

WHY PRAGMATISM NOW?

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Across several disciplines there has been renewed interest in philosophical pragmatism in the past few years. What had been a body of thought reduced largely to the influence of George Herbert Mead in sociology, has reemerged with significance for semiotics, philosophy, literary criticism, and other disciplines. The reasons for a renewed interest in the thought of Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and a revised George Herbert Mead can be found in the theory of meaning proposed by the pragmatists: a theory of meaning that can include more phenomena within the realm of significance, and therefore a theory of meaning that can contribute to ongoing attempts to refashion social theory.

At a seminar last year in West Germany, a colleague asked me why pragmatism is so popular now in America. Before I could answer, another colleague replied that the current interest in pragmatism is due to a resurgence of "Americanism" in the 1980s. I retorted, "Yes, a resurgence of interest by such 'good ol' American boys' as Karl Otto-Apel, Jürgen Habermas, and Hans Joas, to name some Germans involved in the resurgence."

This renewed interest in pragmatism does not, in my opinion, have much to do with Americanism. On the contrary, pragmatism as a body of thought provides a critical antidote for the blind and mindless optimism characteristic of America today. If anything, one could point to neofunctionalism as the symptom of Americanism in the 1980s. Yet even neofunctionalism includes among its "good ol' American boys" the Germans Richard Münch and Niklas Luhmann, so characterizing a school of thought as representing Americanism may be a more slippery endeavor than it first appears. Talcott "Heidelberg" Parsons, for example, the Godfather of neofunctionalism, has often been accused of "Germanism" in his early neglect of American thought and his continued infatuation with the thought of Max Weber. But when one considers the ways Parsons "Americanized" Weber, both in his translation of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* and in his transformation of Weber's angst in the face of modernity into Parsons' own "see no evil" enthusiasm for modernization, then one sees that Parsons himself may be one of the cultural indicators of Americanism, with its tendencies to blind optimism and technicalism.

It seems to me that we must approach the question of why there is renewed interest in pragmatism now from a different perspective. A number of theorists, such as Richard Bernstein and Clifford Geertz, have discussed tendencies

for a remaking of social theory at work, tendencies that blur previously distinct disciplinary boundaries, that revive previously "dead" theories, that seek to forge new vocabularies and new directions for social theory. If this is so—if social theory is undergoing some kind of restructuring—the questions seem to me: Does pragmatism in some way contribute to this restructuring? And if it does, then what kinds of possibilities does it hold for social theory? Finally, the pragmatic question itself: What is the purport of a remaking of social theory?

Perhaps one of the indicators of a restructuring of social theory is the very presence of pragmatism today as a lively issue in contemporary thought. Whereas ten or fifteen years ago pragmatism per se would be excluded from most discussions of contemporary theories of meaning in philosophy or literary criticism, and, if we except George Herbert Mead, in sociology, today we find that pragmatism seems to be a hot topic in literary criticism, and that there is renewed interest in pragmatism in continental thought. Why? Pragmatism might be in contemporary consideration precisely because it provides a theory of meaning that answers the needs of the time for a broadening of meaning beyond the self-imposed restrictions of modernity. As a body of thought, the theories of the classic pragmatists Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead provide a comprehensive theory of meaning that undercuts the constrictive tendencies in so much of contemporary theory.

These tendencies to exclude significant aspects of human experience from the domain of significance or meaning, as I hope to show, are not limited to isolated influences of positivist or subjectivist schools of thought, but are manifestations of a pervasive rationalism in contemporary intellectual life. Richard Rorty, for example, is a philosopher associated with the revival

of pragmatism, but he could equally be singled out as an example of contemporary rationalism. Rorty finds Dewey's situationalism conducive to a pluralistic vision of philosophy as "conversation," in keeping with such key pragmatist concepts as the dialogic nature of thought and community. But Rorty only appropriates a selected portion of Dewey and pragmatism: Rorty's Dewey is a kind of refurbished deconstructionist, freed from biological and historical concerns. He only allows those parts of Dewey and James which fit contemporary relativist rationalism to filter through.

Rorty even goes so far as to say that Peirce's contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James. In other words, none of Peirce, pragmatism's founder, can filter through Rorty's constricted relativist rationalism. Imagine Marxism without Marx, or psychoanalysis without Freud, and you can see why such a facile dismissal of Peirce is dubious at best. Though Rorty is associated with the revival of pragmatism, he can also be seen as a manifestation of the selective forgetting of pragmatism in the name of contemporary rationalism.

This rationalism shows itself even among that school most associated with pragmatism by sociologists, symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism, as practiced today and as originally set forth by Herbert Blumer, is largely an act of selective forgetting of pragmatism. It has organized itself around George Herbert Mead, to the neglect of William James, John Dewey and C.S. Peirce. One can see why Peirce was ignored: Peirce's chief interest was in logic, and his writings are not easy reading. It is more difficult to understand why James and Dewey dropped out of the sociological consciousness. Dewey is clearly a thinker of broader scope than Mead, yet his influence in symbolic interactionism has been minimal. The average intellectual, on being asked to name a pragmatist, would probably name John Dewey or William James, but the average sociologist has been socialized to think of George Herbert Mead. And the Mead image impressed upon sociologists is that derived from symbolic interactionism, in which the lively interest by Mead and the other pragmatists in forging a socialized conception of nature and human biology for social theory has been purged, and the significance of history and social critique too frequently forgotten.

Pragmatism, therefore, has undergone a radical diminution in the sociological tradition, and the renewal of interest should at the least break through the constricted understanding of pragmatism in contemporary social theory. But there is another stereotype that needs dismantling (if not deconstruction), and that is the image of pragmatism as expedient practicalism,

the "business" mentality. This is the false stereotype that infected many European theorists, who were perhaps unwilling to confront a mode of thought that rejected certain foundationalist and dichotomizing tendencies key to their own thinking. Emile Durkheim, for example, could not understand why pragmatism did not accept the fundamental duality of human nature. Georg Simmel could not understand why pragmatism rejected the fundamental duality of life and form. If he had chosen to comment on it, Max Weber would probably have not understood why pragmatism did not accept the fundamental dichotomy between facts and values. These three thinkers share foundations of Kantian dualism rejected by pragmatism. Durkheim accepted a variation of the Cartesian assumption that one begins with a subject and an object and then faces the epistemological problem of how to put them together. His solution was that collective representations provide a foundational mediation (which some have claimed is similar to Mead's "generalized other"). But in retaining an underlying dichotomy, Durkheim had to stress a radical difference between social facts as things and the individuals involved in those social facts, between sociology and psychology, between the elementary forms or Cartesian cardinal conceptions underlying religion and the varieties of religious experience in various religions.

Durkheim's idea that social facts must be treated as external things has a corollary that "individual" facts have to be treated as internal things. His idea of the duality of human nature is insufficiently social; it retains the fiction of an underlying individual always needing to be synthesized into the realm of the social. The pragmatic view that Durkheim denigrated is broader in seeing human beings as fundamentally social, including even inner human psychology and biological life.

Pragmatism was an attempt to undercut the Cartesian problem of starting with a subject and an object and then figuring out how to put them together. It began instead with triadic mediated sign-acts, from which could be prescinded a "subject" and an "object." Pragmatism denied that knowledge was reducible either to a rational knowing subject or to an immediate sensation of an object: it rejected rationalism and the sensationalism of British empiricism. Pragmatism denied the myth of a private and asocially constituted subject *or* object by locating meaning in praxis, intelligible conduct rooted in the vital tissue of the generalized community. One sees in Peirce's semiotic realism, rooted in a conception of an "unlimited community of inquirers," in Dewey's treatment of community in *The Public and its Problems* and in his discussions of the qualitative situation, in James

and Mead's discussions of the dialogic nature of the self, a thoroughly socialized conception of the social, one that cuts through the underlying lingering traces of solipsistic individualism found in the mainstream European roots of social theory. The key term for meaning in the pragmatic view is habit, sign-habit, living sign-habit—a concept that encompasses structure and individual.

Meaning as Semiosis

As a theory of signs, pragmatism includes more phenomena as signs than a number of sign theories or theories of symbolism, semiology or semiotics. Varieties of structuralism, for example, do not include emotions, the communication of feelings, and human experience as themselves signs. These phenomena would only be the "surface level," because meaning occurs at a deep structural level. In other words, the ongoing emotive and other communicative capacities of human experience are ignored by these theories. Pragmatism, by contrast, counts more things as significant. Experience itself is significant, and thereby significant.

In this sense another contribution of pragmatism is that it denies reified theories of meaning that make meaning to be, for example, a "deep structure" unsusceptible to human manipulation, cultivation, practice, or correctability. One of the problems in the structuralist theory of meaning is precisely that it is located in some nether-world where human practice cannot touch it. Meaning is literally in no place in structuralism and its poststructuralist offspring, for the place and space of a code or convention signifies but does not *exist*. Meaning may attach itself to persons, places or things, but as meaning it in no way touches or is touched by those persons, places, and things. Need I remind you of Thomas More's word for "no place": utopia. Pragmatism, by contrast, provides a theory of meaning that has human praxis built into it, a theory that includes the embodiment, as well as the bodying forth, of meaning.

Pragmatism also provides an alternative to theories that would surrender meaning to a mechanically conceived "system," operating like a homeostatic thermostat rather than some human institution or practice. One current avatar of this approach, Niklas Luhmann, would have us believe that education has the function of "the socialization of individuals as an adequate environment for future social systems" (*The Differentiation of Society* 1982, p. 241). In less bloodless language, education functions to make cogs for the machine. Luhmann's theory is simply a flow chart for a functioning machine, and one can see Luhmann as an updated avatar of the Parsonian Grand Theorist. His concept of

"autopoiesis," which attempts to describe the tendencies of systems for self-generation, is simply a recapitulation of that old theme of science fiction—how to create a self-generating machine—transposed to the technical lingo of systems theory. Why would one need to attach "auto-" to "poiesis," if not to highlight the claim that an impersonal system can do what persons by nature do, without the need or bother of persons being considered? Through his concentration on events or "communicative acts" at the exclusion of human persons, Luhmann excises those living qualities that are difficult to capture in the mechanical theory of systems. To the extent that modern conditions have turned human individuals into functioning automata of social systems, Luhmann's may be a theory well-suited to its time. But it is more appropriate to see Luhmann himself as a functioning automaton serving the great machine of modernity, attempting to steal that last holdout and treasure of humanity, life itself, by attributing its generative and self-transcending power, "autopoiesis," to the lifeless machine system.

This reified conception of meaning that one reads today in Luhmann's systems approach, in structuralism and those influenced by its binary logic, in which I would include Anthony Giddens, Umberto Eco, and poststructuralists such as Jacques Derrida, would give to a disembodied "structure," "system," or "text" model those properties of human practice, of human sign-practice. Those who would turn living human action and institutions into the model of the text, such as Derrida or Paul Ricoeur, are lackeys of rationalism, who must necessarily ignore those features of experience and history that do not fit the "text." These are not critical theories of meaning so much as the mirroring, in social theory, of the same tendencies in late modernity to turn all life, public and private, into prepackaged script. And what are "texts" themselves, if not potential human activities and tracings of human life brought to life in the activity of reading and its effects on a person's or people's conduct? These theories are themselves symptoms of the etherialization of human life in the late twentieth century, rather than critical antidotes: they support the "invisible dictator" of rationality in its attempt to turn world into word. Pragmatism, by contrast, views meaning as living habit, and structure and system as organized habit. As living habit, meaning is open to emergence, corruption or cultivation, death or transformation to new sign-habits. And again, by contrast, structuralism does not provide for the death of meaning, let alone the birth of meaning. In providing a theory of meaning that can allow for death or transformation of meaning, of large

scale cultural and epochal changes, pragmatism includes developmental aspects frequently excluded from consideration.

Meaning in the pragmatic tradition is embodied and can body forth. I use the word “body” intentionally. Pragmatism roots meaning in the body public as well as the body private. It thereby stands in stark contrast to those etherialized theories of meaning rooted in the inorganic image of the machine, theories that would alienate meaning from organic human bodies.

Another, and more controversial contribution of pragmatism is that it develops a theory of meaning continuous with nature and biology. There is a bio-social theory of meaning in pragmatism shared by all four of the classic American pragmatists, but one by and large ignored by those who claim to be following tenets of pragmatism. One of the problems that exists in contemporary social theory today—indeed one of the great problems of our time—is precisely the repression and denial of nature. The critical theorists, for example, or structuralists, would have us believe that culture is something radically opposed to nature. Nature is purposeless and culture is the realm of invention and meaning and symbolization. The pragmatists developed a theory that stated something quite different—that culture is a continuous relation in nature, not something radically opposed to it.

In this sense, pragmatism represents an alternative to both sociobiology and so-called critical theories of culture. These two seem to be at odds with each other. Sociobiology individualizes Darwin’s already overly individualistic theory of evolution and claims that culture counts for nothing. Culture is just the sublimated version of nature, and nature is greedy. Sociobiology is itself a kind of philosophy of greed, which “naturalizes” those core concepts of capitalism: maximization, continual struggle, inevitable progress.

The critical culture theorists seem to say the exact opposite. In this view nature counts for nothing, because it is the “arbitrariness” of meaning that determines human endeavors and human institutions. The problem is that both share a mechanical view of nature: one saying it counts for everything; the other saying it counts for nothing, but both uncritically believing in the received mechanical view of nature. Now we sociologists know of all the different and powerful critiques of the rise and deforming characteristics of capitalism and rationalization. We know that the character of work, family and political life, and what it means to be a self have all radically changed in the past few centuries. All of these phenomena have emerged in peculiar ways in modernity, and we can trace

them to the effects of capitalism or rationalization, but curiously enough, and especially curiously for so-called critical theorists, all criticism stops when it comes to the question of nature. The ways the same deforming tendencies may have transformed the concept of nature are strangely ignored. Critical theorists, in which I would include Habermas or Giddens, simply do not take a critical enough approach: to examine critically what it was in the seventeenth century that brought about a transformation to the mechanical view of nature, a view that spread across the natural and human sciences, and to ask whether that view of nature is valid today.

Pragmatism denies the mechanical view of nature, revealing how the “naturalistic fallacy” is not simply the ascription of qualities of culture to nature, but more significantly, the ascription to nature of the lifeless qualities of the machine. Pragmatism rejects the uncritical repression of nature characteristic of so-called “critical” social theories today, as well as the uncritical repression of the critical human capacities by human ethologists and so-called “sociobiologists” (who are neither socially nor biologically rooted, but rather are exponents of rationalistic calculation).

The pragmatists, I would suggest, undercut that mechanical view of nature and attempted to develop a theory that could allow generality or sign-making as a constituent of nature: purpose is not divorced from nature, and human nature is not divorced from culture. In this sense pragmatism was rejecting the uncritical repression of nature characteristic of many of these theories today. And I would say that with the emergence of the new plague of AIDS, contemporary social theory desperately needs to reconceive nature and biology. It is important not only to investigate how biology may be functioning in human behavior but more generally to reconceive the nature of nature.

The Pragmatic Attitude

I have used the term, “the pragmatic attitude,” to suggest the kind of mindset, *Weltanschauung*, or world picture characterizing the pragmatic mind (see my *Meaning and Modernity: Social Theory in the Pragmatic Attitude*, University of Chicago Press, 1986). It seems to me that the classic pragmatists only partially realized the inherent possibilities of the pragmatic attitude. William James—if we look at William James as the most vivid and earthy of the four major pragmatists—had the problem that his very vividness caused him to be the weakest philosophically of the pragmatists. Dewey and Mead attempted to work out the social and political implications of pragmatism, and to a

great extent ran counter to those tendencies of the twentieth century toward closed systems of thought. The very idea that logic is binary that one finds in structuralism, for example, seems to me not to be a factor of the human brain, as Lévi-Strauss suggests, but a factor of the twentieth century, the either/or century—a century of the split brain: either of extreme rationalism or extreme primitivism. The objective situationalism of both Dewey and Mead stood in contrast to the foundationalism of the early twentieth century, just as it stands today in contrast to the overly subjectivist tendencies in symbolic interactionism. Dewey and Mead counter the tendencies to dichotomize existence and thereby provide still valuable ideas for contemporary thought.

Dewey and Mead are complementary to each other, and in a sense are almost two sides of the same coin, though Dewey is, in my opinion, the broader of the two. George Herbert Mead, despite the valuable contributions of his thought, has overly dominated discussion in contemporary sociology. It must be noted again that this is a weird historical fact. James and Dewey certainly had important influences early in the century. Yet for whatever reasons, perhaps even the fact of having posthumously published books by Mead that one could actually hold and that had his name on it, or students like Herbert Blumer who were inspired by his work, for whatever reasons Mead came to ascendancy while the rest of pragmatism dropped into virtual oblivion. We need to broaden our understanding of pragmatism and social theory to include the whole framework: to realize at the very least in what stream of consciousness Mead himself was swimming. With the renewal of interest in pragmatism, sociology in general and symbolic interactionism in particular must recognize the fact that the “Meadian” is no longer the mode.

Given its partial understanding of Mead and its limited Mead-centered understanding of pragmatism, symbolic interactionism has assumed a rear-guard position in the ongoing renewal of interest in pragmatism. Its major controversies revolve around the correct interpretation of Mead, never questioning his centrality. Until symbolic interactionism gets over its half-century long infatuation with George Herbert Mead, it will remain the dubious sociological sect it is today—providing the great machine of professional sociology with a situational escape-valve, never threatening the machine itself but actually serving it. Symbolic interactionism currently serves as “humanoid tissue” for the great sociological machine. In serving up studies of isolate situational interactions stamped with the imprimatur of Mead and His representatives on this earth, it gives the

otherwise metallic hue of professional sociology the appearance of fleshtone: The *appearance* of fleshtone.

Dewey and Mead grew into maturity in the organic culture that flourished at the turn-of-the century in Chicago. They were contributing members to a milieu that included Jane Addams and her Hull-House companions, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright and their organic architecture, Thorstein Veblen, and others. The ideals of this milieu stood in stark contrast to the machine ideals of virulent capitalism at work in Chicago. In this sense Dewey and Mead’s optimistic pragmatism was a much needed alternative to the machine of modernity.

Yet Dewey and Mead’s situationalism and optimism, I would claim, proved in the end inadequate to meet the dark forces at work in the twentieth century. It has been Max Weber’s pessimistic scenario of the dominance of the faceless bureaucratic machine and its rationality that has thus far prevailed.

But even today Dewey and Mead present a powerful counterclaim to Weber: ever increasing “rationalization” is not, as Weber believed, an unavoidable consequence of modernity. Not only can human institutions and large scale patterns of meaning be revised and corrected, but the very model of the rational proposed by Weber is a distorted abstraction, an uprooted conception of rationality that by no means defines reasonableness. *Zweckrationalität*, purposive or instrumental rationality, makes the instrument, the strategic calculating machine of rationality, to be the ultimate master of humankind. This is the story of alienation, not of rationality, the story of the means becoming reified as end. Weber may have been accurately describing an historical process at work, but his own foundations of thought—the legacy of Kant and his dichotomous view of the world—are products of the very same historical process, of what I have termed “cultural nominalism.” Hence Weber’s own theoretical preconceptions may have prevented him from seeing the possibility that rationalism may not truly represent rationality, but only an exaggerated and one-sided view of what constitutes rationality. We should also keep in mind, though, that Dewey did not call his work pragmatism early on: he called it instrumentalism. And some of same overly instrumental tendencies pervade the work of Dewey and Mead. Perhaps the very great amount of attention Dewey and Mead gave to the scientific grounding of a broad theory of meaning underemphasized the place of things such as the imagination, the *Poetic Imagination*, as William Blake called it.

Dewey and Mead’s avoidance of trans-situational norms prevents them in the end from sufficiently undermining the foundations of

modern rationality and proposing a broad-based alternative. For this broader perspective we have to turn to Charles Peirce, the founder of pragmatism, whose semiotic, pragmatism, and “theory of concrete reasonableness” provide possibilities for broadening—radically broadening—the base of social theory.

It was Peirce who in the nineteenth century first proposed fallibilism as an alternative to foundationalism. And it was Peirce’s fallibilism that Dewey and Mead most resonated with—although they developed it in their own ways independently. But it was also Peirce who first—and more deeply—proposed that we are possessed of deep-rooted biocosmic capacities of feeling and inference: of tempered prejudices. Peirce accepted Kant’s idea that we see the world through our faculties of knowing. Only he went further than Kant, to say that our faculties of knowing are themselves transilluminations of the general patterns of nature. We are built the way the world is built, and have a gift within our human nature for inferring about the world and hypothesizing about it.

In Peirce’s claim that we are possessed of indubitable yet fallible ideas in his doctrine of “critical common-sensism,” we see a typical Peircean marriage of opposites—the critical philosophy of Kant with Scottish common-sensism. Peirce, who criticized Descartes’ search for indubitable foundations for knowledge, came in the end to the opinion that we do have indubitable ideas: prejudices, tempered ideas, sentiments, instincts that are so deeply rooted in traditions that it doesn’t even occur to us to question them. His difference with the Scottish common-sensists, and the influence of the Kantian turn, is that though we may be possessed of indubitables, this does not mean that they are infallible. As indubitables arise over time in human affairs for questioning they can themselves be corrected. But there may be some kind of harmony or “condensation of nature” in the way we are built so that these tempered prejudices may provide profound sources for action. It was Peirce, the great logician and inventor of “symbolic logic,” the champion of scientific method, who expressed the seemingly anti-scientific idea that rationality is but a thin film on the great sea of the mind. From the perspective of everyday life, Peirce saw rationality as a mere scum on the waters, a significant one perhaps, but one minute in comparison with the greater human capacities. In this sense the genuinely non-modern turn of Peirce’s thought that could have great value in social theory is his view that rationality is the most immature of human capacities and that sentiment and human instinct are our most mature capacities. Instinct may work vaguely, but that is precisely why we are human, because

we need culture to complete it. But in acting suggestively, in giving us vague inclinations, instinctive capacities provide us profound connections to the world and in that sense outreach even the most developed rationality.

In saying that we are possessed of indubitable yet fallible ideas in the doctrine of critical common-sensism, Peirce pointed the way to a perspective yet to be fully realized. It is a prospectus that social theory may not be ready for—a prospectus that admits the capacities to marvel and to imagine, to feel and act as well as reason, as genuine, even logical, ingredients of reasonableness in all its fullness.

The Purport of Pragmatism

Why pragmatism now? It is not so much *because of* Americanism as *in spite of* Americanism that pragmatism has resurfaced. The pragmatic attitude offers to contemporary social theory much that it presently seeks: a comprehensive theory of signs, communication, and human action; a means to encompass both structure and human agency through the concept of living habit; a critical theory of rationality, society, and modernity. But the pragmatic attitude also offers certain ideas that social theory would prefer not to know about, whether through self-interest or simple embarrassment. The pragmatic attitude, in its furthest reaches, rejects the continued rationalization of the world in favor of the instinctualization of reason. It claims that there are profound connections between human meaning and human bodies, and that biology is a significant factor in the highest, and not simply the lowest, human endeavors. The vagueness of human instinct, which makes human infants less intelligent than chimpanzee infants, does not signify the absence of instincts, but the presence of specifically human biology, “grown” to require human communication as its most essential organ.

Those who see pragmatism as a reflection of American self-interest, expediency, and crass commercialism should remember what the founder of pragmatism, Charles Peirce, had to say in 1898: “To pursue ‘topics of vital importance’ as the first and best can lead only to one or other of two terminations—either on the one hand in what is called, I hope not justly, Americanism, the worship of business, the life in which the fertilizing stream of genial sentiment dries up or shrinks to a rill of comic tit-bits, or else on the other hand, to monasticism, sleepwalking in this world with no eye nor heart except for the other. Take for the lantern of your footsteps the cold light of reason and regard your business, your duty, as the highest thing, and you can only rest in one of those goals or the other (Collected Papers of Charles

Sanders Peirce, 1.673). From these and other words, it is quite clear that Peirce saw pragmatism as opposed to practicalism and rationalism, and rationality itself as subordinate to sentiment in the conduct of life.

The renewal of interest in pragmatism poses a question for social theory that even goes beyond pragmatism: Can the cold light of reason which has thus far served as the lantern for social theory's footsteps give way to that brighter transilluminated light of warm sentiment? To those who believe in the supremacy of rationality the very question is embarrassing. But to those who suspect that reasonableness is more than rationality, the renewal of meaning in contemporary life involves reconceiving human intelligence and reclaiming critical, organic human purpose. Classic pragmatism may not always provide clear or adequate answers, but in raising the very question of the grounding of rationality in suprarational biocosmic resources of the human body, pragmatism attempts to reassert the wholeness of intelligent life against the all too frequently inhumane intelligence of rational life.

The renewal of interest in pragmatism signifies a broadening of social theory, but a full remaking of social theory will involve going beyond the limitations of classic pragmatism. I submit that in its deepest workings, in the thought of Charles Peirce, there was in pragmatism signs of a new and non-modern mind beginning to body forth. A reconstituted "pragmatic attitude," drawing from these ideas, offers what much of contemporary social theory rejects: against contemporary objectivists it claims that the denigrated human capacities to muse, marvel, imagine, and body forth meaning are our chief claim as humans to objectivity. Against contemporary subjectivists it claims that the repressed or despised biological roots of human existence form the living source for meaning, subjectivity, and transformation. Against those who would etherealize human meaning, the pragmatic attitude presents strong counterclaims for the incarnation of bodied intelligence, and indeed the reincarnation of that intelligence through human communication.