

## «WE PRAGMATISTS...»; PEIRCE AND RORTY IN CONVERSATION\*

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### Abstract

A conversation between Peirce and Rorty, composed from their own words, illustrating how different their conceptions are, not only of pragmatism, but of the nature and role of philosophy.

### Resumen

Una conversación entre Peirce y Rorty, tomada de sus propias palabras, ilustrando lo diferentes que son sus concepciones no sólo del pragmatismo sino también de la naturaleza y el papel de la Filosofía.

*SH: Let me begin by asking Professor Rorty to explain how he feels about philosophers like you, Mr Peirce, who take themselves to be seeking the truth.*

*RR: It is ... more difficult than it used to be to locate a real live metaphysical prig. [But] [y]ou can still find [philosophers] who will solemnly tell you that they are seeking the truth, not just a story or a consensus but an honest-to-God, down-home, accurate representation of the way the world is... [I]ovably old-fashioned prigs (EHO, p. 86).*

*SH: Mr Peirce?*

*CSP: [I]n order to reason well..., it is absolutely necessary to possess ... such virtues as intellectual honesty and sincerity and a real love of truth (2.82). The cause [of the success of scientific inquirers] has been that the motive which has carried them to the laboratory and the field has been a craving to know how things really were... (1.34). [Genuine inquiry consists] in diligent inquiry into truth for truth's sake (1.44), ...in actually drawing the bow upon truth with intentness in the eye, with energy in the arm (1.235).*

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\* My hope in compiling this «conversation» from Peirce's and Rorty's own words is that some things can be shown more economically than they can be said. The reader is also referred to an earlier piece («Philosophy/philosophy, an Untenable Dualism,» *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XXIX.3, 1993, pp. 411-26), where I tried to articulate some of them in a more conventional way.

I would like to thank Jane Connolly for advice on presentation, Mark Migotti for suggesting additional Rorty sources, and Robert Lane for checking the quotations and references (any mistranscriptions remaining are, of course, all my own work).

[When] it is no longer the reasoning which determines what the conclusion shall be, but ... the conclusion which determines what the reasoning shall be ... [t]his is sham reasoning. ... The effect of this shamming is that men come to look upon reasoning as mainly decorative... The result of this state of things is, of course, a rapid deterioration of intellectual vigor... (1.57-8).

RR: «[J]ustification» [is] a social phenomenon rather than a transaction between «the knowing subject» and «reality» (*PMN*, p. 9), ...not a matter of a ... relation between ideas (or words) and objects, but of conversation, of social practice... [W]e understand knowledge when we understand the social justification of belief, and thus have no need to view it as accuracy of representation (p. 170).

CSP: The result [as I said] is, of course, a rapid deterioration of intellectual vigor. This is just what is taking place among us before our eyes. ...[M]an loses his conceptions of truth and of reason (1.58, cont. and 1.59).

RR: I do not have much use for notions like ... «objective truth» (*TWO*, p. 141). [The] pragmatist view [is] of rationality as civility, ...[as] respect for the opinions of those around one, ...of «true» as a word which applies to those beliefs upon which we are able to agree... (*SS*, pp. 44, 40, 45).

CSP: [As I was saying,] man loses his conceptions of truth and of reason. If he sees one man assert what another denies, he will, if he is concerned, choose his side and set to work by all means in his power to silence his adversaries. The truth for him is that for which he fights (1.59, cont.).

RR: [T]ruth [is] entirely a matter of solidarity (*ORT*, p. 32). [T]here is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society —ours— uses... (*SS*, p. 42).

CSP: You certainly opine that there is such a thing as Truth. Otherwise, reasoning and thought would be without a purpose. What do you mean by there being such a thing as Truth? You mean that something is SO ... whether you, or I, or anybody thinks it is so or not. ...The essence of the opinion is that there is *something* that is SO, no matter if there be an overwhelming vote against it (2.135). Every man is fully satisfied that there is such a thing as truth, or he would not ask any question. *That* truth consists in a conformity to something *independent of his thinking it to be so*, or of any man's opinion on that subject (5.211).

[T]ruth [is] overwhelmingly forced upon the mind in experience as the effect of an independent reality (5.564). The essence of truth lies in its resistance to being ignored (2.139).

RR: Some philosophers ... insist that natural science discovers truth rather than makes it. ...Other philosophers [like myself] ... have concluded that science is no more than the handmaiden of technology (*CIS*, pp. 3-4).

CSP: [T]here are certain mummified pedants who have never waked to the truth that the act of knowing a real object alters it. They are curious specimens of humanity, and ... I am one of them... (5.555).

RR: My rejection of traditional notions of rationality can be summed up by saying that the only sense in which science is exemplary is that it is a model of human solidarity (SS, p. 46).

CSP: [O]ther methods of settling opinion have [certain advantages] over scientific investigation. A man should consider well of them; and then he should consider that, after all, he wishes his opinions to coincide with the fact... (5.387).

RR: ...I think that the very idea of a «fact of the matter» is one we would be better off without (*PDP*, p. 271).

CSP: ...he should consider that, after all, he wishes his opinions to coincide with the fact, and ... there is no reason why the results of those ... [other] methods should do so (5.387, cont.).

RR: «[T]rue sentences work because they correspond to the way things are»... [is an] empty metaphysical compliment, ...[a] rhetorical pat on the back... [The pragmatist] drops the notion of truth as correspondence with reality altogether... (*CP*, p. xvii).

CSP: Truth is the conformity of a representamen to its object, *its* object, ITS object, mind you (5.554).

[However,] [t]hat truth is the correspondence of a representation to its object is, as Kant says, merely the nominal definition of it. Truth belongs exclusively to propositions. A proposition has a subject (or set of subjects) and a predicate. The subject is a sign; the predicate is a sign; and the proposition is a sign that the predicate is a sign of that of which the subject is a sign. If it be so, it is true. But what does this correspondence ... of the sign to its object consist in? The pragmatist answers this question as follows. ...[I]f we can find out the right method of thinking and can follow it out ... then truth can be nothing more nor less than the last result to which the following out of this method would ultimately carry us (5.553).

RR: [T]here are ... two senses apiece of «true» and «real» and «correct representation of reality,» ... the homely use of «true» to mean roughly «what you can defend against all comers,» ...[the] homely and shopworn sense [and] the specifically «philosophical» sense ... which, like the Ideas of Pure Reason, [is] designed precisely to stand for the Unconditioned... (*PMN*, pp. 308-9).

CSP: [T]hat to which the representation should conform, is itself ... utterly unlike a thing-in-itself (5.553).

RR: [A] pragmatist theory ... says that Truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about... (*CP*, p. xiii). Pragmatists think that the history of attempts to ... define the word «true» ... supports their suspicion that there is no interesting work to be done in this area (p. xiv).

CSP: Truth is that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief... The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds forever—or

would do so, if study were to go on forever. ...[T]he same definitions equally hold in the normative sciences (5.565-6).

RR: I do not think<sup>1</sup> ... that [your account] is defensible ... [It] uses a term —«ideal»— which is just as fishy as «corresponds» (*PDT*, pp. 337, 338).

CSP: [A] false proposition is a proposition of which some interpretant represents that, on an occasion which it indicates, a percept will have a certain character, while the immediate perceptual judgment on that occasion is that the percept has not that character. A true proposition is a proposition belief in which would never lead to such disappointment so long as the proposition is not understood otherwise than it was intended (5.569).

Prof. Royce [like you] seems to think that this doctrine is unsatisfactory because it talks about what would be... It may be he is right in this criticism; yet to our apprehension this «would be» is readily resolved... (8.113). [The] most important reals have the mode of being of what the nominalist calls «mere» words, that is, general types and would-bes. [His] «mere» reveals a complete misunderstanding... (8.191). [T]he *will be's*, the actually *is's*, and the *have beens* are not the sum of the reals. ...There are besides *would be's* and *can be's* that are real (8.216).

SH: I suspect, Professor Rorty, that your sympathies lie with the nominalist...

RR: Nominalists like myself —those for whom language is a tool rather than a medium, and for whom a concept is just the regular use of a mark or noise—... see language as just human beings using marks and noises to get what they want (*EHO*, pp. 126-7).

The right idea, according to us nominalists, is that «recognition of meaning» is simply ability to substitute sensible signs ... for other signs, ...and so on indefinitely. This ... doctrine is found ... in [your writings]...<sup>2</sup> (*TMoL*, p. 211).

CSP: The nominalistic *Weltanschauung* has become incorporated into what I will venture to call the very flesh and blood of the average modern mind (5.61). Modern nominalists are mostly superficial men... (5.312).

[A] realist is simply one who knows no more recondite reality than that which is represented in a true representation (5.312, cont.). I am myself a scholastic realist of a somewhat extreme stripe (5.470). Nomenclature involves classification; and classification is true or false, and the generals to which it refers are either reals in the one case, or figments in the other (5.453).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rorty says, in parentheses, «though I once did,» and refers, in a footnote, to *CP*, p. 165; in that passage, however, though sounding, indeed, more sympathetic to Peirce's account of truth, he misdescribes it as «the view that can survive all [conversational] objections.»

<sup>2</sup> At 1.339 Peirce does indeed write that the meaning of a representation can be nothing but another representation, and that this series is infinite; but the context makes it abundantly clear that, so far from being an expression of nominalism, this is intended as an illustration of the generality and continuity of thirdness.

<sup>3</sup> In this passage (published in 1905) Peirce is criticizing what he then sees as the nominalistic tendencies in his own early statements of the pragmatic maxim. See also my «Extreme Scholastic



[P]ragmatism could hardly have entered a head that was not already convinced that there are real generals (5.503).

SH: *I wonder how Professor Rorty feels about your references to «true representations»...*

RR: Pragmatism [is] anti-representationalism (*PPD*, p. 1).

CSP: Represent: [t]o stand for, that is, to be in such a relation to another that for certain purposes it is treated by some mind as if it were that other. ...When it is desired to distinguish between that which represents and the... relation of representing, the former may be termed the «representamen», the latter the «representation» (2.273).

A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It ... creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object* ... in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen (2.228).

RR: [T]he notion of «accurate representation» is simply an ... empty compliment which we pay to those beliefs which are successful in helping us do what we want to do (*PMN*, p. 10).

CSP: It is as though a man should address a land surveyor as follows: «You do not make a true representation of the land; you only measure lengths from point to point ... you have to do solely with lines. But the land is a surface... You, therefore, fail entirely to represent the land.» The surveyor, I think, would reply, «Sir, you have proved that ... my map *is not* the land. I never pretended that it was. But that does not prevent it from truly representing the land, as far as it goes» (5.329).

SH: *I am beginning to think that you may disagree with each other not only about nominalism, but about the nature and status of metaphysics...*

RR: [T]he pragmatist ... does not think of himself as *any* kind of a metaphysician... (*CP*, p. xxviii).

CSP: [The Pragmatic Maxim] will serve to show that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish —one word being defined by other words, and they by still others, without any real conception ever being reached— or else is downright absurd; so that all such rubbish being swept away, what will remain of philosophy will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences. ...So, instead of merely jeering at metaphysics ... the pragmatist extracts from it a precious essence... (5.423).

We should expect to find metaphysics ... to be somewhat more difficult than logic, but still on the whole one of the simplest of sciences, as it is one whose main principles must be settled before very much progress can be gained either in psychics or in physics. Historically we are astonished to

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Realism': Its Relevance to Philosophy of Science Today», *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XXVIII.1, 1992, pp. 19-50.

find that it has been a mere arena of ceaseless and trivial disputation. But we also find that it has been pursued in a spirit the very contrary of that of wishing to learn the truth, which is the most essential requirement... *Metaphysics* is the proper designation for the third, and completing department of coenoscropy... Its business is to study the most general features of reality and real objects. But in its present condition it is ... a puny, rickety and scrofulous science. It is only too plain that those who pretend to cultivate it carry not the hearts of true men of science within their breast (6.4-6).

Here let us set down almost at random a small specimen of the questions of metaphysics which press ... for industrious and solid investigation: Whether or no there be any real indefiniteness, or real possibility and impossibility? Whether there be any strictly individual existence? Whether there is any distinction ... between fact and fancy? Or between the external and the internal worlds? What general ... account can be given of the different qualities of feeling...? Do all possible qualities of sensation ... form one continuous system...? ...Is Time a real thing...? How about Space...? ...Is hylozoism an opinion, actual or conceivable, rather than a senseless vocable...? ...What is consciousness or mind like...? (6.6).

RR: Metaphysicians see [books] as divided according to disciplines, corresponding to different objects of knowledge. [We] [i]ronists see them as divided according to traditions... (*CIS*, pp. 75-6).

CSP: All science is either, A. Science of Discovery; B. Science of Review; or C. Practical Science. ...Science of Discovery is either, I. Mathematics; II. Philosophy; or III. Idioscopy. ...Philosophy is divided into *a*. Phenomenology; *b*. Normative Science; *c*. Metaphysics. ...Phenomenology is ... a single study. Normative Science has three widely separated divisions: *i*. Esthetics; *ii*. Ethics. *iii*. Logic. ...Metaphysics may be divided into, *i*, General Metaphysics, or Ontology; *ii*, Psychical, or Religious, Metaphysics, concerned chiefly with the questions of 1, God, 2, Freedom, 3, Immortality; and *iii*, Physical Metaphysics, which discusses the real nature of time, space, laws of nature, matter, etc. (1.181-192).

SH: Could you please explain your reference to «ironists», Professor Rorty?

RR: [Ironists] take naturally to the line of thought developed in ... [my] book. ...The opposite of irony is common sense (*CIS*, p. 74).

CSP: [P]ragmaticism will be sure to carry critical common-sensism in its arms... (5.499).

RR: [S]entences like ... «Truth is independent of the human mind» are simply platitudes used to inculcate ... the common sense of the West (*CIS*, pp. 76-7).

CSP: [T]he Critical Common-sensist holds that all the veritably indubitable beliefs are *vague*... (5.505); [that they] refer to a somewhat primitive mode of life... (5.511); [he] has a high esteem for doubt (5.514); [he] criticizes the critical method (5.523).

RR: [We ironists emphasize] the spirit of playfulness... (*CIS*, p. 39). [We are] never quite able to take [our]selves seriously... (p. 73).

CSP: [The Critical Common-sensist] is none of those overcultivated Oxford dons —I hope their day is over— whom any discovery that brought quietus to a vexed question would evidently vex because it would end the fun of arguing around it and about it and over it (5.520).

RR: ...I have spent forty years looking for a coherent ... way of formulating my worries about what, if anything, philosophy is good for (*TWO*, p. 146).

CSP: It is true that philosophy is in a lamentably crude condition at present; ...most philosophers set up a pretension of knowing all there is to know —a pretension calculated to disgust anybody who is at home in any real science. But all we have to do is to turn our backs upon all such truly vicious conduct, and we shall find ourselves enjoying the advantages of having an almost virgin soil to till, where a given amount of really scientific work will bring in an extraordinary harvest ... of very fundamental truth of exceptional value from every point of view (1.128).

SH: *How do you feel about Mr Peirce's description of philosophy as «scientific work», Professor Rorty?*

RR: [One] side of pragmatism has been scientific. ...Let me call the claim that there is [a] «reliable [scientific] method» «scientism» ...If one takes the core of pragmatism to be its attempt to replace the notion of true beliefs as representations ... and instead to think of them as successful rules for action, then it becomes ... hard to isolate a «method» that will embody this attitude (*PWM*, pp. 260-262).

CSP: It is far better to let philosophy follow perfectly untrammelled a scientific method... If that course be honestly and scrupulously carried out, the results reached, even if they be not altogether true, even if they be grossly mistaken, can not but be highly serviceable for the ultimate discovery of truth (1.644). [R]ational methods of inquiry ... will make that result as speedy as possible... (7.78).

The first problems to suggest themselves to the inquirer into nature are far too complex ... for any early solution... What ought to be done, therefore, ...is at first to substitute for those problems others much ... more abstract... [T]he reasonably certain solutions of these last problems will throw a light... upon more concrete problems... This method of procedure is that Analytic Method to which modern physics owes all its triumphs. It has been applied with great success in psychical sciences also. ...It is reprobated by the whole Hegelian army, who think it ought to be replaced by the «Historic Method», which studies complex problems in all their complexity, but which cannot boast any distinguished successes.

There are in science three fundamentally different kinds of reasoning, Deduction, ...Induction, ...and Retroduction... Analogy combines the characters of Induction and Retroduction (1.63-6).

SH: *Do you share Mr Peirce's high regard for logic, Professor Rorty?*

RR: [R]igorous argumentation ... is no more *generally* desirable than blocking the road of inquiry is generally desirable (*CP*, p. xli).

CSP: There are two qualifications which every true man of science posses-

ses... First, the dominant passion of his whole soul must be to find out the truth in some department... Secondly, he must have a natural gift for reasoning, for severely critical thought (7.605). [L]ogic is the theory of *right* reasoning, of what reasoning ought to be... (2.7).

RR: [W]e no longer think of ourselves as having reliable «sources» of knowledge called «reason» or «sensation»... (*OE*, p. 531).

CSP: The data from which inference sets out and upon which all reasoning depends are the *perceptual facts*, which are the intellect's fallible record of the *percepts*, or «evidence of the senses» (2.143).

RR: Eventually I got over [my] worry about circular argumentation by deciding that the test of philosophical truth was overall coherence, rather than deducibility from unquestioned first principles. But this didn't help much (*TWO*, p. 145).

CSP: The reader will, I trust, be too well grounded in logic to mistake ... mutual support for a vicious circle in reasoning (6.315).

Philosophy ought ... to trust ... to the multitude and variety of its arguments... Its reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than the weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected (5.265).

RR: But [as I said] this didn't help much. For coherence is a matter of avoiding contradictions, and St Thomas' advice, «When you meet a contradiction, make a distinction,» makes that pretty easy (*TWO*, p. 145).

SH: *How do you feel about Professor Rorty's observation that making distinctions is «pretty easy,» Mr Peirce?*

CSP: ...Kant's conception of the nature of necessary reasoning is clearly shown by the logic of relations to be utterly mistaken, and his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments, ...which is based on that conception, is so utterly confused that it is difficult or impossible to do anything with it (5.176).

SH: *Perhaps, while we are on the subject of logic, you could explain your attitude to the principle of bivalence...*

RR: [T]he pragmatist ... should not succumb to the temptation to ... take sides on the issue of «bivalence» (*CP*, p. xxvi).

CSP: Triadic logic is universally true (*Logic Notebook* for 1909).<sup>4</sup>

SH: *Perhaps, Professor Rorty, it would be helpful if you would explain how you see the relation of philosophy to science...*

RR: The pragmatist is betting that what succeeds the «scientific,» positivist culture which the Enlightenment produced will be *better* (*CP*, p. xxxviii). Science as the source of «truth» ... is one of the Cartesian notions which vanish when the ideal of «philosophy as strict science» vanishes (p. 34). Pragmatism... views science as one genre of literature —or, put the other way around, literature and the arts as inquiries, on the same footing as

<sup>4</sup> M. See Fisch and A. Turquette, «Peirce's Triadic Logic» (1966), in Fisch, *Peirce, Semeiotic and Pragmatism*, eds K. L. Ketner and C. J. W. Kloesel, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1986.

scientific inquiries (p. xliii). Philosophy is best seen as a kind of writing. It is delimited, as is any literary genre, not by form or matter, but by tradition. ...[P]hilosophy as more than a kind of writing —is an illusion. ...[One] tradition takes scientific truth as the center of philosophical concern (and scorns the notion of incommensurable scientific world-pictures). It asks how well other fields of inquiry conform to the model of science. The second [pragmatist] tradition takes science as one (not especially privileged nor interesting) sector of culture, a sector which ... only makes sense when viewed historically (pp. 92-3). [L]iterature has now displaced religion, science, and philosophy as the presiding discipline of our culture... (p. 155).

SH: *Mr Peirce?*

CSP: [I] desire to rescue the good ship Philosophy for the service of Science from the hands of lawless rovers of the sea of literature... (5.449).

RR: A few [lovably old-fashioned prigs] will even claim to write in a clear, precise, transparent way, priding themselves on manly straightforwardness, on abjuring «literary» devices (*EHO*, p. 86).

CSP: As for that phrase «studying in a literary spirit» it is impossible to express how nauseating it is to any scientific man... (1.33).

RR: [A]s soon as a program to put philosophy on the secure path of science succeeds, it simply converts philosophy into a boring academic specialty (*PMN*, pp. 384-5).

CSP: In order to be deep it is requisite to be dull ... [T]he new pragmatists... are *lively*... (5.17).<sup>5</sup> The apostle of Humanism [like you] says that professional philosophers «have rendered philosophy like unto themselves, abstruse, arid, abstract, and abhorrent.» But I conceive that some branches of science are not in a healthy state if they are *not* abstruse, arid, and abstract, in which case, ...it will be as Shakespeare said...

«Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose, But musical as is Apollo's lute,»...<sup>6</sup> (5.537).

The reader may find the matter [of my «Minute Logic»] so dry, husky and innutritious to the spirit that he cannot imagine that there is any human good in it. ...But the fault is his. It shall not be more tedious than the multiplication table, ...and as the multiplication table is worth the pains of learning, ...so shall this be... (2.15).

SH: *Professor Rorty, your view of philosophy as a genre of literature puzzles me; surely pragmatism is a form of empiricism?*

RR: Pragmatism has gradually broken the historical links that once connected it to empiricism... (*PPD*, p. 4).

<sup>5</sup> Peirce says that this is the *only* fault he finds with the «new pragmatists,» i. e., Dewey, Schiller, and, perhaps, also James; not so, I suspect, with new «new pragmatists» such as Rorty.

<sup>6</sup> «The apostle of Humanism» is F. C. S. Schiller, the reference to *Humanism: Philosophical Essays*, London, MacMillan, 1903, XVI. The lines Peirce quotes are not from Shakespeare, the editors tell us, but from Milton's *Comus*.

CSP: The kind of philosophy which interests me and must, I think, interest everybody is that philosophy, which uses the most rational methods it can devise, for finding out the little that can as yet be found out about the universe of mind and matter from those observations which every person can make in every hour of his waking life ... laboratory-philosophy... (1.126, 129).

RR: From the radically anti-representationalist viewpoint I ... commend... pragmatism can be seen as gradually ... escaping from scientism (*PPD*, p. 4).

CSP: [Philosophical theories] have the same sort of basis as scientific results have. That is to say, they rest on experience —on the total everyday experience of many generations... Such experience is worthless for distinctively scientific purposes ... although all science ... would have to shut up shop if she should manage to escape accepting them. No «wisdom» could ever have discovered argon; yet within its proper sphere, ...the instinctive result of human experience ought to have so vastly more weight than any scientific result, that to make laboratory experiments to ascertain, for example, whether there be any uniformity in nature or no, would vie with adding a teaspoonful of saccharine to the ocean in order to sweeten it (5.522).

RR: The basic motive of pragmatism was ... a continuation of the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment's sanctification of natural science (*EHO*, p. 18).

CSP: [Science] embodies the epitome of man's intellectual development (7.49). [I]conoclastic inventions are always cheap and often nasty (4.71).

SH: *May we go back for a minute to Professor Rorty's reference to Romanticism?*

RR: The Platonist and the positivist share a reductionist view of metaphor: They think metaphors are either paraphrasable or useless for the one serious purpose which language has, namely, representing reality. By contrast, the Romantic has an expansionist view ... Romantics attribute metaphor to a mysterious faculty called the «imagination,» a faculty they suppose to be at the very center of the self... (*CIS*, p. 19).

CSP: When a man desires ardently to know the truth, his first effort will be to imagine what that truth can be. ...there is, after all, nothing but imagination that can ever supply him an inkling of the truth. ...[F]or thousands of men a falling apple was nothing but a falling apple; and to compare it to the moon would by them be deemed «fanciful.» It is not too much to say that next after the passion to learn there is no quality so indispensable to the successful prosecution of science as imagination. ...There are, no doubt, kinds of imagination of no value in science, mere artistic imagination, mere dreaming of opportunities for gain. The scientific imagination dreams of explanation and laws (1.46-8).

Cuvier said that Metaphysics is nothing but Metaphor. ...If metaphor be taken literally to mean an expression of a similitude when the sign of predication is employed instead of the sign of likeness —as when we say this man *is* a fox instead of this man is like a fox,— I deny entirely that metaphysicians are given to metaphor ... but if Cuvier was only using a metaphor himself, and meant by metaphor broad comparison on the ground



of characters of a formal and highly abstract kind, —then, indeed, metaphysics professes to be metaphor... (7.590).

RR: [A] philosopher ... like myself ... thinks of himself as auxiliary to the poet rather than to the physicist. ...Interesting philosophy is ... a contest between an entrenched vocabulary which has become a nuisance and a half-formed new vocabulary which vaguely promises great things (CIS, pp. 7-9).

SH: *But I don't think Mr Peirce would deny the importance of linguistic innovation...*

CSP: [E]very symbol is a living thing, ...its meaning inevitably grows, incorporates new elements and throws off old ones. ...Science is continually gaining new conceptions; and every new *scientific* conception should receive a new word. ...Different systems of expression are often of the greatest advantage (2.222).

RR: It is a feature of ... science that the vocabulary in which problems are posed is accepted by all those who count as contributing to the subject. The vocabulary may be changed, but that is only because a new theory has been discovered. ...The vocabulary in which the *explicanda* are described has to remain constant (CP, pp. 141-2).

CSP: How much more the word *electricity* means now than it did in the days of Franklin; how much more the term planet means now than it did in the time [of] Hipparchus. These words have acquired information... (7.587).

Symbols grow. ...In use and in experience, [the] meaning [of a symbol] grows. Such words as *force, law, wealth, marriage*, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors (2.302).

SH: *I gather, Professor Rorty, from your references to «irony» and «playfulness», that you disapprove of too solemn an attitude to philosophy as a profession...*

RR: I would welcome a culture dominated by «the Rich Aesthete, the Manager and the Therapist»<sup>7</sup> so long as *everybody* who wants to get to be an aesthete ... [T]he ironic, playful intellectual is a desirable character-type... (FMR, pp. 16, 15).

SH: *Mr Peirce?*

CSP: [W]e remark three classes of men. The first consists of those for whom the chief thing is the qualities of feelings. These men create art. The second consists of the practical men... The third class consists of men to whom nothing seems great but reason. ...Those are the natural scientific men... (1.43).

[I]t is infinitely better that men devoid of genuine scientific curiosity should not barricade the road of science with empty books and embarrassing assumptions... (1.645).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rorty's classification is taken from MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Notre Dame, IN, Notre Dame University Press, 1981, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Peirce seems to be getting a little testy here; perhaps, like myself, he is less than charmed by Rorty's references to «lovably old-fashioned prigs.»

RR: [I]ntellectual gifts —intelligence, judgment, curiosity, imagination, ...kinks in the brain ... provide these gifts... (CIS, pp. 187-8).

CSP: There is a kink in my damned brain that prevents me from thinking as other people think...<sup>9</sup>

RR: [A]s we look about at the manly, aggressive and businesslike academics of our ... time, ...[t]he well-funded professor[s], jetting home after a day spent advising men of power ... [we see that the] American academic mind has long since discovered the joy of making its own special enterprise «greater and better organized and a mightier engine in the general life»<sup>10</sup> (CP, p. 61).

CSP: Wherever there is a large class of academic professors who are provided with good incomes and looked up to as gentlemen, scientific inquiry must languish. Wherever the bureaucrats are the more learned class, the case will be still worse (1.51).

SH: *And how do you see the relation of philosophy to society?*

RR: [P]ragmatism must be defined as the claim that the function of inquiry is, in Bacon's words, to «relieve and benefit the condition of man»... (EHO, p. 27).

CSP: [A] modern reader who is not in awe of [Bacon's] grandiloquence is chiefly struck by the inadequacy of his view of scientific procedure. ...«He wrote on science like a Lord Chancellor,» indeed, as Harvey, a genuine man of science said (5.361).

RR: [P]hilosophy [is] *in the service* of democratic politics... (CIS, p. 196). [W]e pragmatists commend our antiessentialism and antilogocentrism on the ground of its harmony with the practices and aims of a democratic society... (EHO, p. 135).

CSP: I must confess that I belong to that class of scallawags who purpose, with God's help, to look the truth in the face, whether doing so be conducive to the interests of society or not. Moreover, if I should ever attack that excessively difficult problem, «What is for the true interest of society?» I should feel that I stood in need of a great deal of help from the science of legitimate inference... (8.143). [A]gainst the doctrine that social stability is the sole justification of scientific research ... I have to object, first, that it is historically false...; second, that it is bad ethics; and, third, that its propagation would retard the progress of science (8.135).

RR: [There have been in our century] three conceptions of the aim of philosophizing. They are the Husserlian (or «scientistic») answer, the Heideggerian (or «poetic») answer, and the pragmatist (or «political») answer (EHO, p. 9).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> An observation of Peirce's reported by E. T. Bell in *The Development of Mathematics*, New York and London, McGraw-Hill, 1949, p. 519.

<sup>10</sup> I have slightly altered Rorty's word-order, but not his meaning, here. The quotation is from Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, London, J. M. Dent, 1913, p. 188.

<sup>11</sup> But didn't Rorty say earlier that the pragmatist favored a view of philosophy as a genre of literature? Well, yes; but his point now seems to be that the public side of his philosophy stresses democracy («solidarity»), the private side, «poetic self-creation» («irony»).

CSP: In my opinion, the present infantile condition of philosophy ... is due to the fact that ... it has chiefly been pursued by men who have not ... been animated by the true scientific *Eros*; but who have ... been inflamed with a desire to amend the lives of themselves and others... (1.620). [T]he two masters, *theory* and *practice*, you cannot serve (1.642).

SH: *It seems to me that the two of you have radically different conceptions of what pragmatism is...*

RR: «Pragmatism» is a vague, ambiguous and overworked word (CP, p. 160).

CSP: [M]any writers, ...in spite of pragmatists' declarations, unanimous, reiterated, and most explicit, still remain unable to «catch on» to what we are driving at, and persist in twisting our purpose and purport all awry. ...[Pragmatism] is merely a method of ascertaining the meanings of hard words and of abstract concepts (5.464).

RR: [T]he pragmatist ... must struggle with the positivist for the position of radical anti-Platonist. ...[A]t first glance he looks like just another variety of positivist (CP, p. xvii).

CSP: [P]ragmaticism is a species of prope-positivism (5.423).

RR: My first characterization of pragmatism is that it is simply anti-essentialism applied to notions like «truth,» «knowledge,» «language,» «morality,» and similar objects of philosophical theorizing. ...There is no whole-sale, epistemological way to direct, or criticize, or underwrite, the course of inquiry (CP, p. 162). [A] second characterization of pragmatism might go like this: there is no epistemological difference between truth about what ought to be and truth about what is, nor any metaphysical difference between facts and values, nor any methodological difference between morality and science (p. 163). ...[T]he pragmatists tell us, it is the vocabulary of practice rather than of theory ... in which one can say something useful about truth (p. 162). [A] third ... characterization of pragmatism [is]: it is the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones. ...The only sense in which we are constrained to truth is that, as [you] suggested, we can make no sense of the notion that the view which can survive all objections might be false. But objections —conversational constraints— cannot be anticipated (p. 165).

CSP: To satisfy our doubts, ...it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be determined by nothing human, but by some external permanency —by something upon which our thinking has no effect. ...It must be something which affects, or might affect, every man. ...[T]he method must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same. Such is the method of science (5.384).

RR: [O]nce human desires are admitted into the criterion of «truth,» ...[w]e have become pragmatists. [T]he pragmatist's claim [is] that to know your desires is to know the criterion of truth... (EHO, pp. 30-31).

CSP: [I]t is necessary to note what is essentially involved in the Will to Learn. ...I can excuse a person who has lost a dear companion and whose reason is in danger of giving way under the grief, for trying, on that account,

to believe in a future life. ...[But] I myself would not adopt a hypothesis ... simply because the idea was pleasing to me. ...[T]hat would be a crime against the integrity of ... reason... (5.583, 598).<sup>12</sup>

RR: What I am calling «pragmatism» might also be called «left-wing Kuhnianism» (SS, p. 41).

CSP: [A]n opinion which has of late years attained some vogue among men of science, [is] that we cannot expect any physical hypothesis to maintain its ground indefinitely even with modifications, but must expect that from time to time there will be a complete cataclysm that shall utterly sweep away old theories and replace them by new ones. As far as I know, this notion has no other basis than the history of science. Considering how very, very little science we have attained, and how infantile the history of science still is, it amazes me that anybody should propose to base a theory of knowledge upon the history of science alone. An emmet<sup>13</sup> is far more competent to discourse upon the figure of the earth than we are to say what future millennia and millionennia may have in store for physical theories ... The only really scientific theory that can be called old is the Ptolemaic system; and that has only been improved in details, not revolutionized (2.150).

RR: [Your] contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name... (CP, p. 161).

CSP: [I]t has probably never happened that any philosopher has attempted to give a general name to his own doctrine without that name's soon acquiring in common philosophical usage, a signification much broader than was originally intended. ...[My] word «pragmatism» ... begins to be met with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abused in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches. ...So, then, the writer, finding his bantling «pragmatism» so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child good-by and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word «pragmaticism,» which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers (5.143-4).

It is good economy for philosophy to provide itself with a vocabulary so outlandish that loose thinkers shall not be tempted to borrow its words. ...[W]hoever deliberately uses a word ... in any other sense than that which was conferred upon it by its sole rightful creator commits a shameful offence against the inventor of the symbol and against science, and it becomes the duty of the others to treat the act with contempt and indignation (2.223-4).

<sup>12</sup> These observations were written in 1898, the year after the publication of James's *The Will to Believe*, which was dedicated to Peirce. James's view is somewhat closer to what Rorty describes as the «pragmatist» position (but only somewhat, since James seems to say, though not unambiguously, that his doctrine applies only where a question cannot in principle be settled by evidence); and James insisted on the independence of his doctrine of the Will to Believe from pragmatism.

<sup>13</sup> An ant.

RR: Revolutionary movements within an intellectual discipline require a revisionist history of that discipline (CP, p. 211).

CSP: It seems to me a pity [that the pragmatists of today<sup>14</sup>] should allow a philosophy so instinct with life to become infected with seeds of death in such notions as that of ... the mutability of truth... (6.485).

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<sup>14</sup> Peirce refers specifically to F. C. S. Schiller: whom Russell described (*Sceptical Essays*, New York, 1928, p. 61) as the «literary protagonist» of pragmatism; and who misinterprets James, rather as Rorty does, by ignoring James's acknowledgment that his account of concrete truths could not stand alone, without the support of his conception of abstract Truth.

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