

The Pragmatic Maxim: Essays on Peirce and Pragmatism

By CHRISTOPHER HOOKWAY

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Christopher Hookway's masterful third book on Peirce is a collection of essays which offers something for everyone: mathematics, abduction, truth, the long run, scepticism, inquiry, empiricism, logic, anti-psychologism, and, of course, the pragmatic maxim. But this book is much more than a collection of essays; it is a rich and unified picture of these topics in relation to the pragmatic maxim, its formulation, proof, and myriad applications. While demonstrating that Peirce's proof of the pragmatic maxim is ultimately unsuccessful, Hookway shows us the importance of Peirce's rich phenomenological account of experience as well as pragmatism as a method for rational self-control (also central to Hookway's earlier work) for handling many contemporary philosophical problems.

Hookway's 'Introduction' elegantly presents the main ideas of Peirce's philosophy including instructive discussions of Peirce's Kantian influences, and his accounts of belief, judgement, and assertion. The first several chapters focus on explicitly epistemological issues. In Chapter 1, 'Peirce and Scepticism', Hookway examines Peirce's replacement of scepticism with fallibilism, the emphasis on genuine doubt, and the rejection of intuition and nominalism, two views which lead to Cartesian doubt. In Chapter 2, 'Fallibilism and the Aim of Inquiry', Hookway argues against Richard Rorty and Donald Davidson's implicitly infallibilist view that truth should not be a goal of inquiry, and for the view that we can and do work toward goals (including truth), without having the capacity to know with absolute certainty whether we have achieved them, and that Peirce himself held his own view of truth to be fallible. In Chapter 3, 'Truth, Reality, and Convergence', Hookway argues against Hilary Putnam's claim that Peirce's account of truth in the long run commits him to what Bernard Williams calls an absolute conception of reality, saying that Peirce's 'basic realism leaves the metaphysical character ('the mode of being') of its objects open' (65). Truth is a logical concept and is metaphysically neutral (66). In Chapter 4, 'Interrogatives and Uncontrollable Abductions', Hookway discusses how Peirce sometimes emphasizes the provisional nature of abductive conclusions, but also admits that we will sometimes have an 'uncontrollable inclination to believe' the abductive conclusion, but that both kinds of abductions play important roles in inquiry (80).

Several middle chapters focus on logic and mathematics, topics which divided the classical American pragmatists. In Chapter 5, 'Normative Logic and Psychology', Hookway argues that Peirce's many attempts to refute psychology's role in logic (including Peirce's criticisms of Dewey) all fall short in some way; Peirce's own formal logic is based in phenomenology rather than a priorism or the special sciences. In Chapter 6, 'The Form of a Relation', Hookway argues that Peirce's position resembles contemporary 'structuralism' because, for Peirce, the object of mathematical reasoning is 'the form of a relation'. Peirce's view of hypostatic abstraction leads him to the view of an *ante rem* structuralism, holding that structures are real independently of any system exemplifying them (124).

While almost all the chapters draw on Peirce's phenomenological account of experience, several focus on Peirce's empiricism more directly, which is essential to understanding pragmatism since it depends on sensible effects of concepts and hypotheses. In Chapter 7, "A Sort of Composite Photograph", Hookway argues that the metaphor of the composite photograph functions in Peirce's philosophy as a kind of Kantian schema (which bridges the sensation and understanding), and that for Peirce 'the appeal to photographs is intended to capture the pragmatist insight that these general ideas and schemata need contain no conceptual elements which cannot have their source in experience' (144). In Chapter 8, 'Pragmatism and the Given', Hookway reads Lewis's theory of the given as Kantian because it provides the objects of our knowledge rather than foundational justifications (158). Hookway's hypothesis is that Lewis's given was driven by his realism (159), which Hookway contrasts with Peirce's realism, which is bolstered by a thicker view of perception.

The final three chapters focus on the pragmatic maxim. In Chapter 9, 'The Principle of Pragmatism', Hookway examines the various formulations of the pragmatic maxim throughout Peirce's work, arguing that there is no one definite version, though each draws on the verificationist theme that clarity lies in concepts or, what Hookway calls, 'the pragmatist theme', which emphasizes the practical bearing a concept or proposition would have in action (167). In Chapter 10, 'Logical Principles and Philosophical Attitudes', Hookway argues that Peirce saw similarities between his and James's pragmatism, but that the important differences between them should be understood in light of their respective goals. Peirce emphasizes law and generality in his pragmatism because of his emphasis on rational self-control (190–91), and pragmatism's role in science, while James's pragmatism appears to be an 'attitude' not related to just a single purpose (193). Chapter 11, 'How Peirce Argued for his Pragmatist Maxim', provides a deep discussion of Peirce's four strategies for defending the pragmatic maxim, none of which is completely successful, though they improve in succession.

Hookway's excellent new book provides a great service to Peirce scholarship and analytic and pragmatist debates in philosophy. Each chapter is a piece of outstanding scholarship which anyone familiar with Hookway's work has come to expect. Hookway speaks both the languages of Peirce scholarship and contemporary analytic philosophy, and always in a clear and helpful way, without technical jargon. Above all, Hookway is deeply intellectually honest. He navigates all the twists and turns in the development of Peirce's philosophy, uncovering Peirce's motivations, how Peirce is often misread and the importance of Peirce's view. He gives both the newcomer and those who have been at it a while a clear lie of the land, and whenever he sees a problem in Peirce's view or argument, he lets his reader know along the way. Hookway's superb new book is must reading for everyone from the beginning pragmatist to the seasoned professional.

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