

The Increasing Attractiveness of Classical Pragmatism¹

A Crescente Atratividade do Pragmatismo Clássico

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Abstract: In 1951, Max H. Fisch put forward the idea that there is a distinct American philosophy that could be considered classical and he outlined the characteristic themes and proponents of “classical American philosophy.” In this paper it is argued that the themes Fisch listed characterize a broad pragmatic *ethos* and can be used to help clarify what should count as classical pragmatism. This is the pragmatism that is increasingly attractive to philosophers today rather than the narrow technical pragmatism of Charles Peirce. It is further argued that, contrary to many accounts, Peirce regarded his narrower doctrine, which he called pragmaticism, as a technical variant of the more general pragmatism and that Peirce was a classical pragmatist along with James, Dewey, and the others.

Keywords: Classical American philosophy. Classical pragmatism. Pragmaticism. Max H. Fisch. Charles S. Peirce.

Resumo: *Em 1951, Max H. Fisch apresentou a ideia de que há uma Filosofia Americana distinta que poderia ser considerada clássica e delineou os temas característicos e os proponentes da “Filosofia Americana clássica”. Neste artigo, argumenta-se que os temas listados por Fisch caracterizam um amplo ethos pragmático e pode ser usado para ajudar a esclarecer o que pode ser considerado como pragmatismo clássico. Este é o pragmatismo que é cada vez mais atraente para os filósofos de hoje, ao invés do pragmatismo estreito e técnico de Charles Peirce. Além disso, argumenta-se que, ao contrário do que muitos dizem, Peirce considerava sua doutrina estreita, a qual chamou pragmaticismo, como uma variante técnica de um pragmatismo mais geral e que Peirce foi um pragmatista clássico, junto com James, Dewey e outros.*

Palavras-chave: *Filosofia americana clássica. Pragmatismo clássico. Pragmaticismo. Max H. Fisch. Charles S. Peirce.*

By classical pragmatism I have in mind what is sometimes called the first wave of pragmatism, the philosophical movement that was born in the early 1870's in the Cambridge Metaphysical Club in Massachusetts and which made its first public appearance in Charles Peirce's famous *Popular Science Monthly* papers of 1877–78, but which did not really coalesce into a real force until William James set things in

¹ This paper was originally presented on 12 Nov. 2007 as the keynote address for 10th International Meeting on Pragmatism at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo.

motion with his landmark 1898 Berkeley lecture: “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results.”²

I use the word “classical” to bring this early wave of pragmatism into congruence with what since 1951 has been known as “classical American philosophy.” This expression was introduced by Max H. Fisch in the general introduction to his decisive anthology, *Classic American Philosophers*, where he argued that a period of philosophy may be said to be classic if “the leading philosophic tendencies of the culture in which it arises reach within it a fullness of expression, a mutual definition, a synthesis or equilibrium, and a permanent embodiment in texts which rapidly acquire the status of a canon” that serves to set a course that will be followed for generations or even for centuries to come.³ As examples of classic periods of philosophy, Fisch cited the periods from “Democritus and Socrates through Aristotle in Greek philosophy, from Abelard through Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus in medieval Christian culture, from Bacon through Hume in Great Britain, from Descartes through Leibniz on the continent, [...] and from Kant through Hegel in Germany.”⁴ He argued for the recognition of such a classic period in American philosophy “beginning just after the Civil War and continuing to the eve of the Second World War” and he named as its major figures, Charles Peirce, Josiah Royce, William James, George Santayana, John Dewey, and Alfred North Whitehead. Fisch later said that George Herbert Mead and Clarence Irving Lewis might also be considered to be major philosophers from America’s classic period but he declined to rank them at the level of his original six.⁵

I would not be surprised if some readers might suspect that Fisch’s claim for such great significance for this philosophical movement is typical hubris of the sort that is expected from those who live in that country between Canada and Mexico that habitually calls itself America — as if it were not possible to see across its own borders. I can appreciate that suspicion. But I believe Fisch was right and I think his view is supported by the phenomenal world-wide growth of interest in classical American philosophy in recent decades.⁶ However, it is not my purpose to argue in support of Fisch’s claim — I believe we can wait for history to decide the question.

² Peirce’s five *Popular Science Monthly* papers, “Illustrations of the Logic of Science,” are reprinted in EP 1: 109–99. James’s Berkeley lecture is reprinted in *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 345–62.

³ FISCH, Max H., *Classic American Philosophers*. Appleton-Century Crofts, 1951. Reissued by Fordham University Press in 1996. Fisch referred to this golden age of American philosophy as both the “classic period” and the “classical period.” The texts identified by Fisch as the “major texts” in the American canon are “Peirce’s *Collected Papers*, James’s *Principles of Psychology* and his *Pragmatism*, Royce’s *The World and the Individual*, Santayana’s *The Life of Reason* and his *Realms of Being*, Dewey’s *Experience and Nature* and his *Logic*, and Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*.”

⁴ FISCH, 1951, p. 1.

⁵ See the preface to the fifth printing (1966) of Fisch, 1951.

⁶ I do not mean to imply that Max H. Fisch was the only philosopher and historian of ideas to recognize the significance of classical American philosophy or to seek to identify its special character but his scholarship is always sound and his conclusions well founded. Another key contributor to the understanding of American philosophy is the late John E. Smith, who cautioned against over-emphasizing the classical tradition: see, for example, his book, *America’s Philosophical Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. p. 195.

I only want to shed some light on why I am calling the first wave of pragmatism “classical pragmatism” and to work out some tensions still lingering in pragmatism’s early history.

I am aware that I have left it unclear if or to what extent I wish to distinguish classical pragmatism from classical *American philosophy*. I have not made that distinction clear because that distinction is, in fact, not clear, and *that* is something that needs to be considered. Of the philosophers listed by Fisch as classical, only Santayana and Whitehead are not usually said to have been pragmatists; and even they are known to have been greatly influenced by the pragmatist ethos that prevailed at Harvard where they spent their pivotal years. On the other hand, all of the key classical pragmatists are included in Fisch’s list except for F. C. S. Schiller, who was an Oxford philosopher, and a few who Fisch did not believe quite rose to the highest rank, probably because, from his purview in 1951, he did not believe they had contributed to what he regarded as the canon of classical American philosophy.⁷ But precisely who was and who was not a classical pragmatist is not a question I wish to pursue here; the fact is, there is such a considerable overlap between the classical American philosophers and the classical pragmatists that one is easily led to suppose that classical American philosophy is pragmatism. That assumption is widely held, and quite understandably so, though when pragmatism is naively conceived this sometimes leads to the idea that American philosophy is simply the rationale for American materialist and entrepreneurial culture. Of course I do not expect that this caricature of pragmatism would be made by readers of this journal but the broader problem of distinguishing classical pragmatism from classical American philosophy remains and is vexing, to say the least.

Let us consider again Fisch’s criterion for what justifies the claim that a period of philosophy is classical. He says that a period of philosophy may be called classic if it expresses the leading philosophic tendencies of its root culture, defining and synthesizing those tendencies into a coherent body of thought inscribed in texts that are taken as canonical expressions of that culture and which set the course for generations to come.

What were the leading philosophic themes and tendencies of American culture which Fisch believed found “fullness of expression” in classical American philosophy? He lists and discusses fourteen themes and tendencies which he summarizes in the following headings: the damnation of Descartes, the naturalizing of mind, the mentalizing of nature, from substance to process, the obsolescence of the eternal, the reduction of yesterday to tomorrow, purpose in thought, exit the spectator, the theory of signs, laboratory vs. seminary philosophy, science as cooperative inquiry, the supremacy of method, science and society, and the great community. I will elaborate on each theme or tendency just a little but only enough to give the general idea. (I follow Fisch closely in this review.)

The Damnation of Descartes. The classical period of American Philosophy began in 1868 with Peirce’s articles in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* where he introduced a “new platform for philosophy” explicitly intended to be post-Cartesian.

⁷ Other philosophers often now regarded as classical pragmatists include Jane Addams, James Tufts, Addison Moore, Edward S. Ames, Alain Locke, Sidney Hook, and Charles Morris.

Fisch writes that “[t]he castigation of Descartes — his faked universal doubt, his intuitions and introspections, his clear and distinct ideas, his dualism, his exaggeration of the ego, his mechanization of nature — has been a constant theme of American philosophy ever since.”⁸

The Naturalizing of Mind. Fisch summarizes this theme as follows: “Assisted by the idea of evolution, by [Alexander] Bain’s theory of belief, by experimental physiology and its substitution of the conditioned reflex for the association of ideas, our classic philosophers have put the mind back into nature. Abandoning the Platonic dichotomy of knowledge and belief, they have included knowing in believing, believing and thinking in acting, and acting in nature.” Quoting Dewey, he writes that “[t]he distinction between physical, psychophysical and mental is one of levels of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction among natural events.”⁹

The Mentalizing of Nature. Fisch suggests that it may not be possible to “naturalize mind without in some degree mentalizing nature” and he runs through most of the classical American philosophers to illustrate this theme. He points to Royce’s idealism, Peirce’s objective idealism (that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws), James’s pluralistic universe (depicted by James as “overlapping consciousnesses”), Dewey’s notion that “empirical philosophy must replace the traditional separation of nature and experience with the idea of continuity,” and Whitehead’s “metaphysics of feelings or ‘prehensions’.”¹⁰

From Substance to Process. “Mental substance has vanished,” Fisch claims, and “material substance survives only in Santayana.”¹¹ For Peirce, “substances” are bundles of habits derivative of events. Substance is also “reduced” to process or event in James, Dewey, and Whitehead. Again quoting Dewey, Fisch writes that “Nothing but unfamiliarity stands in the way of thinking of both mind and matter as different characters of natural events.”¹²

The Obsolescence of the Eternal. Fisch writes that “[t]he eternity that belonged to Plato’s ideas, to truth, and to God survives only in Santayana’s realms of essence and truth, and, somewhat doubtfully, in Whitehead’s ‘eternal objects’ and Royce’s Absolute.”¹³ For most of our classic American philosophers truth is no longer “a stagnant property” inherent in an idea, and in Peirce and Whitehead the “eternal laws of nature” succumb to the theory of evolution and come to be understood as themselves subject to growth and development.

The Reduction of Yesterday to Tomorrow. Fisch emphasizes that all of the classic American philosophers, except for James, were historians to some extent, “[y]et,” he writes, “there was never a period of which it was truer to say that its backward looks were for the sake of forward looks.” Where traditional empiricism had conceived of experience in relation to its causes, the American philosophers conceived of experience in relation to what it foretold, or what future experiences were predictable.

⁸ FISCH, 1951, p. 20.

⁹ FISCH, 1951, p. 21; the quotation from Dewey is from *Experience and Nature* (Chicago: Open Court, 1925), p. 261.

¹⁰ FISCH, 1951, p. 21–22.

¹¹ FISCH, 1951, p. 22.

¹² FISCH, 1951, p. 22; the quotation from Dewey is from *Experience and Nature*, p. 74.

¹³ FISCH, 1951, p. 23.

Quoting Whitehead, Fisch writes, “Cut away the future, and the present collapses, emptied of its proper content.”¹⁴

Purpose in Thought. For this theme, Fisch writes that “[t]he most notable general change in the temper of philosophy in the nineteenth century was the shift from rationalism to voluntarism — from the primacy of ‘The Senses and the Intellect’ to that of ‘The Emotions and the Will,’ to use the titles of Bain’s [famous] two volumes.”¹⁵ Fisch then quotes James, “The willing department of our nature [...] dominates both the conceiving department and the feeling department; or, in plainer English, perception and thinking are only there for behavior’s sake,” and Dewey, who claimed that “the processes and the materials of knowledge are determined by practical or purposive considerations — that there is no such thing as knowledge determined by exclusively theoretical, speculative, or abstract intellectual considerations.”¹⁶ Fisch concludes his discussion of the “purpose in thought” theme by noting that even for Royce, the idealist, there is a crucial element of purpose in all intellectual concepts and he points out that this is one of “the many respects in which pragmatism *is* a form of idealism,” a feature pragmatism shares with Marxism.¹⁷

Exit the Spectator. In an early article on Spencer, William James gave this theme clear expression: “the knower is not simply a mirror floating with no foot-hold anywhere, and passively reflecting an order that he comes upon and finds simply existing. The knower is an actor, and co-efficient of the truth on one side, whilst on the other he registers the truth which he helps to create. [...] there belongs to mind, from its birth upward, a spontaneity, a vote. It is in the game, and not a mere looker-on.”¹⁸ Fisch notes that among our classic American philosophers the rejection of the spectator “takes various forms: the conception of ideas as plans of action; the experimental conception of knowing [...] as involving doing; the denial of immediate knowledge; the distinguishing of knowledge from immediate experiences [...]; and the discrediting of the notion of knowledge as disclosure of antecedent reality.”¹⁹

The Theory of Signs. Generally we credit this theme to Peirce, who in his famous 1868 “Cognition” articles argued that “all thought is in signs,” thus rounding out his theory of categories, according to Fisch: “As feeling is a single [consciousness] and volition a double consciousness, so ‘cognition is [semiosis] [...] a triple consciousness

¹⁴ FISCH, 1951, p. 25; the Whitehead quotation is from *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), p. 246.

¹⁵ FISCH, 1951, p. 26–7.

¹⁶ FISCH, 1951, p. 27; the James quote is from *The Will to Believe* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1897), p. 114, and the Dewey quote is from his definition of “pragmatism” in the *Century Dictionary Supplement*.

¹⁷ FISCH, 1951, p. 27–8 (my emphasis on “is”); Fisch quotes Marx from his *Thesis on Feuerbach* where he says that the “chief defect of all previous materialism was its contemplative character.” “Hence,” according to Marx, “it came about that the active side was developed by idealism in opposition to materialism.”

¹⁸ FISCH, 1951, p. 28; James quote from *Collected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), p. 67. Like James, Peirce and Dewey specifically rejected the spectator view: see Peirce’s “What is the Use of Consciousness,” chap. 4 of *How To Reason* (CP 7.559–64) and chap. 25 of Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), esp. p. 337–38.

¹⁹ FISCH, 1951, p. 28.

[...]’.²⁰ But, as Fisch explains, attention to signs and symbolism was a pervasive theme for most of our philosophers, notably including Royce, Mead, Dewey, Santayana, and Whitehead.²¹

Laboratory vs. Seminary Philosophy. Fisch began his characterization of this theme by pointing out that “Our classical period witnessed the rise [...] of the university [in the U.S.] and the transfer of intellectual leadership from the college to the university.”²² The founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, America’s first secular university devoted to graduate education, exemplified this change — its laboratories beginning to replace its lecture halls as the critical venues for learning. Johns Hopkins was notoriously secular. At its founding, Thomas Huxley delivered the inaugural address giving a grand vision of the advancement of science but without any mention of religion. There was not even an invocation or benediction.²³ This caused immediate outrage. The editor of the *New York Observer* was quick to point out that “Our Colleges are *almost* all born of the Christian religion and it is sad to think that the latest born would have its first words said by that blatant infidel Huxley. It was bad enough to ask him to be present. It would have been better to ask God to be present.”²⁴ The editor delivered a harsh judgment: “If the neglect was due to the unchristian or materialistic sentiments of the authorities, then we can only say, God help them, and keep students away from the precincts of the young institution [...]”²⁵ Of course we know that students did come to Johns Hopkins, two of them being Josiah Royce and John Dewey. And both Peirce and James lectured at Hopkins,²⁶ and both, as men of science, favored scientific experimentation over armchair speculation. In his early pragmatism paper, “The Fixation of Belief,” Peirce neatly expressed this view when he recommended Lavoisier’s laboratory method as the kind of reasoning philosophy should strive for: “Lavoisier’s method,” Peirce wrote, “was not to read and pray, not to dream that some long and complicated chemical process would have a certain effect, [...] [but] to carry his mind into his laboratory, and to make of his alembics and cucurbits instruments of thought, giving a new conception of reasoning, as something which was to be done with one’s eyes open, by manipulating real things instead of words and fancies.”²⁷ This is the conception of reasoning that became doctrine for the classic pragmatists.

Science as Cooperative Inquiry. About this theme, Fisch writes: “In part because of the general shift from theology to science and from college and seminary to university leadership, there was a change in the conception of science. It ceased to mean primarily systematized knowledge and came to mean investigation or inquiry. [...] One

²⁰ FISCH, 1951, p. 29; Peirce Quote from “Pragmatism Made Easy,” MS. 325 in the Harvard Peirce collection. Available in: <http://www.unav.es/gep/1MS325.html>.

²¹ FISCH, 1951, p. 30.

²² Ibid.

²³ JENSEN, J. Vernon. “Thomas Henry Huxley’s Address at the Opening of the Johns Hopkins University in September 1879,” *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 47 (1993): 257–69.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Peirce from 1879 to 1884 and James for a course of lectures in 1882.

²⁷ EP 1: 111.

of the many consequences of viewing science in this way was the accentuation of its social character.²⁸ Fisch points out that this idea of inquiry as a cooperative pursuit came to be accepted by all of our classic American philosophers and revealed itself in philosophy more generally in the shift from “one-author” books to journal articles and collaborative volumes.²⁹

The Supremacy of Method. A tendency to privilege method is another consequence of the attraction of science for American philosophers. Fisch writes that “In an age dominated by science, it was natural that philosophy should become increasingly preoccupied with the nature and function of science; and as science came to be conceived less as a body of doctrine and more as a human enterprise, it was natural that the philosophy of science should take the form of the theory of method.”³⁰ This theme gained its foothold in American philosophy with Peirce, who emphasized that we had entered “the age of methods” and culminated in Dewey’s book, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.³¹ Fisch sees this tendency also expressed in Whitehead’s dictum: “The greatest invention of the nineteenth century was the invention of the method of invention.”³²

Science and Society. Given that science had come to be viewed as a social undertaking, it is not surprising that society itself was taken to be a suitable subject for scientific study. Of course a scientific study of society that followed the experimental methods of the natural sciences required the manipulation and control of human activity, just as physical nature had to be manipulated and controlled in physical experimentation. There are always reservations and concerns about social experimentation, one being that we simply do not know enough to begin tinkering with human nature; paradoxically, we seem to need developed social sciences before we can begin to develop them. Fisch quotes Dewey on this point: “It is a complete error to suppose that efforts at social control depend upon the prior existence of a social science. The reverse is the case. [...] Only the knowledge which is itself the fruit of a technology can breed further technology. [...] if we want something to which the name “social science” may be given, there is only one way to go about it, namely, by entering upon the path of social planning and control.”³³ While the idea of developing the social sciences in continuity with the physical sciences may have been emphasized most by Dewey and perhaps by Mead, it was a tendency within classical American philosophy more generally.

The Great Community. For this last great theme of American philosophy, Fisch once again points to Peirce as in some sense the instigator, reminding us of “Peirce’s assertion of the doctrine of the community as against the Cartesian assumption ‘that the ultimate test of certainty is to be found in the individual consciousness’.”³⁴ But if

²⁸ FISCH, 1951, p. 32.

²⁹ FISCH, 1951, p. 33.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ FISCH, 1951, pp. 33–34; the Peirce quotation is from W4: 379.

³² FISCH, 1951, p. 34; quoting Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 141.

³³ FISCH, 1951, pp. 35–6, quoting Dewey from *The New Republic* 67 (1931): 276f.

³⁴ FISCH, 1951, p. 36, quoting Peirce from “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” EP1, p. 28.

Peirce started this tendency it was advanced to great effect by others in our group, especially Royce, Dewey, and Mead. Quoting Dewey, Fisch writes that “Thinkers may start out with a naïve assumption of minds connected with separate individuals. But developments soon show the inadequacy of such ‘minds’ to carry the burden of science and objective institutions, like the family and state.”³⁵ Fisch says that like Peirce and Royce, Dewey “saw in the community of investigators a pattern for society at large [...] [and he regarded] ‘the operation of cooperative intelligence as displayed in science [as] a working model of the union of [...] [the] collective authority and individual freedom, upon which the future of society depends.’”³⁶

That is the picture Fisch paints of classical American philosophy — which counts as classical, remember, because it expresses the leading philosophic tendencies of the American culture that spawned it. Whether or not Fisch got it exactly right is worth considering but that is not my purpose here — for now, I am quite content to accept Fisch’s picture as an excellent portrayal of the American philosophic mind of the classical period.

What I want to consider is whether these themes characterize *classical pragmatism* or only *classical American philosophy* more generally? In characterizing the tendencies of the mind of classical American philosophy, has Fisch also characterized the pragmatic mind? Clearly most of the themes I have surveyed above apply to all of our classical pragmatists and thus represent important tendencies in their philosophies, but do their philosophies in their entirety count as pragmatic philosophies? Somehow, and I’m speaking quite impressionistically, the themes Fisch adduced as characterizing classical American philosophy seem quite compatible with James’s view of pragmatism, or with Dewey’s, or, for that matter, with the views of many contemporary pragmatists. That might suggest that we would not be greatly mistaken to identify classical American philosophy with classical pragmatism — and, indeed, it is that broad and inclusive, if rather vague, conception of pragmatism that is increasingly attractive. But there are some strong dissenters to this broad view of pragmatism and Peirce and his followers have been largely responsible for that dissent, which might be said to have weakened pragmatism’s initial advance.

Probably everyone reading this paper will have heard the story about Peirce changing the name of his pragmatism to “pragmaticism,” a word which he admitted was not very appealing — that was in fact the point; it was too ugly, he said, to attract kidnappers.³⁷ But why was this change of name so important? It is usually supposed that Peirce wanted to distance his pragmatism from that of James, Schiller, the Italian pragmatists, and a growing number of popularizers of the then newly fashionable movement, because pragmatism was becoming too nominalistic and too sweeping in scope. It is indeed clear that Peirce was convinced that his original version, focused as it had been on the rather narrow yet astonishingly consequential question of the meaning of what he came to call “intellectual concepts,” was too important to be allowed to fade into the fuzziness, and of all things, the unclarity,

³⁵ FISCH, 1951, p. 38, quoting Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 224f.

³⁶ FISCH, 1951, p. 38; quoting Dewey, *Intelligence in the Modern World* (New York: Modern Library, 1939), p. 360.

³⁷ EP 2: 334-35.

of popular pragmatism. In 1905, in a draft of his second pragmatism article for *The Monist*, Peirce criticized Schiller's pragmatism, or Humanism, as not scientific and too taken up with "every department of man's nature." Peirce wrote that he wished "philosophy to be a strict science, passionless and severely fair."³⁸

Besides wanting to keep the focus of "his pragmatism" on ascertaining the meaning of intellectual concepts, Peirce had gradually come to believe that the forward focus of pragmatic meaning could only be adequately expressed in subjunctive conditionals — and this called for an updated form of scholastic realism as a necessary adjunct to pragmatism. Finally, Peirce was a mathematician and a logician and from his earliest days he had learned to search out convincing rationales for the beliefs and theories he thought compelling. In mathematics and logic, as also in law, such convincing rationales were generally offered as "proofs" and Peirce extended that practice to philosophy and became an advocate of philosophical proofs. Peirce believed that it was only his narrow and technical pragmatism that was capable of yielding a proof of the pragmatist principle (or theorem) of meaning expressed in what, since James's famous Berkeley lecture of 1898, we have come to call Peirce's Principle (or the Pragmatic Maxim).

This narrow pragmatism, pragmaticism, would certainly not be equivalent to the classical American philosophy expressed in the themes and tendencies Fisch singled out, even though it could only have arisen within such a culture of ideas. Although intellectual concepts, the only concern of pragmaticism, may presuppose feeling and existential fact, or as Peirce sometimes said, emotion and effort, they constitute a quite limited set of Peirce's sign classes, the classes of symbols. These are the kinds of conceptions, the kinds of signs, which are fit to produce what Peirce called logical interpretants, which might themselves be intellectual concepts but which eventually give way to intellectual habits or what Peirce calls "the *would-acts* of habitual behavior."³⁹ Pragmaticism thus concerns a limited range of human experience; it has nothing to say about emotional interpretants, which evoke feelings, or energetic interpretants, which evoke effort — and so it serves only as a logical doctrine. Peirce was quite aware of this limitation and of what it meant; near the end of his life, he reflected on the contribution his form of pragmatism makes and said that it aids reasoning from the standpoint of security but that it contributes nothing to the *uberty* of reasoning, nothing to creativity and inspiration. Rather poetically, he wrote that "the maxim of Pragmatism does not bestow a single smile upon beauty, upon moral virtue, or upon abstract truth; — the three things that alone raise Humanity above Animality."⁴⁰

Peirce's decision to rename his narrow more technical pragmatism, and his assessment of the more popular form as unscientific, led to the idea that Peirce had completely rejected James's pragmatism and that the two forms were incompatible and competing doctrines. In a paper presented in São Paulo in 2002 at the 5th Inter-

³⁸ CP 5.537; see PIHLSTRÖM, Sami. Peirce's Place in the Pragmatist Tradition. In: *Cambridge Companion to Peirce*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 27-57.

³⁹ EP 2: 401-02.

⁴⁰ EP 2: 465.

national Meeting on Pragmatism,⁴¹ I discussed this schism within classical pragmatism and I cited Richard Robin and H. O. Mounce as examples of scholars who promote the two-pragmatisms view and who judge only one form to be authentic — they both chose Peirce's pragmatism because it was more scientific with roots tracing back to Greek philosophy.⁴² Because of its continuity with Greek philosophy, Robin and Mounce labeled Peirce's narrow pragmatism "classical pragmatism," adding to the confusion about what classical pragmatism is. Mounce went so far as to claim that Peirce's pragmatism and that deriving from James were in conflict in all their essentials.⁴³ I rejected that claim and tried to find some common ground connecting the Peirce camp with the James camp, and I pointed out that Peirce himself did not believe that his pragmatism was in conflict in all its essentials with the more popular doctrine, but since 2002 I have come to see this even more clearly.

Let us consider again the section in the 1905 *Monist* article where Peirce introduced his new word, "pragmaticism." He pointed out that "his [original] word, 'pragmatism' has gained [...] recognition in a generalized sense that seems to argue power of growth and vitality." He noted that James's radical empiricism "substantially answered to [his] definition of pragmatism, albeit with a certain difference in the point of view," and he spoke relatively approvingly, or at least acceptingly, of Schiller's variant of pragmatism. It is true that Peirce decried the way the word "pragmatism" was being promoted in literary journals, but when he announced the birth of his new word, he said it was "time to kiss his child [the word "pragmatism"] goodbye and relinquish it to its higher destiny"; his new word, "pragmaticism," would "serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition." Peirce thought there was a "decisive advantage in his original conception of the doctrine": it was more compact and it could be proved more easily. That was important for Peirce.⁴⁴ But I do not think Peirce was being entirely facetious when he said he would relinquish his word "pragmatism" to a *higher destiny*.

After the publication of his 1905 *Monist* article, Peirce wrote about it to Mario Calderoni: "In the April number of the *Monist* I proposed that the word "pragmatism" should hereafter be used somewhat loosely to signify affiliation with Schiller, James, Dewey, Royce, and the rest of us, while the particular doctrine which I invented the word to denote [...] should be called "pragmaticism." The extra syllable will indicate the narrower meaning."⁴⁵ "Schiller, James, Dewey, Royce, and the rest of us," Peirce

⁴¹ "Pragmatism and the Loss of Innocence." Presented to 5th International Meeting on Pragmatism, Pontifical Catholic University of Brazil, 7 November 2002. Published in *Cognitio* 4 (2003): 197–210.

⁴² ROBIN, Richard. Classical Pragmatism and Pragmatism's Proof. In: *The Rule of Reason: The Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce*. BRUNNING, Jacqueline and FORSTER, Paul (eds.) Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997, pp. 137–152. MOUNCE, H.O. *The Two Pragmatisms*, London: Routledge, 1997.

⁴³ MOUNCE, 1997, p. 231.

⁴⁴ All quotations in this paragraph are from Peirce's "What Pragmatism Is," EP 2: 334–35.

⁴⁵ CP 8.205–06, 1905. When Peirce wrote the definition of "pragmaticism" for the *Century Supplement*, he stated the narrower meaning of pragmatism explicitly: "A special and limited form of pragmatism, in which the pragmatism is restricted to the determining of the meaning of concepts (particularly of philosophic concepts) by consideration of the

wrote; so even though he was a pragmaticist, he was also a pragmatist in the broader sense.⁴⁶

Peirce understood that there was something all the pragmatists had in common, a vision, perhaps, or as he once said, a “pragmatic faith”⁴⁷ Even when the pragmatic method is construed narrowly, Peirce acknowledged that there are “different ways of regarding what is practically the same method of attaining vitally distinct conceptions” and, furthermore, that narrow pragmatism might have “ulterior and indirect effects” on one’s thought in general.⁴⁸ The original purpose of pragmatism might have been to serve as a “*lanterna pedibus* in the discussion of dark questions,” or as James put it, to provide “the clue [...] by following which [...] we may keep our feet upon the proper trail,” but choosing pragmatism as the lamp unto our feet and the light upon our path, might have, as Peirce admitted, incidental consequences. I think the common vision of the classical pragmatists, their common faith if you will, is fairly well expressed in the themes and tendencies Max Fisch ascribed to classical American philosophy, and I believe it is far more accurate to identify classical pragmatism with classical American philosophy, as characterized by Fisch, than to identify it with Peirce’s more technical narrow pragmatism. Peirce might even have agreed for he never supposed that pragmaticism was the whole of pragmatism.

I have taken this long path to show why I think it is classical pragmatism in this broad sense, more or less equivalent with classical American philosophy, that is becoming increasingly attractive because of its broader encompass of experience and its extended sense of its own relevance. There was a long period in American philosophy during which Peirce’s narrower pragmatism was preferred precisely because it was more technical and logical — and narrow. During the heyday of analytic philosophy, Peirce’s narrow pragmatism was sometimes the only form of pragmatism that was looked on favorably and it was thought to be consistent with, if not continuous with, logical empiricism.⁴⁹ But with the decline of analytic philosophy I believe there has been a corresponding decline of technical pragmatism and that philosophy in general is turning away from what is perceived as scientism and logic-centrism. I think we must admit, whether or not we approve of his message, that Richard Rorty was in many respects the oracle, perhaps even the engine, for the direction analytic philosophy and pragmatism took as the last century wound down and the new one started.

In May 2007, a conference devoted to the philosophies of William James and Josiah Royce was held at Harvard University — one of the signs of the transformation of American philosophy that I am writing about is that Josiah Royce is once again

experimental differences in the conduct of life which would conceivably result from the affirmation or denial of the meaning in question.”

⁴⁶ See my paper, “The Church of Pragmatism” (*Semiotica* 178, no. 1/4, 2010, pp. 105–14), for a more developed discussion of this point.

⁴⁷ EP 2: 421 (MS 318).

⁴⁸ EP 2: 419, 400 (MS 318).

⁴⁹ Peirce’s work with the pragmatic component of language, and sometimes Dewey’s too, was also considered favorably. See Carnap’s reply to Philipp Frank and V. Brushlinsky in his volume (XI) of *The Library of Living Philosophers* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1963), p. 868.

gaining prominence.⁵⁰ Hilary Putnam spoke at this conference and his remarks conformed with what I am saying about the direction philosophy is taking. He said that he agrees with Von Wright that analytic philosophers fetishized logic and that formal logic will not be so dominant during this new century. Putnam did not disparage logic altogether, certainly, but he said that the idea that philosophy should so heavily favor formal logic and analysis was not a good idea. Putnam spoke of the pathos in Bertrand Russell's disenchantment with mathematics and logic as described in his book, *My Philosophical Development*. Toward the end of that book, Russell wrote of his change in outlook on the world: "I think that the timelessness of mathematics has none of the sublimity that it once seemed to me to have. [...] I cannot any longer find any mystical satisfaction in the contemplation of mathematical truth."⁵¹ Putnam found Russell's account to be almost tragic. Russell had lost his early idealism and the hopes he had placed in mathematical logic; his intellectual beliefs entirely failed to satisfy his emotional needs. It never occurred to him that philosophical problems might not be like scientific problems. Why shouldn't philosophy be part of the world that matters?

Pragmatism, Putnam said, is the kind of philosophy that does not draw one away from the world that matters and into the abstract and timeless world of Platonic abstractions — the world that Russell eventually found to be so unsatisfying. I do not endorse this assessment, for I believe it verges on committing a nominalist fallacy, but I believe it is a good indicator of the attitude that has led to a shift of interest from technical pragmatism to classical pragmatism. In 2003, in my presidential address to the Peirce Society, I considered what role Peirce might play in the philosophy of the 21st century. Probably every reader knows that Peirce made contributions to mathematical logic that were of great and lasting importance and some readers may know that two of his contributions to logic, his Existential Graphs and his sixteen connective notation, are only now beginning to get the attention they merit. Still, it was not Peirce's logic that I thought likely to be his greatest contribution to 21st century philosophy. Nor was it his pragmatism. I took a clue from Joseph Margolis, who has explored deeply the intimacies and the tensions between pragmatism and analytic philosophy and who has made a convincing case for the possible resurrection of pragmatism as a dominant philosophy.⁵² Although he does not believe we should return to the original pragmatism, he does believe we should reconnect with it, in particular with its fallibilism. I believe Margolis is right — or almost right, since he prefers Dewey's fallibilism to Peirce's and I swing the other way. So it was Peirce's fallibilism, broadly understood, that I predicted would be Peirce's greatest contribution to 21st century philosophy. Notice that fallibilism was not a part of Peirce's narrow pragmatism, yet I believe it is central to his broader pragmatic outlook. And I believe Peirce would have been willing to accept that fallibilism was part of the

⁵⁰ "William James & Josiah Royce a Century Later; Pragmatism and Idealism in Dialogue," hosted by Harvard Divinity School, Lowell Lecture Hall, 25–27, May 2007.

⁵¹ RUSSELL, Bertrand. *My Philosophical Development*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959, p. 211–12.

⁵² See, for example, MARGOLIS, Joseph. *Reinventing Pragmatism; American Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century*. Cornell University Press, 2002. See also his recent book, *Pragmatism's Advantage*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

pragmatistic faith that he shared with the other classical pragmatists. Indeed, I believe it is the fallibilistic tendency within classical pragmatism, so well expressed in both Peirce and Dewey but really embedded in the ethos of classical pragmatism, that underwrites the revival of pragmatism.

It is classical pragmatism, characterized by the fourteen tendencies Fisch cited and by its commitment to fallibilism, which I believe is gaining ground. This is the ecumenical pragmatism that helps situate us more appropriately and satisfactorily in our universe, not only in our conceptual dealings with objects of thought but broadly in all aspects of life. It is the philosophy Dewey advocates in his “Reconstruction in Philosophy,” a philosophy that is attentive to the problems of men.⁵³ It is much more hospitable to intimate relations with phenomenology and existentialism, and other great European contributions to world philosophy, than is the narrow pragmatistic doctrine of Peirce.

I do not at all mean to imply that it is time to abandon Peirce’s pragmatism as if it were a relic of a bygone paradigm. On the contrary, it is as important and as relevant as ever, even though it falls in on the side of science which Peirce gladly admits “is not the whole of life.”⁵⁴ Yes, pragmatism is “abstruse, arid, abstract, and [for some, even] abhorrent,” but that is what is required of some branches of science in order for them to function well — Peirce believed “in the division of labor among intellectual agencies.”⁵⁵ But pragmatism is not the whole of pragmatism and even Peirce saw that. From the broader stance of classical pragmatism, with its more Jamesian and Deweyan tone, we can, and perhaps must, consider everything that concerns the philosophy of life and growth, including the necessity of such sentiments as faith, hope, and love, and the importance of culture for life — including the place of religion in culture.

In my 2002 paper mentioned above,⁵⁶ I gave a rather stark and skeptical account of Peirce’s religious views, strictly from the standpoint Peirce’s narrow pragmatic doctrine, and Ivo Ibrí, in his reply, pointed out that I was perhaps missing the poetic richness of Peirce’s writings about God.⁵⁷ When I shift my stance to the camp of classical pragmatism, the common ground of those bound together by what Peirce called their “pragmatistic faith,” I can see that I had missed the profound importance of admitting the non-intellectual realms of firstness and secondness *on their own* and not only as they end up after they are drawn through the demystification engine of thirdness. I am not yet convinced that this gives much real support for religious belief but I can see that Peirce gives those who are looking for such support reason to hope. In his famous “letter to *The Nation*,” that oft-cited MS 318, Peirce made this telling remark: “For those metaphysical questions that have such [human] interest, — the question of a future life and especially that of One Incomprehensible but Personal God, not imminent in but creating the universe, — I, for one, heartily admit that a

⁵³ *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920).

⁵⁴ CP 5.537.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See n. 41.

⁵⁷ For an excellent account of Ivo Ibrí’s views on this question see his “Reflections on a Poetic Ground in Peirce’s Philosophy,” in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 45 (2009): 273–307.

Humanism, that does not pretend to be a science but only an instinct, like a bird's power of flight, but purified by meditation, is the most precious contribution that has been made to philosophy for ages."⁵⁸

I will not concede that we should rest easy until we have subjected all of our philosophical beliefs to the rigors of Peirce's narrow pragmatism; but I recognize that the current of the times has swept to the side such quasi-positivist protocols. The times seem right for philosophers to attend to the more aesthetic and vital questions that can be addressed from the standpoint of classical pragmatism, a school of thought which is rooted in 19th century American culture but which "left home" long ago to become a philosophy for the world.

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⁵⁸ EP 2: 420–21.

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