EVEN AS A BOY Peirce was interested in the normative sciences. He recounts how he picked up his elder brother’s textbook in logic and worked right through it on his own. Undoubtedly his mathematician father encouraged and directed this interest. Logic, however, was not the only normative science to which he early applied himself. He tells us that as an undergraduate at Harvard (ca. 1855) he expounded as best he could Schiller’s *Aesthetische Briefe* to his friend Horatio Paine (2.197). Almost fifty years later he expressed regret that he had not seriously followed up this study, because he then saw how fundamental it was to a theory of knowledge (2.120, 2.197, 5.129 ff.).

Although logic received most of Peirce’s attention throughout his long career, still he tells us that he had always been interested in ethical systems (2.198). Until the ’80’s, however, he considered ethics to be nothing more than an art or practical science which relied little upon theoretical principles. It should be remembered that the first formulation of the pragmatic maxim (which he later called “a rough approximation”—5.16) and his analysis of belief in terms of what one is willing to act upon appeared in the ’70’s. Peirce says that he first began to see the importance of ethical *theory* around 1882 (2.198). At that time he started to distinguish morality from “pure” ethics. As a result of this illumination he took up a serious study of the great moralists (5.111, 5.129) and began to suspect that there was some important connection between ethics and logic (5.111). It was only some ten years later (ca. 1894) that this suspicion became a firm conviction (2.198) and only in about 1899 was he ready to say that ethics is truly a normative science (5.129). Peirce’s judgment in this matter, therefore, was certainly not hasty. Rather it was the result of long reflection during the height of his intellectual powers (in 1899 Peirce was only 58 years old). Finally in 1903 Peirce made public for the first time his conclusions in the Lowell Lectures (5.533). Yet even then he was not prepared to say apodictically that esthetics is a normative science and indeed the science upon which both ethics and
logic ultimately rest. He is content with the modest proposal of an opinion and an hypothesis (5.129, 2.197).

In the Cambridge lectures of 1903 Peirce explicitly related his doctrine about the normative sciences to the correct understanding of pragmatism as he first used the term. He tells us that once one sees that the normative sciences in general examine the laws of conformity of things to ends, one begins "to get upon the trail of the secret of pragmatism" (5.130). What then was the development of the "pragmatic maxim" from about 1893 onward? Just how did Peirce's speculation concerning the normative sciences modify his thinking about the meaning of his 1878 statement (5.402)?

Peirce considered the first formulation of the maxim "crude" (8.255) and only approximate (5.16). His first emendation (5.402, n. 2) was made in 1893 at approximately the time he began to see a connection between logic and ethics. This note was meant to meet the objection that the maxim is "skeptical and materialistic."1 Peirce defends himself by an appeal to a collective finality governing the "realization of ideas in man's consciousness and in his works." We must be on our guard, he warns us, against understanding the maxim in a too individualistic sense. The fruit borne by an individual's endeavors is not limited just to what he aims at; whether he knows it or not his efforts contribute to a collective result—a growth of reasonableness in the world.

Individual action is a means and not our end. Individual pleasure is not our end; we are all putting our shoulders to the wheel for an end that none of us can catch more than a glimpse at—that which the generations are working out. But we can see that the development of embodied ideas is what it will consist in. (5.402, n. 2)

Three years later William James' *Will to Believe* pushed the pragmatic maxim "to such extremes as must tend to give us pause." Peirce interpreted his old friend's position to be that man's end is action and in an article2 for Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and

---

1 Peirce has in mind those who would make his maxim "stoical." Cf. 5.3. For his analysis of classical Stoicism cf. 6.36.
2 Under "Pragmatic and Pragmatism."
Psychology (1902) criticized James for not seeing that far from action being man's end, action itself supposes an end.  

If it be admitted, on the contrary, that action wants an end, and that that end must be something of a general description, then the spirit of the maxim itself, which is that we must look to the upshot of our concepts in order rightly to apprehend them, would direct us towards something different from practical facts, namely, to general ideas, as the true interpreters of our thought. (5.3)

Action, then, cannot be the final logical interpretant of thought because it is not general while thought is. Thought can only be interpreted in terms of Thirds; the general can only be understood in terms of the general. The meaning of a conception cannot be found in action, but in the end for which the action (resulting from the conception) is done. Of course, the practical facts must not be overlooked or ignored. And if one chooses to call this necessary reference to the practical the "pragmatic maxim," then it should be applied in a thoroughgoing way indeed, but

...when that has been done, and not before, a still higher grade of clearness of thought can be attained by remembering that the only ultimate good which the practical facts to which it directs attention can subserve is to further the development of concrete reasonableness; so that the meaning of the concept does not lie in any individual reactions at all, but in the manner in which those reactions contribute to that development. (5.3)

The meaning of a concept, therefore, is judged in terms of the contribution which the reactions it evokes make toward the realization of thought's ultimate end. In other words, Peirce introduces in the pragmatic maxim itself a normative function. The pragmatic maxim is a way of recognizing the reality of the objects of general ideas in their generality. But general ideas "govern" action; they are really

---

3 Cf. letter to Calderoni (8.211-213).
4 Peirce discusses interpretants at length in 5.475-493 and again in 4.536. See Appendix II for a summary of these texts.
5 Cf. 1.343-344.
laws of growth; they are really final causes; they are really normative.

In this *Dictionary* article Peirce himself admits that his early formulation of the maxim did lend itself to the sort of interpretation given it by James and others, but he implies that he never meant it to be the “stoical maxim” that man’s end is action. He explains:

Indeed, in the article of 1878, above referred to, the writer practised better than he preached; for he applied the stoical maxim most unstoically, in such a sense as to insist upon the reality of the objects of general ideas in their generality.

(5.3)

Now if one carefully rereads “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” in the light of subsequent clarification by Peirce, it will become clear that in truth he did not make action man’s end, nor did he make action the end of man’s thinking. Action, no doubt, is involved in thinking both in the sense that thinking is a form of action and that thinking normally results in action. Action is, therefore, certainly a criterion of thought. But he does not say that action is the purpose of thinking. Its purpose is the establishment of “a belief, a rule of action, a habit of thought.” A habit is not an action. It is in an entirely different category. A habit is general, an action is singular; a habit is a Third, and action is a Second. Still, although this is what Peirce meant and what he strictly said, a superficial reading of the paper could lead to misunderstanding especially if one were not acquainted with Peirce’s subsequent development of the nature of habit as a general. Then, too, Peirce’s examples of how the maxim is to be applied are misleading and betray perhaps a certain hesitation and lack of clarity in the new doctrine he was trying to work out for the first time. For example, he applies the maxim to elucidate the meaning of the term “hard”:

Suppose, then, that a diamond could be crystalized in the midst of a cushion of soft cotton, and should remain there until it was finally burned up. Would it be false to say that that diamond was soft? . . . We may, in the present case,

6 Elsewhere, e.g. in a paper on the classification of the sciences (ca. 1902), Peirce distinguishes “purpose” from “final cause.” Purpose is one kind of final cause, the one “most familiar to our experience.” (1.211) But he is not always careful to observe the distinction. The point he is making is that final cause does not always require consciousness. (1.216)
modify our question, and ask what prevents us from saying that all hard bodies remain perfectly soft until they are touched, when their hardness increases with the pressure until they are scratched . . . there would be no falsity in such modes of speech. They would involve a modification of our present usage of speech with regard to the word “hard” and “soft,” but not their meanings. (5.403)

This certainly seems to be a rather strong expression of the very sort of operationalism which Peirce branded nominalistic and hence erroneous because it reduces potentiality to actuality.7 In another place and at a later date (ca. 1905) he criticized and modified the misleading character of his illustration.8 He regretted the infelicitous example because it tended to obscure rather than to clarify what he had intended to say.

In any case, in 1903, Peirce decided to make pragmatism the subject of a series of lectures at Harvard. This gave him the opportunity of comparing his doctrines with others of the same name but of a different spirit. In those lectures he tells us that he has no particular fault to find with the numerous definitions of pragmatism he had lately come across, but “to say exactly what pragmatism is describes pretty well what you and I have to puzzle out together” (5.16). Then in a playfully ironic passage, he teases the “new pragmatists” for not acknowledging their debt to him.

To speak plainly, a considerable number of philosophers have lately written as they might have written in case they had been reading either what I wrote but were ashamed to confess it, or had been reading something that some reader of mine had read. For they seem quite disposed to adopt my term pragmatism. I shouldn’t wonder if they were ashamed of me. What could be more humiliating than to confess that one had learned anything of a logician? (5.17)

Peirce is delighted to share the opinions of such a brilliant company and has no complaint to make against them except that they are “lively.”

7 But see 7.340, written in 1873, for a realistic interpretation of “hardness.”
8 Cf. 5.403, n. 3; 1.615; 8.208.
The new pragmatists seem to be distinguished for their terse, vivid and concrete style of expression together with a certain buoyancy of tone as if they were conscious of carrying about them the master key to all the secrets of metaphysics. (5.17)

No doubt, Peirce has in mind "cocksureness" and not merely qualities of literary style when he chides this liveliness. One thing Peirce could not tolerate was a cocksure attitude. For him this was the very antithesis of the scientific attitude, humble "fallibilism" or willingness to learn. Peirce clearly has in mind those who enthusiastically pushed the pragmatic maxim "to extremes." The maxim was not intended to be an open-sesame to all metaphysical problems nor a panacea for all intellectual ills. It was not proposed as a principle of speculative philosophy, but as a logical, or perhaps better, a semantic maxim which would guide all types of investigation. Indeed Peirce recognized that

... one of the faults that I think they [the new pragmatists] might find with me is that I make pragmatism to be a mere maxim of logic instead of a sublime principle of speculative philosophy. (5.18)

And, with tongue in cheek, he continues:

In order to be admitted to better philosophical standing I have endeavored to put pragmatism as I understand it into the same form of a philosophical theorem. I have not succeeded any better than this:

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

9 Cf. 1.9 ff.; 1.55; 1.141.
10 "I also want to say that after all pragmatism solves no real problem. It only shows that supposed problems are not real problems. . . . The effect of pragmatism here is simply to open our minds to receiving any evidence, not to furnish evidence." From a letter to James, March 7, 1904 (8.259); see also 5.13, n. 1.
Peirce managed to get his logical principle into the form of a philosophical theorem, but he immediately appends his original statement of the maxim thereby leaving his audience to judge whether the new form is really an improvement. In any case, he never used that form again. Still, there is one important point made in it: the pragmatic maxim must be interpreted in terms of conditionals. Indeed the burden of the Harvard lectures is to show that meaning is intimately bound up with real laws of nature, that is, with real potentialities in things expressible in conditional sentences. The conditional necessity of law is expressed not only by a “will-be” but also by a “would-be,” because law deals with the realm of the possible—what would be the case whenever certain conditions are fulfilled. What the conditional expresses is not merely the juxtaposition of an antecedent and a consequent, but the consequence or connection between them. “If such and such were the case (or were done), then such and such would follow.” When Peirce came to see this more clearly, he corrected what he had said about the relationship between the hardness of a diamond and scratching with carborundum. A diamond never scratched is nevertheless hard because if it were brought into contact with carborundum it would be scratched. Thus the meaning of hardness is not in an action but in an intention or “intellectual purport.”

During this whole period (ca. 1896–1903), then, due to the sudden popularity of “pragmatism,” Peirce was very much preoccupied with disassociating his views from those circulating. Again, in 1905, he felt that he ought to try once more to explain what his notion of pragmatism entailed and even went so far as to coin a new word for it, “pragmaticism,” which was “ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers” (5.414). So he published a series of three articles in the *Monist*, which contain perhaps the clearest presentation of his case that he ever wrote.

In the first of these essays (“What Pragmatism Is”) he re-expressed the maxim thus:

Endeavoring, as a man of that type [a “laboratory-man”] naturally would, to formulate what he so approved, he framed the theory that a *conception*, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since
obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept would imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is absolutely nothing more in it. (5.412)

This formulation makes it clear that the maxim has very little indeed to do with the practical. And Peirce explains that his awareness of this fact determined his choice of the name "pragmatism" or "pragmaticism" rather than "practicism" or "practicalism."

But for one who had learned philosophy out of Kant, as the writer, along with nineteen out of every twenty experimentalists who have turned to philosophy, had done, and who still thought in Kantian terms most readily, praktisch and pragmatisch were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose. Now quite the most striking feature of the new theory was its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose; and that consideration it was which determined the preference for the name pragmatism. (5.412)

It is not, therefore, the practical consequences of a conception which make it true and meaningful. They are, of course, criteria of its truth and meaningfulness (since one might expect a true and meaningful concept to have consequences), but do not in some crude sense constitute truth and meaning. This is but another way of repudiating the notion that action is man's end and the purpose of man's thinking. The

11 Cf. 5.197 where Peirce expounds pragmatism as the logic of abduction. He remarks that if pragmatism teaches that every conception is a conception of conceivably practical effects it makes conception reach far beyond the practical, since it allows any flight of imagination which will ultimately alight upon a possible practical effect. Cf. also 5.538–545.

key to meaning and to truth is the relation of a conception “to some definite human purpose,” to some end which governs actions in the same way Thirds govern Seconds. Rational cognition is in the category of Thirdness and must be interpreted in terms of some other Third. For Peirce this is nothing other than rational purpose. The pragmatic maxim, then, is but a way of expressing this relation. Once again we see that Peirce intends meaning to be identical with rational purport and not with action alone. Of course, Peirce realizes that a proof that this is so would require a sustained exposition of his entire philosophy of logic, cosmology, and metaphysics, or, in his words, “the establishment of the truth of synechism” (5.415).

In the same article Peirce tries to answer certain objections to his positions in the form of a little dialog. It is particularly enlightening because it indicates as clearly as anyone could wish the connection he saw, or at least thought he saw, between pragmaticism and the normative sciences. It is objected, first, that according to the pragmatic position nothing enters into the meaning of a concept but an experiment; yet an experiment in itself cannot reveal anything more than a constant conjunction of antecedent and consequent (5.424). This typically Humean objection, Peirce observes, betrays a misunderstanding of pragmaticism’s fundamental point. In the first place, the objection raised misrepresents what is involved in an experiment. An experiment is not an isolated, “atomic” event, but always forms a part of connected series or system. An experiment essentially requires the following ingredients: 1) an experimenter, 2) a verifiable hypothesis concerning the experimenter’s environment, and 3) a sincere doubt in the experimenter’s mind about the hypothesis’ truth. The experimenter, by an act of choice, must single out certain identifiable objects on which to operate. Then by an external (or quasi-external) act he modifies those objects. Next comes a reaction of the world upon the experimenter through perception. Finally, he must recognize what the experiment teaches him. While the chief elements in the event of the experiment are action and reaction, the unity of essence of the experiment, what makes the experiment an experiment, lies in its purpose and plan (5.424).

In the second place, this sort of objection fails to catch the pragmaticist’s attitude of mind. Rational meaning does not consist in an experiment, but in experimental phenomena. These phenomena, to
PRAGMATISM AND THE NORMATIVE SCIENCES 61

which the pragmaticist refers, are not particular events that have already happened to someone or to something in the dead past, but are "what surely will happen to everybody in the living future who shall fulfill certain conditions" (5.425). Essential to experimental phenomena is that they have been predicted.

The phenomenon consists in the fact that when an experimentalist shall come to act according to a certain scheme that he has in mind, then will something else happen, and shatter the doubts of sceptics, like the celestial fire upon the altar of Elijah. (5.425)

In the third place, this objection that an experiment can only show constant conjunction of antecedent and consequent overlooks in a very nominalistic way the fact that the experimenter is not interested in this single experiment or in that single experimental phenomenon. He is interested in general kinds of experimental phenomena, for what is conditionally true in futuro can only be general. In other words, experimental method implicitly at least affirms the reality of generals (5.426).

It is just at this point that the connection between pragmaticism and the normative sciences becomes unmistakable. Peirce asks how it is that the relational meaning of a proposition lies in the future. The reason is that according to his theory the meaning of a proposition is precisely that form in which it becomes applicable to human conduct, "not in these or those special circumstances, nor when one entertains this or that special design, but that form which is most directly applicable to self-control under every situation, and to every purpose" (5.427). Future conduct is the only kind that is subject to self-control, and, in order that the form of the proposition might apply to every situation and purpose upon which it has any bearing, "it must be simply the general description of all the experimental phenomena which the assertion of the proposition virtually predicts" (5.427). Therefore, according to pragmaticism, the meaning of a proposition is attained when it is grasped as capable of governing future action through the exercise of self-control. That is its "rational purport."

The next objection which Peirce raises against his own theory is that pragmaticism is a thoroughgoing phenomenalism. He answers it briefly by denying the allegation in the light of what had just been
said about “rational purport.” The following objection, however, is the really crucial one in Peirce’s view and the one involving James’ fundamental mistake.

**QUESTIONER:** Well, if you choose so to make Doing the Be-all and the End-all of human life, why do you not make meaning to consist simply in doing? Doing has to be done at a certain time upon a certain object. Individual objects and single events cover all reality, as everybody knows, and as a practicalist ought to be the first to insist. Yet, your meaning, as you have described it, is *general*. Thus, it is of the nature of a mere word and not a reality. (5.429)

The objection is just about as clearly and as forcibly put as it can be. And for Peirce it touches the very heart of the matter because it points out the basic choice that all philosophers must make between nominalism and realism. The objection is powerful because it involves so many things that must be admitted, and Peirce clears away the ground immediately by conceding what he must.

It must be admitted, in the first place, that if pragmaticism really made Doing to be the Be-all and the End-all of life, that would be its death. For to say that we live for the sake of action, as action, regardless of the thought it carries out, would be to say that there is no such thing as rational purport. Secondly, it must be admitted that every proposition professes to be true of a certain real individual object, often the environing universe. Thirdly, it must be admitted that pragmaticism fails to furnish any translation or meaning of a proper name, or other designation of an individual object. Fourthly, the pragmaticistic meaning is undoubtedly general; and it is equally indisputable that the general is of the nature of the word or sign. Fifthly, it must be admitted that individuals alone exist; and sixthly, it may be admitted that the very meaning of a word or significant object ought to be the very essence of reality of what it signifies. (5.429)

These admissions come down to this: pragmaticism holds that meaning or rational purport, since it is necessarily general, can only belong to the category of Thirdness, and consequently, cannot be reduced to...
action-reaction or to individual existence which belong to the category of Secondness. Of course, a general is of the nature of a word or sign precisely because it cannot be exhausted by any singular individual instance. While it is true that generals do not exist, it does not follow that they are not real. They have the reality of types or forms to which objects conform but which none of them can exactly be (5.429). The type or form abstractly considered is an ideal which the instances embody to a greater or less degree, and as an ideal the type or form plays a normative role with respect to its concrete instances, to our knowledge of them (by natural classification), and to expression of that knowledge in terms of abstract definition.\footnote{Cf. 1.222. An abstract definition does not constitute necessarily a “natural” or “real” class. What constitutes such a class is a common final cause. An abstract definition expresses, or attempts to express, the class already constituted.}

It would take us too far afield to discuss in detail Peirce’s notion of reality and his adaptation of “scholastic realism.” Yet from what we have seen thus far their connection with pragmaticism is evident. A brief word, however, may not be out of place. For the pragmaticist, “that is real which has such and such characters, whether anybody thinks it to have those characters or not” (5.430). Thus anything is real which is not a mental fiction. On the other hand, reality is that ultimate state of things which will be believed in the ultimate opinion of the community of inquirers. The ultimate opinion, however, seems to be for Peirce a theoretical limit toward which the community of inquirers converge but which is never quite attained, for no opinion is ultimate in the sense that no further questions may be asked about the subject matter of that opinion. There will always be more to learn. There is convergence in the sense that independent inquirers will tend to accept as established certain propositions about their subject matter. Peirce’s view seems to be that both the external world and man’s knowledge of that world are evolving. On the one hand, since man’s knowledge of the world is dependent upon experience, since he does not create the objects of knowledge, and since the world he experiences is constantly growing, there will always be a lag in his knowledge of the world. Man’s knowledge of the world is constantly corrected by experience and so, given an indefinitely long time, man’s opinion about the world will tend to become uniform. Taught by
nature herself, man would come to know through experience what to expect from nature. This does not mean that he would ever have finished his lessons, for nature will always exhibit "sporting," but he would have come to understand the process in terms of its general direction and purpose—the growth of concrete reasonableness.

Now, just as conduct controlled by ethical reason tends toward fixing certain habits of conduct, the nature of which . . . does not depend upon any accidental circumstances, and in that sense may be said to be destined; so, thought, controlled by a rational experimental logic, tends to the fixation of certain opinions, equally destined, the nature of which will be the same in the end, however the perversity of thought of whole generations may cause the postponement of the ultimate fixation. If this be so, as every man of us virtually assumes that it is, in regard to each matter the truth of which he seriously discusses, then, according to the adopted definition of "real," the state of things which will be believed in that ultimate opinion is real. But, for the most part, such opinions will be general. Consequently, some general objects are real. (Of course, nobody ever thought that all generals were real . . .) (5.430)

Some generals, then, are real and have a real efficacy in just the way common sense acknowledges an efficacy in human purposes. Human actions are controlled in terms of human purposes; they are specified and determined by certain ends and goals. So, too, real generals specify and determine human knowledge. Real generals are what constitute the cosmos as ordered and intelligible. They are both the condition of possibility of any rationality whatsoever and the normative principles of that sort of rationality (human) which is continually dependent upon the shock of experience. "Individual existence or actuality without any regularity whatever is a nullity. Chaos is pure nothing" (5.431).

According to Peirce, if this "scholastic realism" is put in the form of a general conditional proposition about the future such that it is calculated to influence human conduct, one has the pragmatic maxim. True pragmatism, therefore, does not make action the summum bonum. The growth of concrete reasonableness in the world of ex-
istsents is that ultimate good. As evolution progresses, human intelligence plays a greater and greater role in that development through its characteristic power of self-control. There is an interaction between human rationality and the evolutionary process. In the beginning the human mind emerged from that process, according to Peirce's view, but once emerged it can and does influence the course of evolution through deliberate conduct. In effect human rationality becomes one of nature's agents in the process. Nature's objective regularity specifies man's knowledge, and man guides his own activity toward and in nature accordingly. Even if, through some perversity, some men, even over long periods of time, should choose to counteract nature's directives, to swim against the tide, in the long run man will be forced by experience to recognize her as growing in rationality despite him and as guiding him in his own quest for reason.

Peirce concludes this informative Monist article by insisting upon the utter inadequacy of action (Secondness) to account for the generality (Thirdness) of meaning (5.436). To understand all that is involved in this contention one would have to undertake a serious study of continuity which "is simply what generality becomes in the logic of relatives, and thus, like generality, is an affair of thought, and is the essence of thought." Peirce tells us why he alludes to the theory of continuity here: to emphasize what is absolutely essential to pragmaticism, namely, that

... the third category—the category of thought, representation, triadic relation, mediation, genuine thirdness, thirdness as such—is an essential ingredient of reality, yet does not by itself constitute reality, since this category . . . can have no concrete being without action, as a separate object on which to work its government, just as action cannot


15 "Accordingly, the pragmaticist does not make the summum bonum to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be destined, which is what we strive to express in calling them reasonable. In its higher stages, evolution takes place more and more largely through self-control, and this gives the pragmaticist a sort of justification for making the rational purport to be general." (5.433)
exist without the immediate being of feeling on which to act. (5.436)

Almost fifteen years earlier (ca. 1892) Peirce had said, "My philosophy resuscitates Hegel . . . in a strange costume" (1.42). Hegel too had seen the importance of continuity and indeed the "Secret of Hegel" was just that he discovered that the universe is everywhere permeated with continuous growth (1.40–41). Peirce’s pragmaticism, then, is "closely allied to Hegelian absolute idealism" with this important difference: Thirdness alone is not enough to make the world. Hegel’s fundamental mistake was to dismiss Firstness and Secondness (5.436).16

The second article of this Monist series also appeared in 1905 under the title "Issues of Pragmaticism." Peirce remarks that in the 1878 formulation of the pragmatic maxim, contrary to his wont, he used five derivates of the same word, concipere. He did so for two reasons: 1) to show that he was speaking of meaning “in no other sense than that of intellectual purport,” and 2) “to avoid all danger of being understood as attempting to explain a concept by percepts, images, schemata, or by anything but concepts.” The point is, of course, that only something in the category of Thirdness can constitute meaning. Action is like the finale of a symphony, but nobody would say that the finale was the purpose of the symphony; it is rather its upshot (5.430, n. 3). Of course, pragmaticism recognizes a connection between thought and action.17 Ultimately it makes thought apply to action, and indeed it is thought which distinguishes conduct from mere activity. Yet this is quite different from saying either that thought consists in action or that thought’s ultimate purpose is action.

Pragmaticism makes thinking to consist in the living inferential metaboly of symbols whose purport lies in conditional general resolutions to act. As for the ultimate purpose of thought, which must be the purpose of everything, it is beyond human comprehension; but according to the

16 Cf. also 5.79, 5.37 ff.
17 Cf. 5.491. Peirce’s way of looking at this connection has marked similarity to the scholastic maxim "agere sequitur esse." J. Boaler points this out too in Charles Peirce and Scholastic Realism (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p. 102.
stage or approach my thought has made of it . . . it is by the indefinite replication of self-control upon self-control that the vir is begotten, and by action, through thought, he grows an esthetic ideal . . . as the share which God permits him to have in the work of creation. (5.403, n. 3)