

After a close engagement with Peirce's work, they usually find it relatively easy to think with him, as it were, in answering the questions raised in these debates. It's not important to me what issues I or my students choose; what matters is that they see that Peirce's ideas are not dead or outmoded. They can then see the significance of those contemporary thinkers who draw on Peirce's work to develop their own ideas: Susan Haack, Hermann Deuser, Carl Hausman, Chris Hookway, Ivo Ibric, Cheryl Misak, Sami Pihlström, Michael Raposa, and a host of others. Again, the Peircean lesson is that the history of philosophy is an ongoing conversation; and it's a conversation in which Peirce can still play a relevant role.

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Searching for Some Real Doubt

My experience teaching Peirce to undergraduates is mostly confined to introducing him into courses that have little to do with American philosophy. I have included him in my Introduction to Philosophy (a course that is typically populated by non-philosophy majors), in my upper-level course in philosophy of science, and in a combined graduate/undergraduate course on the philosophy of text.

In my intro philosophy course I have students read primary texts and use the class sessions to guide them through the readings, using a combination of close reading and lecture. I think it is good for students to experience difficult texts firsthand, and given that decision I see little problem including Peirce at this level. His writings are not any more difficult than those of other great philosophers, whether it be Aristotle, Hume, Kant, or Nietzsche. Though at times Peirce's language can be awkward, he always writes with the reader in mind and he spends considerable time and effort making his position clear and as explicitly formulated as he can. The problem with Peirce is more conceptual. His views are often antithetical to those found in modern philosophy, which have come to define how students understand themselves and the world in which they live.

In my intro course I have sought to use this to my advantage by first devoting a fairly large section to Descartes and then discussing the Cartesian stance from a Peircean perspective. First, we go through Descartes's *Meditations Concerning First Philosophy* in its entirety, which takes some time. I begin with Descartes's method of universal doubt and his subsequent discovery of the ego cogito in the first two meditations, then I go through the remainder of the work, showing how he built upon this newfound Archimedean point and the worldview that results from it. While doing this I draw attention to the notion of clear and distinct ideas, its relation to truth, the role attributed to God, the proof of the external world, the dualism of mind and body, the substance notion of the soul and the argument for its immortality, the emphasis on the individual, etc. Attention is given also to Descartes's criticism of the schoolmen—what he is reacting to and why—and why his work can be seen as the start of a new era in philosophy. At the end I have students reflect upon this by asking them to formulate how much Descartes's views are representative of how they understand themselves and the world they live in.

Next, I have students read Peirce's standard anti-Cartesian papers "Questions Concerning Faculties Claimed for Man" and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities."

When guiding the students through these texts, I try to constantly relate the moves Peirce is making with the argument presented in the *Meditations*, and I try to get the students involved in developing the rough outlines of the sort of worldview that results from it: no innate knowledge, no God as the guarantor of truth, no Cartesian-style individuals, an emphasis on community, etc. I also show them how Peirce's criticism of Descartes is informed by his reading the schoolmen, and how his departure from Descartes somehow parallels the latter's earlier departure from the schoolmen, suggesting that we too might find ourselves at the dawn of a new era. I conclude by having students reflect on the Peircean view while taking into account what they had said earlier when they discussed the Cartesian view—typically this means they have to reflect upon their own values. Though it upsets some students to find long trusted beliefs and values challenged, the greater didactic problem is addressing a dismissive sophomoric relativism. To conclude, the aim of the exercise is to generate some real doubt about some very fundamental beliefs that are generally wholly taken for granted, and to do so in a productive manner.

With the upper-level courses in philosophy of science, I start with the first two papers of Peirce's *Popular Science Monthly* series: "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." Both papers raise many issues traditionally discussed in undergraduate philosophy of science classes: the aim of inquiry, scientific progress, the demarcation of science, the notions of truth and reality, the role of the scientific community, etc. Moreover, these papers raise the issues in an introductory manner that doesn't require much of a background in either science or philosophy. A discussion of Peirce's pragmatic maxim becomes particularly useful when it is later compared with verificationism in its various guises. When coupled with Peirce's realism, it also presents a good avenue for addressing the problems Carnap runs into in "Testability and Meaning." Peirce's discussion of abduction, deduction, and induction further provides an interesting addition to discussions of the deductive-nomological model of science, and Popperian falsificationism, as well as more contemporary views on inference to the best explanation. In short, discussing Peirce in a relatively standard philosophy of science course gives me a high-quality external vantage point that enables me to contrast mainstream twentieth-century views with the views of a scientist-philosopher who had not been exposed to them, and hence is not infected by them.²⁴

It is also within the context of this course that I wrote the Peirce volume for the Wadsworth Philosophers series.²⁵ When writing that book I was searching for a way to get students quickly up to speed on a fairly large number of key themes in Peirce's work, thus making it easier for the instructor to depart from the assigned readings and talk about Peirce's views more generally.²⁶

The latter, I do exclusively in a combined graduate-undergraduate course on the philosophy of text, where I use Peirce a lot, but without assigning any Peirce readings. One key philosophical problem in this area is the issue of authorial intent, with the related question of what an author is. When talking about the relation between the author and the text, I find Peirce's conception of the self much more useful than the Cartesian notion of the self implicitly adhered to by textual scholars. Another key problem revolves around the ontology of the text—how does the text relate to its physical instantiations—where I find Peirce's realism very helpful in bringing out the implicit nominalism among textual scholars and showing how their views are a consequence of a very particular but unarticulated metaphysical stance, or a rather crude denial of it.

In short, when teaching Peirce to undergraduates I don't see myself guided by a felt need to teach students "the philosophy of Peirce." Instead I use him in more targeted ways to bring out a contrast with mainstream views in a constructive and responsible manner.

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The Value of Peirce's Historical Commentaries

I am proud to be able to say that my first opportunity to teach Peirce in a university setting was due to a co-organizer of the present symposium, James Campbell. I was his one-year stand-in at the University of Toledo in 2003–2004 while he was teaching in Germany. In that capacity I was commissioned to teach an American philosophy seminar which enrollment consisted of about eight or ten graduate students, and a single undergrad. This experience greatly influenced my eventual approach to teaching Peirce in undergraduate contexts.

It being my first chance to teach American philosophy I thought I would "play it as safe." To my mind this meant assigning the most "standard" essays and supplementary interpretations. When it comes to Peirce I learned that this is a mistake. I assigned for the students Peirce's most widely discussed essays, those *Popular Science Monthly* pieces James made famous in his pragmatism lectures. At the time I had a conversation with a colleague ringing in my ears about teaching "The Fixation of Belief." My colleague had assigned the essay to his undergrads with hopes that it would communicate something of the originality of Peirce's philosophic vision, in particular Peirce's endorsement of fallibilism against what he calls the "willful adherence to a belief."²⁷ I shared my colleague's worthy hopes.

My students—the first, mostly graduate group—came to our meeting intrigued by Peirce's suggestive distinctions, but not a little bewildered. They preferred "Fixation" to "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," though they were not particularly moved by either essay. The language seemed to them ponderous and unnecessarily methodical. Peirce's talk about establishing a "rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension" seemed to them starchy and innocuous. The students patiently endured my clumsy attempts to simplify the pragmatic rule using examples like chairs and desks ("one has no precise idea of 'chair' until one has conceived its practical bearings, as in '*this object has advantages of use in this and such particular context*'..."). They were unimpressed by this most central of rules to early American philosophy.

Similarly, Peirce's four methods for fixing belief seemed to them weighted down by dogmatism about logic and inference-making that hardly applied to everyday reasoning. I saw the irony of this—it was precisely this same "everyday reasoning" that Peirce was trying to show conformed to the clearest and loftiest of logical methods—but I had a hard time turning this to my pedagogical advantage. What I viewed as deft philosophic connection-making they took for only stiffness and scientism. As with "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" I was forced to insist, somewhat in vain, and both despite and because of the student's malaise, that Peirce was diagnosing something central to all of their own spontaneous lives: "*The 'method of scientific investigation' is simply the realization,*