Preface

Studies in the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce which have appeared in increasing numbers over the last twenty-five or thirty years have won for him at last the recognition which, for the most part, he was denied during his lifetime. Everyone is now agreed that Peirce is one of America's truly original thinkers. Indeed his contributions to logic alone would merit him that honor. Yet his writings cover such varied subjects as physics, history, cosmology, mathematics, metaphysics, and religion. They are very fragmentary and sometimes incomplete. Often they are merely outlines of projects to be undertaken. An important question, therefore, in determining Peirce's place in the history of philosophy is whether or not he succeeded in constructing his philosophy "architectonically" (5.5). Did he, like Aristotle and Kant, succeed in laying broad and deep foundations on which to build? Is Peirce's philosophy a philosophy or merely a patchwork of incompatible tendencies?

Peircean scholars are divided on the issue. Not a few claim that there are two or more Peirces. Others think that the very undertaking which he set himself—to construct a "scientific metaphysics"—is doomed from the outset because of the basic antagonism between the aims of science and those of metaphysics. Still others argue that,

despite the obviously fragmentary character of his papers, Peirce has outlined a genuine philosophical "system." Yet another group feels that he has achieved a partial synthesis with gaps and inconsistencies, some of which at least can be remedied.

Our own view tends to be something like this last. Peirce will never turn out to be the founder of a philosophical "school" as were Aristotle and Aquinas and Kant. He has left too much undone, too much in the form of promissory notes for that. Nevertheless, there will be "Peirceans" in the sense that men will be inspired by his ideals of inquiry and guided by his principles of logic. And perhaps one day some such "disciple" (or as Peirce himself might have thought, some such group of researchers) may achieve the sort of synthesis of which he dreamed. Peirce’s work does show considerable unity and a good number of the alleged inconsistencies are only apparent. Large blocks of his work are remarkably interwoven and interdependent, so much so that one wonders whether or not Peirce’s claims to have worked out certain problems, even though he never got around to putting the solutions on paper, are not worthy of belief. For example, the various formulations of the pragmatic maxim over the course of his career are basically consistent. His categories are not only consistent with his pragmatism but absolutely essential to understanding it. Again Peirce’s extreme realism is, as he always claimed, the bedrock of pragmatism and synechism. A firm and definite line of thought does emerge from the tangle of his papers even though much of his work is incomplete and perhaps here and there inconsistent in details. It is

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simply too easy, therefore, to divide Peirce up neatly into "tendencies" which are incompatible.\(^6\)

In the end perhaps we may disagree with Peirce, but first we must take him on his own terms, as sympathetically as possible. In that way we are more likely to understand him correctly and so our criticism will be the stronger. It is possible to defend Peirce's fundamental unity and coherence in large sectors of his writing and still not accept his position. The question of understanding a position from the "inside" is of course distinct from the question of that position's truth, or adequacy. Clearly, however, if it can be shown that a philosopher falls into contradiction again and again, it is a decisive point against him. On the other hand, to say that a philosopher is basically consistent is not necessarily to claim that his position is correct. We have a number of serious reservations and criticisms of Peirce, despite the position we are here defending, and we hope to have the opportunity one day to air them thoroughly.\(^7\)

Our presentation is developed in three parts. Part I deals with the relation of the pragmatic maxim to the doctrine of the normative sciences. The 1903 version of that maxim was due in large measure to Peirce's realization of these sciences' role in human inquiry. Since the doctrine of the normative sciences was influenced by years of cosmological speculation, Part II takes up the doctrine of synechism. Peirce thought of his cosmology as proof of pragmatism. Pragmatism,

\(^6\) Some commentators use James' distinction between the "tender-minded" and the "tough-minded" to characterize the "conflicting" elements of rationalism and empiricism in Peirce. They attach an evaluation to this terminology, approving of toughness and disapproving of tenderness. James did not mean to imply a value judgment. He merely meant to describe two temperaments, equally good and necessary in the search for the "whole truth." See W. James, Pragmatism and Other Essays (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), pp. 5–21.

\(^7\) For example, we have reservations about Peirce's extreme realism. Again there are problems concerning the status of the individual in Peirce's "system." We are not entirely convinced either that metaphysics can be collapsed into logic. Further, questions might be asked as to the legitimacy of assuming that the movement of history and evolution follows that of our reasoning. These are but some of the critical questions which might be addressed to Peirce.
he maintained, is a step in synechism. Yet there is no understanding of synechism without an appreciation of tychism and evolution. Indeed, there is no synechism at all without them. Hence Part III considers the doctrine of "evolutionary love." In a proper conception of the evolutionary process, Peirce believed, was to be found the *sumnum bonum*, the ultimate norm for man's thinking and acting. The title chosen by Philip Wiener for his edition of selections from Peirce, therefore, seems particularly appropriate since it sums up so well what Peirce's philosophy tries to discover—*Values in a Universe of Chance.* Throughout our presentation we have emphasized the key role habit is made to play in his thought. In a true sense it is the unifying thread which ties together the strands of realism, idealism, and pragmatism.

This thesis does not propose the last word on the subject of Peirce's "system." We think, however, that we have made a good case and that we have resolved some of the "inconsistencies" in his writings and have laid a foundation for the resolution of others. Perhaps more mature thought will lead us to modify or even abandon altogether the position we are here defending. For the moment, nonetheless, this is how we read Peirce. One thing is certain; we have begun to realize how much still remains to be done. This study has convinced us that his categories are truly at the heart of all Peirce's thought. We feel that an exhaustive study of them is very much needed, a study which will show them to be a great deal more complex than has generally been admitted. For example, a study should be made of the relation of the categories to the modes of being. Are they the same? If they are not, how precisely are they related? This study should emphasize the interrelation and mutual dependence of the categories and not be content with distinguishing them. Again, such a study ought to make clear how the application of the categories shifts and adapts to the various levels of analysis. At the moment, we are inclined to think that such a study in depth will support our general thesis.

We would like to point out that this work was originally submitted to the Department of Philosophy of Yale University as a doctoral dissertation under the title "Peirce's Ontological Pragmatism." The present version is substantially the same as that dissertation with the exception of some minor revisions and the addition of a footnote.
or two. The title has been changed at the suggestion of several associates as more appropriate to the work’s central concern. The bibliography, of course, has also been brought up to date.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge our very great debt to Professor John E. Smith, who directed the dissertation at Yale, for the many hours he so generously gave us. Without his advice, suggestions, and encouragement we would have been utterly lost, and surely this book would never have appeared. We would also like to thank Mr. Richard Bernstein for his continued interest in our project. It was he who first introduced us in a formal way to Peircean studies and offered valuable criticism all along the way. The inadequacies and/or errors which remain are all the author’s. We thank, too, the Philosophy Department of Harvard University for permission to use the Peirce manuscripts on deposit in the Houghton Library, and the library staff for their courtesy and assistance.

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