

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

"I Says to Myself, Says I": Charles Sanders Peirce on the Components of Dialogue

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Peirce famously defined the process of thinking as what a person is "saying to himself," that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time." For Peirce, this meant the essence of thinking is dialogue. This essay proposes a conception of dialogue grounded in Peirce's normative ideal of inquiry that challenges contemporary thinking about dialogue yet supports the same moral and ethical aims. Using a scene from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice that Peirce used as an exemplar of dialogue, we propose a conception that begins in doubt and passes through phases of reasoning and ethical and esthetic judgment before coming to a resolution which expands horizons of thought, emotion, and action.

Keywords: Pragmatism, Phenomenology, Listening, Logic, Reasoning, Esthetics, Ethics.

doi:10.1111/comt.12092

To begin with, every concept and every thought beyond immediate perception is a sign. So much was well made out by Leibniz, Berkeley, and others about two centuries ago. The use of the word λόγος shows that the Greeks, before the development of the science of grammar, were hardly able to think of thought from any other point of view. Let anybody who may desire evidence of the truth of what I am saying just recall the course of what passed in his mind during some recent sincere and fervid self-deliberation. If he is a good introspector, he will remark that his deliberations took a dialogic form, the arguer of any moment appealing to the reasonableness of the *ego* of the succeeding moment for his critical assent. Now it is needless to say that conversation is composed of signs. Accordingly, we find the sort of mind that is least sophisticated and is surest to betray itself by its language is given to such expressions as "I says to myself, says I," or even to audibly talking to himself, like Launcelot Gobbo, according to the subtle psychologist who created him. (Peirce, EP 2: 402)¹

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The subtle psychologist to whom Charles Sanders Peirce refers in this passage is Shakespeare. The character, Launcelot Gobbo, the “merry devil,” is the young servant of Shylock, a wealthy Jewish merchant banker of Venice. We meet Launcelot in Act II, Scene II of *The Merchant of Venice* just as he has stealthily escaped from his master’s house and just prior to a struggle of doubt regarding whether to abandon his employer. From his doubt spring two distinct voices that compete for Launcelot’s allegiance. Employing the language of flattery so typical of the devil, the fiendish voice tells Launcelot that he is too good for his master: “The fiend is at my elbow and tempts me saying to me ‘Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,’ or ‘good Gobbo,’ or ‘good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away’” (Shakespeare, 1967, p. 23). To this, Launcelot’s “conscience replies ‘No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo,’ or, as aforesaid, ‘honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels’” (p. 23). Peirce thus used the example of Launcelot Gobbo to demonstrate his conception of dialogue as a form of conjoint inquiry (even when pursued by an individual) and thus, as a form of sustained reasoning into some matter of doubt, the aim of which is development toward judgment.

This essay represents our effort to construct a distinct theory of dialogue based in the pragmatism of Peirce, for whom dialogue—understood in the context of communication—is a practical and necessary extension of a conjoint commitment to listening to one another by formulating and exchanging utterances about a matter of common concern and doubt. We articulate this pragmatic notion of dialogue in recognition that dialogue has become a core concept within many strands of communication research and central to theorizing in interpersonal, organizational, and rhetorical contexts alike (Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2004). As Anderson et al. themselves argued, however, most conceptions of dialogue have not had a pragmatic focus of inquiry but rather have been inspired by the ethical theories of “Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas, and, more recently, Mikhail Bakhtin” (p. 2). As a result, what most contemporary conceptions of dialogue have in common is a focus on the relationship between two parties who seek to understand one another through open sharing and what Lipari (2014) called an “ethics of attunement.” Using the “textual encounters” of Buber and Emmanuel Levinas as data, Lipari (2004) argued that the I-Thou relation in dialogue is “utterly without telos, aim, or intention. Speaking emerges fully from the present moment, not from prior intentions or future aims” (p. 126). In contemporary conceptions, the mere meeting of another person often becomes a potential starting point for dialogue, as when Kim and Kim (2008) argued that “casual, informal, spontaneous, nonpurposive conversation, or conversation for the sake of conversation, is the womb of dialogic moments” (p. 57). A similar attitude is reflected in works by Beard (2009), Floyd (2010), Gehrke (2009), Lipari (2012), and others (e.g., Arneson, 2010; Ballif, Davis, & Mountford, 2000). Although these positions correspond in many ways with what Peirce believed to be important aspects of dialogic communication, his work provides resources to construct a more distinct and narrow vision of dialogue as explicitly purpose-oriented and concerned less with understanding the nature of an other’s

Being and more with working together with another person in dialogue (including a person of oneself) in order to bring clarity to some issue of doubt.

Using the example from Shakespeare above, we propose a conception of dialogue grounded in Peirce's normative ideal of inquiry. In particular, we propose a conception of dialogue that begins in doubt and passes through phases of reasoning and ethical/aesthetic judgment before coming to some resolution. Dialogue is thus one activity within a larger process of discovery. And as the example of Launcelot shows this process is not only about scientific investigation into the natural world but also is central to ethical action in the social and political realm. Dialogue, as a communicative component of the process of inquiry, is distinct from unformed conversation or even the empathetic relation to the perspective of another; it is a discrete art that can be practiced and improved over time and which we believe is essential to the production of ethical actors. For as Launcelot Gobbo shows, in dialogue, we not only discover new facts and contrast different perspectives but we also reveal our own biases to others or ourselves, and by doing so we make possible—even if not always actual—a more self-reflective and collaborative judgment.

The origin of dialogue

My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. (Shakespeare, 1967, p. 26)

We are not given a clear indication of the source of Launcelot's unhappiness until after he meets his father in the street and proceeds to explain his troubles. The first statement above establishes his conventional anti-Semitism, the phrase "very Jew" implying that Shylock is the epitome of all of the negative qualities attributed to that general category of people at the time—namely that of being rapacious, cruel, stubborn, and clever. The gift he would thus have his father give Shylock is a "halter," referring here to a noose that the moneychanger can use to hang himself. But the proof of his master's cruelty is empirical—the fact that Shylock is working Launcelot so hard and paying him so little that he does not have enough to feed himself, thus, making his ribs show. It is this harsh treatment of Launcelot, and his emaciated image, that finally forces him to reconsider his position as a loyal servant.

What we encounter here is not one but two expressions of how Peirce understood the meaning of dialogue. On one hand, dialogue could refer to a conventional notion of a back-and-forth exchange of signs between two or more selves, including those exchanges called "thought," or what one "is 'saying to himself,' that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time" (EP 2: 338). On the other hand, dialogue also referred more broadly to our experience with all natural phenomena that is mediated through signs. According to Colapietro (1989), for instance, Peirce believed that "the world of our experience is always already constituted as a realm of signs," meaning that "we are in continuous dialogue with the natural world as well as with other humans" (p. 21). Merrell (1998) added that "dialogue is not

merely between the 'I,' the 'inner' other of the 'I,' and the others of the community, but also between the 'I' and the 'real' physical-world other, which is the most unrelenting opponent imaginable" (p. 64). In the example of Launcelot, that is to say, we see him responding to a dialogic encounter with his own emaciated self-image that he interprets through signs to represent the effects of his masters injustice; what follows is then an internal dialogue with what Peirce called his "critical self that one is trying to persuade" in an effort to come to some ethical decision about what to do about his state of affairs (EP 2: 338). In Peirce's expansive notion of dialogue, Launcelot first has a dialogic encounter with phenomena, which leads to a dialogue with himself in preparation for a dialogue with others in the community (his father being but one), so that ultimately he can act back upon the real world through conscious action — itself an extension and consummation of the original dialogical encounter in time.

In order to create a more focused and explicitly communicative notion of dialogue from Peirce's work, however, this essay will restrict the meaning of dialogue to its more conventional "human" usage as a conscious and deliberate exchange of signs between two or more parties. At the same time, the significance of a dialogue with "nature" remains crucial to understanding even this more restricted definition of dialogue. It is often through our interactions with the phenomenal world — in this case, the shocking image of Launcelot's emaciated self — that we produce that experience that Peirce believed was so essential to the initiation of any genuine dialogue: doubt. For Peirce, doubt represents that "uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief," the latter representing a "calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid" (EP 1: 114). More specifically, whereas belief represents not simply a cognitive assent to some proposition but an enduring mode of consciousness that takes the form of habits of mind and action, doubt represents the "privation of habit," and thus, exists as "a condition of erratic activity that in some way must get superseded by habit" (EP 2: 37). Our encounter with some non-human nature was thus central for Peirce's conception of inquiry because, contra-Descartes, doubt cannot originate simply in an internal desire or will. As he explained, "it is important for the reader to satisfy himself that genuine doubt always has an external origin, usually from surprise; and that it is as impossible for a man to create in himself a genuine doubt by such an act of the will as would suffice to imagine the condition of a mathematical theorem, as it would be for him to give himself a genuine surprise by simple act of the will" (EP 2: 348). For Peirce, the same doubt which initiates scientific inquiry also initiates dialogues of the public (e.g., public discourse about controversial issues) and intimate (e.g., with oneself or between friends) varieties.

A corollary of Peirce's conception of doubt which has a significant bearing on our understanding of dialogue-as-communication is that our experience of doubt is often directly connected with our sense of "self." As indicated by his definition of doubt as a privation of habit, doubt arises when the habits that constitute the self — for the self is but the product of habits developed over time — are somehow disrupted, obstructed, or called into question such that there must be an active searching of mind to reconstitute them in order to overcome a particular problem or adapt to a new situation.

Colapietro (1989) explained that, for Peirce, “the matrix self is that complex of habits that represents both a summation of the past and an orientation for the future” (p. 94). It is a summation of the past because the habits that constitute the self “are largely the final products of our own interpretive efforts,” and it is a summation of the future because “these habits more or less determine how we *would* act in given circumstances when motivated by given desires” (p. 94). For instance, that Launcelot stands agitated in an alleyway, talking to himself (in direct violation of his habits as a loyal servant), is indicative of the fact that he exists in an erratic state of doubt directly connected with his conception of self. Launcelot, for instance, may have been habitually unhappy, but in so far as his unhappiness remained habitual, it remained part of his belief that he should continue with his service. The image of himself as a starving beast, however, surprised him to the degree that he was forced into an erratic and dissatisfied state. But doubt might also have been aroused in him by an encounter with an old friend or even his father who might have chastised him for his physical appearance. That is to say, doubt does not only have to arise from a purely physical encounter with “nature” but can also arise just as strongly from our communicative encounters with others.

What finally makes dialogue possible, however, is a commitment to inquiry that arises as a result of doubt and a desire to arrive at a new form of belief—that is, of a desire to establish “in our nature some habit which will determine our actions”—through a communicative exchange of ideas with others or our critical selves (EP 1: 114). Dialogue thus rejects the method of fixing belief through sheer tenacity or obedience to authority and encourages the kind of open discussion consistent with the ethics of rational discussion and scientific investigation (Peirce, 1877). Beyond simply the presence of doubt, then, there must be a shared commitment to inquiry that is not blocked by some bias or self-imposed limitation. Peirce called this commitment the “Will to Learn” which, first and foremost, supposes “a dissatisfaction with one’s present state of opinion” and which, second, embodies a “hearty and active desire to learn what is true” (EP 2: 47). For it is only through the shared presence of the Will to Learn that one can engage in a dialogue that possesses the “vital power of self-correction and of growth” (EP 2: 47). In short, the Will to Learn requires “first, a sense that we do not know something, second, a desire to know it, and third, an effort—implying a willingness to labor—for the sake of seeing how the truth may really be” (EP 2: 48). When the same Will to Learn is shared by all parties—which we believe is equivalent to a shared commitment to listen to one another found in most accounts communication scholars’ accounts of dialogue—then dialogue is not only possible but also necessary (Bodie & Crick, 2014; Floyd, 2010; Lipari, 2010, 2012).

The reasoning of dialogue

Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow and tempts me, saying to me, “Gobbo,” “Launcelot Gobbo,” “Good Launcelot,” or “Good Gobbo,” or “Good Launcelot Gobbo”—“use your legs, take the start, run away.” My conscience says, “No. Take heed, honest

Launcelot. Take heed, honest Gobbo,” or as aforesaid, “Honest Launcelot Gobbo, do not run. Scorn running with thy heels.” Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack. “Fia!” says the fiend. “Away!” says the fiend. “For the heavens, rouse up a brave mind,” says the fiend, “and run.” Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, “My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man’s son” — or rather an honest woman’s son, for indeed my father did something smack, something grow to. He had a kind of taste — Well, my conscience says, “Launcelot, budge not.” “Budge!” says the fiend. “Budge not,” says my conscience. “Conscience,” say I, “you counsel well.” “Fiend,” say I, “you counsel well.” (Shakespeare, 1967, pp. 23–24)

We return to Launcelot’s dialogue with himself as we encounter him in the street outside of his master’s house. Above is the first half of this dialogue, as Launcelot listens to the competing positions in his double consciousness and clarifies to himself their premises, their evidence, and their normative advice and consequences. On one hand, the voice of the “fiend” (the devil) stands for virtues of courage and expediency, suggesting that it is only out of his fear that he stays with Shylock, that a truly brave soul would flee and thereby pursue his own self-interest. On the other hand, the voice of his conscience bids him to not “budge” from his position despite his hardships, thereby upholding the virtues of honor and honesty that he believes is characteristic of his parents and his family lineage (although he immediately corrects himself, noting that only his mother was genuinely honest, his likely father having a “taste” for other women which led him to cheat on his wife). Expressing the true position of doubt, Launcelot thus tentatively concedes both positions, believing they both “counsel well” but neither at that moment counseling well enough to push him in one direction nor the other.

This part of the dialogue might be said to represent the activity of dialogue that would go by the name “reasoning,” insofar as “the object of reasoning is to find out, from the consideration of what we already know something else which we do not know” (EP 1: 111). And for Peirce, reasoning occurs only in relation to what he calls “diagrams.” According to Peirce, “there really is no reasoning that is not of the nature of diagrammatic” (W 8: 24). What he meant by a diagram is something more than that of a picture, as one might think of a landscape or portrait. Both diagrams and pictures are icons, or symbols which directly imitate the object of representation somehow but a diagram is of the character of a scheme, a plan, a map, or a mental formula — in short, a “figure whose parts are connected according to a prescription or rule” (W 6: 258). Of course, any particular diagram does not have to be logically coherent. As Peirce noted, “different persons no doubt construct their logical diagrams in different ways; many probably very oddly; but every person must construct some kind of a diagram or its equivalent, or he could not perform necessary reasoning, at all” (W 5: 331). What matters is simply that, in any particular moment of reasoning, an individual have some kind of mental construction of his or her situation guided loosely by a set of rules that allow for the prediction and control of the environment to some degree.

The notion that dialogue necessitates conscious reasoning challenges dialogic theories that view any imposition of structure or constraint on the dialogue to be overly instrumental or restrictive. For instance, drawing from Buber and Habermas, Kim and Kim (2008) suggested a notion of dialogic deliberation which is, ironically from Peirce's perspective, "dialogic because it has no specific goals and purposes, and it serves to construct the concept of the self, to reach mutual understanding, and to establish interpersonal relations" (p. 66). Similarly, as Lipari (2004) described the "I-Thou relation ... [as] utterly without telos, aim, or intention. Speaking emerges fully from the present moment, not from prior intentions or future aims" (pp. 125–126). In contradistinction, we suggest that dialogue involves four fundamental processes of co-construction and experimentation on diagrams—colligation, iteration, erasure, and observation—and that these processes are always tied to the three structured forms of reasoning—deduction, abduction, and induction. According to Ochs (2004), "*colligation* is the rule of formation according to which a reasoner constructs diagrams; *erasure* is the transformational rule of abstraction; *iteration* is the transformational rule of adopting abstracted elements as new precepts," with *observation* representing in the system the careful and reflective attentiveness to the transformations that occur in the diagrams (p. 339f). Dialogue is therefore an activity of reasoning, and developing this art requires the ability to identify components in order to refine and improve upon them.

The processes

Of all the aforementioned processes, colligation is by far the most important. Colligation represents a bringing-together, a collecting, and a separating out of material to be observed in order to make a judgment of the whole. In Peirce's language, colligation is the "consistent bringing together [of] certain propositions which we believe to be true, but which, supposing the inference to be a new one, we have hitherto not considered together, or not as united in the same way" (EP 2: 22). Elsewhere Peirce described the act of colligation as bringing different premises "into one field of assertion" or "joined into one copulative proposition" (EP 2: 45). Colligation thus represents not only the ability to see commonalities but more importantly the capacity to know what to put together and what to set aside so that one's mental landscape is neither too cluttered nor too empty. The result of colligation is the construction of some kind of tentative diagram, a rule-bound system of relations that orders phenomena and directs experience.

To make these diagrams something more than simply idle representations, however, requires a commitment to observation at almost every stage of dialogue. For Peirce, observation can literally represent "external observation" of particular objects or phenomena (as occurs in induction), but, more often than not, it represents either observation of a mental diagram or observation of the colligation premises (a kind of weak induction) (EP 2: 46). That is to say, observation can be something "internal" and communicative. Observation involves something more than "mere sensation" or just "noticing," but involves a significant degree of "thought" and "attention" (EP 2:

471). Most importantly, observation requires openness to being changed by experience. Peirce forcefully made this point, stating:

For what is observation? What is experience? It is the enforced element in the history of our lives. It is that which we are constrained to be conscious of by an occult force residing in an object which we contemplate. The act of observation is the deliberate yielding of ourselves to that *force majeure*—an early surrender at discretion, due to our foreseeing that we must, whatever we do, be borne down by that power, at last. (EP 2: 47)

The strong language Peirce used here is not intended to argue for any kind of materialism or determinism, as if our reasoning processes were out of our control. Rather, he was critiquing tenacious or authoritarian habits of thought that resist change and suppress the Will to Learn and the willingness to yield to ideas even when they may confront our predispositions and biases.

Last, the processes of iteration and erasure represent the experimental modification and manipulation of our hypothetical diagrams in order to come up with new material to observe. Peirce wrote that after we develop some kind of diagram, “observation leads us to make an experiment upon the graph. Namely, we first duplicate portions of it; and then we erase portions of it, that is, we put out of sight part of the assertion in order to see what the rest of it is” (EP 2: 45). Iteration thus represents the act of duplication, reproduction, and repetition of an original model in slightly different ways. Sometimes an iteration of an original is larger or smaller, sometimes it is just a part of the whole, and sometimes it includes certain items while leaving others out. Each “new iteration” is intended to help us look at our diagrams in new ways. Erasure, therefore, is the step whereby we eliminate essential qualities or needless repetitions in order to focus on only the central and most important conclusions. Erasure, as it were, clears the desk and leaves only a few or even one item in place so that one might observe it with full attention (what some might call “mindfulness”). In short, Peirce claimed that, after colligation, inference “consists in the contemplation of that complex icon [observation], the fixation of the attention upon a certain feature of it [iteration], and the obliteration of the rest of it, so as to produce a new icon [erasure]” (EP 2: 22).

Three forms of reasoning

Whereas the four processes of colligation, observation, iteration, and erasure are involved in all reasoning, deduction, abduction, and induction represent the three structured forms of reasoning, varying in terms of how the four processes are ordered as well as what is being observed and for what purpose. First, all three forms of reasoning begin with colligation, but differ in terms of what is being colligated. In deduction, one colligates known premises in order to come up with a comprehensive diagram that derives necessary consequences from rules. In abduction, one colligates past associations or definitions in order to determine the nature of a thing that we encounter only through its qualities. In induction, one colligates similar objects in

order to verify whether, as a class, they share common properties defined by a common rule. Second, these forms differ in terms of their iterations. Deductions produce iterations of new diagrams. Abduction produces iterations of hypothetical explanations of phenomena. Induction produces iterations of the phenomena themselves. Finally, they differ in terms of what is being experimented upon and why: “Deduction proves that something *must* be, Induction shows that something *actually is* operative, Abduction merely suggests that something *may* be” (CP 5.171). Abduction experiments with data and rules from past experiences in order to determine the nature of a thing or event by identifying the cause of its qualities according to a hypothesis. (This thing is P. But if all S are P, then therefore this must be an S.) Deduction thus experiments on the diagram to determine unexpected consequences and results. (All S are P. This is an S. Therefore, this S is P.) And induction experiments with the empirical phenomena to verify the hypotheses produced by abduction. (These things are S. These S are P. Therefore all S are P.)

Given that Launcelot’s dialogue also takes the form of deliberation—that is, a consideration of two or more opposing positions to form a practical judgment—the most important initial step is the construction of two competing diagrams. These diagrams are created through subtle acts of colligation. On one hand, the “fiend” gathers together all of the properties that Gobbo, through an act of abduction, might use to define himself as a “good” man, thus, producing an iconic representation of himself as brave and virtuous and yet needlessly suffering the injustices of his master. On the other hand, his conscience collects representations of Gobbo as “honest,” thus using a counter-abduction to place himself in a diagram that identifies him as a trustworthy and faithful servant. What follows in his dialogue is then a comparative experimentation on both diagrams in a deductive fashion, testing each of them to determine their premises and their consequences to find which holds up to scrutiny and produces the best results. The first iterations of each diagram produce two competing conclusions, the one suggesting that it is consistent with “Good Gobbo” to run away, the other demanding that a Gobbo who is “honest” will scorn the act of running. The final erasure happens when the details of each diagram are reduced to simply two competing phrases, “budge” and “budge not.”

What is most illuminating about Launcelot’s dialogue, however, is the genuine moment of discovery that occurs in a second iteration of the diagram of “honest Gobbo.” Consistent with the premises of being an honest friend according to the rules of deduction, Launcelot posits the natural corollary that being an honest friend would naturally presume, that of also being an honest man’s son—the presumption being that honest parents produce honest children. Observing this iteration of the diagram (which focuses exclusively on the matter of parental lineage), however, immediately forces upon Gobbo the unexpected conclusion that he is not the son of an honest man at all. Having added his father to the original diagram, that is to say, he had to ask himself, “What kind of man is my father?” To answer this question, he had to recall all of the known properties associated with his father and then find the definition that would have predicted those properties—all consistent with the process of abduction.

Before his mind's eye, he thus brought forward the known fact that his father had a "taste" for other women and pursued his desires freely. He then derives the hypothesis that his father is a scoundrel (because all scoundrels pursue similar tastes at the expense of the well-being of others). This realization forced him to modify his original diagram of "honest Gobbo," altering it so that he is merely the son of an honest mother. Although this does not change the normative recommendation of this position, it does have the slight effect of weakening the depth of his "honest" character and thereby his commitment to that particular virtue.

One can see from this brief example how dialogue often involves a back-and-forth exchange between deduction and abduction, as diagrams lead to unexpected consequences which invoke new questions that have to be addressed by an act of abduction to generate a new hypothesis. This hypothesis is then turned itself into a diagram and subsequently experimented on deductively again in new iterations. And although induction is not explicitly present here, one can easily imagine subsequent inquiry into whether or not all scoundrels do, in fact, have such properties by calling to mind a list of confirmed men who are scoundrels in determining whether or not they have a "taste" for women who are not their wives. Although this would not be induction and a strong sense of direct observation, the reasoning process of induction remains the same insofar as one is generating in one's mind iterations of similar subjects and determining whether they share common properties according to a rule. Although deduction and abduction are used in dialogue to determine the definition of a case (whether it is an act, a person, an object, or an event) and to anticipate possible consequences of action and interaction, induction becomes a means of proving or disproving the rules being invoked by using available examples and counter-examples. Consequently, although dialogue with ourselves or others on its own can never actually empirically prove a rule to be true or false, it can nonetheless serve to generate defensible hypothesis and assert reasonable conclusions that can provide a basis for judgment, understanding, and future observation and experimentation.

The esthetics of dialogue

To be ruled by my conscience I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil. And to run away from the Jew I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very devil incarnation. And in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel. I will run, fiend. My heels are at your command. I will run. (Shakespeare, 1967, p. 24)

So far, we have looked at dialogue as if it is mostly a cognitive affair whose aim is to resolve some question of truth or falsity. But as indicated by the second half of Launcelot's self-deliberation, many of our most important dialogues have direct bearing on ethics, which Peirce called "the science of right and wrong" and the "theory of self-controlled, or deliberate, conduct" (CP 1.191). In dialogues bearing on our

ethical actions, we must come to judgment that satisfies not only our mind but also our will and our feelings so that we act with our whole person. At the conclusion of his solitary speech, Launcelot must weigh the difference between *following* the devil (by fleeing) and *working* for the devil (by staying); he tentatively decides that following the devil is more friendly counsel. His judgment represents the culmination of a long dialogue that was intended to identify the various characteristics of this situation through abduction and then to explore the consequences of different routes of action through deductively experimenting with different iterations of a mental diagram. At the end of the dialogue, Launcelot does feel more committed and confident in a course of action than when he began, thus, resolving the doubt which initiated the dialogue in the first place. This is not simply an affair of cognition. He makes his judgment based in large part on feeling. Thus, it is important to understand the ways in which we encounter the world—including how we encounter others. Cissna and Anderson (1998), for instance, suggested that dialogue requires “an awareness that others as unique and whole persons, encouraging a turning toward the other and imagining the reality of the other” (p. 65; see also Lipari, 2004, 2010). But for Peirce, our feelings also are directed toward what is directly experienced in the world or conceptualized through signs. That is to say, to study dialogue as communication requires us to see how dialogue emerges out of and responds back to a world we experience phenomenologically and semiotically—much in the way that Peirce spoke in terms of our dialogue with “nature.”

Phenomenology

Peirce's phenomenology provides a vocabulary to analyze the way in which we encounter phenomena and take it up meaningfully into our discourse through signs. Here, we find his tripartite system of “Categories.” His first category is aptly labeled First which is “the idea of which is such as it is regardless of anything else. That is to say, it is a *Quality of Feeling*” (EP 2: 160). For instance, hardness, goodness, redness, and hunger are all categories of First—that is to say, feelings capable of being predicates. The Second then stands in relationship to some First, but in the absence of any mediating law; “that is to say, it is *Reaction* as an element of the phenomenon” (EP 2: 160). Peirce often wrote of the brute resistance of an object that we bump up against as a pure Secondness, but one can also consider the shock Launcelot felt at seeing his emaciated ribs as a kind of Second, particularly before he was able to cognize it under an explanatory rule; that is, when it simply existed as a surprise that resisted his expectation. Last, the Third represents any rule-governed, regulative medium that establishes a rule by which a Second and a First are brought together in a law-like fashion; “that is to say, it is a *Representation* as an element of the Phenomenon” (EP 2: 160). For instance, the conventional Renaissance-era stereotype that all Jews are cruel and rapacious represents a Third that predicts and regulates people's behavior with Jews in Venice. In sum, Firstness represents any quality of feeling that exists on its own (as if Launcelot might imagine “Rapaciousness”), Secondness is the feeling of reaction or resistance that we experience when we encounter some object (whether

external or internal) that resists our will (as when he describes the recalcitrance of his “hard conscience”), while Thirdness represents the rule that predicts and interprets his experiences with specific objects, events, and people over time (as when he assumes that any encounter (Second) with Jewish moneylenders would always produce the feeling of resentment (First) because of the law-like habits (Third) that govern them).

Although attention thus far has fallen on an inquiry into the nature of Secondness (in emphasizing the importance of “shock” and “surprise” in beginning a dialogue) as well as Thirdness (in the form of constructing a rule-governed diagram of a situation), it is crucially important to understand the centrality of Firstness in any deliberative dialogue in which participants seek to come to some resolution about a practical judgment. For Peirce, the normative science of Firstness is called Esthetics, or the study of “objects considered simply in their presentation” (EP 2: 143). But whereas common sense often relegates esthetics to merely the realm of fine art and not a practice, Peirce went so far as to say that ethics is actually dependent upon esthetics. As he wrote, “Ethics must appeal to Esthetics in forming its conception of the *summum bonum*; and Logic, as the science to controlled thought, which is but a species of controlled conduct, must rest upon the science of such conduct” (EP 2: 272). Elsewhere he wrote that “it is esthetics that we ought to seek for the deepest characteristics of normative science, since esthetics, in dealing with the very ideal itself, whose mere materialization engrosses the attention of practices and of logic, must contain the heart, soul, and spirit of normative science” (EP 2: 379). Any conception of dialogue that relies on logic alone, and ignores the importance of esthetic judgments, is thus incapable of doing justice to its nuances and significance.

Rules of conduct

Why is attention to esthetic qualities of “Firstness” so important to ethical action and deliberation? Peirce defined six steps in the process of formulating what he calls “rules of conduct” and then acting on them in particular circumstances. The first step is almost entirely a process of esthetic judgment. He wrote that “in the first place, certain kinds of conduct when the man contemplates them have an esthetic quality. He thinks that conduct fine; and though his notion may be coarse or sentimental, yet, if so it will alter in time and must tend to be brought into harmony with his nature. At any rate, his taste is his taste for the time being, that is all” (EP 2: 246). What Peirce meant by esthetics, then, is the capacity to identify and appreciate the qualities associated with a certain act, event, person, or object, whether those qualities are pleasurable or distasteful. A truly esthetic sensibility will thus be able to freely interpret all manners of conduct without embarrassment or reluctance, knowing that to determine its precise quality does not mean also to embrace it. It is similar to the notion of listening as a way to understand another’s position contrasted with the notion of listening as a way to agree.

After this process of esthetic attribution, our initial judgments are ultimately transformed into what Peirce called a “determination.” The second step is to then “shape [our] ideals into consistency with each other, for inconsistency is odious” (EP 2: 246).

This, of course, represents an act of colligation, whereby many of the disparate things we find admirable are brought together in order to determine their consistency. Third, the deliberator “imagines what the consequences of fully carrying out these ideals would be, and asked himself what the esthetic quality of those consequences would be” (EP 2: 246). But these ideals are only vaguely formed, and as Peirce wrote “in the main have been imbibed in childhood” or from “the ideas of his circle of society” (EP 2: 246). Wishing to bring more critical reflection upon this process, our individual pursues the fourth step of trying to determine which part of these ideals “he thoroughly believes,” and thus usually formulates, however vaguely, certain *rules of conduct* that translate these ideals into actual logical principles that “serve to minimize the effects [of] future inadvertence” and controlled the “wiles of the devil within him” (EP 2: 246). It is these rules of conduct, for instance, that the fiend and the conscience of Launcelot whisper in his ear — that a good man will flee from evil whereas an honest man will keep his word even to the devil.

Yet, while rules of conduct are necessary they are not sufficient for ethical action. This is because actions are not general; we act in specific circumstances that are always unique and require a specific act of will to overcome particular resistances. Consequently, any individual faced with making a particular judgment “often foresees that a special occasion is going to arise; thereupon, a certain gathering of his forces will begin to work, and this working of his being will cause him to consider how he will act, and in accordance with the disposition, such as it now is, he is led to form a *resolution* as to how he will act upon that occasion” (EP 2: 246). Importantly, this resolution is not yet an actual working commitment; it is but a “mental formula.” As Peirce went on to explain, “this resolution is of the nature of the plan, or, as one might almost say, a *diagram*. It is a mental formula always more or less general.” Consequently, “being nothing more than an idea, this resolution does not necessarily influence conduct” (EP 2: 246). It is simply a resolution in the abstract, an attraction to the image of oneself acting according to the diagram constructed in the imagination. Resolution thus only translates into determination when it becomes “a really efficient agency, such that if one knows what its special character is, one can forecast the man’s conduct on the special occasion” (EP 2: 246). A determination is a dependable and specific habit of action that can be relied upon and requires confirmations not by any fictitious means but by “means of something true and real” (EP 2: 246). A determination, that is to say, is synonymous with the actions of *belief* — which is the outcome of a habit that successfully predicts the actions of a person when exposed to certain circumstances.

With respect to dialogue, esthetics is important because it is only through the language of esthetics that we can accommodate for what is often the most likely, engaging, creative, and meaningful contributions of dialogue. Most dialogues, after all, are not sober, purely logical affairs; they are humorous, ironic, and playful transactions. It is only through these types of utterances that we are able to truly understand the esthetic qualities that we associate with aspects of ourselves and our environment. For instance, Launcelot used the word “fiend” to label the voice that would counsel him to leave his master — but he also said that the literal advice he gives is to “use your legs,

take the start, run away.” This language itself carries with it certain esthetic qualities that focus on the activity of the body, specifically the legs, to start a kind of adventure that carries with it the halo of novelty, of making a “start.” By contrast, conscience makes the most powerful appeal in calling him “My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man’s son,” thus, immediately calling to mind the unadmirable qualities of betrayal and deception that he would experience if he violated the rules of conduct he associates with his family. In each case, then, the specific use of language carries with it connotations, or associated esthetic qualities, that are often far more influential in the deliberative process than the principle stated in bare propositional form.

Finally, the relationship between ethical judgment and esthetic qualities comes dramatically to the fore in the final passages of Launcelot’s dialogue. Until this point, both positions had “counseled well,” meaning here that, in Peirce’s terms, they had presented certain rules of conduct that satisfied particular esthetic ideals that Launcelot found attractive—namely freedom and loyalty, respectively. Yet, he had not come to any kind of resolution. In the concluding lines, he imagines more specifically the special occasion in which you would act, constructing competing diagrams. In one, he sees himself staying with “the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark, is a kind of devil.” In the other, he would leave Shylock only to “be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself.” Thus, we have one diagram in which Launcelot labors under the rule of a kind of devil, laboring every day under his watchful eye, contrasted with another diagram in which he lives physically free, under no man’s unjust power, but in his soul has become ruled by the devil himself who has overthrown his conscience. Both are unadmirable courses of action, but one brings with it more tangible qualities of physical pain, suffering, and abuse, while the other brings emotional feelings of guilt and manipulation. In the end, Launcelot sides with the devil himself over “the very devil incarnation,” preferring the punishment of the soul over the punishment of the body. Thus, it is that he says, “the fiend gives more friendly counsel”—which is to say, more is esthetically appealing—and arrives at a resolution (not yet a determination) to run at the fiend’s command.

One can see, then, how dialogue requires not only a shared commitment to inquiry and a respect for one’s interlocutor (even if it is oneself) but also a skill at reasoning and a sensitivity to esthetic feelings, particularly those that we perceive as predictive effects of certain experiences or courses of action. In almost all of our inquiries, even the most scientific, we must make fine distinctions between properties for the sake of understanding, prediction, and control. The engagement of dialogue is the process by which we weigh different positions, colligate diverse material, construct and experiment on diagrams, identify qualities, divide our feelings into those which are admirable and unadmirable, and often come to resolutions—perhaps even determinations—that have a bearing on our future habits of thought and action. Dialogue cannot “prove” anything scientifically, of course. Launcelot may come to a resolution that one course of action is favorable over another, and yet, turn out completely incorrect about his judgments once they are tested against the world; yet, dialogue helps us create those mental formulas which make our environment something to be ordered rather than

simply a chaos. It is thus the case that, as Gadamer (2013) wrote, “dialogue is nothing but the mutual stimulation of thought,” a “kind of artistic construction in the reciprocity of communication” (p. 165). Dialogue is thinking together with signs, or what the Greeks called *logos*, such that we bring more meaning and direction to our experience than we might possess on our own.

The resolution of dialogue

Well, well: but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries: if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer. (Shakespeare, 1967, p. 26)

Launcelot's resolution turns to determination only after he encounters his father in the street and realizes that he need not simply run away without a destination; he might use his father's connections to become employed by Master Bassanio, who he hears dresses his servants in bright new clothes. Using deductive reasoning to produce a vision of himself working for such a kind and generous master, he gives himself over fully to the “fiend” and seeks the esthetic rewards that come from a new employer. Thus, when Bassanio arrives on the scene, Launcelot urges the elder Gobbo to run to the man to secure a position, giving one last sentimental appeal produced as a result of abductive inference: “for I am a Jew if I serve the Jew any longer.” Expressing the esthetic ideals of his childhood and his circle of society that finds everything distasteful in the image of the “Jew”—paradoxically a combination not only of the cruelty, greed, and rapacious of a merchant but also servility, baseness, and cowardice of a slave—Launcelot suggests that should he remain in Shylock's service any longer, he will himself become a “Jew” which he clearly believes represents something to avoid at all costs.

What is particularly illuminating about *The Merchant of Venice*, then, is the degree to which our uncritical biases often influence and direct the course of our dialogues. For Peirce, we cannot simply pretend to doubt things that we do not. We must begin where we are, with all of our predispositions, our misjudgments, our illusions, our vices, and our blindnesses. Dialogue can begin in no other place, or otherwise we would have no common place to stand with our interlocutors, no shared material with which to build a diagram. Dialogue must begin with doubt, but it cannot begin with universal doubt. We cannot simply pretend to doubt any more than we can pretend our biases have magically disappeared in service of compromise or understanding. Dialogue must begin with a surprise or shock about a specific aspect of our experience. It then must proceed by relying on the accepted premises shared by all of the interlocutors. In the Venice of Launcelot Gobbo, it was an accepted premise

that Jews are somehow less than human — hence, the famous retort by Shylock in the courtroom:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. (Shakespeare, 1967, p. 47)

This speech, one of the most famous in Shakespeare's writing, is only powerful because it is set against a backdrop of pervasive anti-Semitism. And it is with this backdrop that Launcelot Gobbo engages in his internal dialogue.

It is for this reason that the mere exchange of positions in “dialogue form” does not equate to a dialogue. Something more is required. At the courtroom scene at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, the seemingly victorious Shylock, prepared to take a pound of flesh from his hated enemy, engages in a legalistic argument with the prosecution which ends up with him being completely defeated, humiliated, and forced to convert to Christianity to avoid losing his entire estate. This exchange is not a shared commitment of the Will to Learn but a rhetorical struggle for power and victory. Yet at the same time, the play, as a literary artifact, leaves a rhetorical legacy that has always borne fruit for dialogue. For Shylock's defense of his own humanity—even if that humanity is expressed in a desire for vengeance—has always remained a source of surprise, even of shock, to its readers throughout history. For even as almost every character in the play relies upon and reproduces the principles of anti-Semitism, it creates a space, however small, for the expression of a competing principle by the character of Shylock, a principal based on respect for humanity despite cultural and ethnic differences. And perhaps that is the greatest virtue that dialogue gives to its participants—a shared Will to Learn that comes in the wake of having our own uncritical habits challenged and shaken so that we might have the ability to grow beyond them in cooperative communication with others.

Note

- 1 Abbreviations for all Peirce citations follow these conventions: W = *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition* (Moore et al., 1982), volume#:page#, CP = *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Peirce, 1974), volume#.paragraph#, EP = *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Houser et al., 1992/1998), volume#:page#.

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