The Relativist Threat: Pragmatism, Response-dependence and Protagoreanism

A Ameaça Relativista: Pragmatismo, Resposta-dependência e Protagorismo

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Abstract: Pragmatism is famously difficult to define, especially when it extends from Peirce to its more modern forms. This threatens its consistency and gives room to a relativist reading where anything can count as a form of pragmatism. I intend here to examine arguments in favour of a rigorous definition referring to the original 1878 maxim. I show that, in its response-dependant readings, it secures both the specificity and the contemporary relevance of pragmatism. Some resemblance between the response-dependant reading of the pragmatist maxim and the Protagorean dictum resurrects relativist threat within pragmatism thus redefined. But contrary to the first threat, this second has something to it: it fairly recalls that historically, pragmatism was indeed a reaction for "Protagoras rather than Plato" and also considered as a form of anthropocentrism or "humanism". Philosophically, it addresses a challenge to pragmatism: how can it refuse absolutism and metaphysical realism while not advocating a form of relativism? How can our conceptions both be defined in terms of our dispositions to act on them and have a form of objectivity? The rigidity of definition previously given to pragmatism helps here to distinguish between different kinds of relativist challenges, which deserve to be differently feared and addressed.

Keywords: Meaning. Pragmatism. Pragmatist maxim. Peirce. Protagoras. Relativism. Response-dependence.

Resumo: *O pragmatismo é notoriamente difícil de se definir, particularmente quando vai de Peirce até suas formas mais modernas. Isso ameaça sua coerência e deixa espaço para uma leitura relativista, na qual qualquer coisa pode ser uma forma de pragmatismo. Pretendo, aqui, examinar argumentos em favor de uma definição rigorosa da máxima original de 1878. Mostro que, nas suas leituras do tipo resposta-dependência, ela assegura tanto a especificidade quanto a relevância contemporânea do pragmatismo. Alguma semelhança entre a leitura do tipo resposta-dependência da máxima pragmática e a máxima de Protágoras reaviva a ameaça relativista dentro do pragmatismo assim redefinido. Mas, contrariamente à primeira ameaça, esta segunda é de certa maneira válida: ela justamente lembra que, historicamente, o pragmatismo foi uma forma de reação em favor de "Protágoras ao invés de Platão", e também foi considerado como uma forma de antropocentrismo ou "humanismo". Filosoficamente, ela põe um desafio ao*

pragmatismo: como ele pode recusar o absolutismo e o realismo metafísico sem defender uma forma de relativismo? Como nossas concepções podem ser tanto definidas em termos de nossas disposições para agir quanto ter uma forma objetiva? A rigidez da definição previamente dada ao pragmatismo ajuda, aqui, a diferenciar as espécies de desafios relativistas, que merecem ser temidos e atacados de maneiras diversas.

Palavras-chave: *Significado. Pragmatismo. Máxima pragmática. Peirce. Protágoras. Relativismo. Resposta-dependência.*

There are many ways to understand what "pragmatism" means. Lovejoy famously counted as many definitions of it as there were declared pragmatist thinkers[1], and there may even be more, given the number of self-deceived pragmatists. Lovejoy was then pointing out at a real difficulty, which has increased rather than ceased: what is the common point between thinkers such as Peirce, James, Dewey, Schiller, Putnam, Rorty, Resher[2] – not to speak of the Italian and French pragmatists, the legal pragmatists[3], or the "para-pragmatists" like Quine, Ramsey, Davidson, Sellars, Brandom or even Wittgenstein?[4] Perhaps there is just a family resemblance here. But at least, family resemblance is more than a verbal identity of names, and one can avoid moving, as Lovejoy, to a fair observation of the relative differences between pragmatisms to a kind of scepticism.

> There is, to be sure, in a sense, no such thing as pragmatism; that doctrine is not a well-defined substantive entity. (LOVEJOY, 1909, p.30)

Indeed, if there is no entity without identity, then the lack of a clear definition for pragmatism threatens its existence. One can agree that school names have just an intellectual or scholar existence, as they are mainly used for classificatory uses and are not natural classes. But even this kind of existence must be able to be tested against something, and the relevance of these labels must be secured. Lovejoy warns us against something more important that Peirce would not have contested. There cannot be something true and private, so that the lack of some commonality within pragmatism was working against its acknowledgement as a valuable philosophy. This care for truth and common acknowledgement is partly what explains the many family disputes within pragmatism, to know who have it right and who can claim to be its genuine defender. Peirce assures that both his critics and many of his supporters haven't understood pragmatism properly, whereas Rorty claims that Peirce did almost nothing for pragmatism, except giving it a name, and that James did all the work. Susan Haack reacts strongly to the decadent forms of pragmatism expressed by Rorty, whereas Putnam thinks that a fully consistent pragmatism must include Dewey's political contribution. The list of the disagreement and polemics gets longer.

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[1] LOVEJOY (1909).
[2] See HAACK (2004).
[3] FISCH (1986), HAACK (2006).
[4] RORTY (1961), PUTNAM (1995) and TIERCELIN (2000).

If there is no way to build an extensional definition, starting from the self-proclaimed pragmatists, we must start with an intensional one. But which one? Our last chance is to turn to history to provide us with a working plausible hypothesis. The suggestion is then that the core statement of pragmatism is Peirce's 1878 maxim.

Starting with the Maximal Hypothesis

Let us call this historical suggestion the "Maximal Hypothesis" – "maximal" both because of its appeal to Peirce's maxim of signification and because of its strength. There are indeed good reasons to start with the strongest hypothesis, and (MH) is the best candidate for our inquiry into the definition of pragmatism.

How should it be formulated? If we move from history to philosophy, from narration to definition, we need something more precise than the idea of a connection between the origin of the pragmatism movement and Peirce's maxim. A formulation such as the following is still too vague.

(MH) Pragmatism is defined by an adhesion of the 1878 pragmatist maxim.

Do we mean "explicit" or "tacit" adhesion"? So many declared pragmatist thinkers do not refer to Peirce's statement that it is more careful to count tacit agreement with his maxim as sufficient.

(MH') Pragmatism is defined by an agreement with the 1878 pragmatist maxim.

Yet the hypothesis weakens. The intended definition is indeed a maxim, i.e. *a mere program*. Shouldn't a proper definition of a philosophical movement be made on *actual features*, on some substantial results or claims, anything stronger than mere wishes? Yet pragmatism objects the latter requirement, conceiving philosophy not as a set of theories or principles, but as an activity. Claiming to be above all a *method*, pragmatism welcomes – if not requires – a definition shaped in a conditional imperative rather than an indicative, a prescription rather than a description. (MH) rightly captures this feature.

This casts another shadow on the promises of (MH). It is not only just programmatic, but also quite thin. As Peirce once put it, he intended his maxim to be "*merely* a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words" (CP 5.564). If the maxim is such a specific device, of narrow use, isn't it too thin to support the whole definition of pragmatism? Does it define pragmatism as resorting merely to the philosophy of language? A single statement seems a bit thin to build up a whole movement. In other terms: isn't the maxim a bit minimal as a definition? Yet, as are looking for a *general or inclusive definition* of pragmatism, able to cover its full extension and margins, a minimal comprehension is rather a good thing. Having a general definition does not prevent further discrimination: there are certainly varieties of pragmatism, but it makes it even more important to see what they are *varieties of*.

(MH) resists thus well the most immediate objections. It also remains the most plausible historically. The hypothesis figures in Baldwin's dictionary entry on pragmatism, in James' 1906 lecture on Pragmatism and can be found earlier in a letter exchange between William James and Peirce. Doubts have been raised concerning its being historically sound. First, as Peirce underlines it at several occasions, he did not intend the term "pragmatism" as a name for a whole system of philosophy, nor any *Weltanschauung*

(5.131, see also 5.18), but just for a specific maxim of logic. As Perry notes it, it is mainly James who is responsible for the choice of the Peircean name for a general movement. The name starts indeed being used from 1898 when James pronounces his conference "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results", and not in 1878, when the maxim is first enounced. Moreover, evidence shows that James had himself come to ideas close to Peirce's maxim as soon as 1877[5], independently of his friend's formula. Yet these are not objections against the centrality of the maxim for pragmatism, but against its being intended as such by Peirce and actually his invention. As far as the maxim can be detached from the contingencies of its first public enunciations, it remains a plausible hypothesis for our inquiry.

But can it be so easily detached? Does it still perform its definition role once separated from its rich context? The maxim has been presented in "How to make our ideas clear", along with the main points of an ambitious philosophical program from which Peirce will never absolutely depart. The opposition to Cartesianism and rationalism, the necessity for thought to be external and in signs, the quest for clarity rather than absolute truth, the purification of metaphysics – all these points seem to be wrapped in the minimalist statement of the 1878 paper. Many commentators such as Thayer, Murphey, Hookway or Tiercelin[6] have shown how a proper understanding of this well-known maxim requires to be put in the context of a whole program, and take into account Peirce's own additional *scholia*. As much as one could not really understand the 'cogito ergo sum' without going through the whole of the *Meditations* and the subsequent answers to critics, one cannot understand the pragmatic maxim without understanding a lot more.

This creates a tension. On the one hand, the maxim must be kept as much general as possible, in order to be sharable by several. One has to be careful with a holistic reading, otherwise perfectly reasonable for a study of the unique Peircean system. Do the connections felt between the maxim and the whole of pragmatist attitude amount to real ones, or are they just made by transitions in reading? Can all these themes, claims and commitments be really inferred from the maxim, and "read" in it? If not, shall we consider them as integral to pragmatism, or as optional complements?

On the other hand, looking for a general and semi-detached formula of the maxim is very difficult. It even gets less and less clear, as one reads and thinks about Peirce and other pragmatists, how to understand the maxim. Christopher Hookway, who can legitimately be considered a paradigmatic case of a scholarly-informed pragmatist, recently confessed that he was "not as confident as [he] once was that [he has] a clear idea into Peirce's pragmatist principle!" and admitted that "it is not easy to work out exactly what his convoluted formulation means". Coming from a well-respected Peirce scholar, this has probably to be taken as a statement of modesty, and an encouragement to further inquiry. But this also seriously casts doubt on the possibility to find a precise definition of pragmatism along (MH) lines. The main worry consists in finding a proper formulation of the maxim.

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[5]   BAUM (1933).
[6]   THAYER (1981); MURPHEY (1961); HOOKWAY (1985); TIERCELIN (1993).

When he speaks of the "convoluted formulation" Hookway refers to the well-known fact that the maxim is stated in many different ways, including by Peirce himself. Neglecting here and there the strict chronological order, let us stress some relevant variations. The first public statement of the pragmatic maxim was made in French in 1877 and published in the seventh issue of *la Revue philosophique* as follows:

> (M0) *Considérer quels sont les effets pratiques que nous pensons pouvoir être produits par l'objet de notre conception. La conception de tous ces effets est la conception complète de l'objet.*

It was soon followed by an English formulation[7], published in the *Journal of Philosophy*

> (M1) Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have: then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (1878, EP1: 132)

The content of the maxim, according to Peirce himself (CP 2.99) remains "substantially the same" through the years, at least up to 1903 when he observes so. The 1878 ideas are never denied, and the maxim is quoted precisely in the same way in 1905 (CP 5.348). Yet Peirce had also been adding comments and precisions since the appropriation of the term by James and others, in order to defend his property or to secure his distinction. The maxim gets therefore stated as follows:

> (M2) Pragmatism is the principle that every theoretical judgment expressible in a sentence in the indicative mood is a confused form of thought whose only meaning, if it has any, lies in its tendency to enforce a corresponding practical maxim expressible as a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood. (CP 5.18, 1902)

> (M3) In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception. (CP 5.9, 1905)

> (M4) Define all mental characters as far as possible in terms of their outward manifestations. (MS 682, 1913)

> (M5) For the maxim of pragmatism is that a conception can have no logical effect or import differing from that of a second conception except so far as, taken in connection with other conceptions and intentions, it might conceivably modify our practical conduct differently from that second conception. (5.195, 1902-03)

Is it possible to find commonalities between these statements? Obviously, every formulation respects one and the same general form, i.e. the prescription of equivalence between two elements. In other terms, it fits into a schema such as:

> (Mx) A should be made equivalent to B.

The equivalence being strict, the so-called minimal statement is quite radical. It is a strong requirement of the meaning of concepts, and not, as sometimes heard, just the general idea that our ideas should refer to practice, or make a practical difference of some sort.

What about A and B then? The scope of A, and thus the scope of application of the maxim, varies from *various restrictions* ("intellectual conceptions" [1905, M3] "hard words" [EP2:400]) to a *broader extension* ("all mental characters" [1913, M4]). It goes even up to an apparently unrestricted extension, and this is in fact what the literal maxim suggests when it is quoted out of context. Yet should the maxim really be applied to *every* conception? Peirce's own tendency seems to extend it from the consideration of *abstract general terms*, such as "reality" and "truth", to the treatment of *everyday conceptions,* such as the ones expressed by concrete predicates like "hard". Yet even on this path, he insists now and then on the restricted scope of the maxim, without, in my opinion, giving an explicit definitive statement about the *general kinds of terms* falling out of its scope. The boundaries are quite vague. Take for instance the following claim:

> 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. (MS 682, 1913)

Shall we understand that it doesn't extend to values and normative terms? A correct answer requires one to have a close look into Peirce's ideas on ethics, especially into his developing ideas about the normative sciences. This will not be settled here.

It is enough for our present purpose to notice that the question of the scope of the maxim cannot be solved just by a look at its statement, so that the positions taken about it falls out of our validation of (MH)[8]. The maxim can be taken either as *local* or *global.*

> For some A, A should be made equivalent to B

or as

> For any A, A should be made equivalent to B.

The choice for the former raises important issues for any pragmatism thus involved: which A's are appropriate? Why not the others? What is the criterion to distinguish them? Is the criterion accessible to us, so that we do not then need another maxim to guide us in the choice of A's? Opting for the latter, on the other hand, raises important challenges: is there any counter-example where the prescription would not hold? Can the maxim take such a wide extension without contradiction? We know that Peirce's solution appeals here to the theory of scientific inquiry: every term entering in matters of objective judgement is potentially concerned, but just the ones occasioning real doubts will actually be clarified. Yet, as far as the definition of pragmatism is concerned, answers need not follow him on this issue.

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[8] Obviously, this makes the possibility of a pragmatic clarification of value terms an open question for pragmatism.

Putting aside the scope variation of A, it is also noticeable that B varies from a statement to another. Yet the difference is rather a question of accents.

As Christopher Hookway notices[9], the initial expression 'practical bearings' is quite loose: "almost anything could have practical bearings of some sort." However, this looseness cannot just amount to some unawareness or awkwardness from Peirce. This is the main element that Peirce found worth reformulating with more care, after his first French attempt of formulation. M0 referred merely to "practical effects" (*effets pratiques*) whereas (M1) speaks of "effects that might have practical bearings". In other versions, Peirce will talk about "practical consequences", "outward manifestations", "habits", or use more complicated circumvolutions as "the compulsory perceptions" that one undergoes if "one exerts certain kinds of volition", the "inevitable experiences" that "certain lines of conduct will entail". All these expressions tend to underline how delicate the task is to express in such a synthetic statement the adequate *nature of "B"*, the very things that are supposed to clarify our concepts.

The difference between the pragmatist and the empiricist is to be settled on the B's side of the maxim. Contrary to what Ernest Nagel thought[10], pragmatism is not a mere precursor of logical empiricism, and its maxims differ from pure verificationist statements such as:

> (EL) A concept is meaningful if and only if it is reducible to purely observational terms.

> (V) A statement is meaningful if and only if it is reducible in terms of a finite method of verification.

None of the maxim versions prescribes a reduction to purely empirical content. This mistaken interpretation originates in an undue accentuation of "practical". The adjective is either taken as a synonym for "empirical" or "experimental", or as the opposite of "theoretical", which is in turn understood negatively as "purely abstract construction". In the former case, what the maxims gets to prescribe is an empiricist analysis, where our concepts and ideas are reduced to a set of sensations, contents of experience or sense-data. In the latter case, it seems to prescribe that our ideas should get rid of the layers added by our own intellectual artifice.

Yet obviously the maxim tries to avoid the scheme/content dichotomy. Perceptions, experiences, effects, observations are also woven with theoretical, constructed, or conceptual aspects[11]. This is visible in the insistence on "conceivable" perceptions, and "what we think" the effects would be. There is no point of view from nowhere for pragmatists.

Another way to get at the same conclusion is to see that the clarified concepts are not reduced to something of another nature: signs on the A side are clarified in terms of other signs, on the B's side. Of course, it is easier to get this point in the context of the

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[9] HOOKWAY, *forthcoming*.
[10] Or is taken to say. His paper is actually more qualified. See NAGEL (1940).
[11] A point made clear by Peirce when he said that pragmatism is *linked to* the logic of abduction, and more precisely that the logic of abduction is a consequence of the maxim.

four 1878 papers, where the strong arguments against introspection and for the semiotic model of the thinking are given. It is thus important to see that the maxim does not provide an analysis of meaning, but prescribe a way to clarify some synthetic concepts in terms of others, a way to find most reliable interpretant for our concepts.

The refusal of the scheme/content and the analytic/synthetic distinction are both common to all pragmatists and inscribed in the maxim itself.

Is it the same for a second kind of controversial interpretation that takes "practical"– or its equivalent expressions – as "actual"? Peirce is pretty clear on the importance of not limiting Bs, whatever they are, to actual instances and to extend them to "conceived" and even "conceivable" ones. It excludes thus the crudest empiricist reading. Yet, what is a "conceivable" experience? An experience embedded in conceptual terms? The general type of experience we conceive on the basis of repeated singular experiences? Is conceivable experience the same thing as a possible experience? Notice also that the maxim is not very helpful regarding the method to follow for "conceiving" effects. What do we have to conceive? Do we have to figure out contexts or perspectives in which the object would have practical effects, or in which its effects would have practical bearings? Or do we have, while keeping our one and same perspective and context, think about effects we never experienced but are likely to happen? The expression, obviously, leaves these options and questions open.

Reading "practical effects" *qua* "actual" stresses then another difficulty in the maxim. Actual experiences are singular; they are events taking place in a certain space and time. Peirce was particularly insistent on contrasting this understanding of experience as constituted of "atoms" (James' mistake in his view) with the reading of experience as a general habitual way (in his view, the only plausible one). This last difference is crucial, for it explains the James-Peirce divergence, and more importantly, the relationships between pragmatism and behaviourism. To explore it in more details, it can be put as follows:

> "A should be made equivalent to B" *means*
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> - *as (1)*: "A should be made equivalent to the sum of $Bi(t,p,X)$"with t = time, p = place and X= subject
>
> - *as (2)*: A should be made equivalent to the general way of B-ing (or disposition to act in a B-way[12])

(1) has to be indexed with time and place, contrary to (2), which is fair given that events and not habits require so. As said, Peirce favours the second reading, but does not make it so clear in some of his formulation.

(1) is also indexed relatively to a subject of experience, and it is unclear whether (2) can do without it. Is the subject of experience also an actual subject? Is it then identified to a singular individual or can it amount to a less clear-cut collective? Can't it also account for an "ideal" or normal subject? On this respect, the 1878 statement (M1) remains indeterminate. Peirce is obviously eager to keep the maxim away from any "actualist"

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[12] A disposition or a general is not indexed on time and space. See how odd it would be to say "The glass was fragile on that table" or "He could play chess yesterday".

reading of the first person pronoun, be it an individual or a community. Yet (M1) contains a "we" that is difficultly identified: is that just a mean of exposition or does it actually imply a certain point of view? Whose? How to define the ideal "we" supposed to escape from the restriction to actual thinkers or sets of thinkers? If "we" stands for the community of inquiry, why isn't the reference more explicit in the maxim? Why is it even erased from the later formulations? Peirce's wandering formulations show a constant search of the best expression fitting the following constraints:

> - to avoid making any reference to actual subjects, as in James, Rorty, or Schiller's versions
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> - to make sense of the affected conduct being the conduct of an X of some kind
>
> - to avoid thus the free-floating views as the verificationist ones.

But how relative to humans, and thus to the subjectivity of experience, are the "effects" designed by the maxim? Whose "conduct" is finally affected? Obviously, the maxim does not settle every question.

The Maxim: An Open Question?

What does such a study of Peirce's various formulations teach? The risk, for sure, would be that it confuses us and prevents any inquiry into a definite meaning of "pragmatism". After all, perhaps this was not so clear-cut for his designer himself. Yet the study also has some positive explanatory effects: it shows that the initial formulation of the maxim in 1878 was still open for him to various options and problems, which explains both the development of Peirce's system and the diverging options of his fellows.

Among these divergences, some may be ruled out by a closer look at the original maxim. Others, like the "point of view" problem, seem intrinsic to the maxim itself. These intrinsic difficulties explain then the relativist and pluralist reading to which it leads.

"Relativism" is a very broad label that covers many different things, from subjectivism to communautarian perspective, from relativism about truth or meaning to relativism about values, etc. Its boundaries are not sharp, and it connects easily with contemporary forms of anti-realism or scepticism, of which it must be nonetheless kept distinct. As Paul Boghossian[13] tries to summarize it, in *Fear of Knowledge*, the main relativist claim is that "anything goes". It is supported by claims against the existence of independent facts, and for the dependence of facts on our conceptual schemes, or by claims against the independence of justification from our interests. What is particularly relevant here is to see that the aspects for which pragmatism must be praised, i.e. its rejection of absolutism and metaphysical realism, its insistence of the connexion between thought and purpose, can be turned into arguments for a form of relativism. Aren't Rorty, Schiller or Putnam often accused of a form of relativism? Obviously, the threat of relativism is inscribed in pragmatism itself, which does not mean that it is through and

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[13] BOGHOSSIAN (2006).

through relativist. Our reading of the maxim helps accounting for this point. A strong relativist reading of the maxim considers that they are different meanings associable to the concept C, among which we have no mean to choose. A soft relativist reading considers that the meanings change through history or among people, so that the same concept means different things relatively to a place or time.

Along these relativist readings figure the pluralist ones, which have lead to very vivid debates recently. They take the maxim to say that several things can make it true what C means, depending on who "we" are, on what perspective we have or is accessible to us. They do not conclude that there is no way to make sense of C having a single true meaning, but that it has several true meanings.

What do we then have to decide about our Maximal Hypothesis? Obviously, it raises several problems, essentially by inscribing a threat of relativism within the core statement of pragmatism. Can we do with another hypothesis?

2. Minimizing the Maxim

There are three different ways to rule out (MH). They correspond to three critical stances toward the maxim. Do they offer positive ways to define pragmatism?

(1) One may take this as *a pure baptismal moment*: it is a name given to a general way of thinking without imposing on it that much of content. I am inclined to label it as the "ceremonious" reading of pragmatism. After all, Peirce himself went back to the name for some opportunistic reasons: the term was exhumed and made famous by William James, at a time when Peirce was in need of some audience and acknowledgement. He took advantages – including material ones – to be praised as the inventor of "Pragmatism". Later, when he realised he hadn't been made the real godfather for the doctrine, and rather a designer of the name, he fought back by designing another name for his own purpose: "pragmaticism", it will be, and protected from burglars by the ugliness of the name[14].

(2) Or one may regret that the choice was made in favour of this precise label: it was not such a neutral one and it bears some connotations of brute expediency or search of efficiency that no one wishes too closely associated with her philosophical commitment. One could call it a *revisionist reading* of pragmatism, i.e. a call for the abandonment of the label (if not of every label, as Rorty advocates).

As in the previous case, this alternative to (MH) can find some support in Peirce. It could for instance appeal to his terminological ethics[15]: if any term is ambiguous, or not clear-cut enough for the purposes of its use, one should adopt a technical term. This is the strategy Peirce had, regarding the names to give to his categories, preferring the

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[14] At that time, "pragmaticism" is also a name for a system, and not just for a maxim. I take it that it is the latter aspect – the work involved in understanding the system, the exhaustive agreement one has to have with each of its part – that kept "pragmaticism" safe from kidnapping.

[15] I see nonetheless a problem here, as the ethic of terminology seems to be one of the scholia of the maxim – précising the right way to proceed with unclear conceptions, and synonymous terms. For further developments, see KETNER (1981).

unusual "Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness" to other cruder or reductive designation, as, for instance, Quality, Reaction and Law.

(3) In reaction to the revisionist view or for independent motives, one may look for giving some prestige back to the label. This may be achieved by looking for previous uses of the term "pragmatic" – either in Kant, or in its Greek etymology. This reading looks for a *new legitimacy* for the name "pragmatism". It is all the easier to give reasons in favour of such a reading than I have been tempted by it, and actually pursued it for a while. It can take two paths.

The first one is the Kantian route. Peirce refers to the Kantian use of "pragmatic" against the crude understanding of some of his readers. He stresses thus its technical aspect, and to the fact that rational knowledge is closely linked to rational ends. Yet as the term makes sense in Kant by contrast with the "pure" or transcendental use of reason, it obliges to give at least some minimal substantiality to the latter, so as to make it a decent opposition. Be it taken as an exaggerate defence against the risk of transcendentalist readings of Peirce, this appeal to the Kantian meaning of "pragmatic" seems hazardous. Kant, for sure, is a key reference for the understanding of *the content* and the development of Peirce's system (as shown by Thayer, Murphey, Fisch) yet not so fortunate for the understanding of *its label*.

Another route would be to go back to the Greek word. Could this be a more fortunate or innocent way to restore the name's legitimacy? It would surely be a more original path, at least in two respects.

First, "pragmatic" was a Greek word, before being a Kantian one or the name of a nineteenth century movement. As William James says, in another of his tributes to Peirce:

> An American philosopher of eminent originality, Mr. Charles Sanders Peirce, has rendered thought a service by disentangling from the particulars of its application the principle by which these men were instinctively guided, and by singling it out as fundamental and giving to it a Greek name. He calls it the principle of *pragmatism*.[16]

The etymology links it to "*to pragma* (pl. *ta pragmata*)", which means "what has to be done". It has thus been taken as signifying "business" or "affairs". This echoes Kant's meaning and the fair accent on the real means-ends research, yet without carrying any reminiscence of the transcendental. Such a reading also explains the common sense extension of the term to a *soi-disant* philosophy of entrepreneurs and businessmen. It does not oblige thus to create any discontinuity between common and technical senses.

The Greek legitimacy is also original in a second respect: very few people had advocated for the Greek roots of pragmatism – at least up to a recent time. Max Fisch famously did, in a paper entitled "Peirce's Arisbe"[17] after the Greek name Peirce gave to his house. Some contemporary commentators have since stressed the influence of Greek philosophers on Peirce, especially on some specific topics or late developments (Hausman, Parker, Ransdell, Sfendoni-Menzou, Tiercelin, Deroy).[18]

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[16] JAMES (1905, p. 434-5).
[17] FISCH (1986).
[18] HAUSMAN (1993); PARKER (2004); RANSDELL (2000); SFENDONI-MENZOU (1997); TIERCELIN (1993) and (2005); DEROY (2005).

But what do we mean by "Greek"? It seems at first not clear which "Greeks" we do exactly refer to. As Fisch notes, there are many "Greek" influences in Peirce's thought. Epicurus, Aristotle and Plato are quoted and discussed, but one should also add the Sceptics, the Stoics, and numerous commentators in the Aristotelian tradition (up to the Late Antiquity and the Early middle ages). And even then: is it fair to infer from a quantitative importance to a philosophical one? Not all of these references are actually important and made a real difference in Peirce's thought. Even the most important of them, the Aristotelian one, takes most of its importance independently of the mere definition of pragmatism: they show their influence rather, respectively, for the content of his tychism, synechistic realism and views on causation, continuity and realism.

Moreover, Aristotle may not be much of a (typical) Greek, as Peirce notes:

> Aristotle was not much of a Greek. That he was of full Greek blood is not likely. That he was not altogether a Greek-minded man is manifest. (CP 1.617, 1898)

To put it in a nutshell: if "pragmatism" has Greek roots, they should certainly be Aristotelian ones, yet if it has such Aristotelian roots, these are not that "Greek-spirited". As in the case of Kant, this doesn't mean that a proper study of Peirce's philosophy can skip the reference to Aristotle. Aristotle influences other aspects of Peirce's philosophy, yet not directly the meaning of "pragmatism".[19]

We have thus discarded three hypotheses challenging the Maximal Hypothesis. None of the following can compete in strength and relevance with (MH):

> (1) The *ceremonious* hypothesis ("Pragmatism" was just a name, given at time "t", whose extension and intension have then been fixed or evolved).

> (2) The *revisionist reading* (the extension or/ and intension of the term is so loose that it should rather be abandoned, in favour of more precise one(s), or (to be a "fully consistent neo-pragmatist") in favour of a "no –ism" attitude.[20]

> (3) Finding a "*New Legitimacy*", through a genealogical inquiry into the term or the maxim's history.

These are real options, and are fairly pursued. Yet, they left us unsatisfied. Each one has its dead-ends and insufficiencies.

But aren't we back to Lovejoy's diagnostic? The existence of several competitive accounts of what pragmatism means or stands for is troubling. It encourages a certain relativism, all the stronger than it raises now after a more critical examination. Anything seems to go about the way to take the maxim, and the name.

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[19] A more detailed and special case should be made here, to explain why the Aristotelian way may seem so promising for the definition of "pragmatism". Dewey makes numerous references to Aristotle as a tutelary figure for the movement, and some quotes by Peirce – "Aristotle bathed in its waters" talking about the pragmatism ancestors. But this I take to be, consistently with the option of interpretation, a kind of looking for "legitimacy" from the past – or instrumental references.

[20] A true pragmatism would thus refuse to be called pragmatism. This is, despite the appearance, not a contradiction: one could have not to be *called a spy* to *be* a real spy. In a less illustrative way, one should consider "quietism" as a proper option, yet refusing sides in –*isms*.

A Synthetic Hypothesis: the Pragmatic Maxim, the Protagorean Dictum and Response-dependence Schemas

The only way out of this relativity is now to find a way to combine all these hypotheses in a more general but unique one. In other terms, we are after an interpretation of the name "pragmatism" that would (1) give some substantial definition of the movement (2) preserve something of the Maximal Hypothesis (MH) (3) not rule out the restricted relevance of the ceremonious, revisionist and legitimating readings.

The requirement (1), as we remember, is necessary if the definition of pragmatism has to be general, common, and not relative to each philosopher.

The requirement (2) comes from the ambivalent judgements given about (MH). Obviously, the definition through the maxim has its limits but also a certain relevance and strength. It is here possible to follow Peirce's own remarks. In 1902, when noticing the confusion surrounding the definition of pragmatism, we must, he said, "start with some rough approximation of it, and I am inclined to think that the shape in which I first stated [it] will be the most useful one to adopt as matter to work upon" (5.16). Basically, what he says – and what we should be confident in – is that (MH) may hold as a start and a sketch.

But what about the requirement (3)? How is it even possible to combine these three readings? The "ceremonious" reading has to be qualified. The name "pragmatism" is the result of circumstances and historical contingencies. Yet it was not chosen just for esthetical or external reasons, as a decorative label. It is not a pure proper name, but a very general one, having a thinly informed comprehension and taking a wide extension. However, thin comprehension is a comprehension, and a wide extension is extension.

This point accounts for the looseness criticised in the revisionist readings. The name "pragmatism" is truly general. Whether it is excessively general or not needs further discussion. As such, it welcomes qualifications and sub-distinctions, but only those who fear generality or look for distinction (as Rorty does) have to run away from this name.

It is thus possible to keep both the importance played by the maxim, and to acknowledge both the ceremonious aspect of the label and its calling for further precision. Do we then need also to accommodate another route into history? Which one could it be?

There is actually an historical figure able to preside to such a re-reading, without being idiosyncratic as Aristotle is to Peirce, nor too strict in the interpretation it provides, as Kant is. This figure would be Protagoras. Several arguments come to support this apparently polemical appeal[21].

First, the analogy works well on the formal point of view and is compatible with (HM): Protagoreanism comes from a single formula or maxim (man is the measure of everything).

Second, the figure is actually referred to by many pragmatists, even favoured by certain (Schiller, James, Rorty).[22]

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[21] Surprisingly, few commentators have inquired into this relationship. See OEHLER (2002) for an exception.

[22] See SCHILLER (1908) and (1911), discussed by GILLESPIE (1910).

Third, the debates surrounding the definition and heart of pragmatism overlap many issues raised about interpretation of Protagoreanism. Both include questions about them being kinds of relativism, pluralism, anthropocentrism, or having metaphysical extensions on the question of realism.

Fourth, such a connection extends to the latest discussions about pragmatism. It gives room to the kind of neo-pragmatism claimed by Rorty, i.e. a form of relativist, projectivist or quietist[23] pragmatism. It also gives room to some interesting "pragmatist" perspective re-emerging around the question of response-dependence. And both stress some Protagorean aspects contained in the original pragmatist movement. This fair openness to the most recent forms of pragmatism goes also with a certain hierarchical sense that Peirce would not have disapproved of, and that Susan Haack tries to defend against the praise of "vulgar Rortyism"[24] as the only continuation of pragmatism. Response-dependant versions of it, while having certainly less audience than the anti-intellectualist claims of Richard Rorty, are far better representatives of the pragmatist views, including their positions toward relativism.

But what is exactly a response-dependant perspective, and how does it relate to pragmatism? How does it help, as it is what matters here, to offer a better definition for pragmatism?

Putting the two names together is more than a nominal proximity. As noticed by Putnam in *Reason, Truth and History*[25] (1981, p. 63), response-dependence is highly topical for pragmatism.[26] And in a way, pragmatism is topical for response-dependant issues[27]: the "Revisionary Protagoreanism" of Mark Johnston is conceived as a defence of "pragmatism" purified from verificationism, Huw Price, who sees there a "new path for pragmatism" and Philip Pettit, who advocates for a realist position, sounds in certain aspects closer to Peirce.[28] There is much reasons thus to relate pragmatism and the "Revisionary Protagoreanism" and "realist anthropocentric response-dependence" claims. First, it is fair, as I intend to qualifiedly show, to size the pragmatic maxim to a response-dependence concept schema. Second, it is promising on both sides: pragmatism has much to benefit from a clarification by the lights of the latest inquiries, whereas these ones can benefit from the depth of its previous scrutiny.

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[23] For a recent illustration, see ENGEL & RORTY (2005).

[24] See HAACK (1997).

[25] PUTNAM (1981).

[26] Even if he does not think of it as Protagoras' but sees "global response-dependence" as the sort of doctrine defended by Kant.

[27] JOHNSTON (1993); PETTIT (1991) and (1998); PRICE (1991) and (1998).

[28] Response-Dependence debates resurrect many aspects of the pragmatist debates. This proximity figures already in PUTNAM (1981) and has been underlined by several authors.

The Pragmatic Maxim, the Protagorean Dictum and the Response-dependence Statement

Putting together the pragmatic maxim and Protagoras famous dictum is at first sight not only hazardous, but also objectionable.

There is in fact something threatening in the allusion, given the indubitable relativist accents of the Protagorean maxim, and more, the accusations of self-contradiction and sophism attached to it since Plato. Yet, aren't Peirce and Pragmatists are famously opposed to Platonism? They may after all side with Plato's enemies, even without totally identifying with them. As previously seen, pragmatism also flirts with relativist themes or interpretations. If it domesticates some of its themes, while neutralizing some of its dangers, what is then so frightening? In other terms, we must distinguish between certain forms and meanings of relativism, before deciding which one we reject, and on which ground.

The more interesting objection is less emotional. It objects to that the comparison leaves aside some important aspects of the pragmatist maxim, and thus (as far as (MH) has some relevance) of pragmatism. There is no obvious way to pass from:

> (M1) Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings we conceive the object of our conception to have: then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

to the Protagorean *dictum*: "Man is the measure of all things" (80B1, *in* DIELS-KRANZ).

Doesn't it seem even obvious that the two statements do not say the same thing? Notice first that Protagoras' is assertive whereas (M1) prescriptive. It explicitly appeals to human beings, or to subjectivity, in a definite way that (M1) covers in vague terms, and otherwise tries to avoid. Then it also claims that there is no mind-independent reality, a statement to which at least some versions of pragmatism (Peirce's first) differ.

Yet the two statements express similar things enough to be related, without advocating for any assimilation. They sound quite close by being equally radical. They both call for an equation without rest: there is no residue in the equivalence. There is *no bit* of our conception, in Peirce's statement, that may stand *out of* the pragmatic clarity requirement, and stand in total independence from the "practical bearings" they have on "us"[29]; there is *no inch* of self-standing reality whose value or assessment stand *independently of* the human judgement, according to Protagoras. This may put the two statements at comparable levels, yet not necessarily at the same one.

An important difference has here to be overcome. To fit a comparison with pragmatism, Protagoras' *dictum* has to be understood as a prescriptive one: "Man should be the measure of all things" or "Everything should be at man's measure". This version comes closer to the pragmatist maxim and is certainly not foreign to the original aim of Protagoras, when arguing against Platonist claims of an inaccessible truth and reality, and against some Ideas out of human grasp.

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[29] This "us" being either a individual (in Jamesian Pragmatism), a certain community (in Rorty pragmatism), humanity in general (in Putnam) or the long-run community of inquiry (in Peircean pragmatism).

The explicit reference to human beings or individual makes another difference, yet, as already seen, an implicit reference or a "ghost space" not absent from the pragmatist maxim and explains how it can have been interpreted here, in a nominalistic, subjectivist way (James), there in a humanist or communautarian way (Schiller, Rorty). As such, both the reinterpreted Protagorean dictum and the pragmatist maxim find a way to express an intrinsic connection between the way the world is and the interpretative stance adopted toward it. There is no description of the world which is absolutely independent of our interpretation. That does not make all interpretations equally valid – and indeed would Protagoras agree on that point?

In order to move away yet from some historical connotations carried by any reference to Protagoras, it is useful to consider some more recent and careful reformulation of it, such as Mark Johnston's "Revisionary Protagoreanism". He sees a close connexion between this response-dependant views of concepts (from here RD, for "Response Dependence" and "Revisionary Dictum") and the pragmatist prescription, once purified from its verificationism. This is thus the link between this RD and the pragmatist maxim that needs to be explored.

Response-dependence theories say that there is no more to the definition of certain concepts than the kind of responses an ideal observer is disposed to encounter in certain conditions. Typically, secondary qualities concepts are response-dependent: for instance "Red" cannot just be accounted by a purely physical description in terms of surface reflectance. To be red is to elicit certain responses in creatures able to represent in a way or another things as red. A purely extensional definition, in terms of surface reflectance, makes no sense in itself: the different kinds of reflectance have nothing in common but their power to be seen as red. The Platonist realist view of concepts fails: there is no way to define the Form or Idea of Red in itself, to state the conditions on which a concept applies out of the reference to some mental capacities, themselves linked to the nature of thought.

A "RD" view of concepts advocates that:

> (RD1) For any concept C of an object O, C should be made equivalent to the responses one is disposed to encounter relatively to O.

It is close enough to (M1) to legitimate its labelling as a pragmatist dictum:

> (M1') For any concept C of an object O, C should be made equivalent to the Effects with Practical Bearings (EPB) of O.

But the Response-dependant formulation does not only mirror the pragmatist maxim: it challenges it in several ways. It asks it to get more precise, and to fit in a contemporary frame, informed by philosophical progress. It provides it with a chance to clarify its relationship with relativism and to obtain the precision we were looking for when we wanted it as a core statement of pragmatism.

It must be said that there is no actual agreement on what counts as the proper view of response-dependent. It is rather through a mutual discussion that both RD schemes and the maxim can win in precision and rigor.

Some Straightforward Clarification of the Pragmatist Maxim

There are least three respects in which response-dependant schemas capture the Pragmatist maxim in a sharper form. First, they ask to substitute to the quite loose expression "should be made equivalent" a more clearly cut *bi-conditional* statement, such as:

> (RD1') For any concept C, "O is C" is (true/meaningful/appropriate, etc.) *iff* the responses O is disposed to give are C-responses.

The second clarification is brought up by the notion of "responses" and "dispositions". We have seen how Peirce has been for all his life looking for the right way to define exactly the "effects with practical bearings", so as to avoid these utilitarist, nominalistic or verificationist readings. As seen, one of the ways to escape these interpretations was to stress that the "effects" where referred to changes of "habits" or to a "general conduct". This stress is perfectly fair, but also prevents the maxim from being so easily shareable: the notions of conduct makes sense in connection both with Peircean complex category system and his psychology, and cannot be easily be detached. The notion of disposition substitutes for it in a more neutral way. A disposition is strictly speaking what makes true a counterfactual of the form: "X is disposed to f" is true iff in conditions C X would manifest f. It reminds of the realist definition of "hard" by Peirce: "The diamond is hard" is true if it would resist scratching, scratch other things […] in conditions C."

There is a third interesting substitution concerning the "Effects with practical bearings", as they not only become "dispositions" but more precisely "dispositions to responds". The notion of responses manages to capture the initial meanings and dimensions of the maxim in a short clear way, without closing some latitude of interpretation. For instance, responses may be cognitive, physical, emotional, preserving thus the diversity of interpretants Peirce was eager to defend. Our "responses" are not necessarily related to our conscious individual interests, yet they are linked to our nature, our constitution. This translation avoids some utilitarian readings of "practical bearings" without cutting the "effects" from our own nature and perspective. It is finally neutral regarding causality, which helps the maxim not to be dependent on a causal theory, where the object of the conception exerts a causal power, as the term "effects" suggests[30]. Not every pragmatist agrees indeed on such a realist view of our relation to the world, and the maxim of the school should be detached from such a metaphysical notion. Peirce himself wanted the maxim to keep away from metaphysics.

The final expression "the disposition to respond" also remains neutral, as the maxim was, regarding the status of the subject, without suggesting that no subjectivity could be involved. It is compatible with subjectivism, intersubjectivity, the reference to "normal" or "ideal" subjects, or the idea (perhaps the Peircean one) that there is just a *locus* of reactions and responses. This, I guess, is important if one wishes, in order to save (MH), to keep the relativist, pluralist, anthropocentric, objectivist options open within pragmatism as a whole.

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[30] Peirce noticeably subscribes to a causal theory, yet with a special conception of causation (see HULSWIT (2000) and (2002)) that does not reduce it to pure efficient causality.

On this basis, the maxim may be fitted in the following equation:

> (RD) For the concept C, "O is C" is meaningful *iff* the responses that O is disposed to produce are C-responses.

Responses denote, as in the various classical interpretations of the maxim, the kinds of differences that can be really accessible to us. *Mutatis mutandis,* this shows that pragmatism, conceived as an epistemological thesis, is rather a form of anti-realism in Dummett's sense[31], that is thinks that the meanings can't be out of our cognitive reach. They don't transcend our capacities.

Some Challenges of Translatability

The translation is thus a way to guarantee the lasting validity of (MH). As Johnston suggests, the latter formulation connects with the pragmatist tradition and offers it a "new path"[32]. But the proof of translation is also an opportunity to reveal other aspects of the maxim offering some resistance. It is for instance not clear whether the equivalence schemas need to appeal to the notion of truth (and thus arise the problem of its definition[33]) or whether they can do with a weaker notion of assertability as conformity to use.

This is made visible in the difference between the classical appeal to truth in Johnston's (RP) and Price's alternative "usage-condition" (UC).

> (RD) For the concept C, "O is C" is true *iff* the effects (responses) produced by O are C-responses.

> (UC) For the concept C, the utterance "O is C" is appropriate iff the speakers of the language community consistently experiences C-responses in the presence of O.

The difficulty consists in choosing the appropriate predicate to precede the bi-conditional. It resurrects an important question: does pragmatism rely on a theory of truth, and of which kind? Being presented as a theory of meaning, the maxim often appeals to the notion of truth, but not always. James has often been considered as the one stressing that pragmatism and its maxim, more than theory of meaning, implied a theory of truth[34]. In "What Pragmatism Means", James formulates the maxim in the following way:

> What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were *true*?[35]

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[31] The comparison of the pragmatic maxim in response-dependence terms has the effect of bringing it closer to an anti-realist position. This advocates even more for its validity and value. Classified as such, pragmatism (and Peirce first) shares the same problems than other forms of anti-realism, i.e. relatively to (i) mathematical theories in which things may be true without being proved (ii) objects posited by theories but being too far in time, or a certain size, so that they fall not only beyond our reach but beyond our possible reach. It must be underlined that semantic anti-realism can be combined with ontological realism: Peirce's realism is not forgotten here.

[32] JOHNSTON (1993), p. 103. See also PRICE.

[33] As correspondence, warranted assertability, consistency, or in more deflationist ways.

[34] Problem perceived by Peirce when he decides to first apply the maxim to the notion of truth. On the way to avoid circularity in doing so, much more should be said.

[35] Italics are mines. JAMES (1907, p.17).

Many Peircean versions of the maxim also appeal to the notion of truth. Consider:

> (M3) In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception. (CP 5.9, 1905)

But the initial formula of the maxim does not appeal to the notion of truth, or even to a minimal predicate of "true". It just calls to the notion of a concept being meaningful, working properly as a sign for thought. Of course, for Peirce, the two are connected. As the rest of his system shows in great details, the proper function of mental signs, or thought, is to fix beliefs in the long term, to settle the opinions, i.e. to be true.

But his definition of truth is not shared by all the pragmatist tradition. It raises many problems of interpretation and in itself. I do not intend to deal with them here.[36] It is enough for our purpose to note that Peirce's conception of Truth is highly idiosyncratic.[37] What matters here thus is that it threatens a possible unification of the movement around the pragmatist maxim. The more the maxim relies on a Peircean theory of Truth, the less sharable it gets.

The proof of the translation in a Response-Dependant schema raises an interesting alternative: what if, instead of "true", we had "meaningful"? Doesn't it help to keep the maxim away from debates about truth?

Narrowing the maxim to the domain of meaning, as it happens in the response-dependence issue does not make the maxim standing alone as an independent theory of meaning. It helps to keep the problems distinct and to deal with them separately. Once agreed that a concept is meaningful just in case it is equivalent to the responses of a certain type, we can wonder what "meaningful" itself means. Two things can be said in favour of the philosophical distinction and hierarchy of the problems. First, it is faithful to Peirce who uses the pragmatic maxim to clarify the concept of truth: the maxim cannot thus philosophically rely on a concept it contributes to settle. The two can be thereafter connected but the maxim does not rely of a fully developed theory of truth.[38]

> Pragmatism is, in itself, no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts. (5. 464)

Second, and as suggested by Huw Price[39], along the lines of the RD debates, definition of concepts in a respond-dependent or pragmatist way is conceivable as "content-conditional" ("O is C" is meaningful i.e. has a content) or "usage-conditional" ("O is C" is meaningful i.e. is appropriately used, in a certain language game or context), and not only along with truth conditions. Peirce's own solution adopts some of the feature of the

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[36] The literature on the pragmatist notion of truth is extensive. I refer here to the classical paper by HAACK (1976).

[37] This explains both the mistaken interpretations, and the difficulty to get a proper grasp on its exact complex definition.

[38] At best, it can be seen as appealing to a very minimal concept of truth, as a platitude such as "A is true iff A". On this, see TIERCELIN (2006).

[39] PRICE (1998, p. 112).

latter options, but at least their distinction make the options clearer. The translation proof helps distinguishing between the Truth-defenders and the Meaning-without-Truth defenders, the latter taking direction of theories of content or of use.

Fitting the maxim into a bi-conditional form also asks the question of its holding *a priori*. The bi-conditional expresses a relation between the concept and the responses that holds *a priori*. The concepts are thus necessarily connected to the responses. This makes it more difficult to connect with the pragmatist maxim that Peirce and his fellow pragmatists conceived as helping the progress of empirical sciences, as thus integrating *a posteriori* elements. For instance, the definition of "hard" appeals to empirical manifestations which are known by experience.

> "X is hard" is true/appropriate iff the responses occurring in presence of X are such as (X scratches other materials and is not scratched by them)

The first option offered to pragmatists is thus to try to accommodate a form of *a posteriori* necessity.

Yet such an *a posteriori* reading, even when it is made compatible with the response-dependant schemas, misses something important in the pragmatist maxim. The later indeed is conceived as a logical maxim, and, if the notion of "a priori" does not really fit in a Peircean pattern, there is at least something to be said in favour of a detachment from the experimental details. The definition of a concept indeed does not rely on the precise elements that fit in its interpretant as such: Peirce insists they are indeterminate and evolve. The connection between these elements and the meaning must not thus be made so strong, that it is not open to correction (this is the doctrine of fallibilism, and growth). It seems that Peirce's philosophy offers here a second kind of translation in RD schemas, closer both to their a priori dimension and to the logical aspect of the maxim. It is possible indeed to keep a strong necessary reading of the RD schema, such as:

> "X is hard" is true/ appropriate iff the responses occurring in presence of X are hard-type responses.

And to consider that the proper role of science and experience will be to determine what are the "hard-type" responses (resisting scratching when another material is applied, presenting such and such molecular structure when put under a microscope, etc.). This is open to change and fallibilism, without the initial maxim being falsified or challenged. It is important to underline that this second option, which is properly the Peircean one, rescues the strong logical reading of the maxim by appealing to a realism of classes or types. This connects perfectly with Peirce's idea that "pragmatism could not have entered the mind" of someone who did not subscribe to a form of Scotistic realism, or realism of universals.

This later clarification leads to another problem. So interpreted, the maxim relies on a certain kind of metaphysics, such as Scotistic or Aristotelian realism. If it indeed serves as a definition of pragmatism, then it implies that pragmatism implies realism. By this is not meant any kind of metaphysical realism (positing things in themselves, or a reality out of reach) nor any semantic realism in Dummett's sense, (implying that there are true things that we'll never know) but other forms of realistic commitments toward an objective reality, toward something that is independent of what we think about it. Yet many critics have objected to Peirce's thought for being too metaphysical, and if the

maxim is too closely connected to his form of realism, this may make it more difficult to be shared. I do not intend to close the issue here, but at least to stress how the proof of a translation in a RD schema obliges the maxim to clarify its metaphysical implications. This concerns not only the latent metaphysics of causation, or of (human) nature present in the maxim, that we already discussed, but the central issue of realism. Two questions are here open by the RD formula: is a RD pragmatist schema compatible as well with idealism and realism? What kind of commitment one has to take if, once adopted the maxim as a method of logic, he adopts "his logic as metaphysics"?

Here it is important to underline that the adoption of a realistic perspective is a strong defence against the relativist threat contained in the Protagorean-like response-dependence theories. The RD schema puts the pragmatist into the following position: either answer to the relativist threat by defending realism, but tell us how you do not go back to a Platonist or metaphysical realism; or do not advocate realism, but show how you resist relativism. Pragmatists like Peirce, Putnam or Haack[40] have chosen the first line, and developed interesting forms of realism (scientific, Aristotelian, internal, pragmatist, innocent, etc.). Pragmatists like Rorty or Schiller, for fear of Plato, have taken the latter line, and it is not certain that their systems have found a way to differ much from Protagoras.

Response-dependence: "A New Name for an Old Way of Thinking"?

Have we answered Lovejoy's first challenge? In other terms, have we managed to show that pragmatists were united around something and avoid thus a "anything goes" in the domain of definitions of pragmatism? The commitment to a response-dependant view of concepts can do the work better than the "convoluted" Pragmatist maxim, which is the usual but controversial candidate for such definitions. In that sense, response-dependence is a new path for pragmatism. It makes a certain number of challenges clearer, by connecting them right from the beginning to this original commitment. The main challenges concern relativism and realism: once they agree with the RD view of concepts, how can pragmatists avoid the first? Can they really do without the second?

At the end, it may seem that the discussion of pragmatism as a whole has much been focused on Peirce. It was legitimate as the start, given the Maximal Hypothesis that was making him the grandfather of the movement. It remained so in the response-dependant analysis, for he appears to be full of fruitful suggestions to find the most pragmatist path for RD, and to answer the relativist challenges[41] it may reveal. Coming back to Lovejoy, whose judgements about pragmatism, might actually reveal more fairness than his critical tone suggests, it must be recognized:

> There is danger, on the one hand, that in discussing its affinities with other doctrines one pick out arbitrarily some one element of the complex, or a few elements, and by analysing the implications of these prove the pragmatist

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[40] Or RD defenders like Pettit who develops a form of "cosmocentrist" realism.
[41] As much as the skeptical challenges, as shown in TIERCELIN (2006).

to be a realist, or a solipsist, or a positivist, or an anarchist, or an ontological Mormon, or what you will. On the other hand, it would be equally an error to assume at the outset that there is no one pragmatism par excellence […] which is so peculiar and' exceptional historically as to deserve better than any other to be regarded as distinctive and essential.[42]

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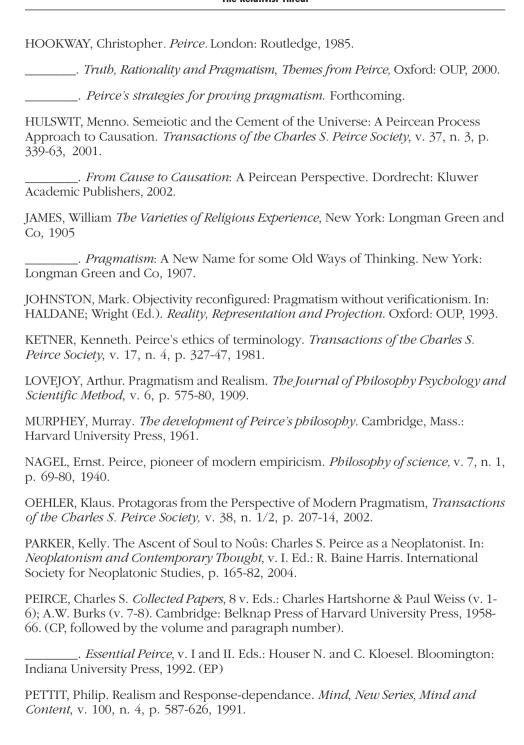
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