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Meaning and Modernity

Social Theory in the Pragmatic Attitude

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Preface

At the time of this writing there are ongoing collected-works projects for all four of the major American pragmatists: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead. What seemed a short time ago to be a completed, and for many, an obsolete movement of thought, has reemerged with contemporary significance for a variety of scholars in America and abroad. Pragmatism, in addressing itself to the question of meaning, in attempting to state rigorously the conditions of meaning within a broadened scientific framework that includes many of the central issues of the arts and humanities as well, speaks to the contemporary hunger for significance in a world where rationalized technique has all too often severed both subject and object from their living context and larger purport.

As the Century of Final Solutions draws to an end, the attempts to reach a terminal state of affairs in both the positivistic and rationalistic ideologies of the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and politics, either under the banner of scientific objectivity or a humanistic or even irrational subjectivity, have revealed themselves as anything but final. Pragmatism had been doomed to the dustbin of history for its insistence on the continuity of thought with action, of biological with cultural life, of emotional with cognitive functioning, of self with environment; for its insistence on the continuity of interpretation itself. Yet it is these very ideas that have begun to bring pragmatism back into the focus of contemporary concern, now that the guiding reductionisms of modern thought have lost their grip.

In 1917 John Dewey, G. H. Mead, and others published *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, a volume that illustrated the broad span of interests stimulated by, but not limited to, pragmatism. Similarly, the present work does not seek to lay out a linear history of the pragmatic movement. Instead, it represents an attempt both to recover and create ideas of contemporary significance, ranging, as in that earlier volume, across disciplinary boundaries and topics, from foundational questions to

ongoing researches. Perhaps there is also a resonance with the title (though not the theory) of Kant's *Anthropology in Pragmatic Perspective*, since this book addresses problems of an anthropological nature, in both the German and Anglo-American meanings of this term.

Although drawing heavily from the pragmatists, this book is by no means limited to their work. I am activating dormant concepts of pragmatism, but I am also working out ideas not reducible to those of the four classic pragmatists (yet nevertheless within "the pragmatic attitude" as I conceive it). At the very least this study shows that Mead can no longer be regarded as the central representative of pragmatism in social theory, that he swam within a much broader "stream of consciousness." Meadians should take note that the fiction of Mead as chief source and repository of pragmatic thought is no longer viable: the "Meadian" is no longer the mode! I have sought to show what a social theory in the pragmatic attitude might look like, by engaging in lively dialogue with other social theories of contemporary significance and by undertaking varied researches in Part 4. Throughout the work, though it is not always in the foreground, is a sustained critique of modern culture.

By "modern culture," or "modernity," I mean that total configuration of mind which grew out of the West, which manifests itself in specific and varied traditions in science, industrialized society, in the social organization of institutions, families, and individuals, in philosophy, art, and politics. I mean the term in the broadest possible sense as a cultural template of liberation from traditional ways of thinking, believing, and acting—and later from tradition itself. Modernity introduced valuable new ideas into the repertoire of humankind, yet it is rooted, in my opinion, in underlying dichotomous abstractions such as social versus individual, traditional versus novel, fact versus value, conventional versus original, that, taken to their logical conclusions, lead to self-annulling modes of thought and practice. Much of modern thought bases itself on a false synthesis of a false dichotomy, and I have criticized this tendency toward rigid dichotomizing as it shows itself in philosophical, sociological, psychological, and more general cultural manifestations. I have attempted, especially in the final chapter, to frame modernity as *cultural nominalism*.

This work is an attempt to reconstruct concepts from philosophical pragmatism for contemporary social theory; more than that, it is an attempt to develop a broadened way of thinking, drawing especially from what I take to be the essentials of a pragmatism not yet well-understood. It is a pragmatism most completely and clearly expressed in the writings of C. S. Peirce; a pragmatism antithetical to our so-called "pragmatic" age, with its valuing of expediency as ultimate means and an increasingly abstracted technique as ultimate goal; a pragmatism that reconnects thought with feeling and will, with things and world.

One of the great hindrances to understanding Peirce in contemporary thought is that Peircean terms, to a great extent through the work of Charles Morris, are now associated with a positivistic context that is radically opposed to Peirce's philosophy. Morris's appropriation of Peirce is not merely random but represents and is a classic example of *logical modernism* at work, denying its own foundations while realizing a stark and scientistic foundationalism. Similarly, Morris's term "pragmatics" is based on a positivistic behaviorism antithetical to philosophical pragmatism and has contributed, as I hope to show, to further misunderstandings of what pragmatism means. In many ways Morris is a key player both in the diminution of theories of meaning and in the foundationalist scientism central to twentieth-century modernism. He is, for these reasons, central to this book, albeit in a negative way.

Peirce's pragmatism (later termed pragmaticism) formed the first portion of his broadened logic, or semiotic. I have tried to "translate" many of these seldom-explored ideas into social theory, ranging freely to incorporate whatever concepts I could into *the pragmatic attitude*, the more general outlook or framework or architectonic. In the early chapters, for example, I explore the fundamental significance of inquiry, qualitative immediacy, and semiosis to pragmatism, and the implications of these concepts for broadened theories of inquiry, critical social inquiry, self, semiotics, and culture.

In chapter 1, I attempt to trace out a number of implications for social theory of the concept of inquiry in philosophical pragmatism. Unlike most philosophies of science, pragmatism claimed that the origin of inquiry, the initial framing of hypotheses, is a reasonable process rather than simply irrational intuition. From the pragmatic conception of inquiry also derives a view of social inquiry as a critical science, a process of critical valuation. Finally, the foundations of social life and politics are based on a view of community that is, in turn, based on a semiotic model of a critical community of inquirers. The pragmatic image of man the inquirer is both antipositivistic and anticonceptualistic in claiming that living, existentially and cosmically rooted inquiry animates the human condition. Pragmatism does not reduce the human condition to a restless search for something that is never quite attainable, but, as shown in chapter 2, includes presentness, qualitative immediacy, feeling (in its philosophical sense), celebration and suffering, the myriad uniquenesses that make up the world as aspects of an irreducible mode involved in all social being.

Peirce's realism of signs, though heavily based in John Duns Scotus's scholastic realism, seems to me neither reducible to that realism nor to modern nominalistic "realism" (of either the conventionalistic or positivistic varieties), but to form the basis of a new mind and cultural order only now beginning to reveal their possibilities. Although Dewey may have thought that "the chief characteristic trait of the pragmatic notion of reality is

precisely that no theory of Reality in general, *überhaupt*, is possible or needed" (Dewey 1917, 55), he, Mead, and James failed to understand the broad implications of Peircean semiotic realism. Similarly, much as I admire Richard Rorty's attempt to frame philosophy as a conversation or social dialogue, this "conversation," like Kuhn's philosophy of scientific revolutions, is rootless in two senses: In the sense that it neither allows a brute otherness in the world (one that does not change because of what we say to it but that may shape us to itself) nor taps the deeper sources of intelligence beyond conceptual reason. In chapter 1, I claim that the special genius of pragmatism is the way it provides a broadened framework of reason as a process of living, existentially rooted inquiry that includes our deepest biosocial sentiments. Dialogue, or "conversation," is a central concept of pragmatism, but the conversation is one ultimately rooted within a generalized conception of nature: a conception in which nature itself is a biocosmic, emergent dialogue. As the chapters in Part II, on semiotic, show, we live perpetually in a dialogue of signs, a dialogue much broader than situationalist, structuralist, positivist, or relativist theories of meaning can allow. In chapter 6, I have tried to develop an approach to culture influenced by, but not limited to, a Peircean pragmatism (and especially Peirce's "critical common-sensism"), a theory of culture that might begin to recover meaning from the bleak and shrivelled rationalistic landscape of so much contemporary culture theory.

Later chapters move out to explore the questions of materialism, meaning, metropolis as memory, money, and modernism from a broadened pragmatic attitude, by no means limited to the actual influence of pragmatism per se, but inclusive of concepts such as the cultural significance of remembrance, critical animism, and the erosion of qualitative immediacy by abstractionism in modern culture (as discussed in particular in relation to Marx, Simmel, and Veblen in chapter 9), concepts that resonate with themes developed earlier in the book. I am not concerned with the history of pragmatism in this book but with the possibilities (as will become clear in the final chapter) of the pragmatic attitude as a mode of thought, capable of animating new directions for social theory, of coming to terms with present conditions and their conceivable consequences, and of creating new premisses for a broadened understanding of the human web of meaning.

1 Inquiry and the Pragmatic Attitude

Pragmatic Roots

An outstanding mark of our time is the generalized tendency to abstractionism. Whether in number-crunching mainstream American social science or word-chewing social theory; whether in so-called "conceptual art" or its supposed (and equally ephemeral) opposite "performance art"; whether in the political ideologies of the East or the West, there is a shared domination by the abstract *concept*. More than a century ago Marx could speak of the fetishism of commodities, but could he have foreseen the extent to which the fetishism of the abstract would reduce so many varieties of theoretical and practical life to empty labels and slogans?

Ours is the "pragmatic" age, our legacy the world from which architects have stripped away ornament and facade in the interest of the concept of the "functional," from which philosophers have supposedly stripped away metaphysics in the interest of the concept of the "positive," and in which the obvious failure of functional buildings that do not function for their inhabitants and the extreme metaphysical system of the logical positivists, which holds the ultimate ground for rationality to be the mystical pointing to "things," appear, in the end, to be unpragmatic in the extreme.[1]

Understanding philosophical pragmatism is made all the more difficult

1. Charles Peirce, even calling himself a "prope-positivist" (broader than positivist) at one point, sought to refine metaphysics methodically, unlike the modern positivists who tried to erase metaphysics (by using, paradoxically enough, metaphysical erasers). Logical positivists sought to find foundations in "primitive terms." In some ways they succeeded: their foundations are some of the most primitive ever devised. They achieved the diabolical end, which is to seek in one extreme, and to create an unintended answer from the opposite extreme. They sought to do away with metaphysics, and created the most extreme metaphysics ever devised; they sought objectivity, and created a system ultimately based on the subjective experience of a single person; they sought to create for the philosophy of science a foundationalist final solution that was also being sought in diverse and often opposing ways in twentieth-century arts and politics, yet created a feeble and fragmentary philosophy that was obsolete before it was even fully developed.

because of the tyranny of the abstract: it becomes too easy to lump pragmatism with the vulgar uses the word has assumed, so that one simply takes "pragmatic" to mean pure utility or expediency. Not only has the word "pragmatic" taken on a meaning of practical expedience in everyday usage, but the widespread popularity of positivist-cum-pragmatist Charles Morris's term "pragmatics" has further misrepresented pragmatism. By claiming a division of semiotic concerned with the relations of signs to their users (pragmatics), in which "users" and their behaviors are not signs, and in severing "uses" of signs from a normative context of self-corrective inquiry, Morris not only introduced serious distortions into the science of semiotic but contributed new distortions to already existing misconceptions of the nature of pragmatism.

In exploring what the major American pragmatists, Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, meant by the term, it becomes apparent that they were all more or less involved in carving out a view antithetical to heartless expediency and mindless abstractionism. To appreciate pragmatism is to appreciate man's mercurial essence, the transformative power of human nature itself. The root metaphor of pragmatism is not "systematized knowledge," an airtight epistemology, conceptually or empirically based, but *living inquiry*.[2]

Toward the end of his life, disturbed by distortions of the pragmatic maxim in William James and others, Peirce distinguished his own variety as "pragmaticism," a term "ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers." It did not prevent later "Peirce snatchers," such as Charles Morris and the semiotic move-ment he spawned, from further abusing Peirce's intentions by creating a field seemingly devoted to abstraction for its own sake, a morass of positivistic terminology and conceptualistic obfuscation diametrically opposed to Peirce's first division of semiotic—the method of clarity, that is, pragmaticism. Peirce explicitly stated that "*pragmatism* is not a *W eltanschauung* but it is a method of reflexion having for its purpose to render ideas clear" (CP 5.13n1). Furthermore, pragmatism is "that method of reflexion which is guided by constantly holding in view its purpose and the purpose of the ideas it analyzes, whether these ends be of the nature and uses of action or thought" (CP 5.13n1). To discuss the pragmatic attitude, then, is to go beyond the bounds of Peirce's pragmaticism, which is my intention. I want to describe the generalized "stream of thought" shared by the four major pragmatists, by concentrating on what seems to me to be its most refined expressions in the work of Peirce and Dewey. Peirce's pragmatic world,

2. Peirce considered the view of science as *epistēmē* as fundamentally misguided. As he remarked, "it is plainly important that our notion of science should be a notion of science as it lives and not a mere abstract definition. Let us remember that science is a pursuit of living men, and that its most marked characteristic is that when it is genuine, it is in an incessant state of metabolism and growth. . . . The life of science is the desire to learn" (CP 1.232, 235; references to the Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce [CP] will follow the standard procedure of listing volume and paragraph number, i.e., volume 1, paragraphs 232 and 235, in this reference).

although rigorously expressed in his architectonically constructed pragmaticism, permeates his view of a wide range of philosophical and nonphilosophical issues (CP 5.14; Rosenthal 1983, 20), and it is these wider implications to which I seek to draw attention.

Pragmatism has usually been viewed as closely related to British empiricism, but in order to understand its roots one must also see its many relationships to the German philosophical tradition. Peirce was strongly influenced by Kant early in his career, to the point of claiming that after studying it for two hours a day for more than three years he had almost memorized the *Critic of the Pure Reason* (CP 1.4).[3] It was through examining the foundations of Kant's categories that Peirce came to revise them and later arrived at his own irreducible categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness (these categories are explained near the beginning of chapter 2; see CP 1.560f.). Peirce went so far as to state that he was led to the pragmatic maxim by reflexion upon Kant's *Critic of the Pure Reason* (CP 5.3), though he believed that Kant was a "somewhat confused pragmatist" (CP 5.525) and that the pragmatic maxim ruled out any notion of a *Ding-an-Sich*. Hegel figured prominently for the four major pragmatists, mostly in a negative way for Peirce and James, positively for the early Dewey and Mead (see Bernstein 1971, 1977; Apel 1980, 1981; Joas 1985a, 1985b). Despite his contempt for Hegel's logic, Peirce saw some analogies in Hegel's *Phenomenologie des Geistes* to his own categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. William James devoted a good deal of one of his last major projects, *A Pluralistic Universe,* to refuting Absolute Idealism.

Against what he saw as a "block universe" in the idealist school, James argued for a pluralistic and open-ended universe that would allow for the multiplicities as well as the qualitative uniqueness of experience. In his later work, James struggled against the earlier dualism of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) toward a more integrated approach that would not simply reduce to a closed system or to meaningless abstractions, but could partially capture the richness, novelty, and open-endedness of experience. He constantly attacked "vicious intellectualism" (a term from *A Pluralistic Universe),* and his targets quite frequently were Hegelians. Against the abstracting tendencies of Intellectualism James sought a more concrete, particularizing philosophy, not in the spirit of reductionism but in a more existentialist spirit, as Barrett (1958, 16–17)

3. I follow here Peirce's preference for "Critik" over "Kritik" (in *Critik der reinen Vernunft*), because of the different technical meanings of the two terms. Critik (or critic) is a specific branch of logic, Kritik is "critique, a critical essay," not necessarily a technical term of logic. In tracing the philosophical history of the term "critic," Peirce notes: "This word, used by Plato (who divides all knowledge into *epitactic* and *critic*), was adopted into Latin by the Ramists, and into English by Hobbes and Locke. From the last it was taken into German by Kant, who always writes it Critik, the initial *c* being possibly a reminiscence of its English origin. At present it is written Kritik in German. Kant is emphatic in the expression of the wish that the word may not be confounded with critique, a critical essay (German *Kritik*)" (CP 2.205).

and others have suggested, or in a phenomenological spirit, as Schutz (1962) and others have suggested. Ironically, this vital vision is not only the greatest strength of James's philosophy but also its greatest weakness. James, easily the most fluid stylist of the pragmatists, never could transform his pluralistic pragmatism into a philosophically rigorous form that would do full justice to the inexhaustibility of meaning in determinate action. By comparison, Peirce's difficult style radiates the lucidity of one who chooses his words with the entire history of their etymology and logical purport at his command.

Dewey and Mead, by contrast with James, were swept up in the widespread interest in Hegel that took place in the United States in the late nineteenth century (Dewey through his teacher G. S. Morris at Johns Hopkins University, Mead through Josiah Royce, G. H. Palmer, and others at Harvard University); though both turned away by the end of the century from what they saw as an overly rationalistic spirit in Hegel (although retaining Hegel's emphasis on process and change), toward Darwinian naturalism rooted in a social pragmatism.

The foundations of pragmatism are based in a radical criticism of Cartesian foundationalism, and of the Cartesian-influenced framework of modern philosophy. Beginning with Peirce's powerful criticism of the "spirit of Cartesianism" in the late 1860s, through Dewey's discussions of inquiry in the 1930s and 1940s, the pragmatists consistently sought to undercut both the "dichotomy" of subject and object and the spectator theory of knowledge to which it gave rise, through a view of knowledge as self-correcting triadic mediation. The pragmatists criticized both the rationalist and empiricist traditions, in which knowledge was ultimately disconnected from experience. In the rationalist view, knowledge is based on an innate "faculty," which brings order to experiential chaos. In the empiricist view, knowledge is based on the direct impressions of perception. In both views the knower is essentially passive, the recipient of rational intuitions or immediate sensory intuitions, and the knower's capacities for inference-making are ultimately of a secondary nature in relation to the intuitive foundations of objectivity. Against this "foundational" basis of intuitive knowledge the pragmatists proposed a view that situated knowledge within possible experience as a practice: the practice of inference-making or inquiry.

The Social Basis of Inquiry

In criticizing the "spirit of Cartesianism," Peirce claimed that the Cartesian account of science is inadequate because of its inherent subjectivism. Descartes attempted to replace traditional authority, which provided the basis for scholastic science, with reason, and his method consisted in doubting everything until he arrived at an indubitable principle that could then provide the rational basis for science. He found this principle in the famous

"Cogito, ergo sum," in which one could ground reason through an immediate indubitable intuition that is both clear and distinct.

Descartes' pivotal role in the development not only of modern philosophy but of modern culture as a whole, was to transform the basis of truth from the scholastic emphasis on the testimonies of the community of authorities, themselves ultimately dependent on divine revelation, to the consciousness of the individual thinker, and in this transformation modern individualism was born. The objective world of community became the questioned, and the individual became the unquestioned foundation of knowledge claims, whether rational or empirical. Against this view Peirce argued that the indubitable origin of reason does not provide the basis of scientific rationality; rather, the continuing self-corrective process of science provides its own rational justification. All knowledge, in Peirce's system, is general and of the nature of a triadic sign. To claim there can be indubitable knowledge is to "block the road of inquiry," because inquiry is the living attempt to render doubt into belief, a process in which we as fallible individuals cannot claim *definite belief,* only *probable opinion*. Scientific rationality thus consists in the essential dubitability of any given question, and the ability to revise our opinions until no further revisions are necessary. Though we can, and continually do, hit upon truths in inquiry, our knowledge of these truths always remains probable, because it is always open to the criticisms of any future investigators. Indubitability consists in the final agreement that would be reached by the community of inquirers and that would not be contradicted by further inquiry. Truth then is the ultimate goal of science, rather than the indubitable foundation of inquiry, and is to be realized in the community of inquirers, rather than by the solitary consciousness. Indeed, the Cartesian attempt to replace authority with reason proves in the end to be most unreasonable, because all knowledge ultimately rests on an individual intuition itself inexplicable, irrational, and indubitable.

Peirce's broadened view of science, with its emphasis on the testimonies of an unlimited community of inquirers, represents a renovated version of scholastic realism and a radical critique of the nominalism that characterizes so much of modern thought. Against Descartes' "clear and distinct" idea, in itself inexplicable, stands Peirce's pragmatic maxim for making ideas clear, with its emphasis on the explicability of meaning in future conceivable consequences; that is, "the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life" (CP 5.412). The word "conceivable" is important in this context and distinguishes Peirce's more general and realistic pragmaticism from James's more particularistic and nominalistic pragmatism, with its emphasis on the actual conduct produced as opposed to Peirce's broader inclusion of generalized tendencies toward conduct, whether actualized or not.

All thought is a form of internal conduct, and all conduct is general triadic mediation in Peirce's pragmaticism. From the perspective of inquiry one can see Peirce's emphasis on *conceivable* consequences as a restatement of his idea that all knowledge is probable and subject to criticism and possible correction. In the same way, the meaning of a certain concept, such as a political theory, is not exhausted by actual determinate acts, because further investigation may show these acts to be limited or misguided realizations of the theory or may lead to the revision of the theory itself, and the results of this inquiry would form a further pragmatic consequence of the original concept. In Peirce's words:

> The importance of the matter for pragmatism is obvious. For if the meaning of a symbol consists in *how* it might cause us to act, it is plain that this "how" cannot refer to the description of mechanical motions that it might cause, but must intend to refer to a description of the action as having this or that *aim*. In order to understand pragmatism, therefore, well enough to subject it to intelligent criticism, it is incumbent upon us to inquire what an ultimate aim, capable of being pursued in an indefinitely prolonged course of action, can be. (CP 5.135)

All knowledge, literally each and every sign, in being open to further determination through future interpretation, is intrinsically social and continuous with the unlimited community of inquirers. The pragmatic method is one that finds clarity within "inquiry," broadly defined, and through the consensus of an unlimited community of inquirers capable of continuous inquiry in the indefinite future. In this sense a clear idea is of the nature of a hypothesis, capable of explaining phenomena, intrinsically dubitable, and thereby the ground of the possibility of inquiry. Similarly, a true idea is not the underlying foundation of inquiry but is the pragmatic result and achievement of inquiry.

Pragmatism, Scientific Method, and the Logic of Discovery

In his *Logik der Forschung* (strangely translated as *The Logic of Discovery)* Karl Popper expresses the common idea shared by rationalists and positivists alike, that inquiry begins with an irrational intuition, a creative insight that is not an inference made from observed facts, and whose consequences somehow provide the guiding idea of an inquiry, despite the fact that the idea itself is utterly illogical:

> The initial stage, the act of conceiving or inventing a theory, seems to me neither to call for logical analysis nor to be susceptible of it . . . my view of the matter, for what it is worth, is that there is no such thing as a logical method of having new ideas, or a logical reconstruction of this process. My view may be expressed by saying that every discovery contains "an irrational element," or "a creative intuition," in Bergson's sense. . . . (Popper 1968, 31–32)

Despite its wide acceptance from diverse sources, this idea that the initiation of inquiry is outside of the inquiry itself is strongly rejected by the pragmatists. In fact, as founded by Peirce, pragmatism is based on the logic of "abduction," or hypothesis formation (CP 5.196), and so is founded precisely on the very logic denied by Popper and those who share his view of science as a logic machine rather than as living inquiry. Hypothesis formation, though not always a purely conscious process, is a reasonable process according to Peirce and Dewey, a genuine mode of inference-making. The pragmatic view of inquiry incorporates the beginnings and ends of inquiries within the self-corrective process of inquiry, not as irrational antecedents or consequences of it. Though Popper can state that his criterion for empirical science is based on an agreement or convention, something in turn based on a shared sense of purpose that is "ultimately a matter of decision, going beyond rational argument" (Popper 1968,37), the pragmatists argued that the ends of inquiry are the ultimate concern of any rational inquiry, and in the long run are thoroughly determined by the nature of inquiry itself.

Peirce claimed that, instead of a primitive concept or intuition that serves as a hypothesis but does not meet the fundamental requirement of a hypothesis to *explain* the known facts, "The elements of every concept enter into logical thought at the gate of perception and make their exit at the gate of purposive action; and whatever cannot show its passports at both those two gates is to be arrested as unauthorized by reason" (CP 5.212). This statement, with its emphasis on "the gate of perception" and "purposive action," might seem quite compatible with the various forms of empiricism and logical positivism, yet when one comprehends Peirce's broadened view it becomes apparent that he proposed a quite different course. Where positivists construed immediate perception as the foundation of knowledge, the means by which metaphysics and other varieties of "speculation," including hypothesis formation as well, could be evicted from the house of science, Peirce used perception to justify the logic of abduction.

Peirce's perspicuous perspective on perception was that from one point of view, there are brute, compulsive *percepts* of the mode of being of Secondness, and simultaneously, from another point of view, all perception involves *perceptual judgments* (see Bernstein 1964). Knowledge derives not from discrete, lawless percepts, as empiricists and positivists argued, nor solely from inner faculties or from a progressive reason that does not recognize the "Outward Clash" of Secondness in its own terms, as rationalists claimed, but from a truly compulsive Otherness that is yet also general.

Peirce argued that there is no hard and fast barrier between perception and rational knowledge; rather, "perception is interpretative" (CP

5.184). His argument amounts to a criticism of both empiricism and rationalism as having a limited view of reason, as not realizing that perceptual judgments are themselves infused with elements of generality, though not subject to self-control. Abductive judgment shades into perceptual judgment, and the difference between the two is that perceptual judgments are not subject to self-control. In other words, says Peirce, "our first premisses, the perceptual judgments, are to be regarded as an extreme case of abductive inferences, from which they differ in being absolutely beyond criticism" (CP 5.181).

As "our first premisses," perceptual judgments are uncontrollable inferences resulting from the interaction of the percept with the totality of feelings, reactions, and thoughts that have informed and tempered our inference-making perceptual abilities, embodied, over the course of evolutionary and personal time, in our very being. The sum of it all, says Peirce, is that:

> our logically controlled thoughts compose a small part of the mind, the mere blossom of a vast complexus, which we may call the instinctive mind, in which this man will not say that he has *faith*, because that implies the conceivability of distrust, but upon which he builds as the very fact to which it is the whole business of his logic to be true.
>
> That he will have no difficulty with Thirdness is clear enough, because he will hold that the conformity of action to general intentions is as much given in perception as is the element of action itself, which cannot really be mentally torn away from such general purposiveness. (CP 5.212)

"Instinctive mind" was for Peirce mature mind, whereas rational mind was immature mind. Peirce's break with the tendencies of modern rationalism *and* empiricism is perhaps nowhere else clearer, for he is claiming that our great achievement of rational thought rests on a vaster store of intelligence embodied in our inference-making nature. Instincts are accordingly, in their proper environment, *true ideas*. Though the human and sociocultural environmental relationship is many times more plastic than that of other species, Peirce claimed that it is wrong to assume that, unlike the bird's instinct for flight, and the bee's for geometrically correct construction, we do not possess a distinctively human instinct. Ours is the instinct for inquiry, the capacity for conjecturing, for making abductive inferences and then submitting them to those deductive and inductive tests of self-controlled conduct, whether in art creations, limited practical affairs, or limitless scientific experimentation. In the history of science many of the important discoveries were reached not after most of the possible hypotheses had been explored but through seemingly unconscious predelictions for certain hypotheses that predominated and vastly quickened the progress of science. This suggests,

according to Peirce, the instinctive capacity of the "well-prepared mind" for making informed guesses, for perceiving nature's laws over the long run because we have "a natural bent in accordance with nature's" (CP 6.478).

To those who might say that the "well-prepared mind" is not truly instinctive because learning has occurred within the web of culture, one could reply that "instinctive" means neither the unconditioned nor solely that conditioned by a biological "deep structure," but, simply, that which is conditioned by whatever habits of experience have shaped it, individually or ancestrally. Certain instincts in dogs, for example, such as retrieving or shepherding, are inseparable from the cultural purposes that created them and from the generalized objects that foster them. Biological structuralism, such as sociobiology, and its secret sibling, cultural or "French" structuralism, both share a withered view of experience, ignoring, on the one hand, how the otherness of the environment serves to temper and condition us, and, on the other, how purpose—whether conceived as the utilitarian individualism of sociobiologists or the cultural codes of the structuralists—is a *transaction* in an environment and not only an acritical underlying structure insusceptible to correction and incapable of growth.

In stating that "every conception is a conception of conceivable practical effects," pragmatism, argued Peirce, "makes conception reach far beyond the practical" (CP 5.196), to include anything imaginable—so long as that which is imagined has some possible pragmatic import. Conjectures having even a slightly greater than chance expectation of being true will lead to valid results in the long run, and thus their provisional acceptance is logically justified. For this reason Peirce was logically correct when he paraphrased the poet Tennyson: "Wildest dreams *are* the necessary first steps toward scientific investigation" (Peirce 1958,233).

In Dewey's approach, developed most explicitly in his *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), inquiry consists of "the progressive determination of a problem and its solution." Where many others start with the problem as given, in which the task of inquiry is to arrive at an objective solution through methodical means, Dewey developed a more inclusive view in which the institution of the problem itself is the first phase of inquiry. Dewey's discussion of the discovery of the problem as the first premiss of inquiry is parallel to Peirce's discussion of abduction, and is based upon Dewey's theory of qualitative immediacy.

Dewey roots the beginning of inquiry in the pervasive quality of a *situation*, meaning by situation a contextual whole or field that includes the object, subject, and pervasive quality of their relation.[4] Dewey attempted to

4. The "definition of the situation," as discussed by sociologist W. I. Thomas (1928), is one of the key elements of contemporary sociological "symbolic interactionism." Thomas's original

undercut the mistaken notion of original dichotomies of subject—object, or "primary" and "secondary" qualities (in the Lockean sense), by looking at the immediate qualitative situation, or what Santayana termed "tertiary qualities," as the inclusive starting point. An unsettled or indeterminate situation immediately experienced is the antecedent condition for inquiry:

> it is of the very nature of the indeterminate situation which evokes inquiry to be *questionable;* or, in terms of actuality instead of potentiality, to be uncertain, unsettled, disturbed. The peculiar quality of what pervades the given materials, constituting them a situation, is not just uncertainty at large; it is a unique doubtfulness which makes that situation to be just and only the situation it is. It is this unique quality that not only evokes the particular inquiry engaged in but that exercises control over its special procedures. Otherwise, one procedure in inquiry would be as likely to occur and to be as effective as any other. (Dewey 1938,105)

It may seem odd that for Dewey the underpinning of scientific inquiry was none other than aesthetic immediacy, that is, the unique quality of a situation considered in itself, yet Dewey proposed the "problematic situation" as a counter to the ultimately subjectivist dichotomy of a determinate object and doubting subject. In this dichotomy inquiry begins because of the mentalistic doubts in the inquirer. By defining the situation in a way that includes the inquirer, and by claiming that doubt is inseparably connected to the unique quality of a given situation ("*We* are doubtful because the situation is inherently doubtful" [Dewey 1938,105–6]), Dewey located doubt as an existential instigator of inquiry. He also viewed inquiry as more than solely cognitive. The doubtful situation is not at first *known* as such but *felt* to be doubtful. As the situational feeling of doubt becomes known as such, the inquirer discerns there is a problem requiring inquiry, and the process of inquiry is begun. At this point the qualitative situation is transformed into the ground for inferring and articulating the problem itself. A qualitative immediacy becomes a mediated sign.

From the qualitative indeterminate situation emerges the problematic situation and first explicit phase of inquiry itself: the institution of the

two-sided emphasis on how both subjective *and* objective factors enter into the ways situations come to be defined has been reduced unfortunately to the subjective side alone in most recent discussions. Yet even his full sense of what constitutes a situation can be placed within the much broader view of the qualitative situation developed throughout Dewey's work, as I hope will become clear in the following discussion. Thomas may have been influenced directly by Dewey's conception of the situation developed in *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916, 70) or in Dewey's earlier "Interpretation of Savage Mind," which Thomas excerpted in his well-known *Source Book for Social Origins* (1909).

problem. Again, in contrast to Popper and others, Dewey holds that the formulation of the problem-hypothesis is an emergent property of inquiry itself. As he said, "Just because a problem well stated is on its way to solution, the determining of a genuine problem is a *progressive* inquiry; the cases in which a problem and its probable solution flash upon an inquirer are cases where much prior ingestion and digestion have occurred" (Dewey 1938,108). Dewey did not accord *suggestion* a logical status, however, as Peirce did for abductive inference. Yet there is a direct parallel to Peirce's theory of the continuum of acritical perceptual judgments and criticizable abductive judgments in Dewey's discussion of a *suggestion* as psychophysical result of an indeterminate situation that becomes an *idea* when critically analyzed in its context and in relation to other ideas. Such analysis transforms acritical suggestion to logical idea or hypothetical proposition because the suggestion takes on a functional role in directing further operations within the inquiry.

The perceptual is not simply composed of direct copies of physical things, as the empirical tradition held, nor are conceptual ideas the sole basis for ordering "facts," as the rationalist tradition held, because, according to Dewey, "In logical fact, perceptual and conceptual materials are instituted in functional correlativity with each other, in such a manner that the former locates and describes the problem while the latter represents a possible method of solution" (Dewey 1938,111). Although acknowledging Kant's insight that apart from each other perceptions are blind and conceptions are empty, Dewey insisted that Kant was mistaken to assume a radical dichotomy between perceptions and conceptions needing a third activity, synthetic understanding, to weld them together. Instead, the activity of inquiry consists of a functionally related continuum of perceptions and conceptions, which can be *analyzed*, or as Peirce would say, *prescinded*, as perception or conception rather than as requiring a *synthesis*. Dewey's criticism was the basic pragmatic criticism that one does not begin with physical things and mental substances needing to be brought together but with a given indeterminate situation in which and by which objects and subjects are constituted. The given situation is a conditioned situation—conditioned by prior experiences or inquiries, by objective determinations, by whatever has shaped it—yet as the starting point for inquiry the conditioned situation is qualitative. Dewey is *not* saying that the qualitative starting point of inquiry is a raw quality dichotomized from reason. In contrast, he is claiming that the qualitative situation is a *funded quality,* the qualitative resultant of previous transactions and inquiries. Yet Dewey, like Peirce, maintained that the qualitative is a genuine mode of being in its own right, as well as one involved in the sign process of cognition. His logic of discovery begins with a felt problem, that, in the process of being brought to reflection, suggests the further course of inquiry and the possible determination of its solution. Though the determi-

nate situation is the goal of Dewey's theory of inquiry, it is regarded as an "end-in-view," not a final end, because it can be criticized and stimulate new inquiries—in effect, it is open to being made indeterminate through the larger context of continuous inquiry.

Social Inquiry as Critical Valuation

Against the widespread view that there is a radical separation between "is" and "ought" stands the pragmatic view that an inquiry is progressively determined by the truth, which operates *during* the inquiry as a correcting and correctible, regulatory norm, a "should be" or "ought." The pragmatists' conception of truth varied from James's "radical empiricism," which held truth to be that which "works" in concrete instances, through Dewey's and perhaps Mead's somewhat broadened ideas of truth as localized to specific situations of inquiry, yet determinative of those situations, to Peirce's insistence that truth is that conclusion which the community of inquirers is destined to reach, because its object is real.

Although Dewey and Mead deny, more or less, Peirce's insistence on the real as the motivation for inquiry and the summum bonum understood as the final goal of inquiry, they do extend to the social realm the implications of Peirce's notion of science as a process of self-correcting inquiry tempered by its objects. The difference rests in part on the different objects of inquiry. Peirce's concept of the realization of truth through an unlimited community of investigators extending into the indefinite future becomes problematic when applied to social practices and institutions whose natures and problems require interpretations in a limited time frame and localized context, and when these practices and institutions themselves may change as a result of the interpretations of social inquiries.

In social inquiry, as Peirce would probably agree, one deals not with the relatively unchanging properties of a diamond but with a self-reflective object. The laws of human affairs may embody some greater laws, but their significance is found within the human context of purposive conduct, not beneath it in a physical or physiological substratum, and not beyond it in a transcendent unknowable or Absolute.

Mead once claimed (1964,324): "There is no such thing as Truth at large. It is always relative to the problematic situation." Using the Deweyan terminology of "the problematic situation," Mead is expressing the idea, shared by him and Dewey, that truth is not a fixed, eternal entity, not a mere abstraction, but that it is an outcome of a specific inquiry. On Peirce's behalf, it can be said that Dewey and Mead's adversion to truth in general presupposes the presence of guiding norms operating in and through specific situations. Only by assuming overarching transsituational norms could Dewey and Mead ignore them. Yet can we not also say that it is truth itself that leads research to itself. Without "Truth at large," that is, living truth, acting

through norms of particular investigations, it is difficult to see how there can be any truth in particular situations.

And when we deal with terms such as "conduct" as the realization of truth, the problem becomes, conduct for whom? Truth, it seems to me, cannot be reduced only to the actual, because it is never exhausted by instances of behavior. Truth is a general, because it causes instances to conform to it. And conduct itself is a general, because it is the concrete manifestation of intelligence. But because it is a general, it is capable of continued correction and growth. And when we ask the question, truth for whom? the answer in my opinion is that, if truth is to retain its meaning, the truths of our particular lives and our particular and localized communities must align themselves with that larger living truth which animates, and is discovered through, the unlimited critical community of all future inquiry.

This difference in focus is why Dewey and Mead are apparently at odds with Peirce. Yet if we realize that their overwhelming concern was social philosophy, and the self-reflective constitution of its object, we can see a much greater continuity (though still not complete agreement) with Peirce's semiotic variety of scientific realism. This also explains the reticence of Dewey and Mead on the claim for a possible final truth or summum bonum (Dewey 1917; Mead 1917). Their concentration on the problematic and probable nature not only of social inquiry but of all inquiry, coincides with Peirce's notion that, even when we do, in fact, hit upon the truth, our knowledge that we have done so remains probable and subject to further criticism. Such a notion of the fallible nature of knowledge is essential in any social investigation, where what is significant does not always have the regularity of gravity, where what is significant is the purposive medium of significance itself, in its qualitative, indexical, and interpretative modes.

When Peirce defines pragmatism as "that method of reflexion which is guided by constantly holding in view its purpose and the purpose of the ideas it analyzes, whether these ends be of the nature and uses of action or thought" (CP 5.13n1), he is also claiming that not only is purpose (or norms) an inherent aspect of any method of investigation but that pragmatism treats this fact explicitly and makes it the object of its methodological principle. The investigation of social life is inseparably bound up with the intepretative medium that is social life, with all those valuations—self-conscious, habitual, and instinctive—that constitute social life and that necessarily enter into the norms of its investigation.

Inquiry, considered as a self-corrective process of interpretation, helps to progressively determine what the facts themselves are, as well as th conclusions to be reached. The facts of inquiry to which the pragmatists attempted to draw attention are that:

> All facts are themselves "the products of complex pro
> tion which have historical origins" (Bernstein 1976,

There are no pure facts outside of the *perspective* in which they are observed. Observation is not immediate perception, as the positivists posited, but is an inferential process. The starting point of an empirical inquiry is not an immediate given but a *perceptual judgment,* and the perceptual judgment, though in itself beyond self-control, nevertheless contains an element of generality.

All facts emerge through inquiry and all hypotheses are confirmed or disconfirmed through being subjected to the continued scrutiny of inquiry. The inquirer necessarily carries values (or "prejudices"), yet the point of inquiry is not to purge these, but to refine them through inquiry to come into agreement with the objective findings of inquiry. The objective conclusion of an inquiry itself acts as a "should be" during inquiry.

The pragmatists tended to reject that nominalization of the modern world in which values became subjective names or beliefs, purely conventional or arbitrary, because this view (either in its positivist or rationalist manifestations) neglected the tempering role of experience in the acquisition of values, thus disconnecting them from living praxis. Values are not simply arbitrarily or subjectively acquired shackles (though this they can well be). In the pragmatic view, values, as an unquestioned, received tradition, are objective to the degree to which experience has been allowed cumulatively to temper them. In other words, the principles of inquiry, in being existentially rooted and not solely products of a rational system of abstraction, extend as well to cultural practices and to biological life itself. This view does not deny the overwhelming influence of unreasonableness and arbitrary codes in the course of history but simply allows that cultures too can exercise self-control and self-correction.

Values, in this view, are valuations, habitualized acts of judgment rather than simply inert nouns. Values can be seen as the general ground for judgment, for inference-making itself, yet the recognition of this position does not necessarily lead to the excision of values from inference-making in order to achieve a more objective position. It leads, instead, to a recognition that values themselves may be subject to method, to a critical scrutiny that might cause them to accord better with the facts. In the pragmatisms of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead, the ineradicability of values in all social conduct is seen. The implications of this view for social inquiry were strongly articulated by Dewey.

In Dewey's view humanity has constructed habits of inquiry that in turn have constructed the nature of our being, enabling us to confront a given situation and make intelligent, rational judgments of what is and what ought to be. Our ultimate purpose is to refine our values, not to ignore them; to bring them into agreement with the broader purposes of life, to make them objective. This involves the discovery and refinement of the broader purposes

themselves. Hence the essential questions of life's purposes are themselves to be answered within the critical web of inquiry, not apart from it.

If values are ultimately inseparable from the facts, and are continuously *refined* by inquiry, then those values held at the end of inquiry are, in fact, true values. Values have to be tempered by the inquiry. A prejudice is something we cannot dispel by "scientific fiat," precisely because we are unaware of our bias. Instead we revise our opinions and prejudices as they come under scrutiny in inquiry. In providing the motivating web of thought and context for inquiry, values, as unquestioned yet questionable assumptions, contribute to the critical yet balanced stance of the inquirer. Values are valuable for inquiry, providing a ground on which to stand that is *refinable,* not eradicable. For this reason social inquiry can be seen as a continuing process of critical valuation.

The Pragmatic Attitude

Against both the positivist and rationalist abstractionisms of modern thought, against "vicious intellectualism" in its sensationalist and conceptualist manifestations, stands the pragmatists' image of man the inquirer, animated by the quest for the greater understanding and growth of purpose. The irony of this image is that it is precisely the image of *science,* so-called, that currently defines the modern ideology of the abstract. It is the ideology of science that has animated the major revolutions of the twentieth century, radically reshaping all dimensions of the world to what William Blake termed the "single vision."

Consider the impact of those revolutionaries in turn-of-the-century Vienna led by Sigmund Freud, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Arnold Schoenberg, Adolph Loos, and others, and how deeply held was the ideal of a scientific rationality and a linear progress that informed their works. Consider how the effect of each was to sever the acting, historical, and inquiring human being from the ultimate source or goal, whether it be "das Es" or the "id" (Freud), the ethical (early Wittgenstein), or the concept of rational truth that guided the arts of Schoenberg and Loos. One could also argue that the other side of the twentieth-century "split-brain," irrationalism, whether in various primitivisms, existentialism, etc., claims potency primarily as a *reaction against* the dominant image of rational scientific ideology. Yet even the radical subjectivism of this side tends to accept the myth of a primordial subject over against a primordial object. It is the acceptance of one side or the other of this split that joins the two opposites in secret unison.

As is becoming increasingly clear now that the culture of modernism is on the wane, a dogmatically held image of science (for *or* against) has produced and rationalized many devastating and unenlightened consequences: the modern mass exterminations of people; the radical break with a

sense of history and tradition in the arts and philosophy (echoes of the Cartesian presuppositionless inquiry, certain of its own foundations because limited to a seemingly clear starting point); the homogenized "international" architecture, music, and abstract art of much of late modernism or of so-called "socialist realism," both of which characteristically lack their own unique character in individual productions; the massive evisceration of the earth in the name of "development" and progress; and the domination of all human life and "continued inquiry" itself by the fetishism of nuclear commodities in the East and West. Why, then, should pragmatism be considered as an alternative to the deadly ideology of modern techno-science, and as a possible contributor to a new cultural epoch?

Pragmatism involves a conception of a critical public, free inquiry and communication, the growth of the imagination, and the embodiment of purposeful habits of conduct as essential not only to the realization of inquiry but to the ultimate goals of life as well. With its claim that all knowledge is inescapably fallible, it radically opposes the fundamentalist tendencies of this age of abstraction toward final solutions.

Perhaps one of the best expressions of the pragmatic attitude as worldview is found in John Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*. There Dewey criticizes the idea of "natural" inalienable rights that are given prior to politics, claiming instead that inalienable rights are constituted in and through the social process. The philosophy of individualism posited individuals *apart from* the social world they inhabit, and asserted that constraints on the individual (on private property, etc.) should be severed. Yet, Dewey claimed, human rights are constituted by human relationships, and mediating institutions form the living social web of our consciousness. The long-term effect of English liberalism paradoxically produced a society that worked against democracy—a faceless, unthinking *mass* instead of a real public and genuine social individuals. Against laissez-faire minimalism, Dewey's view includes intelligence, or "the observation of consequences *as* consequences, that is, in connection with the acts from which they proceed" (Dewey 1927, 12). Dewey's concept of the public is rooted in a transactional perspective based on the recognition and regulation of indirect consequences of human communicative acts (a conception that could have broadening consequences for Anthony Giddens's recent discussions of indirect consequences in his theory of structuration, or for Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action). Stated pragmatically: "We take then our point of departure from the objective fact that some of these consequences are perceived, and that their perception leads to subsequent effort to control action so as to secure some consequences and avoid others" (Dewey 1927, 12).

Freedom, argued Dewey, is a *political* ideal, not something constituted prior to politics. He grounded his argument in a view that human existence is rooted in purposive community, against what could be called the

fiction of Machiavelli and Hobbes that to be human is simply to be a living individual apart from purpose, that political life is a science of techniques rather than of purpose (cf. Habermas 1973). Realpolitik is a nominalism. It claims that community is a mere convention and ideal, that the mediating institutions of language and social relations are not real. Only individual particulars and power-forces which move them for preconceived purposes are real. This is what Dewey (1958, 27) called the "fallacy of selective emphasis," in which a consequence of a certain concept is taken as primary, and the original concept that produced it as derivative of it.

Against the absolutist assumptions of individualists concerning what is truly "natural law," or of Hegelians and/or Marxists concerning what truly moves history, or of any universalist and therefore abstractionist theory, Dewey proposed that:

> Just as publics and states vary with conditions of time and place, so do the concrete functions which should be carried on by states. There is no antecedent universal proposition which can be laid down because of which the functions of a state should be limited or should be expanded. Their scope is something to be critically and experimentally determined. (Dewey 1927, 74)

In delimiting the scope of a concept of publics and states as "something to be critically and experimentally determined" within a specific problematic situation of inquiry, Dewey is reiterating for social inquiry Peirce's description of pragmatism as "that method of reflexion which is guided by constantly holding in view its purpose and the purpose of the ideas it analyzes, whether these ends be of the nature and uses of action or thought" (CP 5.13n1).

Dewey's main point in *The Public and Its Problems* is that political theories and practices need to be based on the model of public inquiry, in which the selection of government officials and the carrying out of governmental affairs are accomplished through a self-corrective intelligence capable of confronting hard facts, changing when necessary, and growing through the critical use of information. Democratic institutions are eroded when special interests, sensationalistic media, and anonymity replace reasoned inquiry, resulting sooner or later (and Dewey believed this had already largely occurred in the United States in 1927, when the book was published) in the eclipse of a true public and its replacement by the faceless mass. Against these tendencies Dewey (1927,178) argued that "Only continuous inquiry, continuous in the sense of being connected as well as persistent, can provide the material of enduring opinion about public matters." Democracy is for Dewey nothing less than the community of inquirers, a continual process of criticism, cultivation, and growth. Similarly for George Herbert Mead (1934), democracy consists in the ability "to take the role of

the other," through which one cultivates an internalized community or "generalized other," capable of critical self-dialogue (see the excellent discussion of Mead's political biography in Joas 1985a).

Dewey's position may become clearer by critically comparing it with that of Hannah Arendt. Her book *The Human Condition* (1958) stands as one of the most profound criticisms of modern life and of the technical ideology that guides it.

Both Dewey and Arendt incorporate Greek-inspired ideas of community, in which the living qualities of action and speech (communication in Dewey's terminology) are needed. For both, action involves the possibility of emergence or natality. Both see the need for a community of *individuals,* a plurality of achieved perspectives: individuality as a social achievement. Without this living web of unique, critical perspectives one is merely left with an aggregate (Dewey) or society (Arendt). Both Dewey and Arendt decry "the eclipse of the public," a phrase that is the title of one of Dewey's chapters in *The Public and Its Problems* and which appears in Arendt's *The Human Condition.*[5]

One major difference is that Arendt sees the rise of the mentality of labor (a conception of human activity as rooted in and determined by life processes, and hence exemplifying necessity instead of freedom), as contributing to the modern culture of science and technology, to its universalizing tendencies, and as directly causing the decay of the public. The social sciences further confirm this trend and are actually manifestations of the dominance of technē itself, not of praxis or theoria (and hence should probably not even be considered sciences). For these reasons social-scientific inquiry is actually an instrument of the tendency in modern life for persons *to behave* rather than *to act,* to form part of a faceless aggregate, a statistical ratio, rather than to embody a qualitative uniqueness and genuine perspective within a community. Hence social-scientific inquiry and method are inimical to the public,

5. One wonders what influence Dewey might have had on Arendt. She reviewed his *Problems of Men* in the *Nation* in 1946 with mild Germanic disdain, yet both drew from similar kinds of sources and made similar critiques of modern society, despite their theoretical differences. We read in Arendt: "The rise of society brought about the simultaneous decline of the public as well as the private realm. But the eclipse of a common public world, so crucial to the formation of the lonely mass man and so dangerous in the formation of the worldless mentality of modern ideological mass movements, began with the much more tangible loss of a privately owned share in the world" (1958, 257). One sees the resonances with the following passages from Dewey's chapter "The Eclipse of the Public": "Our concern at this time is to state how it is that the machine age in developing the Great Society has invaded and partially disintegrated the small communities of former times without generating a Great Community. . . . Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication alone can create a great community. Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible" (1927, 126–27, 142). One gets the impression that Arendt's ties to German philosophy might have prejudiced her from finding any resonances in Dewey, despite the fact that he himself was a Hegelian early in his career.

to speech and action. Dewey, by contrast, recognizes the disparity between science conceived as rational system and science as living practice, rooted in qualitative, problematic situations.

Dewey, then, did not conceive of "life" as Arendt did, as dichotomized from critical intelligence and spontaneous action, but instead, with Peirce, saw the rooting of the higher human capacities within a broadened conception of nature as the ground of the possibility of spontaneous action and critical intelligence. The whole import of "problem finding" and "abduction" is that human faculties of knowledge are themselves tempered capacities, and that our conjecturing is not arbitrary but is rooted in our inference-making and hypothesis-generating nature. Hence science itself is not "systematized knowledge" but *living* inquiry. Dewey also acknowledges the historical factor of abstractionism leading to the decline of the public but sees intelligent, critical inquiry as the means for its recovery. He proposes a critical social (or political, in Arendt's terms) science (1927, 3, 178f.).

Arendt decries the deadening effects of science because science not only ignores but systematically excludes what is most distinctive about human action: its capacity to initiate, to transform and bring about new conditions. Social science, in its search for the regular, destroys the quicksilver of human initiative and freedom. Arendt argues for a critical philosophy, against the acritical logic of empirical social inquiry (and it would seem that her argument also applies against the deadly convention-bound structuralisms that cannot recognize living speech and action—see chapter 3). Inquiry, in this sense, is set up by her as something opposed to living human freedom. Its methodological character is the character of the abstract universalizing tendency that destroys the plurality which is constitutive of the public. Arendt's main criticisms of Dewey are perhaps that he takes the poison of "social scientific" inquiry to be the elixir of reconstruction, and that his view of intelligence and reasoned inquiry optimistically glosses over the obdurate character of people and ruling powers. In this way his thinking might be seen as simply another form of scientific utopianism.

Dewey's criticism of Arendt, in return, might be that her view of community is a kind of idealism that takes its own conceptual validity as a given rather than as a hypothesis to be "critically and experimentally determined." The Greek polis does not necessarily define once and for all the nature of community or what aspects of necessity, such as work and labor, are to be permanently segregated from its life of freedom.

In Dewey's pragmatic view, critical inquiry is constitutive of the public, because inquiry, as the open questioning and "progressive determination of problems and their solutions," is the essence of human freedom: freedom to inquire. Free critical inquiry is at the heart of community, and represents the mode of communication that best enables the continuity of political life. Inquiry tempers both the direction and the goals themselves of

the community, and helps to insure the continuity of communication that is the medium of community life. Dewey did not advocate an untethered generalizing inquiry, because he realized how abstracting systematization had uprooted the unique perspectives of individuals and of locality itself. Rather, it is a situated and localized citizenry with media of communication inherently possessing the cultivated ability of free and open inquiry that is requisite to the continued life of the community.

It is simply misguided to conceive of a state without or beyond problematic situations, as so much of modern political thinking has done, because problematic situations requiring critical intelligence are the lifeblood of all social life. A utopia is, on the positive side, an ideal that can infuse new vision into a decaying order, that can provide the motivating spirit for struggle against the frequently overwhelming injustices and blind obsistencies of the world. Yet on the negative side, a utopia that claims to have solved, even in theory, the problems of life once and for all is a miserable fiction indeed. And when this kind of utopianism sets itself up as unalterable truth, it merely asserts its own falsity. A utopia in the best sense is a hypothesis to be tested and tempered. Like any hypothesis, it needs to have the possibility of its own correction built into itself. Like any hypothesis, it needs to be lived in the "experimental community." In this sense a utopia or "the good life" acts as a motivating but revisable template for both individual conduct and community life. The critical community, however, is and always remains, a precarious equilibrium.

The root metaphor of the pragmatic temper is inquiry: science, not as fixed body of truth, that is, "systematized knowledge," but as inquisitive and imaginative human nature tempered through its observations and refined through the self-critical community. The pragmatic *imago mundi* is one of immeasurably rich, fluid, and unique qualities and possibilities; of brute, compulsive facts that testify to the great "Outward Clash"; of the continuity of mind with being; of the possibility, despite enduring oppressive conditions, for the redirection and transformation of individuals, institutions, and worldviews through the continued semiosis of inquiry.

Dewey's great hope for a reconstruction of modern life may strike one as overly optimistic, given the all too frequent brutalities of our time. Yet it is clear that some radical transformation of the now spent voices of modern culture is needed, for we have arrived at that dire time Peirce alluded to in 1893:

> Soon a flash and quick peal will shake economists quite out of their complacency, too late. The twentieth century, in its latter half, shall surely see the deluge-tempest burst upon the social order—to clear upon a world as deep in ruin as that greed-philosophy has long plunged it into guilt. (CP 6.292).

The scope of Dewey's social philosophy of inquiry is enlarged when placed in the broader context of Peirce's realist philosophy of "concrete reasonableness" and "critical common-sensism," which holds that our quest "to find out" the mystery of the universe and our place in it touches the deepest wellsprings of our being, and that the:

> development of Reason consists, you will observe, in embodiment, that is, in manifestation. The creation of the universe, which did not take place during a certain busy week, in the year 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done, is this very development of Reason. . . . Under this conception, the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable, whenever, as the slang is, it is "up to us" to do so. (CP 1.615)

In the broadened pragmatic attitude, generality itself is rooted in nature, not dichotomized from it, and the laws of mind are not simply inner "faculties" but refractions of larger tempering patterns of nature. The as yet unrealized possibilities of the pragmatic attitude for contributing to a new cultural order rooted in a continuum between purpose and nature, community and cosmos, could begin to take shape, should humanity survive the age of abstraction.