the Nation*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Edward Cook (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1975-1987), 201-2.

This passage, which concludes a scathing review of David G. Ritchie's book, *Darwin and Hegel with Other Philosophical Studies*, is intriguing for a number of reasons, not least of which is its indication of a shift in Peirce's attitude towards Hegel. Throughout most of his career, Peirce dismisses Hegelian philosophy as overemphasizing the category of Thirdness, and thus lacking a viable realism which Peirce identifies as essential to scientific inquiry and our hopes of ever drawing nearer to truth. However, in the passage quoted above, Peirce seems to indicate that a more nuanced understanding of Hegel's philosophy might offer an evolutionary account of thought, truth and reality that matches important aspects of Peirce's own model. Characteristically, Peirce takes this amended interpretation of Hegel's philosophy to be lost on the Hegelians, and was even obscure to Hegel himself:

Hegel, while regarding scientific men with disdain, has for his chief topic the importance of continuity, which was the very idea the mathematicians and physicists had been chiefly engaged in following out for three centuries. This made Hegel's work less correct and excellent in itself than it might have been; and at the same time hid its true mode of affinity with the scientific thought into which the life of the race had been chiefly laid up. It was a misfortune for Hegelism, a misfortune for "philosophy," and a misfortune (in lesser degree) for science.

My philosophy resuscitates Hegel, though in a strange costume.¹⁹³

This passage shows that, even in the early 1890s, Peirce had begun to see his own philosophy as in some way analogous to Hegel's. He continues this line of thought in the 1893 paper "Evolutionary Love." There Peirce says that although he understands Hegel's system to be a form of anancasm, it is a species of anancasm that very well could be mistaken as a version of agapasm, provided that we adopt a broad enough understanding of Peirce's favored evolutionary model.

¹⁹³ CP 1.41-2; cf. CP 1.524

Some forms of [anancasticism] might easily be mistaken for the genuine agapasm. The Hegelian philosophy is such an anancasticism. With its revelatory religion, with its synechism (however imperfectly set forth), with its “reflection,” the whole idea of the theory is superb, almost sublime. Yet, after all, living freedom is practically omitted from its method...If we use the one precious thing it contains, the idea of it, introducing the tychism which the arbitrariness of its every step suggests, and make that the support of a vital freedom which is the breath of the spirit of love, we may be able to produce that genuine agapasticism at which Hegel was aiming.¹⁹⁴

Peirce extols Hegel's philosophy in this passage, in a way that he rarely does even with respect to his espoused philosophical heroes (e.g. Aristotle and Kant). In fact, he suggests that Hegel was himself working to develop a version of Peirce's own synechistic philosophy; all that is needed to bring the two into accord, Peirce says, is to couple Hegel's historicized synechism with a doctrine supporting the existence of real chance, i.e., tychism, which is required to all for “living freedom” and which better accords with the empirical evidence supplied by the natural sciences. There is an awareness of contingency which Peirce detects throughout Hegel's system, suggested by “the arbitrariness of its every step,” but which he takes to be effectively swept under the rug by Hegel's dialectical logic and the finality of absolute spirit. For Peirce, such dialectical necessity and the absolute certainty, exactitude, and universality obtained in absolute spirit are idealizations that could only be found at the end of infinite inquiry. He takes Hegel to insist that they are present within actual history and finite time, and this he sees as an unwarranted hope, a dogmatic faith that places Hegel in the group of thinkers more suited to seminaries than laboratories. In short, “Hegel was a nominalist of realistic yearnings.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ EP I 363

¹⁹⁵ CP 1.19

In one of his last recorded comments on Hegel, in a 1907 draft for a lengthy “letter to the editor,” Peirce excuses Hegel for this shortcoming, and qualifies the bulk of his early criticism of Hegel as arising from an incomplete knowledge of his work, stopping just shy of admitting a complete reversal of his former appraisal.

My trichotomy is plainly of the family stock of Hegel's three stages of thought,—an idea that goes back to Kant, and I know not how much further. But the arbitrariness of Hegel's procedure, utterly unavoidable at the time he lived,—and presumably, in less degree, unavoidable now, or at any future date,—is in great measure avoided by my taking care never to miss the solid support of mathematically exact formal logic beneath my feat....I may say that my much too insufficient study of Hegel (insufficient because I found it unprofitable) left me with the impression that he was a man unqualified for the supremely difficult task of giving an entirely candid account of his reflections upon philosophy, and that the two works of his that I had examined, his *Phänomenologie* and his *Logik*, while overgrown with brambles of self-deception, yet beneath these were replete with the most profound analyses, which it was yet next to impossible to get at so much as to understand them, much more to judge of them, until one had by oneself substantially accomplished those same analyses.¹⁹⁶

What Peirce finds absent in Hegel, then, is an adequate grasp of scientific inquiry, the “traction” our provisional knowledge acquires when it is seen to be answerable to the demands of external reality as manifested in the experience of Secondness. Furthermore, Hegel's account is, for Peirce, too neat and, in its characterization of all contingency as eventually part of a synthetic necessity, it ignores the real chance and spontaneity (i.e., Firstness) that Peirce is at pains to show are present in the world. If awareness of these aspects were added, say, in the form of Darwinian natural selection, then resulting account would, by and large, be Peirce's own.

¹⁹⁶ EP II 428

Darwinianized Heglism

Drawing on Darwin, Peirce develops the idea of evolution as functioning, in part, through the influence of an external reality and a genuine operation of chance. However, he is quick to point out that Darwin's model is insufficient insofar as it is not able to explain the growth observed in evolution, the spread of habit and the reality of generals. As he says in "The Law of Mind," "*tychism* must give birth to an evolutionary cosmology, in which all the regularities of nature and of mind are regarded as products of growth, and to a Schelling-fashioned idealism which holds matter to be mere specialised and partially deadened mind."¹⁹⁷ Such growth is accounted for by an idealism such as Hegel's, which extends the domain of thought and recognizes that "it is of the nature of thought to grow."¹⁹⁸ Hegel, however, overemphasizes the role of Thirdness and mediation. For him and his followers, "Thirdness is the one and sole category."¹⁹⁹ While this "unquestionably...contains a truth,"²⁰⁰ it must be amended by a recognition of external reality and the irreducible operation of the other categories, Firstness and Secondness. Moreover, the account must be qualified with respect to the finitude of human inquiry; as noted above, the absolute certainty, exactitude and necessity that Hegel famously locates in his notion of "Absolute Spirit," can, in a universe that contains real chance and growth, only come at the end of an infinite evolution. Thus,

Hegel's plan of evolving everything out of the abstractest conception by a dialectical procedure, though far from being so absurd as the experimentalists think, but on the contrary representing one of the

¹⁹⁷ EP I 312

¹⁹⁸ CP 2.32

¹⁹⁹ CP 5.89

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

indispensable parts of the course of science, overlooks the weakness of individual man, who wants the strength to wield such a weapon as that.²⁰¹

What is lacking in Hegel's account, finally, is a sufficient awareness of fallibilism. Amending such an account by way of Darwinian evolution not only moves the philosophy from the “seminary” to the “laboratory,” it introduces the fallibilism Peirce sees as requisite. In this way, Peirce is able to construct a philosophical naturalism (his “guess” at the riddle of the Sphinx) that adequately handles both the physical and “*geistlich*” features of mind and nature and which avoids the reductionism which characterizes the bulk of 20th century naturalisms. Moreover, given the recent interest in Hegelian philosophy within current developments of (“post-”)analytic philosophy and so-called “Neopragmatism,” a model such as this, which synthesizes aspects of both Hegel's and Darwin's thought, is a promising account with respect to philosophical naturalism and warrants further study. I will outline such a connection in Chapter 7.

Fallibilism and Phenomenology

There remains, however, at least one other important aspect of Peirce's “Darwinianized Hegelism,” one that will increasingly become the focus of his thought and which captures his earlier discussion of fallibilism but transforms that doctrine, even more so that the evolutionary speculation of the 1890s, into a positive theory that motivates philosophy. This is phenomenology, in Hegel's sense, which Peirce discusses in 1903 as a presuppositionless “preliminary inquiry” that precedes all inquiry into the “normative sciences” (and thus all inquiry whatsoever, according to Peirce's architectonic) and which he will later make a central strand in his system under the name “phaneroscopy.” Peirce explicitly links his use of the term “phenomenology” with Hegel,

²⁰¹ EP I 256

characterizing his own conception of it as a more inclusive adaptation of the doctrine and linking it with his then developing articulation of the “would-be” aspect of reality.

This is the science which Hegel made his starting point, under the name of the *Phaenomenologie des Geistes*,—although he considered it in a fatally narrow spirit, since he restricted himself to what *actually* forces itself on the mind and so colored his whole philosophy with the ignorance of the distinction of essence and existence and so gave it the nominalistic and I might say in a certain sense *pragmatoidal* character in which the worst of the Hegelian errors have their origin. I will so far follow Hegel as to call this science *Phenomenology* although I will not restrict it to the observation and analysis of *experience* but extend it to describing all the features that are common to whatever is *experienced* or might conceivably be experienced or become an object of study in any way direct or indirect.²⁰²

The basis for all inquiry, as the mature Peirce sees it, is an abductively-equipped phenomenology. As such, phenomena (or *phanera*, in Peircean terminology) form the minima of observation and experience; “We make no pretense,” he says, “of going beneath the phenomena.”²⁰³ Such phenomena themselves offer no assurance of objectivity or direct relation to reality and are, by their very natures, interpretive (even if they are presuppositionless). This is owing to their semiotic nature: “Every feeling is cognitive—is a sensation, and a sensation is a mental sign or word.”²⁰⁴ Consequently, Peirce's philosophy after this time is increasingly *phenomenological*, but not *phenomenalist*; he is explicit in his denial of any account that posits some ultimate form of sense-data free from interpretation.²⁰⁵ As Short has noted, “a phenomenon, as

²⁰² EP II 143

²⁰³ EP II 154

²⁰⁴ CP 7.586

²⁰⁵ Phanera may, indeed, come to us as Firsts; however they cannot remain as such once they are submitted to any analysis whatsoever, or viewed as parts of the logic of relations which forms experience. For, as he says in the *Guess*, the First “cannot be articulately thought: assert it, and it has already lost its characteristic innocence; for

something to be explained, is always an abstraction; it is real, yet it is selected by description from a more complex reality.”²⁰⁶

This characterization of phenomena captures both Peirce's fallibilism and his insistence that there is some form of indeterminacy at the very core of reality, owing to its continued evolution and the presence of real chance. “Thoroughgoing synechism,” he says,

will not permit us to say that the sum of the angles of a triangle exactly equals two right angles, but only that it equals that quantity plus or minus some quantity which is excessively small for all the angles that we can measure...We must not say that phenomena are perfectly regular, but only that the degree of their regularity is very high indeed.²⁰⁷

Peirce thus understands phenomenology as a science that “just contemplates phenomena as they are,”²⁰⁸ and will later employ it in his attempts to articulate a “proof” for pragmatism, tying the science to his universal categories, evolutionary theory and mind-body monism. These connections help to flesh out Peirce's understanding of a concept that is central to all forms of pragmatism but which remains notoriously, possibly even fatally, underdeveloped: experience.

As many commentators (particularly those who detect a shift in Peirce's later thought toward a version of realism that is incompatible with idealistic philosophies) have claimed, Peirce sees an increased role for real Secondness in this connection; experience is, for Peirce, a “forcible modification of our ways of thinking, the influence

assertion always implies a denial of something else...Only, remember that every description of it must be false to it,” (EP I 248).

²⁰⁶ Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 125.

²⁰⁷ EP II 2

²⁰⁸ EP II 143

of the world of fact.”²⁰⁹ In the Harvard lecture where he outlines the nature of phenomenology, Peirce offers a remark indicative of his own somewhat pessimistic humor, and his continued concern with the often tragic status of human endeavor:

In all the works on pedagogy that ever I read,—and they have been many, big, and heavy,—I don't remember that any one has advocated a system of teaching by practical jokes, mostly cruel. That, however, describes the method of our greatest teacher, Experience. She says,

Open your mouth and shut your eyes

And I'll give you something to make you wise;

and thereupon she keeps her promise, and seems to take her pay in the fun of tormenting us.²¹⁰

As John J. Kaag has noted, this pragmatic understanding of “experience” grows out of an awareness of fallibilism as an integral feature of the natural sciences.²¹¹ For Peirce, experience “torments” us by constantly showing our provisional knowledge to be insufficient and in error as our ideas are made to adapt to the brute impingement of reality (that is, manifestations of Secondess). Phenomenology, as Peirce sees it, makes this aspect of experience central to philosophy, allowing every aspect of experience opportunity to surprise us. In his turn to phenomenology, then, Peirce is bringing together his earlier theory of inquiry with its governing doctrine of fallibilism and his mature metaphysics.

Viewed in this light, Peirce's entire philosophy is seen to rest upon an analysis of human inquiry, one that features the finite nature and limitations of our provisional knowledge. While Peirce was indeed concerned with avoiding psychologism, his mature

²⁰⁹ EP II 370; cf. EP II 435

²¹⁰ EP II 154

²¹¹ John J. Kaag, “Pragmatism & the Lessons of Experience,” *Daedalus* 138 no. 2 (Spring 2009): 63-72.

thought does not indicate a shift away from speculation on the finitude and ignorance inherent to the human condition (as some have taken to be the case). Every element within that positive account, then, must be viewed as contingent, the product ongoing practices, both evolving and historied. Even the categories upon which Peirce bases so much of his thought must, in the face of fallibilism, be understood as heuristic tools. In order to carve out a place for objectivity within such a theory, Peirce formulates an account of how thought is present (or at least latent) throughout all of reality and how human thought and minds evolve out of extra-human nature. In this Peirce is, as scholars often note, focused on metaphysical speculation. What is often missed, however, is his extension of metaphysics from the objects of the natural sciences to what is more commonly the domain of the so-called human sciences. That is, in his systematic approach to phenomenology and semiotics in conjunction with his larger evolutionary theory of the entire universe, Peirce is laying the foundation for, and beginning to develop what might best be called a “metaphysics of culture.”²¹² And, as Peirce says, “fallibilism will at least provide a big pigeon-hole for facts bearing on that theory.”²¹³

An important aspect of such an account is, of course, an adequate model of the human person. Moreover, given that Peirce objects to Hegel's philosophy because it has no place for the individual, we are justified in asking him what he offers in the way of a superior model of the finite self. Numerous commentators have criticized Peirce precisely because of his relatively cursory treatment of this subject. In the next chapter, I

²¹² This element of Peirce's thought bears striking resemblances to Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, and a detailed analysis of this convergence would be an interesting and promising project indeed. It is, of course, beyond the scope of this dissertation; I plan, however, to pursue the argument in other work.

²¹³ CP 1.175

develop some of his scattered remarks on selfhood and sketch a pragmatistic model of subjectivity that emerges out of Peirce's fallibilist phenomenology.

CHAPTER 5
MIND, CONSCIOUSNESS AND PERSONALITY:
PEIRCE'S THEORY OF THE SELF

“A *person* is, in truth, like a cluster of stars, which appears to be *one* star when viewed with the naked eye, but which scanned with the telescope of scientific psychology is found on the one hand, to be multiple within itself, and on the other to have no absolute demarcation from a neighboring condensation.”

C.S. Peirce²¹⁴

With regard to the individual self, Peirce is most known for a model which is cast largely in negative terms: “since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error,” Peirce says, the individual person, “so far as he is anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be, is only a negation.”²¹⁵ Peirce will hold to this characterization throughout his career, even in the mature philosophy which many take to exhibit a significant departure from his earlier views. In a letter to Josiah Royce, dated June 30, 1913, Peirce says that

I came to the conclusion...that the only thing distinctive of volition is a peculiar consciousness of two-ness, *distension* [distention between a sharply-focused object that volition ‘objects’ to, though it can’t *intend* to abolish since intention involves more than volition and a pushed-back back-ground that we call ‘Myself’] between the sharply focussed [sic.] object and the pushed-back background Self; and I believe there is no other consciousness of the Self.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ MS 403

²¹⁵ W 2:241-42

²¹⁶ Peirce, Letter to Josiah Royce, June 30, 1913, quoted in Frank M. Oppenheim, *Royce’s Mature Ethics*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1993) 242-242. The brackets enclose a note added by Peirce in the margin of the letter.

In this later formulation, Peirce emphasizes the primacy of Secondness in the experience of our own selves; we are made aware of our selves by way of the resistance of reality. This is in keeping with Peirce's understanding of experience as teaching by way of surprise, and consisting of "forcible modification of our ways of thinking" by way of "the influence of the world of fact."²¹⁷ Consequently, "all the *actual* character of consciousness is merely the sense of the shock of the non-ego upon us. Just as a calm sea sleeps except where its rollers dash upon the land."²¹⁸ This is, of course, only another way of saying that the individual self is characterized by its fallibility, that the beliefs which comprise its habits of (potential) action could be false and would then be met with resistance by reality. To say that this is the only "consciousness of the Self" is to say that we are only conscious of our selves as fallible.

But does Peirce also provide a positive model of the self, one capable of meeting the objection raised by Richard Bernstein, that Peirce fails to provide a "coherent theory of the self which would make sense of the idea of 'self-control'?"²¹⁹ Moreover, does he provide a model that has anything to offer contemporary philosophical naturalism, in a way that John McDowell, as I argue, does not? The answer to these questions, as I have already indicated, is both yes and no; Peirce does sketch the beginnings of such a model, one that takes the individual self to be a sign initially defined by its community. However, the outline is scattered and incomplete. A more satisfactory model requires extending this outline and is, I argue, to be found in the mature thought of Josiah Royce; this is the subject of the next chapter. Before turning to that account, however, we would

²¹⁷ EP II 370

²¹⁸ CP 8.265-266

²¹⁹ Bernstein, *Praxis and Action*, 197.

do well to look, first, at its foundation, the account of selfhood as it is present in Peirce's own philosophy.

Signs and Animals: Unifying Peirce's Model of the Self

A perennial concern among Peirce commentators has been the articulation of Peirce's model of individual selfhood which underwrites his notion of self-control. As has been noted, Bernstein holds that Peirce does not have such a model and that we must look beyond the pragmatist tradition in order to find one. Vincent Colapietro, on the other hand, has long been at work on detailing the semiotic account of selfhood that runs throughout Peirce's works.

A sticking point for most accounts is that Peirce seems to characterize the self along two different lines, at times describing it as a sign and with respect to a community while at others characterizing it primarily in terms of embodiment and continuity with the rest of nature. However, if we adopt a view of Peirce's evolutionary metaphysics along the lines sketched in the previous chapter, what I call a "Darwinianized Hegelism," then Peirce's speaking about the self in these apparently contrasting ways is precisely what we would expect. Given that his metaphysics draws on both a Darwinian-styled model of chance-driven biology and a Hegelian-like account of the evolution of reason and culture, it follows that the Peircean self would emerge out of an interaction of these two processes. In fact, this may be the most significant motivating principle of his cosmology, which, it has been noted, tends toward the anthropomorphic. That is, Peirce synthesizes Darwinian and Hegelian evolutions because each is, taken alone, insufficient for describing both the natural world (conceived in terms that are independent of human thought and culture) as well as human institutions, practices and meanings which are of central concern for human persons. By drawing on a line of thought that is isomorphic with Hegel's own (although, according to Peirce, developed independently of any

Hegelian influence) Peirce is pointing to the inadequacies of the Darwinian model in accounting for culture and its artifacts, notably human selves; these cannot be reduced to mere biology or the operation of chance which Peirce takes to be the governing process in natural selection. However, in his frequent criticisms of Hegel's relation to science—a view he often contrasts with that of Darwin—Peirce is showing that biological development and the world revealed by the natural sciences themselves cannot be reduced to the evolution of culture, Mind or *Geist*. To employ *this* reductive strategy would indeed be overly anthropomorphic, and would ignore both the persistence of external reality and the limitations of actual humans.²²⁰ It is only by viewing the self as the product of both operations working jointly that a full account of selfhood can be given. Perhaps because of this position, Peirce does not use the terms “self” or “person” in anything like a technical sense. In fact, he often equivocates in his employment of these and related terms like “man.” Consequently, the key to discovering Peirce's model of the self is to approach his account by way of the related concepts of consciousness, cognition, and personality, each of which Peirce does employ in a technical fashion.

I will proceed, then, by tracing the development of selfhood as Peirce understands it along the lines afforded by both aspects of his metaphysics, beginning with the biological origins of consciousness (the condition for selfhood on the level of the species), and then proceeding to his semiotic account of the cultural and linguistic formation of cognition and “personality” (Peirce's favored term for those aspects of persons which are not reducible to biology alone). In doing this, I show that fallibilism is the crucial element in both lines of development and reemerges as part of the organizing principle of the joint workings of both processes.

²²⁰ Cf. W 6:180

The Evolution of Consciousness

In Peirce's account, the selfhood of individuals depends upon a culturally-informed development of a species-wide level of consciousness. With respect to the biological origins of consciousness, one passage which is of particular note is found in Peirce's draft for a 1904 book review titled "Nichol's Cosmology and Pragmaticism." In the following selection from that paper, Peirce links the doctrines of fallibilism and synechism with the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, (in both their phenomenological and metaphysical applications) in a myth-like account of the development of consciousness. As the majority of this manuscript has not been published, I will here quote the lengthy passage in full:

Questioner: The narrowness of your view of reality only appears more and more strikingly as you go on. You are, as you yourself well phrased it, simply color-blind to the idea of existence in itself.

Pragmaticist: Hylozoism, the doctrine that all matter feels, is an idle and senseless apology for a theory as long as there is no way of bringing it to the test of experiment; but as soon as such a way shall be found it will become a working hypothesis particularly well worth trying. Meantime, we have no difficulty in conceiving some being (call it by the name of amoeba, just to help the imagination) to have consciousness without the least trace of memory of any consciousness of change, of any self, of any action or any relation,—whether of difference, similarity, coexistence or of any sort whatsoever. It will have some quality of sentience,—say a solferino color,—which will not be an object to it, but a tinge of its life,—unrecognized, of course, since it will have no power of recognition. You may say, if you chose to take that point of view, that in that solferino color the fancy-ameoba has an immediate knowledge of the entire universe of being, with this most goodly frame, the earth, and this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, and all. So considered, it is a knowledge absolutely flawless, without doubt, gap, or imperfection and of the very kind that Leibniz attributes to Deity. It has perfectly grasped the idea of pure being. Next, let us suppose that fancy-ameoba to undergo a metamorphosis (to give it a name, say into a fancy-worm) in consequence of which it is impelled from time to time to make conscious efforts, sometimes successful and sometimes not, to change its solferino to emerald green and back again or to resist spontaneous changes of this sort. It has a sense of the resistance. It feels the effort, a vague struggle for it

knows not what; and this ceases upon success or, without success, by fatigue; but it has no ideal of its purpose, and now comparing power whatsoever. Though it has no sense of continuous time, it is aware of succeeding and of giving up. The poor creature is God no longer; its sense of actual happening has made it a finite being. You see what I am driving at: I am endeavoring to create the idea of a being that, unlike our fancy-ameoba, should virtually have the idea of existence or actuality, but without any trace of reason nor the idea of pragmatistic reality. I call your attention to the circumstance that the idea of sentiencial being which this fancy-ameoba virtually has (though of course it has no general idea) is necessarily possessed by the fancy-worm as well; though he has the virtual idea of existence and²²¹

Unfortunately, this portion of the manuscript ends here. We can, however, make a reasonable guess as to how it would continue, enabled by Peirce's remarks in other contexts; this will be attempted below. First, we must unpack Peirce's account of the initial stages of the evolution of consciousness in this context.

The “Fancy Amoeba”

After a brief remark about hylozoism, and an indication of how his own scientifically-modeled hypothesis differs from that doctrine in its traditional form, Peirce asks us to imagine an amoeba with certain characteristics, viz. a rudimentary form of proto-consciousness deprived of any awareness of self, time and relation. This particular amoeba, however, is given the curious qualification “fancy.” The term “fancy” can be used to mean both the product of imaginative fantasy as well as to refer to animals which have been selectively bred so as to develop certain features. Peirce's use of the term here fits both definitions. That is, he is both offering a mythical sort of thought experiment meant to illustrate the evolution of consciousness but without any claims to its being a

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MS 329 “Copy C”

true account of such development, as well as speculatively “breeding” organisms that feature specific traits, viz. those that make up consciousness as we know it.

In this manuscript, Peirce connects doctrine of continuity with his triadic categories. The “fancy amoeba’s” unrecognized, non-reflective “quality of sentience,” it’s “solferino color,” is an example of Firstness.²²² What is striking about this, however, is Peirce's comment “that in that solferino color the fancy-amoeba has an immediate knowledge of the entire universe of being, with this most goodly frame, the earth, and this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, and all.” That is, through its color the amoeba has “absolutely flawless” knowledge of the universe that is entirely free from doubt.

We can perhaps make more sense of this seemingly hyperbolic claim by looking to a passage from “The Law of Mind.” In that paper, Peirce applies his categories to a phenomenology of ideas:

Three elements go to make up an idea. The first is its intrinsic quality as a feeling. The second is the energy with which it affects other ideas, an energy which is infinite in the here-and-nowness of immediate sensation, finite and relative in the recency of the past. The third element is the tendency of an idea to bring along other ideas with it.²²³

These three elements of an idea are another application of Peirce's triadic system of categories, the first being an instance of Firstness akin to the amoeba's awareness of its solferino color. Later in that paper, Peirce further articulates what he takes this first element to be:

²²² It is also interesting to note that, when reference to a specific color is required by the discussion, Peirce almost invariably chooses a shade of red. I am reluctant to speculate at this point as to whether this indicates anything other than personal preference, but given that Peirce does favor the color so greatly in his writing, it is perhaps a line of inquiry worth pursuing.

²²³ CP 6.135

The first character of a general idea so resulting is that it is living feeling. A continuum of this feeling, infinitesimal in duration, but still embracing innumerable parts, and also, though infinitesimal, entirely unlimited, is immediately present. And in its absence of boundedness a vague possibility of more than is present is directly felt.²²⁴

In light of this earlier account, we can conclude that the amoeba's "feeling" or experience of the First which is its color gives it "immediate knowledge of the entire universe of being" because such experience is not constrained by any limitation (internal or external); the full possibility of generalization with respect to that feeling is present to it. And, according to the "law of mind," this generalizability is itself unlimited, and in fact will continue to grow indefinitely (perhaps even infinitely). It is thus the counterpart in the evolution of consciousness of the absolute potentiality Peirce locates at the beginning of the evolution of the cosmos in *A Guess at the Riddle*.

The "Fancy Worm"

As Peirce continues his story and proceeds up the evolutionary ladder from "fancy amoeba" to "fancy worm," the primary distinction is the introduction of error, i.e., the failure of the fancy worm in some project that it is "impelled" to undertake (here the changing of its color) but which is not guided by conscious purpose. In this, the fancy worm has achieved the first requirement of consciousness, an awareness of the individual self as finite and fallible, and exhibits Peirce's category of Secondness: "The type of an idea of Secondness is the experience of effort, prescinded from the idea of a purpose... The experience of effort cannot exist without the experience of resistance. Effort is only effort by virtue of its being opposed."²²⁵ In effect, the fancy worm is not only made aware of its finitude, but actually *becomes* a finite being through its sensing of

²²⁴ CP 6.138

²²⁵ CP 8.330

the resistance it encounters; according to Peirce, “its sense of actual happening has *made* it a finite being.”²²⁶

This raises the question, however, as to how this is indeed a move “up” in Peirce's evolutionary terms. That is, if the “fancy amoeba” possessed a divine sort of knowledge, how could the introduction of finitude and fallibility be viewed as progress? As was seen in the last chapter, Peirce's answer in both the *Guess* manuscript and MS 955 turns upon his distinguishing between “reality” and “existence.” Recall that, for Peirce, evolution in its broadest form models the universe as moving from a point in the infinite past which is characterized as one of absolute potentiality to a point, in the infinite future, of absolute finality; this is the development from absolute Firstness to absolute Secondness. In MS 955, Peirce reiterates a version of this account, showing it to be a consequence of the hypothesis that, rather than being absolute and static, laws grow:

If all things are continuous, the universe must be undergoing a continuous growth from non-existence to existence. There is no difficulty in conceiving existence as a matter of degree. The reality of things consists in their persistent forcing themselves upon our recognition. If a thing has no such persistence, it is a mere dream. Reality, then, is persistence, is regularity. In the original chaos, where there was no regularity, there was no existence. It was all a confused dream. This we may suppose was in the infinitely distant past. But as things are getting more regular, more persistent, they are getting less dreamy and more real.²²⁷

The account of the evolution of consciousness Peirce is telling in the story of the fancy amoeba parallels the evolution put forth in his cosmology; thus, the move from fancy amoeba to fancy worm, and the introduction of finitude and fallibility, counts as evolutionary progress in that it is an instance of the universe's “continuous growth from non-existence to existence.” While a First is indeed “full of life and variety,” Peirce says,

²²⁶ MS 329, emphasis added.

²²⁷ MS 955

“that variety is only potential; it is not definitely there.”²²⁸ In order for consciousness to truly exist, in a manner that is not epiphenomenal but rather continuous with the rest of reality, it must, like everything else, enter into relations of Secondness and be a persisting thing that forces recognition. This alone will make consciousness part of the reality which corresponds to the final opinion, for “to say that a thing *is* is to say that in the upshot of intellectual progress it will attain a permanent status in the realm of ideas.”²²⁹ Peirce has thus hinted at an account of how consciousness can arise from the unpersonalized mind which underlies all reality. This is not, however, a sufficient account of personhood or the human self. This final evolutionary development requires the introduction of mediation and purposefulness, key elements to the last of the Peircean categories, viz., Thirdness.

Unfortunately, the extant manuscript ends just as Peirce is prepared to present the upshot of his argument and extend the model to something that might reasonably correspond to the human self (the remainder of the manuscript consists primarily of revised versions of earlier, unrelated, passages). This is typical of many of Peirce's manuscripts. As Royce noted, Peirce often becomes mired in his own speculation, which may be the reason why he obsessively composed multiple drafts of the same papers which were never completed. Royce complains that

one finds this tendency towards what might be called 'impenetrability' especially evident in his manuscripts. Too often the reader meets with a thought of surpassing brilliancy and follows it eagerly, only to have it disappear like the cuttlefish in an inky blackness of its own secretion.²³⁰

228 W 6:181

229 EP II 2

230 Royce and Kernan, “Peirce,” 707

We can, however, make a very reasonable guess as to how this particular story would continue. The progression we see in this passage proceeds according to the model offered by Peirce's categories; this leaves, then, but one category unaccounted for, namely Thirdness. We can thus imagine the “fancy-worm” evolving, by way of the introduction of Thirdness, into something possessing the sort of consciousness required for selfhood.

Physiology and the Three Forms of Consciousness

For Peirce, the “activity of nerve-cells is the main physiological requisite for consciousness.”²³¹ Amoebae, as well as related “slime-moulds” and “protoplasm,” do “not differ in any radical way from the contents of a nerve-cell, though [their] functions may be less specialized.”²³² This is because while such organisms cannot think, they do “feel,” and this sort of feeling is an element of consciousness. This is an important element of his doctrine of continuity (specifically, as between mind and matter), as was seen in previous chapters:

all mind is directly or indirectly connected with all matter, and acts in a more or less regular way; so that all mind more or less partakes of the nature of matter. Hence, it would be a mistake to conceive of the psychical and the physical aspects of matter as two aspects absolutely distinct. Viewing a thing from the outside, considering its relations of action and reaction with other things, it appears as matter. Viewing it from the inside, looking at its immediate character as feeling, it appears as consciousness. These two views are combined when we remember that mechanical laws are nothing but acquired habits, like all the regularities of mind, including the tendency to take habits, itself; and that this action of habit is nothing but generalization, and generalization is nothing but the spreading of feelings²³³

231 W 6:189

232 CP 6.133

233 CP 6.268

However, as Peirce notes, this account immediately raises other, deeper questions: “But the question is, how do general ideas appear in the molecular theory of protoplasm?”²³⁴

In *A Guess at the Riddle*, Peirce identifies three abstracted elements of full consciousness: “we have indubitably three radically different elements of consciousness, these and no more. And they are evidently connected with the ideas of one—two—three. Immediate feeling is the consciousness of the first; the polar sense is the consciousness of the second; and synthetical consciousness is the consciousness of a Third or medium.”²³⁵ Consequently, “feeling” (which he also calls “simple consciousness”) and “polar sense” (also called “dual consciousness”) are abstractions that are attributed to proto-consciousnesses such as that of the fancy amoeba and worm, respectively (Peirce calls the the third element “synthetical consciousness” or “cognition” and this was likely the subject of the rest of the passage quoted from MS 329). Peirce approaches the third form of consciousness, i.e., “synthetical consciousness,” by way of an analysis of the distinctive marks of cognition:

that element of cognition which is neither feeling nor the polar sense [i.e., simple or dual consciousness abstracted from cognition], is the consciousness of a process, and this in the form of the sense of learning, of acquiring, of mental growth is eminently characteristic of cognition...This is the consciousness that binds our life together. It is the consciousness of synthesis.²³⁶

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ W 6:186

²³⁶ EP I 260

In identifying cognition (the type of consciousness required for persons) with synthesis, Peirce is laying the foundation for his characterization of the self as a Third or sign, the product of an irreducibly triadic relation of mediation.

It is this synthetical consciousness which introduces the possibility of self-consciousness and the growth of the self, for,

the highest kind of synthesis is what the mind is compelled to make neither by the inward attractions of the feelings or representations themselves, nor by a transcendental force or haecceity, but in the interest of intelligibility, that is, in the interest of the synthesizing “I think” itself; and this it does by introducing an idea not contained in the data, which gives connections which they would not otherwise have had.²³⁷

Such a consciousness is not restricted to experience the world through sensation of qualities or feelings, as did the fancy amoeba through its solferino color, or by way of determined action to which resistance is sensed, as in the case of the fancy worm. Owing to its mediating capacities, this form of consciousness is able to form plans of action according to purposes (rather than the impelled action of the worm), interpret the general habits observed in the outcomes of such actions, and articulate general ideas to account for these regularities.

Cognition, or synthetical consciousness, then, embodies the phenomenological application of Thirdness. It is not only capable of experiencing feeling, and reacting to the impingements of brute reality, but is also equipped with the means by which to unify both action and sensation and relate these back to past experiences as well as project them into the future. This unity is achieved through the adoption of a purpose and is made possible by language and community. The progression from the first to the second stage of the evolution (from “fancy amoeba” to “fancy worm”) occurred as a result of the organism becoming implicitly aware of resistance. However, that organism still lacked

²³⁷ EP I 261

the capacity to discursively reflect on its own finitude and limitation; as Peirce says, it is aware, merely, of attempting some action and, on occasion, failing in its execution. The third stage, however, involves not only this awareness but also a reflective consciousness of itself as being inherently limited.

The question arises, however, as to what, exactly, makes this cognition possible. It is important to note that Peirce understands cognition as both continuous with biological evolution and necessarily embodied, although not reducible to either. In a 1906 attempt at a proof for pragmatism, he says that,

By an experience of active effort is meant what is in the mind (and a less determinate phrase would be used if any were forthcoming) upon the contraction of a voluntary muscle, *minus* all idea of ulterior purpose, all sensations referred to the muscle that is contracted or to other parts of the body and all that is otherwise plainly no part of the conscious effort. A person may opine that after those subtractions nothing will remain in consciousness; nor will he thereby by any means convict himself of being a bad observer. Nevertheless, such an opinion is erroneous. The sense of effort is the sense of an opposing resistance then and there present. It is entirely different from purpose, which is the idea of a possible general regarded as desirable together with a sense of being determined in one's habitual nature (in one's soul, if you like that expression; it is that part of our nature which makes general determinations of conduct) to actualize it.²³⁸

What distinguishes cognition, and prevents it from being accounted for purely in terms of biological evolution, is its inherent purposiveness. Peirce characterizes this purposiveness in terms of the self's being able to embody general ideas in actual contexts. In fact, such is the "proper function" of evolved humans: "Animals of all races rise far above the general level of their intelligence in those performances that are their proper function," he says in a later paper, "such as flying and nest-building for ordinary birds;

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EP II 383-4

and what is man's proper function if it be not to embody general ideas in art-creations, in utilities, and above all in theoretical cognition?"²³⁹

A human person is able to perform such a mediating function because it is itself a product of such mediation, in the form of semiosis, i.e., "an action, or influence which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs."²⁴⁰ Synthetical consciousness is the product of such semiosis and this is what will enable the truly unique characteristics of human selves, their capacity to interpret and produce interactions with an environment with respect to ideal purposes. That is, they are able to act in meaningful ways in the sense Wittgenstein illustrates with his famous question in §621 of his *Philosophical Investigations*. That the self is part of semiosis, i.e., a Sign, is one of Peirce's earliest doctrines, explored in detail already in the "Cognition Series" of papers of 1868-9.

Peirce will continue the line of speculation he pursues in the incomplete passage drawn from MS 329, eventually developing the phenomenological application of the categories into what he calls three "Universes of Experience." In a late paper called "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," (1908), he offers the following characterization of these "universes":

Of the three Universes of Experience familiar to us all, the first comprises all mere Ideas, those airy nothings to which the mind of poet, pure mathematician, or another *might* give local habitation and a name within that mind. Their very airy-nothingness, the fact that their Being consists in mere capability of getting thought, not in anybody's Actually thinking them, save their Reality. The second Universe is that of the Brute Actuality of things and facts. I am confident that their Being consists in reactions against Brute forces, notwithstanding objections redoubtable

²³⁹ EP II 443

²⁴⁰ EP II 411

until they are closely and fairly examined. The third Universe comprises everything whose Being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes. Such is everything which is essentially a Sign,—not the mere body of the Sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign's Soul, which has its Being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind. Such, too, is a living consciousness, and such the life, the power of growth of a plant. Such is a living institution,—a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social “movement.”²⁴¹

In light of this formulation, we can see that the organisms described in Peirce's evolutionary myth each inhabit one of the three universes of experience: the fancy amoeba belongs to the first, the realm of “mere Ideas”; the fancy worm inhabits the second, “that of Brute Actuality”; and the synthetical consciousness, per hypothesis, occupies the realm of mediation made possible by semiosis. This consciousness is, therefore, itself a sign. Given that Peirce understands the term “sign” in a very general sense (perhaps too general, some have argued), this puts “living consciousness” on the same level as growth in nature (Peirce uses the example of a plant) as well as cultural artifacts such as texts and even larger Intentional structures such as the “spirit of an age” or Peirce's own example of a “social 'movement.’” Human consciousness cannot be reduced to its biological features because “synechism recognizes that the carnal consciousness is but a small part of the man. There is, in the second place, the social consciousness, by which a man's spirit is embodied in others, and which continues to live and breathe and have its being very much longer than superficial observers think.”²⁴² Peirce thus connects human consciousness with non-human nature as well as with cultural practices and artifacts. This is the heart of his non-reductive naturalism, in its most mature development taking the form of a semiotic model.

²⁴¹ EP II 435

²⁴² EP II 3

Childhood Development and Self-Consciousness

Peirce's story about the evolution of consciousness, which parallels his evolutionary cosmology, is itself paralleled in an account of childhood development which he gives in one of his earliest papers, "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man." Initially, Peirce says, a child is focused solely on its own body and the sensations it produces. "Only what it touches has any actual and present feeling; only what it faces has any actual color; only what is on its tongue has any actual taste."²⁴³ This parallels the limited consciousness of the fancy amoeba, i.e., a phenomenological manifestation of Firstness. This focus on the body soon leads the child to discover that changes in environment are often dependent upon contact with that body which is the center of its universe, and its ability to act on things which in turn react to it. This is analogous to the more developed consciousness of the fancy worm and introduces the child to the phenomenological experience of Secondness. The crucial step which follows is the child's acquisition of a language, which Peirce says occurs by way of instinct and imitation.²⁴⁴ This parallels the move from fancy worm to a person, as described above. "It must be about this time," Peirce says,

that he begins to find that what these people about him say is the very best evidence of fact. So much so, that testimony is even a stronger mark of fact than *the facts themselves*, or rather than what must now be thought of as the *appearances* themselves. (I may remark, by the way, that this remains so through life; testimony will convince a man that he himself is mad.)²⁴⁵

The child soon learns that experience tends to confirm the testimony of others more often than his own beliefs or apprehension of phenomena. "Thus, he becomes

²⁴³ W 2:201

²⁴⁴ Cf. EP II 443

²⁴⁵ W 2:202

aware of ignorance, and it is necessary to suppose a *self* in which this ignorance can inhere. So testimony gives the first dawning of self-consciousness.”²⁴⁶ This leads Peirce to his famous characterization of the individual self in terms of its fallibility: error “can only be explained by supposing a *self* which is fallible”²⁴⁷ which is manifested by its departure from the more reliable judgments of testimony. Consequently, “Ignorance and error are all that distinguish our private selves from the absolute *ego* of pure apperception.”²⁴⁸

We can make better sense of the importance of this claim with a little help from a lecture on Kant's transcendental unity of apperception delivered by Royce. In that lecture, Royce identifies several “characteristic thoughts” of Kant's deduction of the categories. The fourth of these, he claims,

is the thought that we conceive all our experience as unified, as connected, as interrelated, in so far as we view the whole realm of knowable facts as the experience of one virtual self whose time and space forms, whose categories, whose data of knowledge, whose possible experiences, form the topic with which all our sciences are busied....The knowable world is the realm of the possible experience of this virtual self to whose *one* experience we inevitably refer any natural fact.²⁴⁹

According to this Kantian line of thought, something is needed in order to unify all possible experience and thereby grant objectivity to the various subjective experiences of individuals. This virtual self furnishes the conditions for knowledge which enable and determine every individual's possible experience insofar as we all share a common world of phenomena. Both Royce and Peirce claim, then, that we are, as individuals,

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 203

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Josiah Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1919), 34-5.

distinguished from this self which unifies all possible experience only insofar as we depart from it, in terms of error and ignorance.

This leads Peirce to a characterization of selfhood that places particular emphasis on the community to which it belongs. In a short piece for the journal *The Open Court*, which was intended as a summary of Peirce's synechistic philosophy geared towards a popular audience, he makes this point clear and draws conclusions that may at first appear quite bizarre. The synechist, Peirce says, must never say,

“I am altogether myself, and not at all you.” If you embrace synechism, 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 are, in a measure, yourself, though not quite in the same way in which your neighbors are you.²⁵⁰

For Peirce, then, the self as sign and embodiment of ideas can only exist within a community of other selves (this point is particularly important in Royce's development of Peirce's philosophy, treated in the next chapter). This model is in contrast with a more widespread characterization of the self which owes much to the Cartesian picture Peirce's early papers criticize. Douglas Anderson characterizes such a Cartesian self as “a substantive, isolated individual existing in a web of mechanical causes” and contrasts it with “Peirce's realistic, synechistic, and semiotic conception of the self.”²⁵¹ The Cartesian model characterizes the self primarily in terms of its agency and atomicity and casts words and other signs as externalized expressions of subjective intention; they have meaning only insofar as some agent or agents impart meaning to them. The continued prevalence of this account of the self is clear in twentieth-century analytic philosophy of

²⁵⁰ EP II 2

²⁵¹ Anderson, “Peirce and Cartesian Rationalism,” 163.

art, especially arguments surrounding interpretation. A common assumption in such discussions is that artifacts are meaningful structures only insofar as a creative agent can be credited with their production. Thus, a “wave poem”—i.e., what appear to be words written in the sand by the movement of waves—only counts as a poem if it were produced by an agent who intended to write a poem.²⁵² For Peirce, such a theory of meaning is merely another instance of the nominalism he opposes throughout his career. To say that signs are only meaningful insofar as we grant them meaning is to make them mere names, and thus discount the reality of generals. Moreover, it gets the order of evolution backwards. For Peirce, semiosis precedes selfhood—selves are but parts of that process which comprises the mind underlying all of reality (a fuller treatment of this point is given in Chapter 6). This is the crux of Peirce's naturalism; “all communication from mind to mind is through continuity of being,”²⁵³ he says, and “all mind is directly or indirectly connected with all matter, and acts in a more or less regular way.”²⁵⁴

Thus, the fallibilist characterization of the self as the locus of error and ignorance, which at first appears to be merely negative, reveals itself to be an important and positive model in at least three ways: first, it motivates inquiry, experimentation and the embodiment of ideas. It does this by introducing the universal sort of doubt and “existential” crisis discussed in Chapter 3. Second, understanding the self as a locus of error and ignorance is necessary in order for reasons (in McDowell and Sellars' sense) to have the normative force they do. Initiation into language, and the accompanying

²⁵² For detailed discussions of these, and related issues, see: Gary Ikenminger, ed., *Intention and Interpretation*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

²⁵³ EP II 3

²⁵⁴ CP 6.268

realization that testimony is a greater authority even than personal experience, is initiation into something bigger than the self, a world that can rightfully make demands and offer justifications, rather than mere exculpations (this point is further discussed in Chapter 7). Finally, a model of selfhood based on the idea of fallibilism, which itself becomes the doctrine of synechism when “objectified,” bridges the gap between this world of reasons and justifications and the material world.

Personality

Peirce's answer to the sphynx's riddle about “the meaning of man,” in its simplest form, is semiosis. In our own experience (and thus the only known manifestation of such cognition) this takes the form of language. In an unpublished manuscript, Peirce says

By a 'person,' by the way, I suppose we mean an animal that has command of some syntactical language, since we neither call any of the lower animals persons, (for, though they be able to convey their meanings by various sounds, they do not combine different sounds so as to build sentences,) nor do we call an infant that cannot yet put two words together to make a sentence. One might almost define a person as an animal possessed of moral self-control; but that would not be correct unless we were prepared to call some dogs, horses, parrots, hens, and other creatures persons, which I take it nobody does, in spite of the moral respect to which they are often well-entitled. One feels that there is an injustice in our non-expression of respect for them. Yet, after all, the word person, p|e|r|s|o|n|a, has explicit reference to speech.²⁵⁵

Robert Lane has recently offered a Peircean-inspired account of selves that draws heavily on this passage. For Lane, “a person is an animal whose nervous system functions in a specific way, viz. to engage in a continuous process of sign-interpretation.”²⁵⁶ Lane makes it clear that he does not intend for this to be a definition of personhood, but only a

²⁵⁵ MS 659, quoted in Robert Lane, “Persons, Signs, Animals: A Peircean Account of Personhood” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 45, no. 1 (2009): 20, n.21.

²⁵⁶ Lane, “Persons, Signs, Animals,” 8.

partial and rough characterization of it; something more is needed to account for the sui generis nature of human personhood. This is evident when we look to organisms like bees, a case that Peirce himself famously treats.

Honeybees are, as is well-known, capable of a form of communication, what is often referred to as “dancing,” which fits Peirce's description of semiosis: the significant movements of an individual bee (a sign) represent the location, distance and nature of a pollen, nectar or water source (an object) than can be interpreted by other bees who will follow that direction to the target (an interpretant). Consequently, honeybees are animals whose nervous systems function in such a way as to enable them to engage in sign-production and interpretation, as in Lane's characterization of a person. However, honeybees are generally not taken to be persons in the same sense as human selves. Part of Lane's motivation for focusing on the animal embodiment of human persons is that he takes this to be the essential factor in the individuation of selves. “Persons are individuated from each other by being individual animals, just as different copies of Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* are individuated from each other by being different bound volumes.”²⁵⁷ The honeybee example highlights the extent to which this account of individuality must be augmented, for, while each bee is an “individual animal” which engages in sign-making and interpretation, it is not an “individual” in the sense of the term as applied to human persons, a sense that goes beyond numerical differentiation. In fact, what is most intriguing about the honeybees in this context is that they display none of the characteristics of individuality that figure prominently in our intuitions about and treatments of human persons; so much so that we are often led to speak of a “hive mind” of which each bee is merely a part and thus displays very little in the way of an individual mind (a potentially essential characteristic of personhood). We see, then, that not only is

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 11.

something more needed to distinguish human cognition from incipient forms of consciousness in the animal world, but also to distinguish human persons as individuals (in the strong sense captured in ethical discourse) from their fellows.

Peirce is concerned with this element of selfhood from the the very beginning of his career, and addresses it in the 1866 Lowell lecture which emphasizes the similarities between people and words.

Each man has his own peculiar character. It enters into all he does. It is in his consciousness and not a mere mechanical trick, and therefore it is by the principles of the last lecture a cognition; but as it enters into all his cognition, it is a cognition of *things in general*. It is therefore the man's philosophy, his way of regarding things; not a philosophy of the head alone—but one which pervades the whole man. This idiosyncrasy is the idea of the man; and if this idea is true he lives forever; if false, his individual soul has but a contingent existence.”²⁵⁸

This passage prefigures much of what Peirce will later say about the self, including the “immortality” he is willing to attribute to persons as well as his theory of truth as the final opinion. The “peculiar character” he describes is the positive element of his model of the self, what he elsewhere refers to as “personality.”

According to Peirce, “personality is some kind of coördination or connection of ideas.”²⁵⁹ Not just any arrangement of “conceptions working together” produces a personality; the parts of this species of mind must be “coordinated in a particular way.” Moreover,

the word coördination...implies a teleological harmony of ideas, and in the case of personality this teleology is more than a mere purposive pursuit of a predeterminate end; it is a developmental teleology. This is personal character. A general idea, living and conscious now, it is already

²⁵⁸ CP 7.595

²⁵⁹ EP I 331

determinative of acts in the future to an extent to which it is not now conscious.²⁶⁰

Peirce's invocation of teleology here is telling. Teleology, for Peirce, is always connected with the idea of the infinite, and the goal of any such development is never available to actual inquirers in finite time. It is not epiphenomenal; we do carry with us the “freightage of eternity,” but we can never know it or even know that we are actually approaching closer toward it at any given moment.²⁶¹ For this reason, “personality, like any general idea, is not a thing to be apprehended in an instant. It has to be lived in time; nor can any finite time embrace it in all its fullness.”²⁶²

Moreover, this “living in time” of personality reveals the reciprocal evolution of human selves and the general ideas they embody.

Something of the general nature of personality there is in all general ideas. These conceptions are in a certain sense creations of the human intelligence, but in another aspect the human mind is the creation of these conceptions working together. These general conceptions are no figments, they are real things—more than that, they are living beings with something like life and something like personality. Mind acts upon mind by virtue of its continuity; and this continuity involves generality.²⁶³

The reality of generals or ideas in this context comes down to the recognition that, while such culturally significant structures are indeed constructions, they are essential to the emergence of persons, contributing to our existence as selves equally as much as the forces of biology and physics fashion our embodied existence. The importance of Peirce's “Darwinianized Hegelism” is its drawing attention to the fact that a full account of personhood is impossible without attending to both aspects of the development of the

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Cf. CP 1.141

²⁶² EP I 331

²⁶³ MS 954

self, i.e., the biological and the culturally significant. This is by no means an entirely novel conception; the insight might be traced back to the sophists of fifth-century Athens who, as Sarah Broadie puts it, came to the “dual realization” of “our power of *logos* [which variously means 'speech', 'language', 'argument', 'reason'] and its power over us.”²⁶⁴ The conclusion this leads us to is that human persons or selves are artifacts of cultural, brought about by the semiosis of language but in a way that is continuous with the evolution of the “natural” world. This “natural artifactuality” is the alternative to the natural-artificial distinction promised in Chapter 1.²⁶⁵

To understand Peirce's account of actual human selves, then, requires analysis of two concepts that, despite their close affinity to mind and consciousness, Peirce keeps somewhat distinct. The first is self-consciousness and the second, personality. Bringing all three (Mind, self-consciousness and personality) together gives us a reasonable account of Peirce's model of the self; however, the third element, personality, remains largely unexplained within Peirce's own work. In order to better understand its nature and function requires, I argue, a turn to Royce's development of this and related Peircean concepts. This is the subject of the next chapter.

²⁶⁴ Sarah Broadie, “The Sophists and Socrates,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*, ed. David Sedley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 75. The material enclosed in square brackets is Broadie's own gloss of the Greek term “*logos*.”

²⁶⁵ The term “natural artifact” is borrowed from the work of Joseph Margolis and Marjorie Grene. See, especially, Margolis, *The Arts and the Definition of the Human*, 26-27, and Grene, “People and Other Animals,” 358.

CHAPTER 6

JOSIAH ROYCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF PRAGMATICISM

“I think Royce's conception in *The World and the Individual...* comes nearer to the genuine upshot of pragmatism than any exposition that a pragmatist has given,—that any *other* pragmatist has given.”

C.S. Peirce²⁶⁶

In the preceding chapters, I have traced the development of Peirce's doctrine of fallibilism as it pertains to his philosophical naturalism and with particular attention to his account of human person. The underlying argument which informs this project is that fallibilism has not been sufficiently appreciated as a positive doctrine that motivates and informs the rest of Peirce's philosophy, that it is the “lynchpin” of his pragmatism and an important lesson for current discussions of philosophical naturalism. However, Peirce's account, as I have described it, raises important questions that cannot be ignored and the answers to which are not always evident in Peirce's own work. Of particular note are questions bearing on the nature of what Peirce calls “Mind,” the pragmatic value of his definition of truth in terms of infinite inquiry and the nature of personality as embodied in actual human selves. I propose that these questions can be can be profitably addressed by reading Peirce's philosophy through the lens of his contemporary and fellow pragmatist, Josiah Royce. Read as a *pragmatist* informed to a large degree by his “Peircean insight,” Royce elucidates some of the more obscure and potentially extravagant aspects of Peirce's philosophy (such as his account of the continuity of mind and matter), and extends crucial themes which are underdeveloped in Peirce's own writings (notably the nature and importance of personality and its relation to ethical

²⁶⁶

MS 284

concerns). This is the subject of the current chapter. Before turning to this discussion, however, a few words must be said to justify linking Peirce and Royce in this fashion.

Royce's Pragmatism

It is no secret that Peirce was often a disagreeable figure (a feature of his character that we might partially excuse as a product of the serious pain he experienced as a result of his *facial* neuralgia). He was exceedingly proud of his own intellect and a dyed-in-the-wool intellectual elitist. Peirce often despairs, in unguarded language, about the many failings of his peers and sees their development of pragmatism as a degenerate bastardization of his own intellectual offspring. To this end, he famously introduces a variation of the term, “pragmatism,” a “term sufficiently ugly to keep it from the hands of kidnappers” and which was intended to capture the spirit of the doctrine in its originally form.²⁶⁷

An example of Peirce's distancing himself from his contemporaries is found in a letter to E.H. Moore, in which Peirce both places himself within the uppermost echelon of then-living mathematicians and singles out John Dewey for a particularly acerbic criticism, effectively labeling him as the “best of the worst”:

To attempt to make myself understood by anybody but a mathematician would be futile. Nor could the minds of the best adapted to understanding these things,—say Clifford and C.E. Oliver,—possibly go through the process of accurately apprehending all the necessary conceptions in less than,—well, if I say several weeks, I am attributing to them powers marvellously above my own. As for the whole existing race of philosophers,—say John Dewey, to mention a relatively superior man whom you see,—why, they are the sort of trash who are puzzled by Achilles and the Tortoise! Think of trying to drive any exact thought through such skulls!²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ CP 5.414

²⁶⁸ MS 45; now located in L299.

Comments such as this one have helped to fuel a current discussion of just who counts as a pragmatist and how the classical figures themselves would answer such a question. Douglas Anderson, however, has recently argued that, in many ways, the question of who is “really” a pragmatist doesn't really matter.²⁶⁹ I agree with Anderson that the question and its answer are more important to disputes within the current study of pragmatism than to the early pragmatists themselves. Nevertheless, if what I have been arguing in previous chapters is true, viz. that the differences between Dewey's and Peirce's respective fallibilisms have significant consequences for the direction of philosophy and naturalism, then it does matter who, if anyone, Peirce would consider a fellow pragmatist and thus as carrying on his own project. My intuition is that while Peirce is very inclusive in his application of the term “pragmatism,” he is exceedingly restrictive in his use of the term “pragmaticism” meant to capture his own philosophy. In fact, Peirce makes several remarks that would seem to indicate that he only knew of one other philosopher, living at the same time he did, to whom the name “pragmaticist” might accurately be applied: Josiah Royce.

My claim that Peirce felt a greater kinship with Royce than other contemporaries like James and Dewey, may come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the popular account of the history of pragmatism, or passingly acquainted with Royce's philosophy, particularly in its early manifestations. Royce was, after all, well-known in his time as a leading (perhaps *the* leading) metaphysician and Hegelian in the United States. He was also explicitly interested in theology and devoted much of his work to an analysis of Christianity that borders on, if not truly becoming, apologetics; Peirce complained to James about Royce's *The World and the Individual*, “I don't think it good taste to stuff it

²⁶⁹ Douglas R. Anderson, “Who's a Pragmatist: Royce and Peirce at the Turn of the Century,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 41, no. 3 (2005), 467-481.

so full of the name of God.”²⁷⁰ What's more, in a response to one of Royce's early works, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, Peirce (ironically) aligns himself with the “Thrasymachian” doctrine Royce criticizes. He also takes the side of his long-time friend Francis E. Abbott in a bitter feud the latter had with Royce, who had charged him with plagiarism, among other things. All this would seem to indicate that Royce was a less-than-perfect choice to take up Peirce's mantle and continue the development of pragmatism.

However, despite such differences, Royce clearly saw himself as carrying out certain projects Peirce had begun, rather than as the sort of transplanted German idealist much of his contemporaries viewed him as.²⁷¹ In the preface to his late work, *The Problem of Christianity*, he says,

As to certain metaphysical opinions which are stated, in outline, in the second volume of this book, I now owe much more to our great and unduly neglected American logician, Mr. Charles Peirce, than I do to the common tradition of recent idealism, and certainly very much more than I ever owed, at any point of my own philosophical development, to the doctrines which, with technical accuracy can be justly attributed to Hegel.²⁷²

Moreover, given that Peirce was never afraid to express his disdain for other thinkers, his repeated laudatory remarks to and about Royce should be taken all the more seriously. The passage quoted above in which Peirce unhesitatingly denounces Dewey ends with Peirce's remark that, “Royce is the only philosopher I know of real power of

²⁷⁰ CP 8.277

²⁷¹ See, for example, George Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1913), 186-215. Santayana there associates Royce with what he calls “the genteel tradition” in American philosophy, and contrasts him with James.

²⁷² Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 39.

thought now living.”²⁷³ Elsewhere, Peirce even draws upon Royce in order to signal his own distance from James. In a late discussion of “The Illustrations of the Logic of Science,” Peirce acknowledges James's role in bringing pragmatism “before the philosophic world.” However, in an aside, he characterizes James' version of the doctrine as “pressing it indeed further than Mr. Peirce, who continues to acknowledge, not the *existence*, but yet the *reality*, of the Absolute, as set forth, for example, by Royce.”²⁷⁴

In one of the many drafts for a work outlining the central characteristics of pragmaticism (and its differences from pragmatism), Peirce gives an even stronger articulation of his approval of Royce's work, and aligning Royce with his own version of pragmaticism and in contrast with the other pragmatists:

[S]ome are turned against pragmaticism because they think it comes too near to making action, mere brute force, the *summum bonum*. I know of the existence of this objection from having, not very long ago, myself entertained a suspicion that such was the character of pragmaticism and from having almost abandoned the principle, on that account. But further consideration of the matter and the rereading of my own early papers have shown me that pragmaticism, properly understood, is entirely free from that tendency. As I entertain it, it makes the development of the idea alone the *summum bonum*. Only it is essential to the full development of the idea that it should attain literal life, and it is only through action that it can attain life, and only in actions that it can live. I think Royce's conception in *The World and the Individual* (although I do not assent to the logic of that work) comes nearer to the genuine upshot of pragmaticism than any exposition that a pragmatist has given,—that any *other* pragmatist has given.²⁷⁵

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Peirce's fallibilism means that any hope for secure foundation for inquiry which is constant, absolute and certain is a hopeless dream. How then can inquiry even begin? Only by way of a presuppositionless “system,” which

²⁷³ MS L299.

²⁷⁴ MS 630

²⁷⁵ MS 284

is what Peirce takes phenomenology to be. This is a Hegelian philosophy, to be sure, but one that makes far less of Absolute Spirit than certain prominent Hegelians have done. It is a Hegelian phenomenology that requires for its evolutionary account actual contingency and chance which are not ultimately shown to be “necessary.” That is, it is a Hegelian philosophy that has been Darwinized.

It is fitting, then, that of all of Peirce's contemporaries, the one he himself singles out as drawing closest to his own pragmatism is a reformed Hegelian of sort, one intimately familiar with Hegel's philosophy and its legacy. What this shows, I believe, is a new direction for Peirce studies. Too often, Royce is taken to be a secondary figure in the pragmatic tradition, and discussions of the connections between Peirce and Royce tend to focus primarily on the importance of Peirce's influence on Royce. What I offer is that we should reverse the standard order of priority, looking not to Peirce to strengthen Royce's philosophy, but to Royce as developing and strengthening Peirce's account. And, in light of Peirce's remarks such as those quoted above, the place to begin such an account is the second volume of Royce's *The World and the Individual*.

We can, I believe, place special emphasis on this work. Peirce's own shift with regard to Royce occurs around the time that the *The World and the Individual* was published, and many of his most laudatory remarks occur in discussions of the second volume of that work (the only one the then-destitute Peirce had access to).²⁷⁶ Despite reservations regarding Royce's understanding and employment of logic, Peirce clearly

²⁷⁶ In a letter to Royce, Peirce says: “1st, Please know that I never received from your publisher Vol I of your *World and Individual*. I should not have omitted to write and thank you for one of the most valuable works on my shelves. You seem to me to have penetrated metaphysics deeper than anyone. I am not at all sure you will not make your notion of reality more distinct: I think you will do us that service. That it is in the right road I feel sure. I am going to send you Vol II to have my name written in it by you.” MS L385; Draft Milford Pa 1902 May 28.

seems to view Royce as a fellow pragmatist, developing ideas that Peirce takes to be crucial to the development of that philosophical orientation. In 1902, Peirce renews a correspondence with Royce prompted by his reading of the *The World and Individual*:

Now to your work generally, the introduction of exact ideas into metaphysics makes it one of the very most remarkable performances in the whole history of philosophy. I cannot admit that you have solved the problem; but you have taken a seven-league stride toward it; and at your age, with the best years of philosophic study before you, the philosophic world may hope that you will yet accomplish the great achievement of bringing metaphysics up into the company of the peacefully progressive sciences. It appears to me that the time is ripe for it and that you are the man to do it.²⁷⁷

Understanding “Mind”

Of the Peircean themes that Royce develops and elucidates, perhaps the most important, from our perspective and possibly from Peirce's own as well, is the obscure concept of Mind which underwrites Peirce's cosmology and Royce's idealism. Recall that for Peirce, Mind underlies all existence and matter is simply “effete mind” which has become more completely hidebound and habituated. This line of thought has troubled many commentators: it seems to be a doctrine that tends toward the overly anthropomorphic, and which perhaps is at odds with what is often referred to as Peirce's “realism.” Moreover, it is unclear as to just what Peirce means by Mind and how it could be responsible for material nature as Peirce's agapastic theory holds it to be.

The answers to such concerns were prominent themes in Royce's earliest work following his “Peircean insight.” Royce begins his account with a discussion of the long-standing distinction between matter and mind:

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

At one extreme of Nature, we find a world which we are accustomed to conceive as a world of inwardly changeless substances, of material particles, whose changing external relations are determined by rigid and relatively mechanical laws. These laws the sciences of physics and chemistry define. At the other extreme we find a world with whose inner character we are well acquainted, little as we know many of its laws. In that world, the world of our consciousness, all the stream of fact flows, and nothing abides but the meanings. This world is indeed not lawless, but its facts seem to bear no resemblance to those of inorganic matter.²⁷⁸

Traditional approaches to this distinction either endorse a dualism or seek to reduce one element to the other. Royce's point, drawing on Peirce and already hinted at in the formulation above, is that disjunction itself is misguided. If Peirce's doctrine of synechism is correct, and all of nature is continuous, then its manifestations at either extreme, commonly characterized as "mind" and "matter," cannot be understood disjunctively. However, to view one extreme as forming the basis of the other is to elide the real differences manifested in each. Consequently, Royce offers an evolutionary account which emphasizes the similarities between mind and matter, but which does not reduce one to the other: "the processes apparently common to unconscious and to conscious Nature," he says, "are the very processes of evolution themselves."²⁷⁹ Royce emphasizes this point later in the text, saying that "it is precisely this apparent continuity which is the most impressive of all the inductions that the study of evolution has lately forced upon the attention of all who have taken Nature at all seriously."²⁸⁰

Like Pierce, Royce does not view this evolutionary process as proceeding solely along biological lines. A full account of the evolution of the cosmos is possible only in terms of what I have been calling, after Peirce, a "Darwinianized Hegelism," i.e., a model

²⁷⁸ Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual: Second Series*, (New York: Dover, 1959), 209.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 210.

that views reality as the product of both biological and cultural evolution. Royce articulates this doctrine himself in terms of what he calls “mental evolution”: “Between what seems to us, from our ordinary social point of view, the highest of accessible mental life, and what we take to be the manifestation of lifeless matter, there is, in the process of mental evolution, apparently no breach of continuity anywhere.”²⁸¹

Royce's first step in defending the continuity of mind and matter is to question assumption that, of the two, matter is better known and understood. He does this by pointing to the failure of attempts to give purely extensionalist or reductive accounts of mental.

Yet the persistent hopelessness of the whole undertaking, the absolute impossibility of explaining how mental life, whose appearance at least we know so well in its fleeting beauties, should be a mere show of the properties of that which, when we take its mere appearance as true, seems to be the permanent substance now conceived as Matter,—the persistent hopelessness, I say, of this whole undertaking, has led many to reflect afresh, and to ask, Do we so well know the mere appearance called by us Matter as to be sure that its apparent properties, its stability, its mechanical rigidity of lawful behavior, are its ultimately real characters? Suppose, after all, that this stable appearance were a delusion. Suppose that even material nature were internally full of the live and fleeting processes that we know as those of conscious mental life. Suppose that these processes constituted the inmost essence and foundation of what seems to us to be Matter.²⁸²

This speculation leads Royce to the surprising claim that “Matter is actually the more mysterious of the two extremes.”²⁸³ Royce acknowledges that this is a controversial position, apparently contrary to common intuitions. “But it does not always seem so; for

281 Ibid.

282 Ibid., 213.

283 Ibid., 212.

Mind, as we know it in men, is an unstable process, which all sorts of physical conditions appear to derange.”²⁸⁴

Royce is here pointing to a common objection brought against attempts to make fields such as philosophy into sciences. We have, so the argument goes, a successful track record when it comes to determining the fundamental laws which govern the nature and behavior of material nature and the forces which operate upon it. However, despite centuries of investigation, no similar laws seem to have been discovered by philosophy or other fields directed at the investigation of the mental and cultural realms. In fact, this investigation appears to have revealed the mental to be, essentially and by nature, an “unstable process” which is decidedly un-lawlike. This would appear to support models which take the mental and the cultural to be mere illusions or constructions, relative latecomers on the cosmological scene, of interest to us in our anthropocentric moments but not particularly helpful in understanding the more fundamental aspects of reality. Furthermore, our investigation of the material aspects of reality have been of enormous practical consequence and benefit whereas the benefits of the investigation of the mental has been dubious and never without controversy.

Royce is aware of all these concerns, and certainly has no interest in denying the utility of the work of the natural sciences. What his account does deny is the assumption that the approach adopted by the natural sciences is enabled by any categorical difference in their objects of study. Royce's hypothesis, which reveals the nature of mind for both him and Peirce, is that “very possibly material Nature is a show of a process that is inwardly fluent, just as the mental process in us is fluent, only at some very different rate.”²⁸⁵ This follows from Peirce's evolutionary cosmology; the movement from absolute

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 219.

potentiality to absolute fixity is marked throughout by fluidity and is beyond the perspective of human inquiry which is always an ever-involving interpretation.

Natural laws are, for Royce, attempts at approximating processes which are, by their nature, too grand to be captured from the perspective of finite human knowledge.

The vast contrast which we have been taught to make between material and conscious processes really depends merely upon the accidents of the human point of view, and in particular upon an exaggeration of the literal accuracy of those admirable theories of atomic and ethereal processes which, as I have said, belong to the mere bookkeeping of the sciences.²⁸⁶

Within the scope of actual human inquiry, such processes appear more-or-less perfectly regularized, i.e., completely subject to habit. From a broader perspective such processes, Royce hypothesizes, are actually much more fluid and fluxive, akin to the processes observed in the mental realm and which at first seemed to reflect a fundamental distinction between the material and the mental. “What we find, in inorganic Nature,” Royce says, “are processes whose time-rate is slower or faster than those which our consciousness is adapted to read or to appreciate.”²⁸⁷

That Royce brings this process under the heading “mental evolution” should not be taken to indicate that he favors a reductive account along idealist lines (although, as we will see, this *might* in fact be the case). What the term indicates is that Royce follows Peirce in taking “Mind,” employed as a term of art, to capture the continuity in question. The pragmaticist line, here, is not an account of which “stuff” is fundamental, but which processes are. For, following Peirce's original formulation of the pragmatic maxim, such “stuffs” are, for us, simply the possible effects they would have, i.e., the processes and relations in which they participate. Royce gives his own formulation of the pragmatic

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 224.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 240.

maxim along such lines, saying, “What empirical science can try to tell you is not what things are in themselves, but how they behave, and to what laws they are apparently subject.”²⁸⁸ Thus, viewed through the lens Royce offers, Mind, for Peirce, is a concept which describes the fundamental processes of nature rather than its ontology. (This is the point of Peirce's emphasis on the generality of laws and their development through the spread of habit, as discussed in Chapter 2.)

This interpretation gains support when we turn to Royce's description of these processes. The model he presents is, as he explicitly states, a version of Peirce's “Law of Mind,” the “basis for his remarkable hypothesis regarding evolution”:

Both regions of Nature, the apparently mental and the apparently material region, are subject to processes which involve a general tendency of one part of Nature to *communicate*, as it were, with another part, influencing what occurs at one place through what has already occurred at another place...In both cases the tendency is one towards *the mutual assimilation of the regions of Nature involved in the process*. In both cases the process of communication has, in general, an at least partially irreversible character.²⁸⁹

In characterizing this process in terms of communication, Royce is pointing to an element of this evolutionary model that emerges in Peirce's philosophy in the form of semiotics, and in Royce's own account under the concept of interpretation. The central point here is that processes in nature have a tendency to spread and that this spreading and assimilation is what leads to the observed regularity of nature as expressed in natural laws. (This is but another way to articulate Peirce's evolutionary hypothesis, i.e., that the entire universe is moving from a point of pure potentiality to one of absolute fixity and regularity, as discussed in Chapter 4). This increased regularization is enabled by the spread of what Royce, again following Peirce, calls “habits.” “Both the material and the

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 214.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 220.

mental worlds show a tendency, under favorable conditions, to the appearances of processes resembling those which, in the life of a mind, we call Habits.”²⁹⁰ For Peirce, this spread of habits follows the path of his triadic doctrine of signs; for Royce, it is a process of communication which is likewise structured in terms of a triad. Viewed in the context of human culture and community, this model leads Royce to his key notion of community and a fuller account of the “unifying idea” that Peirce mentions, but does not elucidate, as necessary for the existence of a personality, what we would more commonly identify as an individual human person.

Personality, Community and the Unity of the Self

Following Peirce, Royce affirms the role that evolution and community have in the emergence of selfhood and emphasizes the community over the individual in inquiry and meaning.

Practically I cannot be saved alone; theoretically speaking, I cannot find or even define the truth in terms of my individual experience, without taking account of my relation to the community of those who know. This community, then, is real whatever is real. And in that community my life is interpreted. When viewed as if I were alone, I, the individual, am not only doomed to failure, but am lost in folly. The “workings” of my ideas are events whose significance I cannot even remotely estimate in terms of their momentary existence, or in terms of my individual successes. My life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community. I win no success worth having, unless it is also the success of the community to which I essentially and by virtue of my relations to the whole universe, belong.²⁹¹

The self has its origins in the biology of the human animal and first acquires its nature as a self in the context of a community. Moreover, as Peirce points out, the

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 220-1

²⁹¹ Royce, *Problem of Christianity*, 357.

individuality of the self is primarily a product of abstraction; the self for both Peirce and Royce emerges in response to a perceived deviation from a more fundamental social identity. “In origin,” Royce says, “the empirical Ego is secondary to our social experience. In literal social life, the Ego is always known as in contrast to the Alter.”²⁹² The process of such development that Royce describes closely parallels Peirce's early account as discussed in Chapter 5:

A child in the earlier stages of his social development,—say from the end of the first to the beginning of the fifth year of life,—shows you, as you observe him, a process of the development of self-consciousness in which, at every stage, the Self of the child grows and forms itself through Imitation and through functions that cluster about the Imitation of others, and that are secondary thereto. In consequence, the child is in general conscious of what expresses the life of somebody else, before he is conscious of himself. And his self-consciousness, as it grows, feeds upon social models, so that at every stage of his awakening life his consciousness of the Alter is a step in advance of his consciousness of the Ego.²⁹³

This process, as Royce sees it, begins with imitation and is semiotic in structure. A human child draws upon its animal capacities and imitates the acts of its fellows. “What he learns imitatively, and then reproduces, perhaps in joyous obstinacy, as an act that enables himself to display himself over against others,—this constitutes the beginning of his self-conscious life.”²⁹⁴ However, the imitative act never perfectly matches the model; this introduces a sort of variation in the cultural sphere that parallels the variation in genetics necessary for biological evolution, and motivates Royce's focus on interpretation. In imitating another,

²⁹² Royce, *World and Individual*, 264.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 261-2.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

I never merely repeat his act. Imitation is a kind of experimental origination, a trial of a new plan, the initiation of a trial series of acts. The result of imitative efforts is that the world comes to contain a sort of action which lies *between* two former ways of action, in such wise that, if you regarded these two former ways of acting as equivalent to each other, the new way would be equivalent to both.²⁹⁵

The human self, then, is the irreducible triad formed by this interpretive imitation; “the new Individual, the life of the empirical human Self, comes to be, in one aspect, *a series of results of intermediation*, a more or less systematic establishment of new terms whereby triads are constituted.”²⁹⁶

Consequently, as with Peirce's account discussed in Chapter 5, the individuality of the self for Royce is not only negative, or purely derivative.

Yet fear not to find in what manifold ways your life depends upon Nature and Society. It depends upon them for absolutely all of its *general* characters. That is, whatever character it shares with others, implies dependence upon others. If it did not so depend, it would have no intimate share in the common life. But its dependence means precisely that it derives from the other lives everything *except* its *individual fashion of acknowledging and taking interest in this its very dependence, and of responding thereto by its deeds.*²⁹⁷

While a self is indeed an abstraction from a larger social unity for both Peirce and Royce, the individuality achieved through interpretive imitation also has a positive aspect. The self formed in such an interpretive process itself generates further possibilities of interpretation, aiming for the never-attained final interpretant Peirce discusses in his semiotic. In drawing together the numerous and varied interpretive acts under this this goal one achieves the unity of self by means of an coordinating idea which Peirce describes as “personality.” For Royce, this unifying idea is a plan which is first

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 311.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 312.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 293.

acquired from a community and then appropriated so as to enable to formation of one's own will. This formation of the will becomes the central ethical demand faced by every individual and corresponds to Peirce's important notion of self-control. (The similarity here becomes even more evident when we consider Peirce's own remark that "The only moral evil is not to have an ultimate aim.")²⁹⁸ Moreover, it is the ability to adopt such a plan and form such a will that accounts for the sui generis nature of human selves in contrast with non-human nature; it is the Roycean version of Peirce's claim that "man's proper function" consists in embodying general ideas. In the next of his major works, *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, Royce sums up this characterization, saying that, "a person, an individual self, may be defined as a human life lived according to a plan. If a man could live with no plan at all, purposely and quite passively, he would in so far be an organism, and also, if you choose, he would be a psychological specimen, but he would be no personality. Wherever there is personality, there are purposes worked out in life."²⁹⁹

In keeping with the evolutionary and semiotic commitments of Peircean pragmatism, Royce is careful to point out that the plans by which selves attain unity cannot be fully manifest at any point in time prior to the end the universe's infinite evolution. "I cannot too strongly insist," he says, "that, in our present form of human consciousness, the true Self of any individual man is not a datum, but an ideal."³⁰⁰ The ideal nature of such a plan makes the self likewise an ideal:

But now, if my human Self can be defined in a single and connected fashion only in terms of such an ideal, we see at once that, in our present human life, no one life plan ever gets both a precise definition and a

²⁹⁸ CP 5.133

²⁹⁹ Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (New York: MacMillan, 1911), 168-169.

³⁰⁰ Royce, *World and Individual*, 287.

complete embodiment; and, therefore, we can say, Never in the present life do we find the Self as a given and realized fact. It is for us an ideal.³⁰¹

This has the consequence that ideals suitable for the organizing function of life-plans are those which require of the individual a commitment to a project that he or she will never be able to achieve in his or her own lifetime. It should be clear by now that the principle form such an ideal would take for the pragmatist is truth. Royce's makes this connection to Peirce's definition of truth at the end of inquiry explicit in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*: "To appeal to the genuinely real "long run" is only to appeal in still another form to a certain ideally fair conspectus of my own life,—a conspectus which I, in my private human experience, never get."³⁰²

Devotion to such ideal causes as truth provides Royce with his central ethical doctrine, loyalty.

Truth seeking and loyalty are therefore essentially the same process of life merely viewed in two different aspects. Whoever is loyal serves what he takes to be a truth, namely, his cause. On the other hand, whoever seeks truth for its own sake fails of his business if he seeks it merely as a barren abstraction, that has no life in it. If a truth seeker knows his business, he is, then, in the sense of our definition, serving a cause which unifies our human life upon some higher level of spiritual being than the present human level. He is therefore essentially loyal.³⁰³

That such an ideal goal remains always beyond the grasp of the individual makes it what Royce calls a "lost cause" and echoes the existential crisis that Peirce's account of truth introduces (as discussed in Chapter 3). "Truth is itself a cause," Royce says,

and is largely as one must admit, for us mortals, just now, what we called, in our last lecture, a lost cause—else how should these pragmatists be able

³⁰¹ Royce, *World and Individual*, 290.

³⁰² Royce, *Loyalty*, 339.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 314. Royce also remarks that, "The loyal, then, are truth seekers; and the truth seekers are loyal. And all of them live for the sake of the unity of all life," (p. 376).

thus to imagine a vain thing, and call that truth which is but the crumbling expediency of the moment?³⁰⁴

Moreover, Royce's characterization of truth as a "lost cause" matches Peirce's implicit distinction between truth as social goal and settled belief as goal of individual: "Our course, hereupon, is to seek something *between* that unknown goal, and ourselves as we are. This something, as soon as found, tends to satisfy the will as an effort, even if it leaves us disappointed with the result."³⁰⁵ However, this is not merely a recognition of finitude, and permission to take a "moral holiday" by substituting practical expediency for the ideal goal. There is, for Royce, intrinsic value in adopting goals and life-plans that are necessarily unattainable. And this value reveals the pragmatic nature of Peirce's definition of truth.

Truth and Other "Lost Causes"

In explaining the value of lost causes, Royce begins with his own articulation of Peirce's fallibilism, a doctrine that is much stronger than the ones proposed by James and Dewey. Speaking of the loyal, Royce says that

They, too, are indeed subject to fortune; their loyalty, also, is an insatiable passion to serve their cause; they also know what it is to meet with tasks that are too vast for mortals to accomplish. Only their very loyalty, since it is a willing surrender of the self to the cause, is no hopeless warfare with this fate, but is a joyous acceptance in advance of the inevitable destiny of every individual human being...Since it views life as a service of the cause, it is content with an endless quest.³⁰⁶

However, although he follows Peirce in endorsing such a strong fallibilism, Royce moves much more quickly than his predecessor to a discussion of hope and his

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 340.

³⁰⁵ Royce, *World and Individual*, 313.

³⁰⁶ Royce, *Loyalty*, 90.

own ethical doctrine of loyalty: “If one persists, *But you and I may be wrong*, the last word of conscience is, *We are fallible, but we can be decisive and faithful; and this is loyalty.*”³⁰⁷

That such causes are “lost,” and therefore remain unfulfilled in actual human striving, is, for Royce, an essential element in the evolutionary development of human culture:

Loyalty to lost causes is, then, not only a possible thing, but one of the most potent influences of human history. In such cases, the cause comes to be idealized through its very failure to win temporary and visible success. The result for loyalty may be vast.... The whole history of Christianity is therefore one long lesson as to how a cause may be idealized through apparent defeat, and how even thereby loyalty may be taught to generation after generation of men, and may develop into endlessly new forms, and so may appeal to peoples to whom the cause in question was originally wholly strange. This history shows us how such a teaching and such an evolution of an idea may be furthered by what seems at first most likely to discourage loyalty, that is, by loss, by sorrow, by worldly defeat.³⁰⁸

This is because loyalty to lost causes makes those causes, “real,” in Peirce's sense, i.e., part of the universe's “continuous growth from non-existence to existence.”³⁰⁹ As was the case with the reality of consciousness discussed in Chapter 5, the ideals of lost causes, which serve as the coordinating ideas necessary for personality and selfhood, must acquire regularity; “The reality of things consists in their persistent forcing themselves upon our recognition.”³¹⁰ Furthermore, their status as “lost” leads to commitment to something much larger than individual, thus accounting for the normative force of a socio-historical “space of reasons.” Royce and Peirce are thus telling the story

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 196.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 280-1.

³⁰⁹ MS 955

³¹⁰ Ibid.

of how human constructs can, and do, shape human development, and providing the “missing intermediaries” of McDowell's account (discussed further in Chapter 7). Finally, this account reinforces the fallibilistic stance that is lost when the ideal is done away with and we settle for expediency or “warranted assertability.”

It is this account of truth that, according to both commentators like Anderson as well as Royce himself, marks Royce's divergence from classical pragmatism, but not, as I shall argue, from *pragmatism*. “This way of regarding the world of truth,” Royce says, “which I have just defined as mine, is especially and most vivaciously attacked by my good friends, the pragmatists,—a group of philosophers who have of late been disposed to take truth under their especial protection, as if she were in danger from the tendency of some people who take her too seriously.”³¹¹

In speaking of “the pragmatists” here, Royce has in mind, primarily William James. He nowhere indicates a desire to characterize Peirce in the same fashion, and his comments about the “father of pragmatism” remain consistently laudatory. Moreover, despite his objections to Jamesian pragmatism, Royce is quite willing to admit his sympathy toward a great deal of James' popular pragmatic understanding of truth:

I fully agree with [James] that whenever a man asserts a truth, his assertion is a deed,—a practical attitude, an active acknowledgement of some fact. I fully agree that the effort to verify this acknowledgement by one's own personal experience, and the attempt to find truth in the form of a practical congruity between our assertions and our attained empirical results, is an effort which in our individual lives inevitably accompanies and sustains our every undertaking in the cause of truth seeking. Modern pragmatism is not indeed as original as it seems to suppose itself to be in emphasizing such views. The whole history of modern idealism is full of such assertions.³¹²

³¹¹ Royce, *Loyalty*, 315.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 325.

What Royce finds lacking in James' account is any understanding of truth as something greater than practical exigency or which cannot be immediately affirmed by empirical means, no matter how “radical” these may be. That is, Royce balks at James's “entertaining expressions of horror of the eternal,” a feature that Royce takes to be essential to truth.³¹³ This is because truth, for Royce and Peirce, is found only in an “absolute” context, one that far exceeds any individual perspective. “But tell me,” Royce says,

'I just now find this belief expedient, it feels to me congruous' and you have explicitly given me just a scrap of your personal biography, and have told me no other truth whatever than a truth about the present state of your feelings.³¹⁴

In this, Royce implicitly supports the distinction between pragmatism and pragmaticism outlined in Chapter 2.

Before continuing, it must be noted that there is certainly evidence to suggest that Royce adheres to a sort of Absolute Idealism that bears marked differences from pragmaticism as Peirce presents it. This is because Royce seems to take the existence of some Absolute truth as necessary for our speaking of truth at all.³¹⁵ Fallibilism, under such account, becomes something less than Peirce takes it to be, merely the by-product of our own present limitations, something to be superseded by the synthesizing perspective of the “world consciousness.”

It is only because, after all, I am loyal to the world's whole truth that I can so express myself in fallible ideas, and in fragmentary opinions that, as a

³¹³ Ibid., 326.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 338.

³¹⁵ This was certainly the view of the young Royce as put forth in the *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. Peirce famously rejected the account of truth presented in that work, presenting his own view as a variation of the “Thrasymachian” doctrine Royce opposes.

fact, I may, at any moment, undertake too much for my own momentary successes to be assured, so that I can indeed in any one of my assertions fail justly to accord with that world consciousness which I am all the while trying to interpret in my own transient way. But when I this fail, I momentarily fail *to interpret my place in the very world consciousness whose life I am trying to define*. But my failure, when and in so far as it occurs, is once more a fact,—and therefore a fact for the world's consciousness.³¹⁶

This view of truth leads to Royce's own form of idealism and is the heart of his “Absolute Pragmatism.” It is also the point at which, according to Anderson, Royce departs from Peirce's pragmatism. The central difference between the two, as Anderson sees it, is the importance each gives to chance in his cosmology. According to Anderson, to Royce “chance is a contingency of finitude and not a real feature of the Absolute.”³¹⁷ That is, the “world about which we inquire, [Royce] intimates, is a fully determinate continuum in which there is not room for real vagueness or chance that might make statistical analyses appropriate to world itself. We employ statistics only because we cannot have an immediate absolute vision of the world.”³¹⁸

Anderson's characterization seems an apt one, particularly in view of passages in which Royce seems to treat some version of determinate absolute truth as an a priori commitment necessary for any and all inquiry.

[W]hoever talks of any sort of truth whatever, be that truth moral or scientific, the truth of common sense or the truth of a philosophy, inevitably implies, in all his assertions about truth, that the world of truth of which he speaks is a world possessing a rational and spiritual unity, is a conscious world of experience, whose type of consciousness is higher in its level than is the type of our human minds, but whose life is such that our life belongs as part of this living whole. This world of truth is one that you must define, so I insist, if you are to regard any proposition whatever

³¹⁶ Ibid., 370-1.

³¹⁷ Anderson, “Who's a Pragmatist?” 475.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 478.

as true, and are then to tell, in a reasonable way, what you mean by the truth of that proposition.³¹⁹

If this does, indeed, remain Royce's view (and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that it is), then Anderson is entirely correct in holding Royce and Peirce to diverge, in a significant way, in this regard. For, as was shown in Chapter 4, Peirce's valuation of statistical analysis arises not from a desire to compensate for the shortcomings of human inquiry, but because such analysis is uniquely suited to capturing an evolving world that harbors real chance. Moreover, as was also shown in that discussion, the continuum with which the mature Royce identifies the Absolute is itself dependent upon the sort of strong fallibilism Peirce endorsed and which has been featured throughout the present discussion. Whether or not Peirce and Royce really do diverge on this point, while certainly an important and interesting question, is outside the scope of my project which, despite drawing heavily upon historical discussions is not historical in its aim.³²⁰ Royce's pragmatism may have remained “unreconstructed” with respect to chance and the Absolute, as Anderson argues. In the continued evolution of pragmatism, however, we can—indeed, must—recover the insights offered by Peirce and Royce in a manner that is beneficial with respect to current discussions of

³¹⁹ Royce, *Loyalty*, 314.

³²⁰ There is some evidence that Royce did understand the Absolute in the manner such passages as the above would indicate. In *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, he addresses the issue himself in a response to criticisms leveled by James: “But the real whole conspectus of experience, the real view of the totality of life, the real expression of that will to live in and for the whole, which every assertion of truth and every loyal deed expresses—well, it must be a conspectus that includes whatever facts are indeed facts, be they past, present, or future. I call this whole of experience an eternal truth. I do not thereby mean, as my colleague seems to imagine, that the eternal first exists, and that then our life in time comes and copies that external order. I mean simply that the whole of experience includes all temporal happenings, contains within itself all changes, and, since it is the one whole that we all want and need, succeeds in so far as it supplements all failures, accepts all, even the blindest of services, and wins what we seek” (pp. 344-5).

philosophical naturalism, even if such a recovery comes at the cost of abandoning aspects of their respective doctrines which each actually espoused. I offer that both thinkers can be brought together in a manner that remains true to the spirit of each by way of a definition of the a priori that was put forth by one of Royce's own students, C.I. Lewis.

Pragmatism Evolved: Lewis and the a priori

Lewis recognizes the apparent divergence between Peirce and Royce, noting that, “Pragmatism has sometimes been charged with oscillating between two contrary notions; the one, that experience is 'through and through malleable to our purpose,' the other, that facts are 'hard' and uncreated by the mind.”³²¹ He takes his own account to “offer a mediating conception: through all our knowledge runs the element of the *a priori*, which is indeed malleable to our purpose and responsive to our need. But throughout, there is also that other element of experience which is 'hard,' 'independent,' and unalterable to our will”³²² This mediating conception relies involves modifying the traditional understanding of the a priori in a way that captures and reformulates Royce's troubling take on truth and the Absolute. Following Royce, Lewis holds that *some* a priori commitment to a larger order is necessary for us to make sense of our fragmentary experiences; this is because, as he says, “Experience does not categorize itself.”³²³ Rather, “It is only because the mind is prepared to judge it real or unreal according as it bears or fails to bear certain marks, that interpretation of the given is possible at all, and that experience can be understood.”³²⁴

³²¹ C.I. Lewis, “A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 20, no. 7 (1923): 177.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, 14.

³²⁴ Ibid., 13.

However, according to Lewis, the *a priori* cannot be construed as necessary and independent of experience, nor can it be taken to be mind-independent or something that dictates all thought.

What is *a priori* is necessary truth not because it compels the mind's acceptance, but precisely because it does not. It is given experience, brute fact, the *a posteriori* element in knowledge which the mind must accept willy-nilly. The *a priori* represents an attitude in some sense freely taken, a stipulation of the mind itself, and a stipulation which might be made in some other way if it suited our bent or need.³²⁵

This "freely taken" attitude is necessary in the sense that some form of it must be adopted in order to make sense of experience, but the specific commitments involved rest on pragmatic, (i.e. contingent), grounds, and are the product of historical and evolved fluencies conforming to practical concerns:

Such definitions, fundamental principles and criteria the mind itself must supply before experience can even begin to be intelligible. These represent more or less deep-lying attitudes, which the human mind has taken in the light of its total experience up to date.³²⁶

To put the point in a way that resonates with the pragmatist line developed in this chapter, we can say, with Lewis, that *a priori* commitments are close kin to the purposes which coordinate mind and enable the development of persons. "What is *a priori*," Lewis says,

is prior to experience in almost the same sense that purpose is. Purposes are not dictated by the content of the given; they are our own. Yet purposes must take their shape and have their realization in terms of experience; the content of the given is not irrelevant to them. And purposes which can find no application will disappear. In somewhat the same fashion what is *a priori* and of the mind is prior to the content of the

³²⁵ Lewis, "A Priori," 169.

³²⁶ Lewis, *Mind*, 266.

given, yet in another sense not altogether independent of experience in general.³²⁷

The explanation for the origins and development of this a priori element that Lewis gives follows the lines of the “Darwinized Hegelism” I have favored here, and arises the spread of habits proved successful in their application to the world as it is experienced by a community of inquirers over the entire career of its development. According to Lewis,

Our categories are guides to action. Those attitudes which survive the test of practice will reflect not only the nature of the active creature but the general character of the experience he confronts. Thus, indirectly, even what is a priori may not be an exclusive product of “reason,” or made in Plato's heaven in utter independence of the world we live in. Moreover, the fact that man survives and prospers by his social habits serves to accentuate and perfect agreement in our basic attitudes.³²⁸

Lewis thus grounds the a priori commitment required for experience in a world that harbors real chance. Like Peirce, he views the elements of experience which are produced by the mediating and interpretive actions of mind to be themselves the products of our encounters with the “brute” aspects of reality, makeshift hypotheses and guesses without any pretense toward privilege or universality.

Neither human experience nor the human mind has a character which is universal, fixed, and absolute. “The human mind” does not exist at all save in the sense that all humans are very much alike in fundamental respects, and that the language habit and the enormously importance exchange of ideas has greatly increased our likeness in those respects which are here in question. Our categories and definitions are peculiarly social products, reached in the light of experiences which have much in common, and beaten out, like other pathways, by the coincidence of human purposes and the exigencies of human cooperation.³²⁹

³²⁷ Ibid., 24.

³²⁸ Ibid., 21.

³²⁹ Lewis, “A Priori,” 177.

The a priori, then, is for Lewis an a posteriori posit, a generalization of successful fluencies developed in actual practices. “The a priori,” he says, “is knowable simply through the reflective and critical formulation of our own principles of classification and interpretation.”³³⁰ As a result, “philosophy is, so to speak, the mind's own study of itself in action; and the method of it is simply reflective. It seeks to formulate explicitly what from the beginning is our own creation and possession.”³³¹

In this, Lewis avoids Royce's mistake of taking the world to be “a fully determinate continuum” the order of which merely awaits our discovery. However, Lewis does follow his teacher in taking a community of interpretation to be essential to our existence as persons and inhabitants of a common world of interpretation.

Indeed our categories are almost as much a social product as is language, and in something like the same sense. It is only the *possibility* of agreement which must be antecedently presumed. The “human mind” is a coincidence of individual minds which partly, no doubt, must be native, but partly itself is created by the social process.³³²

In the next, and final, chapter I pursue this intuition, and demonstrate the importance of such an antecedent commitment to the “possibility of agreement” in language by way of a discussion of twentieth century attempts to “naturalize” linguistic meaning. I then connect this discussion to McDowell's own project in a way that reveals the distinct promise of an evolved pragmatism in the development of philosophy in the twenty-first century.

330 Lewis, *Mind*, 232.

331 Ibid., 18.

332 Ibid., 21; see also pp. 238-9

CHAPTER 7

RE-ENCHANTING NATURALISM: MCDOWELL AND PRAGMATISM

“Only it is essential to the full development of the idea that it should attain literal life, and it is only through action that it can attain life, and only in actions that it can live.”

C.S. Peirce³³³

In the twentieth century, following what Rorty identifies as the “linguistic turn,” the traditional questions of metaphysics and epistemology gradually became the domain of the philosophy of language. This is the shift which enables Huw Price's distinction between “subject” and “object” naturalism, as discussed in Chapter 1. Price locates a problematic in the very formulation of the naturalist project by focusing on the importance of language in our understanding of the world as an object of inquiry. Similarly, in his invocation of Gadamerian themes, McDowell sees the acquisition of language as the means by which a human being “actualizes” animal capacities, comes to have a mind and takes a place in a normatively freighted “world” (as opposed to a mere “environment”).

The possibility of a naturalist model in this tradition is, then, indelibly caught up with problems surrounding language and the enigmatic connection between linguistic meaning and the world. This is an intuition that figures prominently in the work of W.V. O. Quine, Donald Davidson and Daniel Dennett. If so much of what it means to be a person depends upon acquiring a language, then in order to “naturalize” persons, we must be able to “naturalize” language. Perhaps the most famous attempt at such a project in twentieth century American philosophy is Quine's own behaviorist model.

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This chapter begins by looking at Quine's strategy for naturalizing linguistic meaning and the objections raised against it by John Searle. Searle's criticism relies upon privileging the first-person perspective in the determination of linguistic meaning. However, if, as I have been arguing, what marks the individual, and thus the first-person perspective, is limitation and error rather than transparent reflexivity and certitude, then Searle's objection fails. This is introduced not to defend Quine's own naturalism, but rather to show the relevance (and, indeed, the influence) of Peirce's philosophy for more contemporary attempts at a naturalized model of meaning. Moreover, the debate between Quine and Searle, along with Davidson's response to Quine's project, is an apt exemplar of the point of departure for McDowell's own naturalist project. Tracing this development, then, not only brings into focus McDowell's preferred strategy, but highlights the decisive differences between that model and the one I take Peirce and his fellow pragmaticists to offer, thus demonstrating pragmatism's distinct promise with respect to the further development of philosophical naturalism.

Naturalizing Language and Quine's Thesis of Indeterminacy

The fundamental intuition behind Quine's approach to language is that the only way to the "objective reality" of meaning is through the analysis of empirically observable linguistic behavior. For reasons he puts forth in his seminal paper "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" and elsewhere, he is reluctant to construe "meanings" psychologically, or to grant them existence as entities.³³⁴ Consequently, he develops an account of meaning based upon translation, particularly "radical translation," i.e., translation which is not facilitated by shared linguistic etymology or a common cultural tradition. Quine's idea here is that meaning is that which is shared by an utterance and its

³³⁴ Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism."

translation into another language, and that such meaning can eventually be understood purely in terms of observable behavior.

The standard example of such observable behavior, in Quine's account, is the sentence "Gavagai" uttered by a speaker of the target language upon sighting a rabbit. As a first pass, the field linguist might then translate "Gavagai" as "Lo, a rabbit." This translation would then be tested against future evidence, the translator might use the sentence later upon sighting a rabbit and look for assent from the speaker of Gavagai-talk, and altered or replaced as necessary. When, under suitably similar conditions, a speaker of the target language is equally likely to assent to the utterance of a given observation sentence as a speaker of the translator's language would be to so respond to the utterance of that sentence's translation, then the two sentences are said to be "stimulus synonymous." Thus, "Gavagai" is stimulus synonymous with "Lo, a rabbit" insofar as it is just as likely that the native speaker be prompted to assent to the utterance of "Gavagai" upon sighting a rabbit as an English speaker would be so prompted to assent to the utterance of "Lo, a rabbit."

Cases such as this, in which the meaning of the sentence uttered is as much as possible a function of the external stimuli that prompt the utterance, Quine calls "observation sentences." These belong within a larger class of "occasion sentences," sentences whose meaning depends upon the context that prompts their utterance but which are not necessarily prompted by sensory stimuli, and which, in turn, are contrasted with "standing sentences," sentences which require acquaintance with certain cultural structures, as well as certain assumptions or "analytical hypotheses." The determinateness of meaning is, under this account, a function of the role that external stimuli play in prompting the disposition to make a given utterance; as one moves from observation sentences toward standing sentences, the constraining role such stimuli play decreases, and the less useful such sentences become for the investigation into the objective reality

of meaning. Quine prefers, then, to restrict investigation of meaning to “stimulus meaning,” the ordered pair consisting, on the one hand, of the conditions under which a person (endowed with the necessary linguistic ability) would be just as likely to assent to the utterance of a sentence as he would to its translation, and, on the other, those conditions in which he would be just as likely to dissent from either.

A consequence of this account is that one is able to judge between competing translation schema, what Quine calls “translation manuals,” only insofar as one manual better accords with the behavioral evidence. However, it is, as Quine claims, not only possible but actually *certain* that there be multiple such translation manuals that are incompatible with each other (that admit translations that are not allowable under the other manual, and vice versa) but which all equally fit the behavioral evidence at hand. This is the linguistic form of the familiar notion of underdetermination. However, Quine makes a further claim, viz. that there *never* will be evidence such that it will one day show the unique aptness of one translation manual over and against the others, his famous “Indeterminacy Thesis”: “The thesis [of indeterminacy] then is this: manuals for translating one language into another can be set up in divergent ways, all compatible with the totality of speech dispositions, yet incompatible with one another.”³³⁵

This plays out in reference as “inscrutability.” For Quine, the basic unit of radical translation, and thus the basic unit of meaning, is a complete sentence, with particular preference being given to observation sentences. Thus the translator, like the child who first learns language, comes to know the meaning of entire sentences first, and only later is able to abstract repeatable and interchangeable components from such sentences. Such abstraction, however, must proceed along lines similar to those governing the interpretation of standing sentences, i.e., involve recourse to analytical hypotheses in

³³⁵ W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object*, (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1960), 27.

addition to observable behavior. To return to the standard case, interpreting the subject of the utterance “Gavagai” as “rabbit-stage,” accords with the observable evidence equally as well as taking the subject to be “rabbit”; choosing one over the other is a function of certain hypotheses rather than the conditions for stimulus meaning that Quine puts forth. This, then, introduces an element of indeterminacy at the level of mere reference.

It is against this point that Searle directs his objections to Quine’s account of meaning.³³⁶ The thesis of indeterminacy, Searle says, actually counts as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the premises from which it follows, viz. linguistic behaviorism.³³⁷ Searle’s argument can be expressed as follows. According to linguistic behaviorism, the only objective reality that meanings possess is the correlation between external stimuli and the dispositions to linguistic behavior such stimuli prompt. A consequence of this account, sketched above, is that translations are indeterminate with respect to their relative accuracy; there is no fact of the matter that necessarily shows one translation manual to be more accurate than another, incompatible, manual, given that both manuals equally fit the evidence upon which they are based, namely the disposition prompting stimuli. Such

³³⁶ John Searle, “Indeterminacy, Empiricism and the First Person,” *Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 3 (1987): 123-146.

³³⁷ In the actual presentation of the argument, Searle refers to Quine’s specific brand of behaviorism as “extreme linguistic behaviorism.” He nowhere explains exactly what aspect of Quine’s theory warrants the appellation “extreme,” however I believe that is safe to say that he means to indicate by this qualification the fact that Quine’s theory holds that nothing beyond the disposition to linguistic behavior is admissible in a responsible, scientific investigation of meaning (thus distinguishing it from a form of behaviorism that merely takes such dispositions to be of primary, but not exclusive, interest). However, as Searle notes, even this “extreme” form of linguistic behaviorism does not entail the ontological commitment that there are, in fact, no psychological states associated with meanings: “Quine, I take it, does not deny the existence of inner mental states and processes; he just thinks they are useless and irrelevant to developing an empirical theory of language,” (p. 124). In light of this, I have opted to ignore the qualification “extreme” as it does not seem to bear upon the argument at hand.

indeterminacy, Searle maintains, would apply not only to the third-person case in which the linguist translates the language of the native speaker into his own, but also to the first-person case in which I determine what I meant by one of my own sentences. Thus, according to Quine's model, there is no fact of the matter as to whether I meant "rabbit," "rabbit-stage" or "undetached rabbit-parts" by my utterance of the sentence "Rabbit." However, Searle says, we know independently, that there is indeed a "plain fact of the matter" about which of these "translations" I meant; in uttering the sentence "rabbit" I meant "rabbit" and I know this to be true.³³⁸ That I know this is, Searle repeatedly says, "a plain fact about me." Consequently, as the premise of linguistic behaviorism upon which the theory in question was built leads us to a contradiction (that I both know and don't know what I mean in uttering a sentence), we are forced to reject it.

There is, however, reason to be skeptical of Searle's account, due, in part, to its very formulation. In articulating the reductio that he finds in Quine's model, Searle says that,

if this thesis [of indeterminacy] is correct, then there cannot even be 'correct' translations from a language into itself. By observing my idiolect of English, I can't tell whether by 'rabbit' I mean rabbit stage, rabbit part, or whatnot.³³⁹

Similarly, he remarks elsewhere that the "absurdity is that, if I assume my idiolect is a fixed set of dispositions to verbal behavior, then any translation of one word into itself or another of my idiolect is absolutely arbitrary and without empirical content."³⁴⁰ What is problematic here is Searle's talk of "translating" within a single natural language or even idiolect. This employment of "translation" strikes me as incorrect, and we would

³³⁸ Searle, "Indeterminacy," 126.

³³⁹ Ibid., 131.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 132.

be better off speaking of interpretation or understanding in such cases. The difference lies in the fact that translation, under Quine's account, involves shifting from one structural totality of dispositions to another, whereas reflection upon my own linguistic usage does not; it necessarily occurs within the same totality, viz., my own idiolect or "mother tongue."

This point is crucial with respect to the discussion of reference. For Quine, the various constituents of such totalities, e.g., referring terms, are not atomistic; they are individuated through abstraction and differentiation. Thus, within my own idiolect, "rabbit" has what meaning it does partially in that it is differentiated from "rabbit part," "rabbit stage," etc. The thesis of indeterminacy arises with respect to translation in that it is an open question, on Quine's model, as to which of our own sentences (and subsequent abstractions of reference) correspond to the sentence in the target language; it pertains to the mapping or alignment, to speak metaphorically, of distinct totalities onto each other. In the first-person case of an idiolect, however, only one such totality is involved. "Translation," or, more precisely, interpretation and understanding, would amount to situating the sentence (or reference) in question with respect to other expressions of linguistic behavior, and such positioning would itself be a function of differentiation with respect to these other expressions.

This issue of context and one's relationship to his or her own language or idiolect, is an important element in criticisms of Searle's objection. Searle articulates the central point of his argument as follows: "Now, in my own case, when I understand myself, I know a great deal more than just under what external conditions I hold what sentences are true. To put it crudely: in addition, I know what I mean."³⁴¹ Crucial to the success of his argument is an answer to the question as to what, precisely, is entailed by the claim

³⁴¹ Ibid., 141.

that I know what my words mean, i.e., what sort of knowledge is this supposed to be? Peter Hylton argues that what Searle has in mind amounts to a transcendental notion of meaning, i.e., a perspective outside of language from which one can evaluate what terms really refer to. “But for Quine,” Hylton says, “reference, like truth and reality, is immanent: speaking of reference makes sense only from within some language and theory of the world.”³⁴²

Searle, and others who make similar arguments, are motivated by the intuition that naturalized accounts such as Quine's neglect an important element of meaning. Searle's case of “translating” within the first-person perspective is meant to indicate just what this crucial element of meaning is. However, as Hylton argues, this putative component can only be observed from a perspective that is somehow “outside” one's own idiolect; as the above discussion of translation was meant to indicate, one must be able to reflect one's idiolect onto itself, essentially double it, in order for any “translation” to be possible. But this would require that one be able to step out of the language, and see how it “really” attaches to the world without stepping into another language, and this is precisely what Quine's account denies is possible. Consequently, “as long as they bear in mind that their words, like all others, are within a language, Quine's opponents cannot explain to us the crucial element of language that Quine has omitted.”³⁴³

It should be evident how this line of argument follows the one I have been tracing in Peirce and Royce. As we have seen, for Peirce, the individual manifests itself, or is known, only through error and ignorance.

³⁴² Peter Hylton, “Translation, Meaning, and Self-Knowledge,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96, (1990-1991), 280.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 287-8.

Now you and I—what are we? Mere cells of the social organism. Our deepest sentiment pronounces the verdict of our own insignificance. Psychological analysis shows that there is nothing which distinguishes my personal identity except my faults and my limitations.³⁴⁴

Peirce also, at times, articulates the point positively:

we know that man is not whole as long as he is single, that he is essentially a possible member of society. Especially, one man's experience is nothing, if it stands alone. If he sees what others [in principle] cannot, we call it hallucination. It is not 'my' experience, but 'our' experience that has to be thought of.³⁴⁵

Although these passages are primarily concerned with the manifestation of the individual self in relation to experience and inquiry, we can derive from them an idea that bears upon the semantic relations under discussion, as was treated in Chapter 5.

Typically, it could be argued, we qualify such things as beliefs, meanings, and the like as belonging to an individual when they fail to adequately match or correspond to the “going account.” That is, just as the individual, for Peirce, manifests itself primarily through its finitude with respect to a larger community, the first-person case in the sense of the qualification what *I* mean by an utterance, reveals itself as a departure from the unqualified, i.e., non-individuated case, or what the utterance means. The point is that recourse to personal speaker-meaning in this fashion, as opposed to sentence or utterance meaning, is typically made when there is a lack of correspondence between the use of or intentions behind my utterance and the use or intentions that typically correlate with it in cases in which the context of speaker is not emphasized.

Before exploring this claim, we must be careful to distinguish it from the claim that the notion of error itself requires appeal to the social. Hylton touches upon this other view in a footnote:

³⁴⁴ CP 1.673.

³⁴⁵ CP 5.402 n. 2.

On some accounts, the need for a community of language-users arises from the need to be able to give sense to the idea of the individual user making a mistake, or misusing an expression. If the language were constituted by the individual's use, it might seem impossible to give sense to this idea. The point is, however, by no means clear-cut; one might attempt to give sense to the idea of making a mistake by contrasting the actual use with dispositions to use the expression, and by referring to the individual's disposition to correct his own usage, and so on.³⁴⁶

The point I am locating in Peirce is not that appeal to a community is needed in order to provide a standard for the evaluation of error in the case of the individual (which Royce might be said to claim, as discussed in Chapter 6). The point I take the pragmaticists to be making, and which I have defended here, is that linguistic communities are necessary for individuals to even enter into semiotic processes. Meaning is acquired from the community in which the individual is raised in a process that transforms the individual into a sign-using and meaning-responsive self. Individual meaning, on this account, is secondary and, while important to the evolution of the community and meaning in general, parasitic on more general usage. The point is that an individual's own knowledge qualified in terms of what he or she means (as opposed to what the utterance means) seems to require the knowledge that there is a disparity between the two. When I do not recognize any such disparity, then what I know is simply what the sentence means (of course, I can be wrong about this, but until I am shown that I am indeed wrong, I do not know that I am wrong and thus do not know that what I mean is not what the sentence means). More importantly, this point emerges most clearly in the first-person case that Searle favors. In Searle's case where I know what I mean, there is no awareness of any divergence, therefore there is no difference (for me) between what I mean and what the word itself means.

³⁴⁶ Hylton, "Translation," 275 n.8.

A Searlean might respond to this by claiming that I know what I mean in the sense that I can *decide* to mean something by a given expression. That this is not the norm is irrelevant in this case; it is sufficient merely that such a notion is conceivable, for in such cases, there is no appeal to behavioral dispositions in the determination or evaluation of the meaning of the utterance. Such a response, however, would invite the same objections that are, in a different context, leveled at the example of Humpty Dumpty's use of "glory." Recall that in Lewis Carroll's story, Humpty Dumpty makes the now infamous claim that "When I use a word...it means just what I choose it to mean." In the discussions surrounding the notion of speaker-meaning that have employed this case, it has often been remarked that Humpty Dumpty can't really mean what he says here. That is, Humpty Dumpty cannot *mean* "a nice knockdown argument" by "glory" if he does not believe that his audience would be able to interpret the utterance as having such a meaning; intention is inextricably bound up with expectation.³⁴⁷ In Carroll's story, Humpty Dumpty actually seems to recognize this, saying that "of course" Alice doesn't understand his unique employment of the word until he, the speaker, informs her of it.

Furthermore, Peirce's account of individuality as arising primarily from error or ignorance can be supported by appeal to Quine's own text. According to Quine, in the work of translation and the analysis of meaning,

To look deep into the subject's head would be inappropriate even if feasible, for we want to keep clear of his idiosyncratic routings or private history of habit formation. We are after his socially inculcated linguistic usage, hence his responses to conditions normally subject to social assessment.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ See Keith Donnellan, "Putting Humpty Dumpty Together Again," and Alfred McKay, "Mr. Donnellan and Humpty Dumpty on Referring," both in *The Philosophical Review* 77 (1968), and Donald Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs," *Philosophical Grounds of Rationality*, ed. Richard Grandy and Richard Warner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 157-174.

³⁴⁸ Quine, *Word and Object*, 31.

Quine clearly favors the social, rather than idiosyncratic linguistic behavior in his investigation of meaning. Part of the reason for this, he says, is that language, evaluated within an intersubjective context, is relatively uniform, and thus provides a larger body of evidence for the work of translation.³⁴⁹ Moreover, for Quine, communication is enabled by the social determination of dispositions to linguistic behavior, as is evident in his discussion of the semantics of terms and sentences for which stimulus meaning is a less-than-perfect model.

One looks to ‘unmarried man’ as semantically anchoring ‘bachelor’ because there is no socially constant stimulus meaning to govern the use of the word; sever its tie with ‘unmarried man’ and you leave it no very evident social determination, hence no utility in communication.³⁵⁰

Although he does not make as much of the social as, for example, Tyler Burge does relying upon a language community,³⁵¹ Quine does seem to hold that the meaning of an utterance, qua disposition to linguistic behavior, has its roots in sociality, i.e., is, roughly, what the individual language user has been trained to do by the community to which he belongs. It would follow from this that any significant deviation from the socially-inculcated behavior would signal a departure from the “meaning” founded on such behavior; that is, such deviation would be incorrect, just as was Humpty Dumpty’s use of “glory.” Hylton makes much the same point in contrasting Quine’s model with what he takes to be a remnant of Cartesianism.

It is the actions and dispositions of the community which constitute the language, and provide the standards of correctness to which my use of the language aspires...The mind’s ability to think, and to know itself, which once seemed to provide a secure starting point for all further reflection,

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 46-7.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 56.

³⁵¹ See Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 4, (1979), 73-121.

now appears as dependent upon the engagement of the embodied mind with the world, and with other people.³⁵²

It is this dependence of the individual, and his or her use of language, upon a larger community that is primary in the analysis of language for Quine, as well as the pragmaticist line favored in this dissertation. Searle seems to forget this, and that “language is a social art” is the first sentence of the Preface to *Word and Object*. Under Quine’s and the pragmaticists’ accounts, then, we might say that the only principled difference between the first-person and third-person cases is the capacity for error in the former. This does not mean that we can never have a better knowledge of our own intentions and dispositions than others would have simply by observing us; we need only consider the case of dispositions which might be prompted by a given stimulus but aborted before becoming manifest in behavior to see that Quine and his predecessors must refrain from denying any distinction between first- and third-person cases. However, given that this superior knowledge is rather thin, and, when coupled with the notion that the capacity for error (deviation) is what distinguishes the first-person case, it is insufficient to support Searle’s reliance on the first-person case as somehow privileged in his critique of Quine.

“Dismounting the See-saw”: Naturalism at the End of the Twentieth Century

This debate between Quine and Searle, though localized and somewhat dated, nicely illustrates the central opposition which forms the discursive space of McDowell's naturalist project. Quine and Searle, in this context, are representative of the two poles between which philosophy has been doomed to oscillate, according to McDowell. On the one hand, there are directly observable practices and behaviors which constitute our lived existence as human animals in a manner that easily fits with the rest of material nature.

³⁵² Hylton, “Translation,” 289.

On the other hand, however, there is a sense of being answerable to and endowed with the capacity to invoke something greater—meaning in general—which at first appears to somehow transcend the law-like operation of material nature and which distinguishes humans as persons.

Quine's behaviorist model is, for McDowell, an instance of “bald naturalism,” an approach which seeks “to *reduce* the structure of the space of reasons to something that is already unproblematically natural on the relevant conception.”³⁵³ Such a strategy, according to McDowell, falls prey to the “Myth of the Given.” In McDowell's account, the most promising way to retrieve the sort of privilege Searle relies on in his objection to Quine is via a coherentist model such as Davidson offers (as McDowell reads him). However, Davidson's coherentism is itself prone to an objection very similar to the one I raise against Searle. In Searle's case, first-person privilege is unwarranted as, on the account I favor and have argued for throughout this dissertation, what marks the individual is precisely his or her divergence from the testimony and practice of a linguistic community, manifested as ignorance and error and thus necessitating the posit of an individual self. Davidson, in taking the truth of statements to be a function of their coherence with larger networks of belief and standards of rationality, avoids Searle's misstep. However, his account is open to the objection that the entire communal and social network which underwrites his coherentism is itself “false,” i.e. fails to accord with mind-external reality. It is possible, and indeed supported by historical evidence, that even coherent networks are fallible with respect to a perspective that need not invoke transcendentalist objectivity. This is the objection McDowell brings against coherentism; such networks must somehow answer to the world or face the danger of becoming

³⁵³ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 73.

“frictionless spinning in the void.” McDowell's account of second-nature is meant to navigate between Quine's Scylla and Davidson's Charybdis.

However, while McDowell tells us how an individual can be initiated into the space of reason, he does not tell us how such a space of reasons itself came to be, and how it is natural. In fact, McDowell rejects such a project outright: “we can regard the culture a human being is initiated into as a going concern; there is no particular reason why we should need to uncover or speculate about its history, let alone the origins of culture as such.”³⁵⁴ In rejecting the utility of inquiry into the origins of human capacities of reason, the origin of the person, McDowell blocks the very way to escaping philosophy' oscillation.

Naturalism's Prospects

If Darwin is to be taken seriously, then such capacities must have evolved; however, they are, by their very nature, not expressible purely in terms of biological mechanics. For, they depend upon idealizations of actual practices, and biological evolution seems to have no place for the ideal. In contrast, Peirce's “Darwinianized Hegelism” characterizes the self as the product of the joint workings of biological and cultural evolution. The physiology of a human organism must be such that it is capable of acquiring language and becoming enculturated, else animals raised in environments identical to those of human infants would become enlanguaged and enculturated persons. Producing such a physiology is at least partially the result of biological evolution along Darwinian lines. However, this physiology alone is insufficient to account for the development of the cultural domain and the normative structures within it. Both Peirce and McDowell agree that nature, understood mechanistically, cannot account for such

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 123.

development. A model of the self which takes it to be just another object in “nature” cannot account for an agent acting on reasons as *reasons*, but rather sees such as the mechanical operation of natural forces; “ought,” under such an account is reduced to “is” and causal determinism threatens our intuitive distinctions regarding our role as agents. According to Peirce, such a view ignores the presence of real chance in the universe, which is necessary for the emergence and growth of semiosis. McDowell offers a similar argument in his critique of any philosophical strategy that makes recourse to “the Given”:

[I]t is one thing to be exempt from blame on the ground that the position we find ourselves in can be traced ultimately to brute force, it is quite another thing to have a justification. In effect, the idea of the Given offers exculpations where we wanted justifications.³⁵⁵

The aim of the non-reductive naturalist, then, is to account for how human persons find themselves “already in the space of reasons” (McDowell’s phrase, borrowed from Sellars), but in a manner that still allows for the constraint of such reasons by reality.

One of McDowell’s central arguments (which he borrows from Gadamer, who, in turn, draws on Heidegger) is that what distinguishes human selves is their inhabiting a “world” rather than only an “environment.” To inhabit an environment, McDowell says, is to possess “a mode of life that is structured exclusively by immediate biological imperatives.”³⁵⁶ (Such is the life of the fancy worm and its attempts at changing color, as discussed in Chapter 5.) “When we acquire conceptual powers,” however, “our lives come to embrace not just coping with problems and exploiting opportunities, constituted as such by immediate biological imperatives, but exercising spontaneity, deciding what to

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 8.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 115.

think and do.”³⁵⁷ Creatures possessing this mode of life inhabit a world, brought into view by “the power of conceptual thinking.”³⁵⁸ Humans acquire or become part of such a world, according to McDowell, by being initiated into the “going concern” of language.

Peirce's non-reductive naturalism captures this distinction almost a century before McDowell, and his evolutionary cosmogony provides a justification of it that far surpasses McDowell's invocation of Gadamer and Heidegger. What is important is for the current project is not so much the question as to whether or not McDowell reads Gadamer correctly. The above point is meant simply to show that in recharacterizing the self for the purposes of his naturalism, McDowell seems to leave something important out. As several commentators have noted, McDowell's reliance on Gadamer is primarily epistemological; it lacks the metaphysical force of Gadamer's model of linguisticity and the ontological presuppositions regarding the self as occupying a “verbally constituted” world.³⁵⁹ Without such a metaphysical underpinning, the model of “second nature” McDowell develops is unable to support the non-reductive naturalism he favors. Charles Taylor argues that this negligence is the result of McDowell's model being epistemologically-based, whereas the account given by Gadamer and Hegel (and which Taylor himself favors) is ontologically-based, asserting that “human beings are in contact with the real.”³⁶⁰ What is needed, then, is an account that not only explains what it is for our reasons to be answerable to the world, but also what it is about ourselves and the

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 114.

³⁵⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 444.

³⁶⁰ See Charles Taylor, “Foundationalism and the Inner-Outer Distinction,” *Reading McDowell: On Mind and World*, ed. Nicholas H. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 115.

world that makes this the case. That is, the epistemological question of how a subject's reasoning relates to the world cannot be separated from the ontological question which asks what a subject or self is. The answer to the first question involves "re-enchanting nature," as McDowell proposes, but answering the second requires that we likewise "re-enchant" naturalism itself and look for a way to locate the human person in the "natural world" without thereby eliding the distinctive qualities of the "cultural world."

To approach the point from a slightly different angle, we can say that McDowell tells us how particular individuals come to have a world but not how such a world itself came to be, and this, despite his claims to the contrary, is actually what his own project demands. To explain how the reasons which define the spontaneity of human persons are natural is to explain how personhood itself is possible and how it is natural. What is required of philosophy is not to tell the exact story of how this occurred—that task belongs to the domain of the natural sciences—but to produce an idiom in which such a story could fit. And this, it seems, requires a metaphysical account which would support the sort of epistemological model McDowell favors.

Pragmatism's Promise

Peirce, however, does recognize the importance of a robust metaphysical system for the support of his naturalist model, and his semiotic account captures precisely that element that is left out in McDowell's model.³⁶¹ For Peirce, the evolution of human consciousness is enabled by and reciprocally dependent upon the evolution of semiosis in the form of language:

[S]ince man can think only by means of words or other external symbols, words might turn round and say, You mean nothing which we have not

³⁶¹ This argument, which is only sketched here, is given fuller treatment in the final chapter.

taught you and then only so far as you address some word as the interpretant of your thought. In fact, therefore, men and words reciprocally educate each other; each increase of a man's information is at the same time the increase of a word's information and *vice versa*.³⁶²

In the very early lecture from which this passage is drawn, Peirce is at pains to show just how much life is shared by people and words. However, he does allow for distinction between the two: a “man has consciousness; a word has not.”³⁶³ This difference, as we have seen, relies on the category of Secondness; entering into relations of action and reaction is necessary for consciousness to exist as anything more than a potentiality, an “airy-nothingness.” This aspect of consciousness is afforded by its embodiment in the biological features of conscious organisms:

There is that emotion which accompanies the reflection that we have animal life. A consciousness which is dimmed when animal life is at its ebb, in age or sleep, but which is not dimmed when the spiritual life is at its ebb; which is more lively the better animal a man is, but is not so the better man he is. You can all distinguish this sensation I am sure; we attribute it to all animals but not to words, because we have reason to believe that it depends upon the possession of an animal body.³⁶⁴

For Peirce, then, the self is historicized and emerges from semiotic structures that are themselves the product of evolutionary development, but it is also necessarily embodied and subject (although not reducible) to the course of purely biological evolution; this is the force of his “Darwinianized Hegelism.” Peirce's model differs from McDowell's on this score in that, for Peirce, the self is actually *produced* (ontologically) by this process, rather than merely being “initiated” into a cultural sphere. The self which occupies the space of reasons is inherited from the community in which it is reared by way of the acquisition of language. This is why Peirce stresses the communal nature of

362 W 1:496

363 W 1:494

364 W 1:494-5

persons; even after an individual has taken "ownership" and control of the inherited self-sign, he or she remains subject to the semiotic processes of the entire community. The self is a sign that emerges within an interpretive community and which manifests itself as an individual primarily through his or her fallibility. Understanding the self as a locus of error and ignorance is necessary in order for reasons (in McDowell and Sellars' sense) to have the normative force they do. Initiation into language, and the accompanying realization that testimony is a greater authority even than personal experience, is initiation into something bigger than the self, a world that can rightfully make demands and offer justifications rather than mere exculpations.

Peirce's metaphysics retains the impingement of brute reality upon human knowledge, but refrains from posting a "given" (in McDowell's sense) or non-conceptual content of experience. According to Margolis,

Peirce's idea, if I understand it rightly, is that, granted *we* exist, whatever else exists in the world resists us (or other things), or would resist us (or other things), in the "brute" sense sketched...Peirce clarifies what we should mean by saying that *something exists*, without thereby settling the question of *what* actually exists.³⁶⁵

That is, Peirce's category of Secondness allows us to speak of the "resistance" which we encounter in our dealings with the world but in such a way that all we speak of is that resistance, or our awareness of it; Peirce's account remains thoroughly phenomenological in that the nature of the resisting thing is not implicated. This focus on the structure and regularity of our phenomenological experience of reality echoes Peirce's discussion of the superiority of the scientific method in "The Fixation of Belief."³⁶⁶ In this, Peirce avoids the problems that arise when we characterize that which

³⁶⁵ Joseph Margolis, *Historied Thought, Constructed World*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 114.

³⁶⁶ W 3:254

resists our inquiry and practices as something non-conceptual or “unknowable” (to use Peirce's favored term). Moreover, in speaking of our experience of the resistance, Peirce prevents accounts which would seek to reduce that experience of resistance to the resisting object.

Relations of Thirdness enable interpretation and the growth of real generals and ideals as well as consciousness of the failure of any actual attempts to achieve such ideals; mediation is a teleological but unending process as every Third leads to another. As Peirce says in a 1903 letter to William James,

Whatever is capable of being represented is itself of a representative nature. The idea of representation involves infinity, since a representation is not really such unless it be interpreted in another representation. But infinity is nothing but a peculiar twist given to generality.³⁶⁷

This is seen most clearly in relation to signs: every sign involves an interpretant that can itself become another sign with another interpretant, and so on; the end of such a progression, in the form of an “ultimate intepretant” could only occur at the end of infinite inquiry, alongside Truth and Reality in their fullest manifestations.³⁶⁸ This is the doctrine of fallibilism in its semiotic form: as every sign produces an interpretant that is itself the object or sign of another in a process that can never produce a final interpretant without proceeding infinitely. The interpretants actually produced (which comprise all our ideas and provisional knowledge) are necessarily contingent and subject to alteration, and any idea could be shown, by later developments, to be wrong. Moreover, this account links that doctrine to the doctrine of continuity. The contingent and fluxive development of thought captured in the doctrine of fallibilism matches, indeed forms a part of, the

³⁶⁷ CP 8.268

³⁶⁸ For a fuller account of this element of Peirce's semiotic, see Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, especially Ch. 2.

fluxive evolution of the continuum spanning the infinite progression from absolute Firstness to Absolute Secondness, for, as Peirce says, that infinity is “but a peculiar twist given to generality.”³⁶⁹ Peirce seems to indicate here that the absolute termini which bound his evolutionary cosmology are themselves the products of the mediating work of Thirdness, which he elsewhere holds to be essentially relative and subject to continuous development and alteration.³⁷⁰ Taken together, this semiotic fallibilism and synechism, both supported by Peirce's metaphysics, offer a superior and less-problematic version of Quine's indeterminacy thesis. Peirce's point (which other pragmaticists follow) is that indeterminacy in the linguistic sphere arises not from any insufficiencies on the part of language, but because the world which language captures (and helps form) is itself only in the (infinite) process of becoming determinate and thus supports multiple, incompatible but equally apt characterizations and formulations.

This is the intuition that Royce picks up on in his notion of the "World of Interpretation," his own take on the environment/world distinction. In his development of Peirce's philosophy, Royce focuses on answering the question which immediately follows from a discussion of the distinction between an environment and a world, namely, What is the nature of this world that we, as persons, belong to?

Constructing the “World of Interpretation”

The world which we as persons inhabit is, for Royce, a world formed by interpretation. This is Royce's way of putting Peirce's notion that Thirdness and mediation permeate the entire cosmos and define our space within it, and that "truth" and "reality" are found at the end of infinite evolution.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Cf. EP II, 1

The endless order of time stands in contrast to an ideal goal, which the world endlessly pursues with its sequence of events, but never reaches at any one moment of the time sequence. The pursuit, the search for the goal, the new interpretation which every new event requires,—this endless sequence of new acts of interpretation,—this constitutes the world. This *is* the order of time. This pursuit of the goal, this bondage of the whole creation to the pursuit of that which it never reaches, this naturally tragic estrangement of this world from its goal,—this constitutes the problem of the universe.³⁷¹

The ultimate nature of reality, according to Royce, is then an idealized posit arising from the awareness of our own finitude and fallibility. Consequently, “many of our most exact laws of Nature are thus, as it were, explicitly ideal constructions, products, so to speak, of the present methods of bookkeeping used by science in keeping our accounts of facts.”³⁷² This argument is not quite as fanciful as it first appears, particularly when viewed in light of a similar account put forth by Lewis:

It is an error common to rationalism and to pure empiricism that both attempt an impossible separation of something called the mind from something else called experience. Likewise both treat of knowledge as if it were a relation of the individual mind to external object in such wise that the existence of other minds is irrelevant; they do not sufficiently recognize the sense in which our truth is social.³⁷³

Both Royce and Lewis are offering arguments which parallel the one regarding language addressed above in the discussion of Quine and Searle. There it was shown that a linguistic community precedes and enables individual linguistic usage and “meaning”; to speak of what an individual means by his or her utterances is, for the most part, useful merely to point to the divergence, the “ignorance” and “error” represented in that usage. Truth and meaning, on this account, are social functions, not in the sense that they arise from anything like a formalized agreement, contract, or set of rules, but rather because

³⁷¹ Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, 382.

³⁷² Royce, *World and Individual*, 215.

³⁷³ Lewis, *Mind*, 25.

they can be articulated (partially) as idealizations abstracted from the fluencies of actual practice.

We can say that, for the pragmaticists, a linguistic community forms the space in which an individual acquires a "second nature," comes to have a mind and actualizes its animal capacities to become a person, as in McDowell's account. Put in Peirce's language, this is the semiotic process which leads to the development of the self as a sign, produced by a community and individualized by its finitude. In this account, the existence of the individual depends upon the community and the existence of the community depends on mediation and interpretation of individuals in a reciprocal, rather than circular, evolutionary manner. This process can be further idealized and a context abstracted in which the linguistic communities themselves arise. (As remarked above, this is the task that McDowell refuses to take up.) Such would be the context of our knowledge about the world, and the world itself as answering to and informing that knowledge. That is, this would be "world" (as opposed to an "environment") which enables the emergence of persons as interpreters of nature, answerable to reasons, and capable of embodying meanings.

Consequently,

[O]ur search for reality is simply an effort to discover what the whole fabric of experience is into which our human experience is woven, what the system of truth is in which our partial truths have their place, what the ideally significant life is for the sake of which every deed of ours is undertaken. When we try to find out what the real world is, we are simply trying to discover the sense of our own individual lives. And we can define that sense of our lives only in terms of a conscious life in which ours is included, in which our ideas get their full meaning expressed, and in which what we fail to carry out to the full is carried out to the full.³⁷⁴

³⁷⁴

Royce, *Loyalty*, 364-5.

This is the fulfillment of Peirce's promise that it “is thought, but it is not my thought or yours, but is the thought that will conquer.”³⁷⁵

However, as was the case with Lewis' account of the a priori, this idealization is a function of actual purposes and a posit that arises from actual experience. For Peirce, any meaning which transcends such limits is itself unthinkable. “I hold...that man is so completely hemmed in by the bounds of his possible practical experience, his mind so restricted to being the instrument of his needs, that he cannot, in the least *mean* anything that transcends those limits.”³⁷⁶ Likewise, Royce insists that even the idealized forms of the world of interpretation arise out of the practical purposes and concerns of lived existence. “Two things belonging to the world-life we know,” Royce says: “*it is defined in terms of our own needs; and it includes and completes our experience.*”³⁷⁷

Thus, while ultimate “reality” may be an idealized posit that is not attainable in finite existence—as was the case with Peirce's definition of truth and reality—it is a posit that arises out of real practices and lived existence and which answers to the demands of “brute” reality, i.e., embraces the struggle essential to Peirce's category of Secondness. According to Royce,

The real world is therefore *not* something independent of us. It is a world whose stuff, so to speak,—whose content,—is of the nature of experience, whose structure meets, validates, and gives warrant to our active deeds, and whose whole nature is such that it can be interpreted in terms of ideas, propositions, and conscious meanings, while in turn it gives to our fragmentary ideas and to our conscious life whatever connected meaning they possess. Whenever I have purposes and fail, so far, to carry them out, that is because I have not yet found the true way of expressing my own relation to reality. On the other hand, precisely in so far as I have

³⁷⁵ MS 735

³⁷⁶ CP 5.536, emphasis in original

³⁷⁷ Royce, *Loyalty*, 392.

understood some whole of reality, I have carried out successfully some purpose of mine.³⁷⁸

As was seen in the treatment of Peirce's evolutionary myth (Chapter 5) and Royce's account of "lost causes" (Chapter 6), reality for the pragmaticists requires, first, the relation of struggle and opposition captured in Peirce's category of Secondness. As Lewis puts the matter, "There is no such thing as reality in general; to be real, a thing must be a particular sort of real."³⁷⁹ For reality to be a "world," in the sense discussed above, it must contain processes of interpretation and mediation (facilitated by language in the account above, and captured by Peirce's doctrine of semiosis). Again, Lewis articulates the intuitions of his predecessors, in this case in a manner that bears striking resemblance to Peirce's evolutionary myth, and with a nod to James.

The buzzing, blooming confusion could not become reality for an oyster. A purely passive consciousness, if such can be conceived, would find no use for the concept of reality, because it would find none for the idea of the *unreal*; because it would take no attitude that could be balked, and make no interpretation which conceivably could be mistaken.³⁸⁰

As I have presented it, the account the pragmaticists give of the emergence of such a form of consciousness is thoroughly evolutionary and heavily influenced by Darwin. Moreover, the meanings and habits which form the world in which persons find their place themselves emerge in an evolutionary manner (this is the "Hegelian" aspect of "Darwinianized Hegelism"). In Peirce, it takes the form of abduction, i.e., the human person's capacity to "guess" in ways that are not overwhelmingly more wrong than they are correct (the latent importance of Peirce's "Insurance company model of inquiry," discussed in Chapter 3, should be clear in this respect). Far from being a privileged

³⁷⁸ Ibid., 363-4.

³⁷⁹ Lewis, *Mind*, 262-3.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 30.

faculty of reason, however, the pragmaticists make clear that such abductive capacities arise naturally, through the evolution of the species in its encultured forms. This is clear in one of Royce's claims which interprets Peirce's abduction: "The mind of man must be peculiarly fitted to invent new hypotheses such that, when tested by experience, they bear the test, and turn out to be probably true."³⁸¹ However, to understand such an evolution requires, as I have argued above, an idiom that is not limited to the strictly mechanical or chance-driven biological account of Darwinism as the pragmaticists interpreted it (and which seems to inform the accounts of present-day reductivists).

Man's power to interpret his world has somehow evolved with man. The whole natural world of the past has been needed to produce man the interpreter. On the other hand, this power of man cannot have been the result of any "vital impulse" "canalizing" matter or otherwise blindly striving continuously and tentatively for light. For this scientific aptitude of man links him even now with the whole time-order. He is so attuned by nature that, imperfect as he now is, he is adapted to be or to become, in his own halting way, but not only in blind fashion, an interpreter of the meaning of the whole of time. Now such a teleological process as this which man's scientific successes express, illustrates the teleology of a spiritual process which does not merely, from moment to moment, adapt itself to a preexistent world. Nor does this process appear as merely one whereby an unconscious impulse squirms its way through the "canals" which it makes in matter. No, this teleology appears to illustrate a spiritual process which, in its wholeness, interprets at once the endless whole of time.³⁸²

Royce's position here may lead him to the sort of "block universe" which James criticizes and Anderson identifies as at odds with Peirce's own account. However, as argued above, we need not follow him to that conclusion but simply retain the argument, shared with Peirce and Lewis, that the cultural evolution which makes persons suitable and successful interpreters of nature cannot be captured in an idiom that does not

³⁸¹ Royce, *Christianity*, 397.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 400.

recognize the sui-generis nature of persons. Lewis offers a particularly nice way to “naturalize” the point:

It does not follow from the dialectical method that the basis of the accord between minds represents some universal pattern of human reason, apart from the world of sense in which we live; nor that the mind has access to some realm of transcendent concepts which it recovers, of its own powers, at the instigation of experience; nor that agreement of minds presumes initial principles which are self-evident....The coincidence of our fundamental criteria and principles is the combined result of the similarity of human animals, and of their primal interests, and the similarities of the experience with which they have to deal. More explicitly, it represents one result of the interplay between these two; the coincidence of human modes of behavior, particularly when the interests which such behavior serves involves cooperation.³⁸³

What is required, I hold, is a discourse that holds a place for the ideals which guide such an interpretation and enable it to progress beyond mere expediency, or the “moment to moment” adaptation “to a preexistent world.” “Whatever else life is,” Royce says,

it contains the natural conditions for an interpretation of the world. What Professor Henderson's facts, and Charles Peirce's facts, do not prove, but illustrate, is our philosophical thesis that the time-world viewed as a whole, or in very long stretches, is a process which possesses, and includes, not mere miracles and efforts and vital impulses, but a total meaning and a coherent interpretation.³⁸⁴

This is the force of the “freightage of eternity” Peirce speaks of, and the motivation for his fallibilism which makes central, rather than shrinking away from, speculation on the infinite and its connection with the finite. What Peirce and Royce are each signaling in their respective evolutionary accounts is that the distinguishing mark of the human person is its relation to ideals (such as truth, the Absolute, and the like) by

³⁸³ Lewis, *Mind*, 20.

³⁸⁴ Royce, *Christianity*, 401.

way of a linguistically-structured community with other selves, including one's own idealized past and future selves. A strong fallibilism such as the one I locate in Peirce and Royce, which is not merely a negative epistemological qualification but a positive doctrine ranging over metaphysics, semiotics and philosophical anthropology is actually a necessary enabling condition of ideals such as truth (in an unqualified sense), rationality, the Absolute and the like. Recognizing finitude, error and ignorance as the principal characteristics of the self opens up the discursive space in which it is possible to posit instances of ideals which are not subject to such limitations.

It should be clear now, how such an idiom reveals the error in casting familiar distinctions—realism and idealism, mind and matter, the natural and the artificial—disjunctively. Perhaps Royce's greatest contribution is his articulation of the pragmatic insight regarding these and related distinctions; only by understanding the respective poles of each as part of the world which humans inhabit can a successfully naturalized theory of reality and culture be achieved.

For by the “real world” we mean the true interpretation of the problematic situation which the antithesis presents to us in so far as we compare what is our ideal with what is so far given to us. Whatever the real world is its nature has to be expressed in terms of this antithesis of ideas....But the general problem which the antithesis presents is the world-problem. *The question about what the real world is, is simply the question as to what this contrast is and means.* Neither of the two ideas can solve its own problem or be judge in its own case. Each needs a counsel, a mediator, an interpreter, to represent its cause to the other idea.³⁸⁵

Such reality is interpreted, produced through both the lines of evolution which preoccupy the pragmaticists, the Darwinian-inspired account of chance, contingency and risk as well as the teleological pursuit of higher ideals, forever beyond the reach of finite beings. In short, such a world cannot be accurately described as either “natural” or

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 338.

“artificial,” in the traditional senses of those terms, but must be viewed as “artifactual” and the selves which inhabit it as natural artifacts.

Final Words from a Fallibilist

I close with one more passage drawn from Peirce's unpublished manuscripts. It is a playful remark that shows a side of Peirce that is often obscured by his sometimes overweening pride in his own abilities and his intellectual elitism.

One shrinks from parting with one's last secret. Else what an instructive historical chapter could I not write! And so irresistibly funny withal! A chapter of my mistakes, mostly in retrodution. That class of inferences contains some that looked upon with one eye seem to be too foolish to be mentioned on any other page than that of a Book of Nonsense, and yet when regarded from the other eye are all but absolutely convincing; such a difference an angle of parallax may make. It would be an autobiographical chapter. But some things are not told out of school.³⁸⁶

Peirce's indication here that there are several aspects of his philosophy that he himself took to be clearly in error is one that certainly galls anyone interested in his thought, and his refusal to break the schoolyard code and snitch on his own misbehavior does little to alleviate the irksome effect of the passage. To be sure, one could read this remark as undermining the strength and plausibility of any aspect of Peirce's philosophy or any account of it in its entirety, such as the one given above. However, its lesson is itself subject to the effect of parallax; seen with the “other eye” it shows that nothing, for Peirce, should be treated as completely immune from future correction, that even the most central themes of his philosophy should be viewed primarily as heuristic in value. In this, it is one more piece of evidence indicating the fundamental nature of Peirce's ever-present fallibilism.

³⁸⁶

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