

Peirce's pragmatist portrait of deliberative rationality

O retrato pragmatista da racionalidade deliberativa de Peirce

Vincent Colapietro

Pennsylvania State University – USA

vx5@psu.edu

Abstract: My overarching purpose is to offer a pragmatist sketch of deliberative rationality derived from collated texts in C. S. Peirce's voluminous corpus. Though in some instances, the formulations are mine, not Peirce's. But this does not make my effort an instance of ventriloquism (a case of putting my words into his mouth): the position regarding rationality is his, not (in the first instance) mine. My thesis is that, for Peirce, reason is at bottom a more or less integrated set of habits enabling agents to be deliberative. That is, deliberation is for him the heart of rationality. This is fundamentally an *agential* capacity: it pertains first and foremost to agents, theoretical knowers being a distinctive role played by deliberative agents. What I hope to show in this paper is why this portrait of reason is distinctively pragmatic and truly Peircean. What I also hope to show is how Peirce's position entails what in contemporary philosophy is identified by Christine Korsgaard as self-constitution, Sabrina Lovibond as self-formation, and other theorists by other designations. Deliberative agents are, in Peirce's account, radically responsible agents. They are responsible for the very criteria by which reasonableness and responsibility are defined and developed. The question of maturity and the relationship between being moral and being mature are central to Peirce's account of rationality. His pragmatist portrait of deliberative rationality is, in my judgment, not only a tenable but also a compelling one. Above all, this is what I hope to show in this essay.

Keywords: Agency. Habit. Identity. Maturity. Narrative. Negation. Rationality. Self.

Resumo: *Meu propósito abrangente é oferecer um esboço pragmatista da racionalidade deliberativa derivada dos textos coligidos no volumoso conjunto de C.S. Peirce. Embora em alguns casos, as formulações sejam minhas, e não de Peirce. Porém, isso não torna meu esforço um caso de ventriloquismo (colocando minhas palavras na boca dele): a posição em relação à racionalidade é dele, e não (no primeiro caso) minha. Minha tese é que, para Peirce, a razão é no fundo, um conjunto mais ou menos integrado de hábitos, possibilitando aos agentes serem deliberativos. Ou seja, para ele, a deliberação é o cerne da racionalidade. Esta é, fundamentalmente, uma capacidade agencial: aplica-se primordialmente a agentes, sendo conhecedores teóricos um papel importante desempenhado por agentes deliberativos. O que espero demonstrar neste trabalho é a razão pela qual este retrato da razão é distintamente pragmático e*

verdadeiramente peirciano. O que também espero demonstrar é como a posição de Peirce implica o que, na filosofia contemporânea, é identificado por Christine Korsgaard como autoconstituição, por Sabrina Lovibond como autoformação e por outros teóricos com designações outras. Agentes deliberativos são, segundo Peirce, agentes radicalmente responsáveis. São responsáveis pelos verdadeiros critérios nos quais razoabilidade e responsabilidade são definidas e desenvolvidas. A questão de maturidade e a relação entre ser moral e ser maduro são essenciais à explicação de Peirce de racionalidade. Seu retrato pragmatista da racionalidade deliberativa é, a meu ver, não só sustentável quanto convincente. Acima de tudo, isto é o que espero demonstrar neste ensaio.

Palavras-chave: Agência. Hábito. Identidade. Maturidade. Narrativa. Negação. Racionalidade. Self.

Introduction

In philosophical and other contexts, virtually all of us run the risk of being unwitting ventriloquists (cf. BRANDOM, 2002). Time and again *we are tempted*—indeed, strongly tempted—without even being aware of the impulse *to put our words into the mouths of others*. We suffer from the auditory delusion that these words actually flow from the mouths of others. Put otherwise, what we hear is all too often the echoes of our own voices, not utterances emanating from sources other than our all too insular psyches (EP 2:269-270). And the paradoxical character of our own problematic nature—a social animal at once so intimately attuned to other such animals and so aggressively closed in upon itself (EP 2:369-370)—is, on this occasion, at the center of my concern.¹ What a psychoanalytically informed reading of Peirce brings to the delicate task of interpreting this elusive genius is an awareness of the extent to which Peirce anticipated Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Lacan, Laplanche, and others in the psychoanalytic tradition: *avant la lettre*, he conceived the unconscious in the dynamic or psychoanalytic sense, not merely its descriptive sense (See GARDNER, 1991).

In philosophical contexts, we are especially prone to be ventriloquist with those authors whom we revere. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The possibility of *me* putting words into Peirce's mouth is, given my topic, quite distinct. Of course, the risk of doing so is not unique to me: virtually all of us are in danger of doing so. By *us*, I mean most of all those of us who strive to be conscientious interpreters of historical figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and

1 Peirce reveals, "I doubt not that much the greater part of the reader's labor is expended on the world of fancy; yet it is near enough the truth for a first approximation. For this reason we call the world of fancy the internal world, the world of fact the external world. In this latter, we are masters, each of us, of his own voluntary muscles, and of nothing more. But man is sly, and contrives to make this little more than he needs. Beyond this, he defends himself from the angles of hard fact by clothing himself with a garment of contentment and habituation. Were it not for this garment, he would every now and then find his internal world rudely disturbed and his fiats set at naught by brutal inroads of ideas from without" (EP 2:369-370).

Peirce, but who at the same time envision ourselves to be autonomous inquirers, not slavish disciples of any philosophical author.

My overarching purpose is to offer a pragmatist sketch of deliberative rationality derived from collated texts in C. S. Peirce's voluminous corpus. Though in some instances, the formulations are mine, not Peirce's. But this is in my judgment not an instance of ventriloquism: the position regarding rationality is his, not (in the first instance) mine. My thesis is that, for Peirce, reason is at bottom a more or less integrated set of habits enabling agents to be deliberative. That is, deliberation is for him the heart of rationality. This is fundamentally an *agential* capacity: it pertains first and foremost to agents, theoretical knowers being a distinctive role played by deliberative agents. This does imply that knowing is for the sake of doing; rather it conceives knowing as an instance of doing, having an inherent purpose and inviolable integrity of its own. What I primarily hope to show in this paper is, however, why this portrait of reason is distinctively pragmatic and truly Peircean. I take myself to be drawing out the implications of his words, not putting words into his mouth.

1 Interpreters as co-inquirers

At the end of the day (and, in fact, even long before then), it does not matter all that much whether one's creative appropriation or simply ideal reconstruction of a historical figure's purported contribution—e.g., Aristotle's account of the polis, Kant's construal of ethics, Hegel's story about history, or Peirce's theory of science—is faithful to either the letter or the spirit of that figure's texts (SHORT, 2007, p. xii). Better put, it *does* matter (cf. STOUT, 2007), but something else matters more. What matters more is whether insights are generated, vision is enlarged, deeply problematic presuppositions exposed, previously unsuspected implications are drawn, and promising paths of experimental inquiry are opened. What figures like Aristotle and Scotus, Hegel and Peirce, cared about above all else was the advancement of inquiry. Defenders of Hume have insisted from Kant's time to the present Kant's reading of Hume was superficial and limited: a deeper, wider reading would have shown him that his transcendental project is based on an untenable interpretation of bon David. In turn, defenders of Kant have insisted from Hegel's time to the present that Hegel's reading of Kant is a paradigmatic instance of hermeneutic injustice. And, in turn, defenders of Hegel have insisted from Marx's time to the present the same regarding Marx's critique of Hegel's system. Without question, each one of these thinkers strove to do justice to their predecessors and contemporaries; but their engagement with the writings of others was an integral part of a creative process in which getting a text right is subordinated to getting on with the business of inquiry. It would be easy to misinterpret what I am asserting here. I am not granting a license or warrant to wild and irresponsible interpreters to ride roughshod over the writings of others—anything but this. But I am insisting that the hermeneutic task is subordinate to the philosophical task: as critical as it is, struggling to get Peirce right is important principally because this struggle serves to generate insights, enlarge vision, unearth problematic presuppositions, identify unsuspected implications, and open paths of inquiry. If we as interpreters of Peirce are *not* joining him as co-inquirers, and if our conjoint task is *not* the philosophical one in which the discovery of novel truth rather

than the interpretation of a philosophical text is our animating concern, then we are almost certainly disqualifying ourselves to serve as interpreters of his writings. The most appropriate approach to interpreting Peirce is to allow his words to inspire us to join him in his experimental investigation of sharply focused issues, but issues ineluctably connected to each other. Seemingly separate inquiries need ultimately to be woven into a truly synoptic vision, but the trammels of system ought never to be allowed to constrain the theoretical imagination² (See Peirce on Schelling).

Peirce's theoretical self-understanding is an enactment of his moral self-formation. It is both rooted in this self-formation and issues into the fruits of conceptions enabling us to understand theoretically the precarious process by which the human infant is transformed into a deliberative agent. How Peirce understands his task as a theorist traces its roots to how he understands what might be called the self-constitution (KORSGAARD, 2009) or—formation (LOVIBOND, 2002) of deliberative agency. For deliberative agents to fail to address in a repeated, conscientious manner both *who* they desire to become and, inseparably connected to the deliberate formation of this constitutive desire, *what* they feel to be inherently admirable (or adorable³) means they fall short of being fully deliberative agents. As such contemporary theorists as Harry Frankfurt, Christine Korsgaard, J. David Velleman and others argue, self-endorsement is central to the process of self-constitution or—formation, at least when conscientiously undertaken. But the tendency of these theorists is to defend what, in broad outline at least, is essentially a Kantian position. The irony here is that they offer a thick (or finely nuanced account) of what is a very thin view of the self, while Peirce only hints at a much thicker view of selfhood (he offers an exceedingly thin account of what is substantively a thick conception of the self). In this connection, as in many other ones, the mature Peirce is much closer to such post-Kantian idealists as Schelling and Hegel than he is to Kant. Of specific relevance here is Peirce's appreciation of what Hegel called *Sittlichkeit*. While the transcendental subject presumes the capacity to extricate

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- 2 In a letter to William James, dated January 28th, 1894, Peirce wrote: "I consider Schelling as enormous; and one thing I admire about him is his freedom from the trammels of system, and his holding himself uncommitted to any previous utterance. In that he is like a scientific man. If you were to call my philosophy Schellingism transformed in the light of modern physics. I should not take it hard" (PERRY, 1935, p. 415-416). No expositor of Peirce has a deeper appreciation or more profound understanding of this important facet of Peirce's philosophical project than Ivo Ibri, despite the fact that Joseph Esposito, himself a first-rank expositor, has written well on this topic.
- 3 The word *adorable* is being used here in its etymological sense to designate that which is worthy of adoration. It is arguably a better one to use in this connection than the term *admirable*. In a Letter to William James, dated July 23, 1905, Peirce wrote: The "[...] esthetic ideal, that which we *all* love and adore, the altogether admirable [or adorable], has, *as ideal*, necessarily a mode of being to be called living. Because our ideas of the infinite are necessarily vague and become contradictory the moment we attempt to make them precise. But still they are not utterly unmeaning [or nonsensical or vacuous], though they can only be interpreted in our religious adoration and the consequent effects upon consciousness. Now the Ideal is not a finite existent" (CP 8.262, *author's emphasis*). It is rather a living, infinite reality never fully capable of being embodied in nature or anything generated in nature, including the infinite community of experimental inquirers.

itself completely from its historical situatedness, neither the Hegelian nor the Peirce subject presumes this. The work of ongoing, immanent, and indeed *substantive* critique is the deliberative process from which the self-formed self emerges, not the purely formal stance of a completely autonomous consciousness pretending to be in the position of uncompromised self-authorship.

2 A positive portrait of human selfhood

At times, C. S. Peirce appears to accord the individual human self the status of nothing more than an illusion. It is not my purpose on this occasion to go over familiar ground, arguing that there is a positive conception of human individuality to be drawn from his scattered remarks on this crucial topic. I am rather assuming the main results of previous investigations, above all the thesis that there is implicit even in his most seemingly negative characterizations of the individual self a positive portrait of human agency. The “individual man, since his separate existence is manifested only by ignorance and error, so far as he is anything apart from his fellows, and from what he and they are to be, is [Peirce suggests], only a negation.” (CP 5.317, EP 1:55, W 2:241-42, 1868). But this is a highly qualified claim: the individual apart from others, individual and communal development—hence, apart from history—is “only a negation.” But a positive portrait is implicit in this negative characterization. The self apart from others, history, and the possibilities of growth made possible by being constitutively *in* time and also constitutively *with* others is a negation: as a social, temporal, and historical being, the human animal is anything but a mere negation, though the capacity for negation, for saying “No” in an emphatic and resolved manner, is critical for the positive accomplishments of this social animal (COLAPIETRO, 1989, p. 75-80).

So, at least, I argued over twenty-five years ago. This still seems to me largely true. It is however the case that I am less certain of this today than I was three or more decades ago. When Peirce identifies his moral orientation with “the supreme commandment of the Buddhisto-Christian religion,” it may be the case that he stands in an unresolved tension between the Buddhist doctrine of *anātman* and the Christian doctrine of *agapé*, that is, between the thoroughgoing rejection of the self and a more qualified stance toward individuality. In my earlier investigations (especially, COLAPIETRO, 1989), I did not take this possibility seriously enough.

Even if he holds that the self is primarily or even essentially a locus of error and ignorance, he seems equally committed to the view that the self has the resources not only to identify itself as such a locus but also to eradicate some of its mistakes and make discoveries (so that the self has the ability to reduce however infinitesimally its ignorance). It would seem that the self must be more than a locus of error and ignorance simply to be able to identify itself as such. Taking up a suggestion by John E. Smith offered without reference to Peirce, I proposed, precisely in reference to Peirce, to conceive the self as *a center of power and purpose*. This center is however no point, the human self not what Charles Taylor calls the punctual self (an indivisible point in effect without temporal duration or spatial location). It is simply the enduring, embodied capacity to frame and execute purposes. What enables the self to recognize itself as such a locus is, above all else, its embodied participation in an ongoing dialogue inclusive of other individual selves. In its earliest stages,

mature, solicitous caretakers must protect the infant from its obliviousness. Such solicitude is however frequently felt by the infant to be opposition: its impulses are thwarted, its desires frustrated. The contradictory testimony of others plays a pivotal role in this process. In general, Peirce contends, the “idea of other, of *not*, becomes a very pivot of thought” (CP 1.324). In reference to the emergence and development of the self, however, this idea becomes of even deeper significance. The idea of *not* here is principally that of negation in a distinctive sense: this idea of *not* is that of negation best understood as a dynamic, energetic act or process (of, e.g., energetically saying “No,” as in effect happens when the inertia of one body intersects with that of another). In addition, the form of negation most prominent in the earliest stages of this process of self-constitution is that of others contradicting the impulses, inclinations, and resistances of the infantile self (a self hardly left behind at infancy!). The form of negation is not indeterminate or abstract; rather it is determinate and concrete. Its concreteness is inextricably intertwined with situatedness. Some mature individual (*this* concrete other), in this specific situation, in effect says “No” to this inchoate being in its blind impulsivity and, as a result, the infantile self is initiated into the task of acknowledging the irreducible otherness of other finite beings. Such acknowledgment forces the “self” or, more accurately, the blindly groping organism to come to terms with its finitude, also its fallibility. The limits of my world are not so much the limits of my language as they are those language-using animals with whom I am intimately related insist that I acknowledge. In no small measure, “I” in my immaturity go kicking and screaming (and, to repeat for the sake of utmost clarity this crucial point, this is the “I” before it is truly an *I*, since *it* lacks self-consciousness and self-control): the acknowledgment of these limits is anything but an irenic or gentle process of initiation into the shared world of the human beings who are entrusted with facilitating this initiation. It is to varying degrees a process shot through with conflict and resistance, ambivalence and willfulness. This much is certain: the self apart from others, development, and history is, for Peirce, a mere negation. Beyond this, however, a less certain but reasonable interpretation is that acts of negation are among the means by which the self constitutes itself. Deliberative agents are ones who have internalized the capacity to say such things as, “No, that conclusion does not follow” or “No, that claim is not true” or “No, that impulse is to be resisted, not indulged.” These are distinct aspects of negation. While the first does not strictly entail the second, there is enough evidence, textual and experiential, to advance the hypothesis that they turn out to be related.

Our infantile impulses and oppositions are devoid of forethought. We are anything but deliberative. The transformation of the almost entirely blind impulses of the infantile organism into the resolute judgments of a deliberative agent is truly just that—a metamorphosis, one as profound as anything observable in the natural world, so much as that it does not appear to be a natural phenomenon (hence, the invocation of a world beyond this one to explain what takes place in *this* one). The affective features of deliberative agency are, at bottom, habits and, in particular, dispositions to feel in certain ways in certain circumstances. This is a special case of what Peirce identifies as the highly general law of mind. Habits grow and, in growing, the very forms of habituation proliferate and very often differentiate themselves into intricate patterns. The habit of habit-taking, another way of speaking about “the law

of mind,” is itself reflexive: it is in effect a meta-habit, a disposition regarding the process of acquiring novel dispositions. This reflexivity is also evident with regard to feelings (e.g., one might become angry with oneself for having become angry at one's child, or one might feel shame at allowing another to shame oneself). In any event, these affective dispositions, such as shame and guilt, prompt concrete judgments of self-reproach. Apart from feelings of self-reproach, the exercise of self-control is hardly imaginable. Implicit in Peirce's account of self-constitution, then, there is an admirable sketch of moral psychology and, intimately allied to this sketch, there are insightful suggestions regarding moral development. This is true to such an extent that Peirce's very concept of the self is first and foremost a moral conception and, beyond this, a religious one. The individual self *is* a moral agent, that is, a deliberative agency tracing its origin and development to an embodied dialogue with other finite selves only identifiable in terms of ideals and norms.

Self-reproach drives in the direction of self-control, if it is not already an instance, however inchoate, of self-control. In turn, self-control eventuates in self-constitution. The paradox is that the achievement appears to assume the very being alleged to emerge in the course of self-constitution. Do we not need to assume the reality of the self at the outset in order to have an agent capable of constituting itself as a self and if we must assume such a self at the very point of origin then is not the idea of self-constitution simply incoherent? I take Peirce's position to be that of acknowledging the presence of an agent who is not properly identified as a self and, then, suggesting how that agent constitutes itself as a self, a process initiated by the recognition that the agent is a locus of error and ignorance and culminating in the self-imposed task of engaging in a lifelong critique of the agent's self-constitutive ideals. That is, the process presupposes the presence of the organism and the organism is by its very constitution an agent, however blind are the impulses of that agent. The self defines itself by its commitment to ideals and, indeed, comes to a consciousness that very early in its development it is already committed to an array of ideals, though the infantile “self” typically exhibits an unacknowledged ambivalence toward its definitive ideals. The paradox of self-constitution is thus rendered intelligible by acknowledging an agent at the outset but refusing to grant this agent the status of a self. The question then becomes how the human infant evolves into a deliberative agent.

3 Self-constitution from Peirce's perspective

The most decisive step in the process of self-constitution is the one taken by the individual who realizes that s/he can become reflexively autonomous. After noting “[...] there is a kind of self-control which results from training, Peirce stresses: “Next, a man can be his own training master and thus [can] control his self-control” (CP 5.533). But this developmental possibility is taken by the truly deliberate agent as a moral necessity: this is not only something an agent *can* do; it is something an agent *must* do and indeed must do for the sake of securing a fuller measure of agency and a more solid form of identity. The integration of habits of a certain character—nuanced, supple, and mutually supportive dispositions (see, e.g., DEWEY, MW 14, p. 31)—is central to this process of self-constitutions. We are in a certain respect little more than a bundle of habits but what little more we are makes a momentous

and indeed fateful difference. When a bundle of habits is transformed into a self-integrated whole of an expansive constitution (a psyche having “an outreaching identity”) and, moreover, when the task of the self-integration is undertaken in an increasingly deliberative manner, the metamorphosis of a blindly impulsive organism into a self-formed agent becomes more than an abstract possibility. It becomes a genuine potentiality.

The Peircean ideal of the continuous (perhaps only *continual*) growth of concrete reasonableness is by implication one bearing upon the obligation to assume the task of self-maturation. In the context of inquiry, this touches upon virtually all of Peirce’s most distinctive contributions (e.g., his theory of signs, doctrine of pragmatism, and even, perhaps especially, his systematic elaboration of universal categories).

It is, for instance, imperative to see how, in Peirce’s judgment, his thought became self-controlled as a result of elaborating his system of categories. As he put it:

[...] my work [and there can be no doubt from the context that he means the work of inquiry] early in the year 1867, when I already had in my mind the substance of my central achievement, the paper of May 14th that year, ‘On a New List of Categories’ (Letter to Francis C. Russell, July 1908; quoted in FISCH, 1986, p. 253).

His thought became self-controlled by means of his categories: *tout ensemble*, they were as much an instrument of deliberative rationality as a tool of responsible inquiry (see COLAPIETRO, 2001). I do not think we insufficiently appreciate the link that Peirce attempts to forge between his system of categories and his ideal of self-control.

Another example is provided by his mature conception of the ultimate logical interpretant of a sign employed in the context of inquiry.

The deliberately formed, self-analyzing habit—self-analyzing because formed by the aid of analysis of the exercises that nourished it—is the living definition, the veritable and final logical interpretant. Consequently, the most perfect account of a concept that words can convey will consist in a description of the habit that that concept is calculated to produce. But how otherwise can a habit be described than by a description of the kind of action to which it gives rise, with the specification of the conditions and of the motive? (CP 5.491).

Please note the reference to motive. The meaning of habit here is very close to, if not identical with, that of a skill or competency, for it signifies not so much a single, isolated disposition as an integrated cluster of distinct habits having a functional unity (think here of the array of habits enabling an organism to perform such a seemingly simple activity as walking across a room or switching on a light). What Peirce principally has in mind by the word *habit*, then, is the readiness “[...] to act in a certain way under given circumstances and *when actuated by a given motive*”

(CP 5.480; *emphasis added*). The focus of his concern is accordingly not habits in isolation, but in their integration. The integration is one subserving a purpose or function. Without the specification of a motive (e.g., the desire to illuminate a corner of a room so that one might read a book more easily), the readiness to this rather than that can rarely, if ever, be specified or identified. That is, commonplace motives (e.g., the desire to be warm, to avoid pain, to dispel doubt, to identify more certainly an object at a distance, and countless other such everyday inclinations and aversions) tend to be constituent features of Peircean dispositions.

These are only several examples of how deeply Peirce's ideal of self-control informs his thought. Others might easily be added to this list. The self-control of our habits of *feeling* is one especially worthy of note. "If conduct is to be thoroughly deliberate, the ideal must be," Peirce insists, "*a habit of feeling* that has grown up under the influence of a course of self-criticisms and of hetero-criticisms" (CP 1.574; *emphasis added*). The "theory of the deliberate formation of such habits of feeling is," he is quick to add, "what ought to be meant by *esthetics*" (*ibid.*). What Harry Frankfurt, Christine Korsgaard, J. David Velleman, Sabina Lovibond, and others insist upon regarding self-constitution or—formation is intimately akin to what Peirce envisions regarding the manner in which thoroughly deliberate agents cultivate their practical identities (see COLAPIETRO, 2006).

Of at least equal importance, it is important to appreciate that a vision of the good informs Peirce's ideal of self-control. What the good pragmatically means is the attractive (what has the power to enlist the adherence of agents by drawing them to it). The dispositions of agents constitute the other side of the story, above all, those dispositions rendering them susceptible to what is, in itself, attractive in some measure. We are more or less responsive or receptive to what is to some extent inherently attractive. Just as we are not sovereign subjects regarding meaning (in countless instances, meanings are inherent in processes of semiosis quite apart from our consciousness or contrivance), so we are not such subjects reading value (things are valuable quite apart from our capacity to recognize their value). Objects and events have the status of signs by virtue of their power to generate interpretants (see RANSELL, 1980). So, too, they have worth by virtue of *their* power to attract adherents or admirers. Peirce goes so far as to claim, ideas "[...] have an inherent power of working their way to the governance of the world, at last"; [they] "[...] somehow manage to grow their machinery, and [engender] their supporters" (CP 2.149).

This implies that, "[i]n general, the good is," Peirce suggests, "[...] the attractive—not to everybody, but to the sufficiently matured agent; and the evil is the repulsive to the same" (CP 5.553). The defining task of the deliberative agent is the arduous one of cultivating adoration for especially those living ideals by which the transformation of an immature creature into a matured agent. The deliberate cultivation of a deep receptivity to the beauty of ideals is, Peirce contends, ultimately the most important task to be undertaken by a deliberative agent. It is a self-imposed task, just as one's individual character is a self-shaped self. Cultivating a receptivity to the beauty of ideals entails doing so especially regarding the ideal of beauty itself. Somewhat paradoxically, the self-shaped self is one transfigured by the radiance of what is always other than this self, since this self is always to some extent immature or undeveloped.

This is nowhere more evident in the capacity of even mature selves to be self-deceitful and self-deceitful about momentous and even intimate matters, including one's own motives and character. "Men many times fancy," Peirce wryly observes, "[...] that they act from reason when, in point of fact, the reasons they attribute to themselves are nothing but excuses which unconscious instinct [or innate disposition of a virtually overpowering force] invents to satisfy the teasing 'whys' of the *ego*" (CP 1.631). Please note: this is frequently but not always or necessarily the case. In any event, Peirce quickly adds: "The extent of this self-delusion is such as to render philosophical rationalism a farce" (*ibid.*). His commitment to experimental intelligence was as profound as his antipathy to philosophical rationalism was intense.

"Reason [...] appeals," Peirce insists, "[...] to the sentiment in the last resort" (CP 1.632). But the nature of this appeal is all too easily misunderstood, especially if we take Peirce's statements regarding the necessity of reason to appeal to sentiment in conjunction with his denigration of rationalism as a farce. In appealing to sentiment, reason is *not* appealing to anything wholly external. Reason as it is actually constituted is always to an extent impossible to measure "egotistical" (CP 5.631). But reason as it deliberately re-constitutes itself is a sworn enemy of egotistical insularity. Sentiment is in some measure distinct from, yet also in an important respect *constitutive of*, rationality. This is nowhere more evident than in Peirce's identification of the three logical sentiments, which happen to be the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. So, when reason appeals to sentiment, it is in effect constituting itself as such or, more accurately, striving to constitute itself as more fully rational by identifying itself ever more deeply with integral sentiments. These sentiments are both ones calling for integration with one another *and* ones facilitating an integration of the self as something more than a bundle of habits.

Thus, some of the specific sentiments to which deliberative rationality appeals are nothing less than affective dispositions constitutive of deliberative rationality. To define oneself in opposition to these sentiments entails defining oneself in opposition to rationality itself. Some part of reason, specifically that part in the tenacious grip of an overweening ego, resists at a deep level identifying itself with such sentiments as faith, hope, and love, while another part strives to attain the humility and courage to identify with these sentiments in an effective and enduring manner. Human reason is inescapably at war with itself, its essence being at once invincibly "egotistical" and transcendently communal. Some part of the self is so entangled with the ineradicable tendencies of the human organism toward infantile regression that it deforms rationality by making human reason *merely* an instrument for the attainment of *given* desires.⁴ But another part of it is always already beside itself, always already allied with otherness in the most intimate and critical ways, so much so that reason is a drive toward its own self-transformation. This includes taking given desires as problematic rather than authoritative. Contra Hume, reason is not the slave of the passions but their co-conspirator: the alliance between reason and passion transforms the passions as much as it does reason, insofar as this distinction

4 Peirce insists, "[...] one, at least, of the functions of intelligence is to adapt conduct to circumstances, so as to subserve desire" (CP 5.548). But a crucial feature of experimental intelligence is to transfigure desire itself.

is any longer tenable. Reason is a cluster of affectively charged dispositions, while countless passions, though certainly not all of them, become deliberately transfigured (e.g., an instinctual wariness becomes a tempered skepticism or a wild imagination becomes a disciplined capacity to project contextually salient possibilities). This occurs in large part because of the reflexive character of human deliberation. We can have feelings about how we feel, thoughts about our manner of thinking, and doubts about the desirability of certain desires.

"The fact that something is desired," as Dewey notes in *The Quest for Certainty*, "[...] only raises the *question* of its desirability; it does not settle it. Only a child in the degree of his immaturity thinks to settle the question of desirability by reiterated proclamation: 'I want it, I want it, I want it'" (LW 4, p. 208). Our maturity is in no small measure revealed by our disposition to raise the question of the desirability of our desires, to treat our given desires as anything but indisputable dicta. This points us toward a fundamental but largely neglected connection between deliberative agency and reflexive maturation (i.e., the self-conscious adoption of the ideal of maturity as integral to the fullest realization of deliberative rationality).

4 The ideal of maturity

In *Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society*, Thomas Hobbes suggests (and, given the relevance of this suggestion to our topic, I will quote it at length):

Unless you give children all they ask for, they are peevish and cry, aye, and strike their parents sometimes; and all this they have from nature. Yet they are free from guilt; neither may we properly call them wicked; first, because they cannot hurt; next, because wanting [or lacking] the free use of reason they are exempted from all duty [or obligation]. These when they come to riper years, having acquired power whereby they may do hurt, if they shall continue to do the same things [as they did as children] then truly they both begin to be and are properly accounted wicked [or vicious]. Inasmuch as *a wicked man is almost the same thing as a child grown strong and sturdy*, or a man of a childish [or immature] disposition; and malice [is] the same with a defect of reason in that age when nature ought to be better governed through good education and experience. Unless there we will say that men are naturally evil, because they receive not this education and use of reason from nature, we must needs acknowledge that men derive desire, fear, anger, and other passions from nature, and yet not impute the evil effects of those onto nature. (HOBBS, 1841, p. xvi-xvii, *emphasis added*).

Hobbes is clearly trying to forge a link between morality and maturity. In 1903, Peirce in his lectures on pragmatism disclosed:

[...] when, beginning in 1883, I came to read the works of the great moralists, whose great fertility of thought I found in

wonderful contrast to the sterility of the logicians—I was forced to recognize the dependence of Logic upon Ethics; and then took refuge in the idea that there was no science of esthetics, that, because *de gustibus non est disputandum*, therefore there is no esthetic *truth* and *falsity* or generally valid goodness and badness. But I did not remain of this opinion long. I soon came to see that this whole objection rests upon a fundamental misconception. To say that morality, in the last resort, comes to an esthetic judgment is *not* hedonism—but is directly opposed to hedonism. (CP 5.111).

Peirce was certainly acquainted with the work of Hobbes. It is however not at all certain whether he would have accorded Hobbes the status of a great moralist or, moreover, he was specifically acquainted with “The Preface” to *The Philosophical Rudiments concerning Government and Society*, the work from which I just quoted at length. Whatever we discover regarding his detailed familiarity with, and specific assessment of, Hobbes, there is, I propose, a *kinship* between the position advocated by Hobbes in *Philosophical Rudiments* and the one defended by Peirce in the context of his pragmatism. This proposal does not imply anything regarding influence (whether Hobbes influenced Peirce on this score is a historical question requiring historical evidence for its resolution).⁵ It simply stresses a significant kinship between two thinkers who are in so many fundamental respects opposed to each other, for Hobbes was in Peirce’s judgment a paradigm of the nominalist. From a Peircean perspective, no difference could make a deeper difference than this one, so his affinity with Hobbes is all the more striking.

In a mature manuscript (!), Peirce asserts:

Attraction and repulsion are kinds of action. [That is, they are not feelings separable from actions, but are themselves actions or, more precisely, genres of action.] Feelings are pleasurable or painful according to the kind of action which they stimulate. In general, *the good is* [to repeat] *the attractive* not to everybody, but *to the sufficiently matured agent*; and the *evil is the repulsive to the same* [the sufficiently matured agent]. (CP 5.552; *emphasis added*).

This moral orientation is rooted in an uncompromising insistence on the biological condition of the human infant and, I would go so far as to argue, the *invincible* immaturity of the human organism.⁶

5 Historical questions require answers based on historical evidence. There must be a “smoking gun,” unmistakable textual or other evidence that Peirce read this specific work by this specific author and, indeed, was aware of just these passages. I at least know of no such evidence.

6 In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey draws an important distinction regarding immaturity. In the comparative and hence privative sense, immaturity means not mature. It signifies lack or privation. In the intrinsic and positive sense, however, it signifies the boundless capacity for an antecedently unspecifiable growth (MW 9, p. 46-48). “Taken absolutely, instead of comparatively, immaturity designates a positive force or ability —

The conception of the Rational Mind as an Unmatured Instinctive mind which takes another development [analogous to prenatal life] because of its childlike character is confirmed, not only by the prolonged childhood of men [and women], but also by the fact that all systems of rational performance have had instinct for their first germ. Not only has instinct been the first germ, but every step in the development of those systems of performance comes from instinct. It is precisely because the Instinct is a weak, uncertain Instinct that becomes infinite plastic, and never reaches an ultimate state beyond which it cannot progress [i.e., the instinctual constitution of the human organism renders humans invincibly immature]. Uncertain tendencies, unstable states of equilibrium are conditions *sine qua non* for the manifestation of Mind. (CP 7.381).

The development of human rationality turns out for Peirce to involve a story about cosmic Reason. Such Reason is also interminably incomplete. It “[...] is something manifesting itself in the mind, in the history of the mind’s development, and in nature” (CP 1.615). To repeat for emphasis, “[...] it is something that never can have been completely embodied” (CP 1.615): it is never a *fait accompli*, always an unfinished task. Accordingly, it “must always be in a state of incipency, of growth” (ibid.).

In some instances, reason evolves to the point of self-maturation, that is, to the point where the organism is principally responsible for its growth and maturation. The maturation of deliberative agent is nowhere more discernible than in reference to what such agents find attractive and repulsive. In Peirce’s distinctive sense, the *esthetic* dimension of human maturation is the most vital one. The life of rationality is one with Eros. The life of Eros is that of the generation of new life, resulting from consummated desire.⁷

5 Neither a Deontologist nor a Consequentialist

In ethics, Peirce was a teleologist, not a deontologist or a consequentialist. “Now the word ‘ought’ has no meaning except relatively to an end. That ought to be done which is conducive to a certain end.” Peirce illustrates this with respect to the *ethics* of inquiry (“The inquiry [to which Peirce most passionately devoted himself] should begin with searching for the *end* of thinking. What do we think *for*?” [CP 5.594]).

the *power* to grow” (MW 9, p. 47). The relevance of recalling this distinction here is that both senses are operative in Peirce’s writings. The positive sense is evident in, e.g., CP 7.381 (the rational mind is the invincibly immature mind, i.e., the infinitely plastic one), whereas the privative sense is intended in, e.g., CP 5.552 (the good is the attractive to the sufficiently matured agent).

7 When I presented a version of this paper in São Paulo on November 4th, 2016, Lucia Santaella posed an extremely question regarding Eros, namely, What is the relationship Eros and agape? One possibility, the one toward which I incline, is that agape traces its roots to Eros: it is a transfiguration of the latter. Suggesting this is one thing, showing it another thing altogether!

Like consequentialism, he argues that the deliberative agent must attend conscientiously to the foreseeable consequences of distinctive lines (or courses)⁸ of human conduct. Moral deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal of divergent lines of human conduct (DEWEY, MW 14, p. 132), conducted partly for the sake of discerning what differential consequences would most likely flow from these divergent possibilities (insofar as such consequences are foreseeable). Unlike consequentialism, however, takes the results of our actions most worthy of our deliberative consideration to be those that are integral to the formation of a distinctively noble form of character and, inseparable from this formation, the furtherance of an historically evolving form of practice (e.g., devotion to the advancement of science. Only by focusing on such results do we avoid falling into a self-serving opportunism. The point is to devote ourselves to a self-transformative undertaking. The self-transformation is of such a deep-cutting character as to be properly seen as an instance of self-constitution or—formation. This can only happen when life is lived *in extremis* (cf. Ortega) or heroically.

Like the deontologist, Peirce stresses the binding character of our innermost imperatives (we can only treat these imperatives as conditional if we treat ourselves, as presently constituted, as nothing). Moreover, he emphasizes autonomy, but not in the formal and abstract manner of Kant and his progeny. Unlike the deontologist, however, he insists that all of our duties are derived from our ends (as we have already noted, “the word ‘ought’ has no meaning,” for Peirce, “except relatively to an end”). To a teleologist such as Peirce, doing one’s duty for one’s duty’s sake makes no sense, but doing good and, indeed, *being* good for goodness’ sake does. The acquisition and exercise of the virtues perfects *both* the character of the individual and the practice in which the virtues are either acquired or exercised. One is in a sense good for goodness’ sake, since the inherent good of a shared practice is integral to the innermost motivation of the committed practitioner. To take Peirce’s own example, “scientists” who do not desire to discover what is not yet known, who do not resolutely commit themselves to the arduous task of experimental inquiry, are ones in name only. In other words, the proper motivation is a defining feature (if not *the* defining feature) of the scientific inquirer. To lack this motive is to have in effect rejecting the vocation of the scientist.

So, while doing one’s duty for duty’s sake makes no sense to a teleologist such as Peirce, being good for goodness’ sake does. To some extent, this possibly softens the contrast between Peirce’s teleology and Kant’s deontology (see SHORT, 2007, p. 346-347).⁹ After all, ends play a significant role in the Kantian portrait of

8 It is never the individual act in isolation that warrants our deliberative attention, but always the act as integral to what Peirce commonly identifies as a “line of conduct” (see, e.g., CP 1.574). Ultimately, it is an act in the context of nothing less than a form of life, wherein the life of the individual must be situated in order to be rendered intelligible (cf. Wittgenstein).

9 “Autonomy is, [Short helpfully explains] not merely absence of external control; it is self-control, which consists in a principle of control being adopted, not arbitrarily, but because it is seen [or judged] to be right. In Kant’s formulation, the idea of the moral law alone [...] evokes a feeling of reverence that demolishes self-love. And thus the dialectic of the moral life is set up, between inclinations rooted in the flesh and

moral agency, just as the quality of motivation plays a decisive role in the Peirce's depiction of such agency.

Whatever we mean by *deliberative rationality* in conjunction with especially Peirce's mature thought, we do not mean a calculating stance in the service of given (or unquestioned) ends. Ultimately, we mean an orientation toward the world involving nothing less than a response to the call of heroism, however quietly or undramatically such heroism is enacted. One cannot be moral in the conventional sense without having the courage of one's convictions. But one cannot be moral in the Peircean sense without having the courage to subject one's inherited convictions to a radical critique¹⁰ and, then, the conclusions of this critique themselves to an ongoing course of critical reflection (see, e.g., CP 1.574).

Courage is the virtue *par excellence* of the hero. A hero could no more lack courage than an inquirer could lack curiosity and imagination: strip away these qualities and you annihilate the figure. The moral agent as such is always—and necessarily—a heroic figure, however (to repeat) undramatic or unassuming is the form of heroism.

6 An Ethics of Heroism

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James asserts:

Mankind's common instinct for reality has always held the world to be essentially a theatre for heroism. In heroism, we feel, life's supreme mystery is hidden. We tolerate no one who has no capacity whatever for it in any direction. On the other hand, no matter what a man's frailties otherwise may be, if he be willing to risk death, and still more if he suffer it heroically, in the service he has chosen, the fact consecrates him forever. (JAMES, 1958, p. 281-282).

It is possible to read Peirce's ethics as one of heroism, at the center of which is the lifelong devotion to a transcendent cause (in his case, the discovery of experimental truth).

All communication from mind to mind is through continuity of being. A man is capable of having assigned to him a *rôle* in the drama of creation, and so far as he loses himself in that *rôle*,—no matter how humble it may be,—so far he identifies himself with its Author. (CP 7.573).

moral duty grounded in reason. Freedom depends on there being that dialectic and our choosing morality over inclination" (SHORT, 2007, p. 346), what might say, choosing goodness for goodness' sake. "In all of this, we see," Short is quick to point out, parallels to Peirce's thought, which is unsurprising, as his philosophical education began with Schiller and Kant (but origins are less important than destinations)" (ibid.). This kinship makes Peirce divergence from Kant all the more important (cf. SHORT, 2006, p. 347).

- 10 Though the idea is implicit in Peirce's writings, it is explicit in Nietzsche's. In *The Gay Science*, we encounter this famous aphorism: "A very popular error: having the courage of one's convictions; rather it is a matter of having the courage for an *attack* on one's convictions" (NIETZSCHE, 1974, p. 238, note 20).

For Peirce both personally and philosophically, such a thoroughgoing identification is constitutive of his “outreaching identity” (CP 7.591). That is, personal identity, including one’s strictly *philosophical* identity, is a function of identification with the contemporary phases of an unfolding drama. Peirce is emphatic about this: “a man’s ultimate end may lie in in a vague personification of the community [the “we” is in a sense an “I,” a sufficiently integrated cluster of distinct individuals to act as an agent] and at the same time may contemplate a [more or less] definite state of things [such as the continual growth of concrete reasonableness] as the *summum bonum*” (CP 1.588). Put more modestly, but also formulated explicitly in reference to experience, Peirce suggests:

The course of life has developed [or generated] certain compulsions of thought which we speak of collectively as Experience. Moreover, the inquirer more or less *vaguely identifies himself in sentiment with a Community of which he is a member*, and which includes, besides his momentary self, his self of ten years hence; and he speaks of the resultant cognitive compulsions of the course of life of that community as *Our Experience*. (CP 8.101; *emphasis added*).

The constitution of the self, insofar as the self is a deliberative agent, entails identification in sentiment with a community the shape and limits of which any member can only ever have the vaguest awareness. Such vague awareness is however neither vacuous nor ineffective.

Such identification is made possible by narrative imagination—seeing oneself as playing a *role* in a drama, be it “the drama of Creation” or some other fateful undertaking. This means that self-controlled agency is partly an achievement of story-shaped selves. We are not only story-telling animals but also at the root of our being story-shaped selves (see Toni Morrison’s Nobel Lecture).¹¹

Conclusion

The self-controlled agent turns out to be a story-shaped self.¹² This is however something Peirce barely hints at, though the few places where he does are precious for both their rarity and their suggestiveness. Sometimes such rare hints are anything

11 When the children “talk back” to the old, blind woman possessing a reputation for wisdom, they say: “You are an adult. The old one, the wise one. Stop thinking about saving your face. Think of our lives and tell us your particularized world. Make up a story. Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created.” Narrative is radical, that is, it is at the very root of our being. At a slightly later point they say to her: “You, old woman, blessed with blindness, can speak the language that tells us what only language can: how to see without pictures. Language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names. Language alone is meditation.”

12 While this theme is barely developed in Peirce, it has been much more fully thematized and elaborated by a number of subsequent thinkers (e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre, Paul Ricoeur, and Charles Taylor, not to mention John Dewey). One implication of this is Peirce’s deep affinity with virtue ethics: his position is much closer to the neo-Aristotelianism of, say, MacIntyre than the neo-Kantianism of Christine Korsgaard or J. David Velleman. This topic deserves to be explored, but of course can only be noted here.

but negligible asides. They can be deeply revelatory, if largely undeveloped, insights. In the case of Peirce's hints about the identity of the self being bound up with playing a role in a drama, I take his comments to be deeply disclosive of his considered view (the view to which he was led by deliberation over the course of a lifetime).

As agents, we cannot help but envision ourselves as participants in a drama or a countless number of more or less distinct dramas. But we can envision ourselves in this fashion only because we are story-telling animals, only because we can plot a sequence of actions and events as a drama. Our self-understanding is inherently dramatic: our role in the history of a practice partly constitutes our self-understanding. To a great extent, this makes our self-understanding narrative. And *this* makes the self to some extent a fiction, a being dependent upon imagination (see SHORT, 1997). At the same time, the self *is* a reality, at the very least, a “bundle of habits,” but almost certainly more than this. The law of mind is at bottom the habit of habit-taking but the evolution of this habit involves not only the acquisition of new habits but also novel forms of integration. The “law” of mind cannot be a strictly deterministic law; it must be an inherently “gentle force” (CP 7.389), moreover, an invincibly open-ended one. For our purpose, however, what most needs to be highlighted is this point: the effective integration of multiple habits into a uniquely identifiable agent happens, in part, willy-nilly (the exigencies of agency drive quite apart from intention toward such integration) and, in part, deliberately (see COLAPIETRO, 2016).

I have seized this occasion to tell a story about Peirce. It is however up to my readers to determine whether my story is truly about Peirce—whether it is one in which *his* thought has been rendered more available and perspicuous or whether I have put words into his mouth! Our motives are inevitably complex and, in no small, opaque to even ourselves. Our ideals inescapably involve idealizations and, as such, the deceptions entailed by idealizations. While philosophical rationalism is indeed a farce, philosophical dialogue is a process in which this fact and much else can be brought to light. Moreover, a pragmatist defense of experimental intelligence includes a dialogical disclosure of such rationalism as a farce. Our only hope is to carry out the ongoing work of immanent critique in an ever more deliberate—hence, ever more conscientious, resolute, and indeed imaginative—manner. This entails, first, identifying our deep-rooted, quite possibly ineradicable, tendencies toward self-deception and self-idolatry¹³ and, then, working to counteract the effects of this tendency. Only one's passionate participation in an unbounded community of experimental inquirers can prove effective in this regard. That is, one's *identification* with such a community is crucial for this task. This makes the task simultaneously

13 Peirce stresses, “[...] all reasoning is quite thrown away upon a person who has once set his teeth and has resolved to believe in a definite proposition” (CP 6.180). He goes so far as to identify an intellectual malady of an extremely debilitating character. In all too many people we observe it: “[...] the very essence of their mental malady consists in an exaggerated loyalty to their own principles, i.e., a heartfelt and rather intolerant religion whose divinity is their past mental selves” (CP 6.181). Peirce quickly—and wryly—adds: “Those who are really acquainted with this folk will recognize the portrait.” What needs however most to be stressed is Peirce's characterization of this as self-idolatry, for this is clearly the implication of his diagnosis.

personal and communal. This identity is not imposed upon one from without. But it is also not anything achieved within the solitary confines of the individual psyche. Out identities are truly “outreaching.” They are at the same *indriving* (if I may coin this word), since they drive inward as deeply as they reach outward.

The thoroughly deliberate subject deliberately cultivates an esthetic ideal, an ideal admirable or adorable in itself. As Peirce puts it, “he grows an esthetic ideal.” “This ideal, by modifying the rules [or habits] of self-control [,] modifies action, and so [modifies] experience too—both the man’s own and that of others.” This fateful modification of one’s practical identity however drives in opposite directions: “this centrifugal movement [this outreaching impulse] thus rebounds in a new centripetal movement [an inward impulse, and so on,” indefinitely (COLAPIETRO, 2014, p. 288-292). Allow me to conclude with a suggestion: the deliberative self is to be completely identified with neither this outreaching drive nor this indriving impulse, but in the continual back-and-forth of dramas played out on the stage of the deliberative imagination and ones enacted on the stage of the outward world, where the reverberating effects of the outward clash inevitably have inward significance, just as our inward fantasies ineluctably have outward bearing (see, e.g., CP 6.286; COLAPIETRO, 1989, also 2014).

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Endereço/ Address

Vincent Colapietro
Department of Philosophy
Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802 – USA

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