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## Pragmatism

### Pragmatismo

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**Abstract:** In 1907, Charles Peirce attempted to write an article that would introduce his distinct variety of pragmatism to a general audience. He eventually produced more than five hundred handwritten sheets, culminating in five major variants. Peirce left the second unfinished, while extensive portions of the third through fifth have appeared in collections of his writings, including the beginning that is common to all five. This is the completed and signed first version, which has never been published before and offers fresh insights into the evolution of its author's thinking about semeiotic and pragmatism.

**Keywords:** Concept. Meaning. Peirce. Pragmatism. Signs.

**Abstract:** Em 1907, Charles Peirce tentou escrever um artigo que introduziria sua variedade distinta de pragmatismo para um público amplo. Eventualmente, ele produziu mais de quinhentas folhas manuscritas, culminando em cinco variantes principais. Peirce deixou a segunda inacabada, enquanto extensas porções da terceira até a quinta apareceram em compilações de seus escritos, incluindo o início que é comum a todas as cinco. Esta é a primeira versão completa e assinada, a qual nunca foi publicada antes e oferece ideias renovadas na evolução do pensamento do autor sobre semiótica e pragmatismo.

**Palavras-chave:** Conceito. Peirce. Pragmatismo. Significado. Signos.

## 1 Editorial Introduction

Charles Peirce is best known as the founder of pragmatism, thanks largely to his lifelong friend William James, who popularized it beginning in 1898 while crediting it to Peirce. They famously disagreed about the details, and Peirce eventually became so dissatisfied with how James and others had appropriated “pragmatism” that he decided to rechristen his own doctrine “pragmaticism,” confident—rightly, as it turned out—that this new name was “ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers” (CP 5.414, EP 2:335, 1905). Nevertheless, he did not completely give up on the initial moniker, instead acknowledging its broader scope.

In 1907, James authored a book that he called *Pragmatism*, based on a series of lectures that he had delivered over the previous winter at the Lowell Institute in Boston and at Columbia University in New York. During roughly the same time frame, whether deliberately or coincidentally, Peirce attempted to write an introductory paper of his own with the same title. He intended it for a magazine with a general audience: at first *The Nation*, and



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later *The Atlantic Monthly*, both of which ultimately declined to print anything. This effort eventually produced more than five hundred handwritten sheets, none of them dated. Numerous drafts comprise the manuscripts that Richard Robin catalogued as R 317-322 and R 324.

While preparing the second volume of *The essential Peirce*, the Peirce Edition Project undertook the monumental task of ascertaining the various sequences of composition. As confirmed by its current director, André De Tienne, Peirce likely wrote R 324, R 320, R 319, R 322, and R 321 in that order in February-March; the first three versions of R 318 in March-April; and the remaining two versions of R 318 some months later. Priscila Borges subsequently created a diagram of all five major variants of R 318 using the page numbers assigned by the Institute for Studies in Pragmaticism.<sup>1</sup> The second is unfinished, while extensive portions of the third through fifth appear in *The collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (CP 5.11-13, 5.464-496, 1.560-562) and *The essential Peirce* (EP 2:398-433), including the first nine pages that all five have in common.

What follows is the completed first version (ISP 125-134, 235-257, 314) as transcribed from the high-resolution digital images provided online by Houghton Library at Harvard University (seq. 1-20, 647-692, 553-554).<sup>2</sup> It has never been published before and offers fresh insights into Peirce's thinking about semeiotic and pragmatism as it was evolving toward what he expressed in the lengthier and increasingly technical texts that scholars have thoroughly scrutinized. It is also one of only three drafts bearing Peirce's signature at the end, suggesting that he was fully satisfied with it, although several illuminating quotations from an earlier working variant (ISP 339-350; seq. 395-418) are included here in footnotes. With minor exceptions, his original and sometimes idiosyncratic spelling and punctuation are preserved throughout.

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Mr. Editor:

The philosophical journals, the world over, are just now brimming over, as you know, with pragmatism and antipragmatism. The number of *Leonardo* that reaches me this morning has an admirable piece on the subject by a writer of genius and of literary skill, Giovanni Papini. Yesterday brought news of discussions along the same line in New Zealand. Often, however, one hears glib utterances that betray complete misunderstanding of this new ingredient of the thought of our time; so that I gladly accept your invitation to explain what pragmatism really is, how it came into being, and whither it is tending. Any philosophical doctrine that should be completely new could hardly fail to prove completely false; but the rivulets at the head of the river of pragmatism are easily traced back to almost any desired antiquity.

Socrates bathed in these waters. Aristotle rejoices when he can find them. They run, where least one would suspect them, beneath the dry rubbish-heaps of Spinoza. Those clean definitions that strew the pages of the *Essay concerning Humane Understanding* (I refuse to reform the spelling,) had been washed out in these same pure springs. It was this medium, and not tar-water, that gave health and strength to Berkeley's earlier works, his *Theory of Vision* and what remains of his *Principles*. From it the general views of Kant derive such clearness as they have. Auguste Comte made still more,—much more,—use of this element; as much as he saw his way to using. Unfortunately, however, both he and Kant, in their rather opposite ways, were in the habit of mingling these sparkling waters with a certain mental sedative to which many men are addicted,—and the burly business men very likely to their benefit, but which plays sad havoc with the philosophical constitution. I refer to the habit of cherishing contempt for the close study of logic.

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1 Available at: [https://peirce.iupui.edu/resources/ms318\\_diag.pdf](https://peirce.iupui.edu/resources/ms318_diag.pdf)

2 Available at: <https://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl.hough:12486126>.

So much for the past. The ancestry of pragmatism is respectable enough; but the more conscious adoption of it as *lanterna pedibus* in the discussion of dark questions, and the elaboration of it into a method in aid of philosophic inquiry came, in the first instance, from the humblest *souche* imaginable.<sup>3</sup> It was in the earliest seventies that a knot of us young men in Old Cambridge, calling ourselves, half-ironically, half-defiantly, “The Metaphysical Club,”—for agnosticism was then riding its high horse, and was frowning superbly upon all metaphysics,—used to meet, sometimes in my study, sometimes in that of William James. It may be that some of our old-time confederates would today not care to have such wild-oats-sowings made public, though there was nothing but boiled oats, milk, and sugar in the mess. Mr. Justice Holmes, however, will not, I believe, take it ill that we are proud to remember his membership; nor will Joseph Warner Esq. Nicholas St. John Green was one the most interested fellows, a skillful lawyer and a learned one, a disciple of Jeremy Bentham. His extraordinary power of disrobing warm and breathing truth of the draperies of long worn formulas, was what attracted attention to him everywhere. In particular, he often urged the importance of applying Bain’s definition of belief, as “that upon which a man is prepared to act.” From this definition, pragmatism is scarce more than a corollary; so that I am disposed to think of him as the grandfather of pragmatism. Chauncey Wright, something of a philosophical celebrity in those days, was never absent from our meetings. I was about to call him our corypheus; but he will better be described as our boxing-master whom we,—I, particularly,—used to face to be severely pummelled.<sup>4</sup> He had abandoned a former attachment to Hamiltonianism to take up with the doctrines of Mill, to which and to its cognate agnosticism he was trying to weld the really incongruous ideas of Darwin. John Fiske and, more rarely, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, were sometimes present, lending their countenances to the spirit of our endeavours, while holding aloof from any assent to their success. Wright, James, and I were men of science, rather scrutinizing the doctrines of the metaphysicians on their scientific side than regarding them as very momentous spiritually. The type of our thought was decidedly British. I, alone of our number, had come upon the threshing-floor of philosophy through the doorway of Kant, and even my ideas were acquiring the English accent.

Our metaphysical proceedings had all been in winged words (and swift ones, at that, for the most part,) until at length, lest the club should be dissolved without leaving any material *souvenir* behind, I drew up a little paper expressing some of the opinions that I had been urging all along under the name of pragmatism. This paper was received with such unlooked for kindness, that I was encouraged, some half-dozen years later, on the invitation of the great publisher, Mr. W. H. Appleton, to insert it, somewhat expanded, in the *Popular Science Monthly* for November 1877 and January 1878, not with the warmest possible approval of the Spencerian editor, Dr. Edward Youmans.<sup>5</sup> The same paper appeared the next year in a French redaction in the *Revue Philosophique* (Vol VI p. 553; Vol. VII, p 39). In those medieval times, I dared not in type use an English word to express an idea unrelated to its received meaning. The authority of Mr. Principal Campbell weighed too heavily upon my conscience. I had not yet come to perceive, what is so plain today, that if philosophy is ever to stand in the ranks of the sciences, literary elegance must be sacrificed,—like the soldier’s old brilliant uniforms,—to the stern requirements of efficiency, and the philosopher must be encouraged,—yea, and required,—to coin new terms to express such new scientific concepts as he may discover, just as his chemical and biological brethren are expected to do. Indeed, in those days, such brotherhood was scorned, alike on the one side and on the other;—a lamentable but not surprising state of scientific feeling. As late as 1893, when I might have procured the insertion of the word pragmatism in the *Century Dictionary*, it did not seem to me that its vogue was sufficient to warrant that step.

3 The Latin expression translates as “lantern for the feet,” alluding to Psalm 119:105, and the French word translates as “stump,” or in this context “origin.”

4 The transliterated Greek term designates the leader of the chorus in Attic drama, who speaks for all the rest.

5 The references are to *The Fixation of Belief and How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (CP 5.358-410, EP 1:109-141).

It is now high time to explain what pragmatism is. I must, however, preface the explanation by a statement of what it is not, since many writers, especially of the starry host of Kant's progeny, in spite of pragmatists' declarations, unanimous, reiterated, and most explicit, still remain unable to 'catch on' to what we are driving at, and persist in twisting our purpose and purport all awry. I was long enough, myself, within the Kantian fold to comprehend their difficulty; but let it go. Suffice it to say once more that 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. All pragmatists of whatsoever stripe will cordially assent to that statement. As to the ulterior and indirect effects of practicing the pragmatistic method, that is quite another affair.

All pragmatists will further agree that their method of ascertaining the meanings of words and concepts is no other than that experimental method by which all the successful sciences (in which number nobody in his senses would include metaphysics,) have reached the degrees of certainty that are severally proper to them today;—this experimental method being itself nothing but a particular application of an older logical rule, "By their fruits ye shall know them."<sup>6</sup>

Beyond these two propositions to which pragmatists assent *nem. con.*, we find such slight discrepancies between the views of one and another declared adherent as are to be found in every healthy and vigorous school of thought in every department of inquiry.<sup>7</sup> The most prominent of all our school and the most respected, William James, defines pragmatism as the doctrine that the whole "meaning" of a concept expresses itself either in the shape of conduct to be recommended or of experience to be expected. Between this definition and mine there is certainly a slight theoretical divergence, which, for the most part, becomes evanescent in practice; and though we may differ on important questions of philosophy,—especially as regards the infinite and the absolute,—I am inclined to think that the discrepancies reside in other than the pragmatistic ingredients of our thought. If pragmatism had never been heard of, I believe the opinions of James on one side, of me on the other would have developed substantially as they have; notwithstanding our respective connecting them at present, with our conception of that method. The brilliant and marvellously human thinker, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, who extends to the philosophic world a cup of nectar stimulant in his beautiful "Humanism," seems to occupy ground of his own intermediate, as to this question, between those of James and mine.

I understand pragmatism to be a method of ascertaining the meanings, not of all ideas, but only of what I call "intellectual concepts," that is to say, of those upon the structure of which arguments concerning objective fact may hinge. Had the light which, as things are, excites in us the sensation of blue, always excited the sensation of red, and *vice versa*, however great a difference that might have made in our feelings, it could have made none in the force of any argument.<sup>8</sup> In this respect, the qualities of hard and soft strikingly contrast with those of red and blue. If I see a strawberry intact, thereupon, knowing it to be very soft, I know that no knife blade has been drawn heavily over it; and if all those things that are, in actuality, soft had been hard, and *vice versa*, the argument would equally have held, not indeed for strawberries, but for flints and diamonds, which would then have been as soft as strawberries now are.

My pragmatism regards a feeling as *really* being altogether such as it immediately seems and nothing else, without any intrinsic ultimate significance. Or rather my *pragmatism*, predicating nothing of feeling, permits me to hold this opinion as I do. But with intellectual concepts,—the only concepts properly so called,—the case is entirely different. The affirmation and denial of such a predicate do differ in their intrinsic significations. The one implies that the object of which it could be truly affirmed would, under some definitely conceivable circumstances, behave differently from any object of which the same

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6 The quotation is from Matthew 7:20.

7 The abbreviation is for the Latin *nemine contradicente*, which translates as "with no one dissenting."

8 The text that is unique to the first version of R 318 begins in the middle of the next sentence.

predicate could be truly denied. This, to my mind, is the kernel of pragmatism. It is downright nonsense to assert that a general predicate is *real*, if no existential consequence of it is conceivably possible; and real I certainly hold a multitude of such actual predicates to be, and more than any multitude of possible predicates.<sup>9</sup> It would, however, be sufficient, for the purposes of the argument to hold that they are conceivably real. Now every existential fact is an object of possible experience, and every such object might conceivably affect anybody's rational conduct.

Even this brief article should proffer some hint, at least, of a reason for holding all this, or as much of it as concerns pragmatism, to be true. From among several apparently independent lines of argumentation, I select the following. To begin with, I say that every concept is a mental sign. There is no novelty in this position. The Greeks seem to have been unable to think of a concept otherwise; and some of the greatest medieval and modern thinkers have urged its truth. A little self-observation, outweighing the sum total of authority, even if authority were of one voice in condemning this view, suffices however to show that deliberations that really and sincerely agitate our breasts always assume a dialogic form. The ego of any one moment (at such times) is incessantly appealing to the ego of a subsequent moment, welded into the former one, to yield his assent and give his endorsement to the earlier instant's argumentation. The untutored mind, often, as we all know, startlingly close to elemental truths, testifies to this in its phrase "I says to myself, says I." Not seldom, that sort of mind even reasons aloud with itself. I shall assume it then to be granted to the force of these three combined reasons with others too trite for mention, that a concept is a mental sign.

Now any sign, of whatsoever kind, professes to mediate between an Object, on the one hand, that to which it applies, and which is thus in a sense the cause of the sign, and on the other hand, a Meaning, or to use a preferable technical term, an *Interpretant*, that which the sign expresses, the result which it produces in its capacity as sign. Discussions concerning logic can come to nothing but that muddle that prevailingly we find in the logic-books, unless (for one thing,) the distinction between these two essential correlates of the sign be drawn clean and clear, and be kept so. To promote such clearness, a couple of remarks will be pertinent. The sole function of the object is identification; by which I mean that if any part or concomitant of the sign specially or separately represents the object rather than the meaning, it is to show that not any other than this very object is that to which the sign refers; so that either both the utterer (or putter forth,) and the interpreter must be already familiarly acquainted with the object and well understand that the other is so at the time of the communication of the sign, (as when we talk of the universe or of the prehistoric,) or else the object must be exhibited (as in a geometrical diagram, or a snipping from a textile fabric,) or else the interpreter's attention must be forcibly drawn to the object (as by the gleam of a light-house, or by a driver's shout of "hi, there!") or else directions must be given for acquiring sufficient acquaintance with the object for its identification, (as when we talk of "the second cataract of the Nile,") or else the object must remain indefinite (as when Longfellow taught the world that 'All things are not as they seem.')<sup>10</sup> By a 'verbal sign,' I mean a word, sentence, book, library, literature, language, or anything else composed of words. In verbal signs, dates, adverbs of time and place, ordinal numbers, pronouns, are usually indications of the object. The object of a sign may be a collection of objects. Thus, in the sentence, "A sign mediates between its Object and its Meaning," the words "any sign," "it," "an Object," "a Meaning" indicate partial objects of the sign, while the collection denoted by the whole list of these expressions—"Any sign that anybody may select, its object, its meaning,"—may be regarded as collectively making up the total object of the sign. To my statement that the meaning is a result of the sign, you may, very naturally, demur on the ground that the utterer of a sign must first have had its meaning in his mind, so that the sign is rather the effect of the meaning.

9 This statement implies that the totality of *actual* predicates is a discrete collection, while the totality of *possible* predicates is a real continuum in accordance with Peirce's mature conception.

10 Working variant: "But in any case the reference of a sign to its object merely serves the purpose of identification; namely, the identification of the actual or supposed previous experience with which the new meaning, conveyed in the sign, is to be attached" (ISP 342-343).

That would, I am persuaded, be psychologically incorrect, although, no doubt, in deliberate speech a man knows beforehand what it is that he means to express. But I reply, since every thought is a mental sign, it is impossible that he should have had a naked meaning before he had a mental sign embodying it. “Yes,” you will probably retort, “but, by the same token, no more can the interpreter have the naked meaning *after* the mental sign has passed from consciousness.” Upon this helpful objection, I remark that far from holding that a sign can be the “naked,” that is, the ultimate, meaning of a sign, I was just about to insist that it cannot be so; and the great enigma that leads up to pragmatism,—at least, to my form of the doctrine,—is, “What can this ultimate or naked meaning be?” But I add that, in many cases, as I shall proceed to show, the meaning of a sign is not itself a sign, and in those cases the objection has no standing.<sup>11</sup>

The meaning, or as we had better say, *a* meaning, is often a sign. A definition is the meaning of its definitum, or sign defined. But a person who uses his or her mental eyes for the not inappropriate purpose of looking with them, and does not bandage them up in a metaphysical theory, (as women are less given to doing than men,) knows very well that thoughts and other signs may bring about physical effects that are not signs,—and that, not in their character as things merely, but through their action as signs. During a battle, an *aide de camp* rides up to one of the two commanders, and mutters a few words in his ear. So long as they are audible, it makes no difference whether the physical energy of the sound-vibrations be great or little. The consequence, in any case, is that, in a few minutes, a great charge of cavalry crosses the arena, tremendous, terrific: and hundreds of men pass the gates of death. I should like very much, to see a serious and strong attempt to give a hypothetical explanation of such a thing, based on our present knowledge of cerebral histology,—an explanation, I mean, which should not slur over any link of the chain. I do not know whether such an attempt could be successful or not: I suspect not. But whether it could or not, its extreme interest would be entirely physiological. It would not cause a ripple in the stream of my present thought, flowing through the meadows of logical science. For my purposes, it is indifferent by what mechanism the result is brought about, so long as indubitably somehow from thought, with no more than negligible physical energy, there are brought about events stupendous from every point of view. The proposition is that signs often have existential meanings, or results of their force as signs, and each meaning consisting in some deed or fact, or single series of historic events, where my adjective merely means that I use the noun “event” in the sense in which an event can happen but once, because the past is gone, and time does not double on itself.<sup>12</sup> An infantry officer’s word of command, “Ground arms!” is completely fulfilled in the slamming of the musket butts upon the ground. He wishes the order to be heard and apprehended, but the more purely mechanical the response, the better his meaning is fulfilled. Some signs, then, have existential meanings; but of course, no number of events could be adequate to the meaning of an intellectual concept, since such a concept is general; and no collection of individuals, however multitudinous, can be adequate to a general. For a general embraces all that are conceivably possible, when possibility is not restricted by any existential condition.

Qualities of feeling may be meanings of signs. Thus, a piece of concerted music, since it mediates between the quality of the composer’s succession of musical emotions and another in the breast of the auditor, is a sign. A quality of feeling is neither a thought nor an existential event.<sup>13</sup> Dispute might arise over the latter assertion, but my confidence in it remains. The truth is that the whole field of feeling is sown with logical subtleties. I have examined them; but the reader will presumably be glad to escape

11 Working variant: “Thus there are emotional meanings, or meanings that are feelings; there are existential meanings, or actual things or events, whether physical or psychical, resulting from the significance of signs; and conceptual or logical meanings.”

12 Working variant: “Little need be said of the existential meaning, which in its entirety, consists in the sum total of the actual effects which the sign has had and will have, in its capacity as a sign. These must not be confounded with the effects of the truth of the sign.”

13 Working variant: “The emotional meaning ... is what is conveyed strictly in the presentation [of the sign] itself without any reflexion, or abstraction, or analysis, or other efficient element. It is not, (to make a very fine point,) even the feeling the sign brings, since that is an actual fact, and so belongs to the existential meaning. This is only the quality of feeling.”

such discussions. A quality of feeling is a mode of consciousness that is, first, positive, so that it might be a whole life; second, is within itself all that it is; and third, can only be experienced as the limit of relative grades. Consider for example, any particular purple. It is easy to conceive of a consciousness which should be altogether composed of nothing but that purple sensation. Psychologically impossible, because nothing would prevent its straightway going to sleep, it is, nevertheless, remarkably easy to conceive, in the sense of approximately imagining, and “making allowance” for the discrepancy. This positiveness, like every other character of the feeling, is non-relative. Indeed, the quality cannot be said to have any characters; it is, itself, its sole character. When compared with other purples, it will be seen to differ in hue, in luminosity, and in chroma. “Secondary sensation” is the accepted designation of a generalization from feelings that arise when sets of feelings are contemplated. Such are hue, luminosity, chroma. I have selected this form of statement, not, I confess, because I am sure it is more correct, but because while answering our purpose, it is much more easily comprehensible than another which would make a quality of feeling to be a mode of consciousness of that which is merely potential or possible, and which would accordingly say that hue, luminosity, and chroma were present in the original purple feeling. The important point for us is that every sign, if, at least, it actually functions as such, has an emotional meaning, or meaning consisting in a quality of feeling; namely, in the pleasurable quality of being recognized as an old acquaintance or else as one that a person feels he comprehends; and along with this there goes, in the case of an intellectual concept, an apprehension of a logical meaning, apt to be very delicate in its clearness, or discrimination between what has and what has not, the meaning in question, but equally apt to be quite crude in its indistinctness, that is, not accurately recognizing the ingredients that go to make up this meaning.

So much for the existential and the emotional meanings of intellectual concepts. We now come to that enigma which pragmatism professes to solve: What further meaning than those can there be? Somebody may say: “You have yourself mentioned it. It is the logical meaning.” No doubt: that is to say that it is easy to see that neither the existential nor the emotional meaning is adequate to the whole meaning of an intellectual concept; but we are now left, if possible, more visibly in the dark than ever, as to what that further meaning can consist in.

It is worthy of attention that while there appear to be three forms of the one correlate of a sign, the Meaning, there are only two of the other, the Object. They are the immediate and the real object. Perhaps if we examine these, we may be able to discern the reason of this discrepancy, and so get a hint of what that third meaning must be. The immediate object is the object as the sign represents it: the real object is that same object as it is, in its own mode of being, independent of the sign or any other representation. A person who should be endeavouring to moderate an exaggerated admiration of ability might remark that Richard III appeared to be a judicious ruler and legislator. One might safely lay a hundred to one that he had never examined the original witnesses as to the life of Richard; nor would he probably suppose his interlocutor to be better informed. It would not be the real Richard, but the Richard Plantagenet of the history-books, that he was talking about. But suppose that the other party should thereupon open the question whether Richard really was the furious fiend he is represented as being, whether, in truth, it was he or Henry Tudor who murdered the princes, and so on. Then he would have shifted the inquiry to the real object.<sup>14</sup> Every sign must plainly have an immediate object, however indefinite, in order to be a sign. In conversation, it will often be expressed, not in words, but by the environment of the interlocutors. In the order “Ground arms!” the object, which is the next instant of time, is expressed by the attitude of the officer, the way he carries his sword, and so forth. If the bare word “green” really conveys any idea, it is of something visible. For the object is the antecedent of the meaning. As I said above, the object is the idea or thing that the sign finds, the meaning what it leaves. The immediate object

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14 Working variant: “The real object,—so, at least, the conditional idealist will say,—is that figure of Richard which we should ultimately have in our minds as the result of sufficient information and reflexion.”

resembles the emotional meaning in being common to all signs, and also in being subjective.<sup>15</sup> The real object corresponds to the existential meaning very obviously.<sup>16</sup> Plainly, the reason for there being a third meaning but no third object must be grounded in the essential difference between the relations of the correlates to the sign. The object is antecedent, the meaning subsequent to the sign. That third meaning, therefore, must be in some sort of future tense.

To this may be added the consideration that it is not all signs that have a logical meaning, but only intellectual concepts, which are all general, or else intimately dependent on a general. This shows that the particular species of future tense to which the logical meaning belongs is the conditional. All grammarians find the conditional to be a modified future.

At the time when I was originally puzzling over this enigma, I had reached somewhere about this point in my inquiry, and was in a decided quandary, when I all at once said, "Now if I only could find a moderate number of concepts which should be at once highly abstract and abstruse and yet whose meanings should be quite unquestionable, a study of these would undoubtedly show just why and how the logical meaning must be a conditional future, even for concepts quite unlike those." I had no sooner uttered this project to myself than I exclaimed, "Why, what am I talking about? There are plenty of such concepts! They are as plenty as blackberries in mathematics!" At that time the Weierstrassian reform had hardly begun. However, I selected a number of pretty good examples: the concept of an irrational quantity, that of geometric equality, that of one collection which though innumerable is less than another given collection. These cannot have been the examples I then used; but they will answer the purpose today. Having found my examples, I at once began running through the explanations of the concepts and found them all to take the following form: Proceed according to such and such a general rule. Then if such and such a concept is applicable to such and such an object, the operation will have such and such a result; and conversely. Thus if two geometrical figures of dimensionality  $N$  are equal in all their parts, then in a space of dimensionality  $N+1$ , it is possible by such and such a rule to find an axis such that by a rotation around it the one figure will pass through exact coincidence with the other, but if not, will not. If we express a dyadic relation by  $R$ , and use these two expressions as equivalent  $A$  is  $R$  to  $B = B$  is  $R$ 'd by  $A$ , then if one collection, say the  $M$ 's is less than or equal to another, that of the  $N$ s, it is possible to find a relation,  $R$ , such that every  $M$  is  $R$  to some  $N$  to which no other  $M$  is  $R$ , but if the  $M$ s are more than the  $N$ s, no such relation is possible. If a quantity,  $Q$ , is irrational, then, given any numerical fraction,  $F$ , whatever, it is possible to find another fraction  $F'$ , which more nearly fulfills the defining condition of  $Q$ ; but if  $Q$  is rational, there is some fraction which exactly fulfills the defining condition of  $Q$ .

These examples bear out James's definition of pragmatism, which I have never denied is true of the logical meaning.<sup>17</sup> My slight objection to it is that it seems to be true also of the existential meaning. Intellectual concepts are general or derivatives of generals, and therefore their meanings must be general. The general forms of psychic action besides concepts themselves are desires and habits. Desires are previous to the existential realization, while habits result from repeated such realizations. If, in place of James's "experiences to be expected," we substitute the habits which must result from those experiences,—must result, I mean, if the defined concept be intellectual, but not if it be existential or emotional,—we finally extract, I think, the very quintessence of the logical meaning. Herein, as it seems to me, lies the very inmost secret of the subject: that such an idea as "green," or such an idea as that Richard III was humpbacked, does not necessarily,—nor, by itself, even possibly,—result in any habit or general rule of conduct, while a true intellectual concept does lead to the result that, given the

15 Working variant: "The emotional meaning corresponds to the immediate object, inasmuch as it is involved in the mere presentation of the sign. Only, it is what that presentation brings and not what it finds."

16 Working variant: "The existential meaning corresponds to the real object, in that both are concerned with the actual or existent; and both, while unattainable in their completeness, can be known humanly by approaches."

17 As stated above, James "defines pragmatism as the doctrine that the whole 'meaning' of a concept expresses itself either in the shape of conduct to be recommended or of experience to be expected."



appropriate circumstances and motive, a rule of conduct will follow. If a quantity is irrational, you must not seek for any exact value of it, but may seek for an approximation to any predesignate tolerance of error, and so forth. It seems to me that it is to my idea, rather than to James's, that the designation pragmatism is particularly applicable. It is because the practical is so preponderant in my doctrine, that I thought the most appropriate form for its enunciation was that of a maxim; and accordingly I originally stated it, as follows:

“Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings you conceive the object of your conception to have. Then your general conception of these effects is the whole of your conception of the object.”<sup>18</sup>

The immediate effects can only be efforts. The general conception of them is the concept of the habit that governs them.<sup>19</sup>

Because of its intensely practical character, a real comprehension of pragmatism can only be gained through examples; and any exposition of it should include at least two examples, the one to illustrate the application of the rule, and the other to show how the hard knots of metaphysics fall assunder as soon as the rule is applied.<sup>20</sup> Indeed more than one example of the latter kind are called for to show how different kinds of difficulties yield to the treatment. Besides that, the snares of pragmatism require attention; that is to say, the effects of careless and faulty attempts to put it into practice. Finally, the objections to, and refutations of, pragmatism require notice. Most of these I heartily applaud and approve; for it is not pragmatism at all that they refute, but pseudopragmatism; and the refuters,—those of them that are really strong,—are mostly themselves half-pragmatists, without suspecting it. I reckon any philosopher who emphasizes the element of purpose in intellectual action as being a sort of pragmatist; and so computed, the majority of the philosophical world today is pragmatist.

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18 Peirce's original formulation (CP 5.402, EP 1:132) has slightly different punctuation, is in first person plural rather than second person, and omits the word “general.”

19 Working variant: “Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings you conceive the object of your conception to have: then the general mental habit that consists in the production of these effects is the whole meaning of your concept.”

20 Working variant: “When once this work shall have been done and generally acknowledged, as it certainly will be, pragmatism will sink down to a place in philosophy analogous to that of the doctrine of limits in mathematics,—that is as a fundamental principle which seldom has to be called upon after the foundations of philosophy have once been laid.”