

Excerpts from

The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (henceforth CP)

reproducing Vols. I-VI ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935), Vols. VII-VIII ed. Arthur W. Burks (same publisher, 1958)

--in keeping with copyright laws, I have to specify that this .pdf file is for CLASS-USE ONLY. You can print off one copy for personal use and then trash the downloaded file, or just keep one copy of the .pdf file on your computer for the duration of the course, and then trash it at the end of the course.---

The story of the Harvard edition titled CP, which we here re-present in electronic form, is a story fairly well known, and a sad one. Hartshorne and Weiss, along with Burks later, deserve our thanks for getting the volumes out, but we must at the same time regret the manner of their editing, which was to construct a topical scheme of their own devising under which to sort and dissect the papers left whole to Harvard through the good intentions of Josiah Royce. How Harvard abused that trust! The story, at least, is now out with the bursting upon the scene of the newly-worked (after more than thirty years of repression) biographical dissertation of Joseph Brent in the form of the book, **Charles Sanders Peirce. A Life (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993)**. This publication is a tribute in equal parts to the writing skill and historical tenacity of its author, to the editorial genius (to say nothing of the detective skills) of Thomas A. Sebeok, and to the publishing genius of John Gallman, the Director of the Indiana University Press.

---John Deely, editorial introduction to the electronic edition.

INTRODUCTION by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss

Charles Sanders Peirce plays a unique rôle in the history of American philosophy. During his own lifetime he published no book on philosophy, and except for a relatively short period he held no university chair from which to impress his influence upon students; yet he has come to be recognized as the founder of the one distinctive movement which this country has produced.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p iii

Pragmatism, as it developed, followed the pattern of William James' thought and that of John Dewey rather than the conceptions of Peirce; but it was Peirce, as James and Dewey magnanimously insisted, who defined the principle of the movement and gave it the first impetus. Never indeed a leader of movements, Peirce was an originator of ideas. He clearly formulated in his writings many conceptions which are only today beginning to find recognition, and there are implications in his thought which have not yet been fully developed.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p iii

Articles on pragmatism represent only one phase of his work. Some of his best thought

was devoted to logical problems: to the logic of classes and relations, the theory of signs, scientific method, to probability and induction, and to the logical analysis of mathematics. In the development of exact or mathematical logic his papers represent the most important and considerable contributions in the period between Boole's *Laws of Thought* and Schröder's *Vorlesungen*. His writings on logic touch almost every point of theoretical interest in the subject.
Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p iii

His published papers, about seventy-five in number, include the series of articles on pragmatism, the logical papers, and important discussions of metaphysical problems. There are about twice as many book reviews. From these published works one may gather some suggestion of the versatility of his interests and the wide range of his studies, which included subjects as remote and unexpected as geodesy and astronomy, telepathy, criminology, and optics. But perhaps because carefully edited for publication, these papers and reviews fail to reveal as they might another side of Peirce -- his humor, freshness, pithiness of phrase, his exuberance of idea, erratic self-consciousness and self-confidence, his endless projection of vast systematic constructions, the gleams of genius described by James in his famous phrase as "flashes of brilliant light relieved against Cimmerian darkness." Only in the less formal writings does Peirce emerge as his friends at Harvard knew him in the great period of philosophy there at the turn of the century.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p iv

After Peirce's death in 1914, his unpublished manuscripts came into the care of the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University. They number several hundreds, not including fragments, the fruit of a long life devoted almost exclusively to philosophy and to science in a great variety of forms. These manuscripts represent all stages of incompleteness. Frequently there is no date or title, and many leaves are out of place or altogether missing. Some of them were rewritten as many as a dozen times: it is often evident that Peirce himself was not able to select the final form. Some are clearly identifiable as earlier drafts of his published papers; others one may assume to have been such drafts, although they differ from the published papers so much as to make this a matter of doubt. Often these unpublished studies contain passages, or longer portions, which impress those who have examined them as being of greater worth or clarity than those in the published articles. There are, likewise, a number of studies, often completed and of considerable length, and yet plainly unrelated to any which were printed. Sometimes they can be identified, through contemporary correspondence, as definite projects for publication which for one or another reason, never came to fruition. Often, however, there is no indication of such definite intent; he seems to have written merely from the impulse to formulate what was in his mind. Nevertheless, Peirce's studies of this kind are usually fairly continuous and systematic. If their merely private or preliminary nature is at all betrayed, this is because in them Peirce allows himself to follow out the ramifications of his topic, so that digressions appear which are inadmissible in print, but which show vividly the interconnectedness of his thought and the unsystematic character of his writings.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p v

Peirce possessed the system-making mind. That the merely external exigencies of his life and the indifference of publishers prevented any full-length presentation of his philosophy is a tragedy. And it is a tragedy which cannot now be set right. His system cannot be completely

reconstructed; even the attempt would mean taking indefensible liberties with the manuscripts. The most that can be done is to select, with such judgment as one can command, the most important of these unpublished papers and to compare them with his published writings on the same topic. Such selection is always difficult. Illuminating passages of great interest must be passed by because inextricably connected with other material the inclusion of which is not justified. On the other hand, because the doctrines they present are too important to be omitted, papers and fragments must often be included although one is sure that the author would not have printed them in their present condition. Often there are alternative drafts of the same study, one distinctly superior in some portion or respect; the other, in some other portion or respect. In such cases a choice is necessary, although any choice is a matter of regret.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p v

In general, when Peirce's thought is at its best, he writes least well. For relatively superficial and transient topics he commanded a facile style, as in the many engaging contributions to *The Nation*. And in his more serious published work, he never allowed anything to leave his hand until it had attained a certain clarity and continuity. But when he is most in earnest (the manuscripts make this evident), the systematic and detailed character of his thought impedes his pen: he is likely to fall into some harsh jargon of his own, adopted in the interests of precision. The neatly turned phrase or brief and striking statement must often be rejected, in favor of one more technically accurate, or more complicated in the interest of adequacy. It is only just, however, to recognize that there are infelicities of style which occur in some of the papers included in these volumes which Peirce himself would never have allowed to remain in the final published form.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p v

The more important of these manuscripts of Peirce, as well as his published papers, have now been brought together in some ten volumes which will appear in rapid succession. The first volume contains in outline his system, so far as it can be presented, his writings on scientific method and the classification of the sciences, his doctrine of the categories, and his work on ethics. The next volume deals with the theory of signs and meaning, traditional logic, induction, the science of discovery and probability; and the third volume reprints his published work on modern logic. The fourth includes his unpublished original contributions to the foundations of mathematics, logic and graphs. The fifth volume contains his papers on pragmatism. The sixth is concerned with metaphysics. It is expected that the remaining volumes will contain his writings on physics and psychology, as well as his reviews, letters and biography.

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p vi

Nearly all the members of the Department during the last fifteen years, as well as many others who were interested in Peirce, have devoted much time to the often very intractable material of the manuscripts. But the final and laborious work of selecting, arranging and preparing the papers for the press has been done by Dr. Charles Hartshorne, formerly Instructor in Philosophy at Harvard and by Dr. Paul Weiss, who is at present an Instructor in Philosophy at this university. The Department desires to express its gratitude to the many friends who have contributed generously towards the expense of printing the volumes.

* * *

Peirce: CP 1 Introduction p vi

Wherever possible Peirce's punctuation and spelling have been retained. Titles supplied by the editors for papers previously published are marked with an E, while Peirce's titles for unpublished papers are marked with a P. Peirce's titles for previously published papers and the editors' titles for unpublished papers are not marked. Remarks and additions by the editors are inclosed in light-face square brackets. The editors' footnotes are indicated by various typographical signs, while Peirce's are indicated by numbers. Paragraphs are numbered consecutively throughout each volume. At the top of each page the numbers signify the volume and the first paragraph of that page. All references in the indices are to the numbers of the paragraphs.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
AUGUST, 1931.

PEIRCE HIMSELF WRITING NOW.....Volume one, paragraphs 1-26 of the CP

1. To erect a philosophical edifice that shall outlast the vicissitudes of time, my care must be, not so much to set each brick with nicest accuracy, as to lay the foundations deep and massive. Aristotle builded upon a few deliberately chosen concepts -- such as matter and form, act and power -- very broad, and in their outlines vague and rough, but solid, unshakable, and not easily undermined; and thence it has come to pass that Aristotelianism is babbled in every nursery, that "English Common Sense," for example, is thoroughly peripatetic, and that ordinary men live so completely within the house of the Stagyrte that whatever they see out of the windows appears to them incomprehensible and metaphysical. Long it has been only too manifest that, fondly habituated though we be to it, the old structure will not do for modern needs; and accordingly, under Descartes, Hobbes, Kant, and others, repairs, alterations, and partial demolitions have been carried on for the last three centuries. One system, also, stands upon its own ground; I mean the new Schelling-Hegel mansion, lately run up in the German taste, but with such oversights in its construction that, although brand new, it is already pronounced uninhabitable. The undertaking which this volume inaugurates is to make a philosophy like that of Aristotle, that is to say, to outline a theory so comprehensive that, for a long time to come, the entire work of human reason, in philosophy of every school and kind, in mathematics, in psychology, in physical science, in history, in sociology, and in whatever other department there may be, shall appear as the filling up of its details. The first step toward this is to find simple concepts applicable to every subject.†2

Peirce: CP 1.2 Cross-Ref:††

2. But before all else, let me make the acquaintance of my reader, and express my sincere esteem for him and the deep pleasure it is to me to address one so wise and so patient. I know his character pretty well, for both the subject and the style of this book ensure his being one out of millions. He will comprehend that it has not been written for the purpose of confirming him in

his preconceived opinions, and he would not take the trouble to read it if it had. He is prepared to meet with propositions that he is inclined at first to dissent from; and he looks to being convinced that some of them are true, after all. He will reflect, too, that the thinking and writing of this book has taken, I won't say how long, quite certainly more than a quarter of an hour, and consequently fundamental objections of so obvious a nature that they must strike everyone instantaneously will have occurred to the author, although the replies to them may not be of that kind whose full force can be instantly apprehended.

Peirce: CP 1.3 Cross-Ref:††

3. The reader has a right to know how the author's opinions were formed. Not, of course, that he is expected to accept any conclusions which are not borne out by argument. But in discussions of extreme difficulty, like these, when good judgment is a factor, and pure ratiocination is not everything, it is prudent to take every element into consideration. From the moment when I could think at all, until now, about forty years, I have been diligently and incessantly occupied with the study of methods [of] inquiry, both those which have been and are pursued and those which ought to be pursued. For ten years before this study began, I had been in training in the chemical laboratory. I was thoroughly grounded not only in all that was then known of physics and chemistry, but also in the way in which those who were successfully advancing knowledge proceeded. I have paid the most attention to the methods of the most exact sciences, have intimately communed with some of the greatest minds of our times in physical science, and have myself made positive contributions -- none of them of any very great importance, perhaps -- in mathematics, gravitation, optics, chemistry, astronomy, etc. I am saturated, through and through, with the spirit of the physical sciences. I have been a great student of logic, having read everything of any importance on the subject, devoting a great deal of time to medieval thought, without neglecting the works of the Greeks, the English, the Germans, the French, etc., and have produced systems of my own both in deductive and in inductive logic. In metaphysics, my training has been less systematic; yet I have read and deeply pondered upon all the main systems, never being satisfied until I was able to think about them as their own advocates thought.

Peirce: CP 1.4 Cross-Ref:††

4. The first strictly philosophical books that I read were of the classical German schools; and I became so deeply imbued with many of their ways of thinking that I have never been able to disabuse myself of them. Yet my attitude was always that of a dweller in a laboratory, eager only to learn what I did not yet know, and not that of philosophers bred in theological seminaries, whose ruling impulse is to teach what they hold to be infallibly true. I devoted two hours a day to the study of Kant's *Critic of the Pure Reason* for more than three years, until I almost knew the whole book by heart, and had critically examined every section of it. For about two years, I had long and almost daily discussions with Chauncey Wright, one of the most acute of the followers of J. S. Mill.

Peirce: CP 1.5 Cross-Ref:††

5. The effect of these studies was that I came to hold the classical German philosophy to be, upon its argumentative side, of little weight; although I esteem it, perhaps am too partial to it, as a rich mine of philosophical suggestions. The English philosophy, meagre and crude, as it is, in its conceptions, proceeds by surer methods and more accurate logic. The doctrine of the

association of ideas is, to my thinking, the finest piece of philosophical work of the prescientific ages. Yet I can but pronounce English sensationalism to be entirely destitute of any solid bottom. From the evolutionary philosophers, I have learned little; although I admit that, however hurriedly their theories have been knocked together, and however antiquated and ignorant Spencer's First Principles and general doctrines, yet they are under the guidance of a great and true idea, and are developing it by methods that are in their main features sound and scientific.
Peirce: CP 1.6 Cross-Ref:††

6. The works of Duns Scotus have strongly influenced me. If his logic and metaphysics, not slavishly worshipped, but torn away from its medievalism, be adapted to modern culture, under continual wholesome reminders of nominalistic criticisms, I am convinced that it will go far toward supplying the philosophy which is best to harmonize with physical science. But other conceptions have to be drawn from the history of science and from mathematics.
Peirce: CP 1.7 Cross-Ref:††

7. Thus, in brief, my philosophy may be described as the attempt of a physicist to make such conjecture as to the constitution of the universe as the methods of science may permit, with the aid of all that has been done by previous philosophers. I shall support my propositions by such arguments as I can. Demonstrative proof is not to be thought of. The demonstrations of the metaphysicians are all moonshine. The best that can be done is to supply a hypothesis, not devoid of all likelihood, in the general line of growth of scientific ideas, and capable of being verified or refuted by future observers.
Peirce: CP 1.8 Cross-Ref:††

8. Religious infallibilism, caught in the current of the times, shows symptoms of declaring itself to be only practically speaking infallible; and when it has thus once confessed itself subject to gradations, there will remain over no relic of the good old tenth-century infallibilism, except that of the infallible scientists, under which head I include, not merely the kind of characters that manufacture scientific catechisms and homilies, churches and creeds, and who are indeed "born missionaries," but all those respectable and cultivated persons who, having acquired their notions of science from reading, and not from research, have the idea that "science" means knowledge, while the truth is, it is a misnomer applied to the pursuit of those who are devoured by a desire to find things out....
Peirce: CP 1.9 Cross-Ref:††

9. Though infallibility in scientific matters seems to me irresistibly comical, I should be in a sad way if I could not retain a high respect for those who lay claim to it, for they comprise the greater part of the people who have any conversation at all. When I say they lay claim to it, I mean they assume the functions of it quite naturally and unconsciously. The full meaning of the adage *Humanum est errare*, they have never waked up to. In those sciences of measurement which are the least subject to error -- metrology, geodesy, and metrical astronomy -- no man of self-respect ever now states his result, without affixing to it its probable error; and if this practice is not followed in other sciences it is because in those the probable errors are too vast to be estimated.
Peirce: CP 1.10 Cross-Ref:††

10. I am a man of whom critics have never found anything good to say. When they could see no opportunity to injure me, they have held their peace. The little laudation I have had has

come from such sources, that the only satisfaction I have derived from it, has been from such slices of bread and butter as it might waft my way. Only once, as far as I remember, in all my lifetime have I experienced the pleasure of praise -- not for what it might bring but in itself. That pleasure was beatific; and the praise that conferred it was meant for blame. It was that a critic said of me that I did not seem to be absolutely sure of my own conclusions. Never, if I can help it, shall that critic's eye ever rest on what I am now writing; for I owe a great pleasure to him; and, such was his evident animus, that should he find that out, I fear the fires of hell would be fed with new fuel in his breast.

Peirce: CP 1.11 Cross-Ref:††

11. My book will have no instruction to impart to anybody. Like a mathematical treatise, it will suggest certain ideas and certain reasons for holding them true; but then, if you accept them, it must be because you like my reasons, and the responsibility lies with you. Man is essentially a social animal: but to be social is one thing, to be gregarious is another: I decline to serve as bellwether. My book is meant for people who want to find out; and people who want philosophy ladled out to them can go elsewhere. There are philosophical soup shops at every corner, thank God!

Peirce: CP 1.12 Cross-Ref:††

12. The development of my ideas has been the industry of thirty years. I did not know as I ever should get to publish them, their ripening seemed so slow. But the harvest time has come, at last, and to me that harvest seems a wild one, but of course it is not I who have to pass judgment. It is not quite you, either, individual reader; it is experience and history.

Peirce: CP 1.13 Cross-Ref:††

13. For years in the course of this ripening process, I used for myself to collect my ideas under the designation fallibilism; and indeed the first step toward finding out is to acknowledge you do not satisfactorily know already; so that no blight can so surely arrest all intellectual growth as the blight of cocksureness; and ninety-nine out of every hundred good heads are reduced to impotence by that malady -- of whose inroads they are most strangely unaware!

Peirce: CP 1.14 Cross-Ref:††

14. Indeed, out of a contrite fallibilism, combined with a high faith in the reality of knowledge, and an intense desire to find things out, all my philosophy has always seemed to me to grow. . . .

LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

§1. NOMINALISM †1

15. Very early in my studies of logic, before I had really been devoting myself to it more than four or five years, it became quite manifest to me that this science was in a bad condition, entirely unworthy of the general state of intellectual development of our age; and in consequence of this, every other branch of philosophy except ethics -- for it was already clear that

psychology was a special science and no part of philosophy -- was in a similar disgraceful state. About that time -- say the date of Mansel's *Prolegomena Logica*†2 -- Logic touched bottom. There was no room for it to become more degraded. It had been sinking steadily, and relatively to the advance of physical science, by no means slowly from the time of the revival of learning -- say from the date of the last fall of Constantinople.†3 One important addition to the subject had been made early in the eighteenth century, the Doctrine of Chances. But this had not come from the professed logicians, who knew nothing about it. Whewell, it is true, had been doing some fine work; but it was not of a fundamental character. De Morgan and Boole had laid the foundations for modern exact logic, but they can hardly be said to have begun the erection of the edifice itself. Under these circumstances, I naturally opened the dusty folios of the scholastic doctors. Thought generally was, of course, in a somewhat low condition under the Plantagenets. You can appraise it very well by the impression that Dante, Chaucer, Marco Polo, Froissart, and the great cathedrals make upon us. But [their] logic, relatively to the general condition of thought, was marvellously exact and critical. They can tell us nothing concerning methods of reasoning since their own reasoning was puerile; but their analyses of thought and their discussions of all those questions of logic that almost trench upon metaphysics are very instructive as well as very good discipline in that subtle kind of thinking that is required in logic.

Peirce: CP 1.16 Cross-Ref:††

16. In the days of which I am speaking, the age of Robert of Lincoln, Roger Bacon, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, the question of nominalism and realism was regarded as definitively and conclusively settled in favor of realism. You know what the question was. It was whether laws and general types are figments of the mind or are real. If this be understood to mean whether there really are any laws and types, it is strictly speaking a question of metaphysics and not of logic. But as a first step toward its solution, it is proper to ask whether, granting that our common-sense beliefs are true, the analysis of the meaning of those beliefs shows that, according to those beliefs, laws and types are objective or subjective. This is a question of logic rather than of metaphysics -- and as soon as this is answered the reply to the other question immediately follows after.

Peirce: CP 1.17 Cross-Ref:††

17. Notwithstanding a great outburst of nominalism in the fourteenth century which was connected with politics, the nominalists being generally opposed to the excessive powers of the pope and in favor of civil government, a connection that lent to the philosophical doctrine a factitious following, the Scotists, who were realists, were in most places the predominant party, and retained possession of the universities. At the revival of learning they stubbornly opposed the new studies; and thus the word Duns, the proper name of their master, came to mean an adversary of learning. The word originally further implied that the person so called was a master of subtle thought with which the humanists were unable to cope. But in another generation the disputations by which that power of thought was kept in training had lost their liveliness; and the consequence was that Scotism died out when the strong Scotists died. It was a mere change of fashion.

Peirce: CP 1.18 Cross-Ref:††

18. The humanists were weak thinkers. Some of them no doubt might have been trained to be strong thinkers; but they had no severe training in thought. All their energies went to writing a

classical language and an artistic style of expression. They went to the ancients for their philosophy; and mostly took up the three easiest of the ancient sects of philosophy, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Scepticism. Epicureanism was a doctrine extremely like that of John Stuart Mill. The Epicureans alone of the later ancient schools believed in inductive reasoning, which they grounded upon the uniformity of nature, although they made the uniformity of nature to consist in somewhat different characters from those Stuart Mill emphasizes. Like Mill, the Epicureans were extreme nominalists. The Stoics advocated the flattest materialism, which nobody any longer has any need of doing since the new invention of Monism enables a man to be perfectly materialist in substance, and as idealistic as he likes in words. Of course the Stoics could not but be nominalists. They took no stock in inductive reasoning. They held it to be a transparent fallacy. The Sceptics of the Renaissance were something like the agnostics of the generation now passing away, except that they went much further. Our agnostics contented themselves with declaring everything beyond ordinary generalizations of experience to be unknowable, while the Sceptics did not think any scientific knowledge of any description to be possible. If you turn over the pages, for example, of Cornelius Agrippa's book *De [incertitudine et] vanitate scientiarum [et artium]* [1531], you will find he takes up every science in succession, arithmetic, geometry, mechanics, optics, and after examination pronounces each to be altogether beyond the power of the human mind. Of course, therefore, as far as they believed in anything at all, the Sceptics were nominalists.

Peirce: CP 1.19 Cross-Ref:††

19. In short, there was a tidal wave of nominalism. Descartes was a nominalist. Locke and all his following, Berkeley, Hartley, Hume, and even Reid, were nominalists. Leibniz was an extreme nominalist, and Rémusat [C. F. M.?] who has lately made an attempt to repair the edifice of Leibnizian monadology, does so by cutting away every part which leans at all toward realism. Kant was a nominalist; although his philosophy would have been rendered compacter, more consistent, and stronger if its author had taken up realism, as he certainly would have done if he had read Scotus. Hegel was a nominalist of realistic yearnings. I might continue the list much further. Thus, in one word, all modern philosophy of every sect has been nominalistic.

Peirce: CP 1.20 Cross-Ref:††

20. In a long notice of Frazer's Berkeley, in the *North American Review* for October, 1871,†1 I declared for realism. I have since very carefully and thoroughly revised my philosophical opinions more than half a dozen times, and have modified them more or less on most topics; but I have never been able to think differently on that question of nominalism and realism. In that paper I acknowledged that the tendency of science has been toward nominalism; but the late Dr. Francis Ellingwood Abbot in the very remarkable introduction to his book entitled "*Scientific Theism*" [1885], showed on the contrary, quite conclusively, that science has always been at heart realistic, and always must be so; and upon comparing his writings with mine, it is easily seen that these features of nominalism which I pointed out in science are merely superficial and transient.

Peirce: CP 1.21 Cross-Ref:††

21. The heart of the dispute lies in this. The modern philosophers -- one and all, unless Schelling be an exception -- recognize but one mode of being, the being of an individual thing or fact, the being which consists in the object's crowding out a place for itself in the universe, so to

speaking, and reacting by brute force of fact, against all other things. I call that existence.

Peirce: CP 1.22 Cross-Ref:††

22. Aristotle, on the other hand, whose system, like all the greatest systems, was evolutionary, recognized besides an embryonic kind of being, like the being of a tree in its seed, or like the being of a future contingent event, depending on how a man shall decide to act. In a few passages Aristotle seems to have a dim aperçue of a third mode of being in the entelechy. The embryonic being for Aristotle was the being he called matter, which is alike in all things, and which in the course of its development took on form. Form is an element having a different mode of being. The whole philosophy of the scholastic doctors is an attempt to mould this doctrine of Aristotle into harmony with christian truth. This harmony the different doctors attempted to bring about in different ways. But all the realists agree in reversing the order of Aristotle's evolution by making the form come first, and the individuation of that form come later. Thus, they too recognized two modes of being; but they were not the two modes of being of Aristotle.

Peirce: CP 1.23 Cross-Ref:††

23. My view is that there are three modes of being. I hold that we can directly observe them in elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way. They are the being of positive qualitative possibility, the being of actual fact, and the being of law that will govern facts in the future.

Peirce: CP 1.24 Cross-Ref:††

24. Let us begin with considering actuality, and try to make out just what it consists in. If I ask you what the actuality of an event consists in, you will tell me that it consists in its happening then and there. The specifications then and there involve all its relations to other existents. The actuality of the event seems to lie in its relations to the universe of existents. A court may issue injunctions and judgments against me and I not care a snap of my finger for them. I may think them idle vapor. But when I feel the sheriff's hand on my shoulder, I shall begin to have a sense of actuality. Actuality is something brute. There is no reason in it. I instance putting your shoulder against a door and trying to force it open against an unseen, silent, and unknown resistance. We have a two-sided consciousness of effort and resistance, which seems to me to come tolerably near to a pure sense of actuality. On the whole, I think we have here a mode of being of one thing which consists in how a second object is. I call that Secondness.

Peirce: CP 1.25 Cross-Ref:††

25. Besides this, there are two modes of being that I call Firstness and Thirdness. Firstness is the mode of being which consists in its subject's being positively such as it is regardless of aught else. That can only be a possibility. For as long as things do not act upon one another there is no sense or meaning in saying that they have any being, unless it be that they are such in themselves that they may perhaps come into relation with others. The mode of being a redness, before anything in the universe was yet red, was nevertheless a positive qualitative possibility. And redness in itself, even if it be embodied, is something positive and sui generis. That I call Firstness. We naturally attribute Firstness to outward objects, that is we suppose they have capacities in themselves which may or may not be already actualized, which may or may not ever be actualized, although we can know nothing of such possibilities [except] so far as they are actualized.

Peirce: CP 1.26 Cross-Ref:††

26. Now for Thirdness. Five minutes of our waking life will hardly pass without our making some kind of prediction; and in the majority of cases these predictions are fulfilled in the event. Yet a prediction is essentially of a general nature, and cannot ever be completely fulfilled. To say that a prediction has a decided tendency to be fulfilled, is to say that the future events are in a measure really governed by a law. If a pair of dice turns up sixes five times running, that is a mere uniformity. The dice might happen fortuitously to turn up sixes a thousand times running. But that would not afford the slightest security for a prediction that they would turn up sixes the next time. If the prediction has a tendency to be fulfilled, it must be that future events have a tendency to conform to a general rule. "Oh," but say the nominalists, "this general rule is nothing but a mere word or couple of words!" I reply, "Nobody ever dreamed of denying that what is general is of the nature of a general sign; but the question is whether future events will conform to it or not. If they will, your adjective 'mere' seems to be ill-placed." A rule to which future events have a tendency to conform is ipso facto an important thing, an important element in the happening of those events. This mode of being which consists, mind my word if you please, the mode of being which consists in the fact that future facts of Secondness will take on a determinate general character, I call a Thirdness.