



Charles S. Peirce's Phenomenology: Analysis and Consciousness

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CHAPTER

4 From Phenomenology to Phaneroscopy

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Abstract

Peirce first recognizes a science of phenomenology in 1902, but in 1904 he changes the name of the science to phaneroscopy. This change is motivated by a desire for terminological exactness. After rejecting “phenomena,” “pure experience,” and “idea” as appropriate words for the object of phenomenological investigation, Peirce settles on “phaneron.” He changes the suffix from “-logy” to “-scopy” to indicate that the science is primarily observational. Peirce’s characterizations of the phaneron change over the course of his investigations because of four problems he faces. Those problems are whether the phenomenologist studies the possibilities of consciousness or actual consciousnesses, how we can generalize observations of our own conscious experiences to what any conscious experience is like, how we can make our conception of the object of phenomenological investigation clearer, and how we can speak of the phaneron as a totality and yet reference its parts.

Keywords: Peirce, James, Kant, Hegel, Locke, Berkeley, phaneron, pure experience, phenomena, prebit

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As I noted in the introduction, I have been calling the inquiries of the sort in which Peirce is engaged phenomenology since that is the accepted terminology today. It is not, however, Peirce’s preferred name for the science. Although when he first identifies the science in 1902 he calls it phenomenology, Peirce eventually comes to prefer the name phaneroscopy. His insistence on the ethics of terminology compels him to make the change. In 1903, he writes, “for philosophical conceptions which vary by a hair’s breadth from those for which suitable terms exist” we should “invent terms . . . with a distinctly technical appearance” (EP 2:266, 1903). It is the hair’s breadth between his own conception of phenomenology and the associated conceptions of his predecessors and contemporaries that leads him to coin the term phaneroscopy. As I shall show, Peirce settles on this name late in 1904, but he also proposes the names ideoscopy, phanerology, and phanerochemistry. These shifts in Peirce’s name for the science of phenomenology shed important light on his conception of it.

Peirce's Conception of Phenomenology in Contrast with Others

Kant, Hegel, and "Phenomena"

p. 74 As explained toward the end of chapter 1, in 1902 Peirce first comes to identify a science of phenomenology as a consequence of recognizing logic as a normative science and needing to fill a gap between mathematics, on the one side, and logic and metaphysics (in the more mature, Aristotelian sense, as explained in chapter 1), on the other. Accordingly, Peirce claims that the business of phenomenology is "to unravel the tangled skein [of] all that in any sense appears and wind it into distinct forms; or in other words, to make the ultimate analysis of all experiences the first task to which philosophy has to apply itself" (CP 1.280, 1902). In 1902, Peirce is not explicit about from whom he takes the name phenomenology, but in 1903 he clearly states it is Hegel and indicates how his own conception differs from Hegel's: "This is the science which Hegel made his starting point, under the name of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,—although he considered it in a fatally narrow spirit, since he restricted himself to what *actually* forces itself on the mind" (EP 2:143). The last clause is important for understanding why Peirce is dissatisfied with the name phenomenology. In 1902, he writes: "In the derivation of this word [phenomenology], 'phenomenon' is to be understood in the broadest sense conceivable; so that phenomenology might rather be defined as the study of what seems than as the statement of what appears" (CP 2.197). The terminological problem is that the phenomenal is what appears and not what seems. This is the manner in which Kant distinguishes the phenomenal from the noumenal: "[I]f we call certain objects, as appearances, beings of sense (*phaenomena*), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from their constitution in itself, then it already follows from our concept that to these we as it were oppose, as objects thought merely through the understanding, either other objects conceived in accordance with the latter constitution, even though we do not intuit it in them, or else other possible things, which are not objects of our senses at all, and call these beings of understanding (*noumena*)" (CPR 360 [B306]). For Kant, the noumenal is the limiting concept of the thing-in-itself whereas the phenomenal is the appearance of the object in sensibility. Accordingly, while Peirce takes the name phenomenology from Hegel, he rejects the associated conception of it because of the Kantian view of the phenomenal.

On Peirce's account of phenomenology, this Kantian conception of phenomena as the objects of phenomenological investigation is overly narrow in two ways. First, it is restricted to what appears in sensibility. Peirce wishes his conception of the object of phenomenological investigation to include what seems to one "in any way or in any sense" (CP 1.284, 1905), whether that be in sensibility or not. But as Peirce states in 1909, he believes, "the word 'phenomenon' . . . is better reserved to express those more special meanings to which it is usually restricted; as, for example, to denote any fact that consists in the uniformity with which something peculiar and perceptible to the senses (without or with instrumental aid) will result from the fulfillment of certain definite conditions, especially if it can be repeated indefinitely" (Ketner 1998, 328). Second, since the phenomenal is contrasted with the noumenal thing-in-itself, the phenomenal is restricted to what is actually forced upon the mind, as Peirce says with respect to Hegel. Whereas the concepts of the understanding are applicable to possible experience, the phenomenal is limited to what we do sensibly experience. Since Peirce endorses the modified Kantian Insight that the logical forms of propositions have phenomenological correspondents, he believes those forms of propositions should be found not merely in actual experience but in any possible experience.

p. 75 The influence of Hegel's views on Peirce is a matter of some dispute. On the one hand Peirce states that Hegel's categories are "bad" (SS 189, 1904) and that his own views "grew originally out of the study of the table of Kant" (CP 1.300, 1894) and were "determined in my mind by considerations entirely foreign to Hegel, at a time when my attitude toward Hegelianism was one of contempt" (EP 2:144, 1903). In 1905, Peirce implies that he does not find Hegel's system satisfactory and would have never undertaken his own

work on the categories had he found Hegel's system satisfactory (see LI 300). On the other hand he concedes that there is another series of categories "imperfectly represented by Hegel's Categories" (CP 1.141, 1905) and that Hegel "has been a little warmed by the truth" (EP 2:143, 1903).

When Peirce gave the Lowell Lectures of 1903, he listed two titles for recommended reading on the categories. The first was his own "On a New List of Categories." The second was John Grier Hibben's *Hegel's Logic: An Essay in Interpretation*, published in 1902. Why he should recommend the former should be obvious. But why the second? One possible explanation is that it is an endorsement of the Hegelian account. A second and I think more plausible explanation is that Hegel's views are the closest to his own and so he hopes to set forward both how his views differ from and are similar to Hegel's.

One issue, as just noted, is that Hegel limits his account to what actually forces itself upon the mind, but there are other points of difference between Peirce's conception of phenomenology and Hegel's, as other scholars have noted. For instance, Carl Hausman writes: "He differentiates himself from Hegel by pointing out his own conviction that freshness (under the category of Firstness) and resistance (under the category of Secondness) will not be overcome in some final end. The universe will always have some irregularity—will inevitably bear the mark of freshness and brute fact" (1993, 17; see EP 2:177, 1903). Joseph Esposito writes of the early Peirce with respect to Hegel: "For Hegel, logic is the science of the 'pure idea', but for Peirce it is 'the science of the laws of experience in virtue of its being a determination of the idea' ([R] 340)" (1980, 84) and that the "difference between them finally turned on the question of whether or not Hegel's dialectic had to be given a rigorously mechanistic interpretation" (193; see W 8:200–201, 1892, where Peirce criticizes Hegel's mechanistic cosmology). De Tienne, quite rightly in my opinion, holds that Hegel's influence on Peirce's work on the categories is negligible (1996, 179n145) and that it is doubtful Hegel had much influence on the early Peirce (110–111). Probably, Hegel is not a developmental influence on Peirce's theory of the categories but it is mainly retrospectively that Peirce sees the parallelisms between his own views and those of Hegel. I will make a few comments on this topic in chapter 6 as well (and for recent studies see also Stern 2013a, 2013b, 2007, 2005, and Kaag 2011). As I shall show, ultimately, Peirce thinks Hegel has erred in his conception of both the first and second categories and wrongly held that those two categories are not independent of the third.

p. 76 James's "Pure Experience"

As a consequence of recognizing that the Kantian and Hegelian meaning of "phenomenon" does not capture his own conception of the object of phenomenological investigation, in 1904 Peirce has doubts about his terminology and begins considering other options. He writes a letter to William James stating, "My 'phenomenon' for which I must invent a new word is very near your 'pure experience' but not quite since I do not exclude time and also speak of only *one* 'phenomenon'" (CP 8.301, 1904). Moreover, he complains that what James calls "'pure experience' is not experience at all and certainly ought to have a name" (CP 8.301, 1904). Here we find Peirce declining to substitute James's "pure experience" for "phenomenon" for three reasons: matters of time and the duration of moments of consciousness; issues concerning the unity of the phenomenon; and terminological concerns. Given the influence of James's work, especially *Principles of Psychology* (henceforth *Principles*), on the phenomenological tradition at large, we will do well to consider each of these criticisms at length as well as those similarities between James's account of pure experience and Peirce's theory of the phenomenon that make the two conceptions "very near" one another.

Time and Consciousness: James states: "The instant field of the present is at all times what I call the 'pure' experience" (WWJ 3:13), but Peirce wishes his conception of the phenomenon to include both past experience and future or (at least) anticipated experience. In fact, Peirce's concerns about James's views on time and consciousness trace back to a decade before Peirce even recognized a science of phenomenology. To understand why Peirce is critical of James's conception of pure experience as the instant field of the

present, we must turn back to James's *Principles*, published in 1890, and Peirce's "The Law of Mind," published in 1892.

In *Principles*, James argues for two claims pertinent to understanding Peirce's view of the temporal duration of moments of consciousness. The first claim James argues for is that consciousness is spread over a finite duration of time. James's discussion occurs in the context of a discussion of the unity of thought. He maintains, "*however complex the object may be, the thought of it is one undivided state of consciousness*" (WWJ 8:266). This is true even though thinking is temporally ordered, even though consciousness is extended over a period of time.

p. 77 James uses as his example the thought that the pack of cards is on the table. Although it takes time to utter the phrase, James holds that "of these time-parts that we cannot take any one of them so short that it will not after some fashion or other be a thought of the whole object 'the pack of cards is on the table'" (WWJ 8:269). We can divide the thought and let each part "stand for a fraction, every point for an instant, of the time," but these parts are "continuous" with one another (WWJ 8:269). The thoughts "melt into each other, like dissolving views," and "each feels the total object in a unitary and undivided way" (WWJ 8:269). A dissolving view is a technique for showing an apparent lapse of time using a magic lantern or slide projector. Using a high-intensity light, one would first project an image of, say, a scene in summer. Then one would project over it an image of the same scene but during winter, using a low-intensity light. By slowly lessening the intensity of the light projecting the image of the summer scene and slowly increasing the intensity of the light projecting the winter scene, it would appear as though the image were transitioning from a summer to a winter scene. Just as these images appear to dissolve or melt into each other though they are of the very same scene at different times, James claims moments of thought melt or dissolve into each other though they are of the same object. Accordingly, he denies "that in the thought any parts can be found corresponding to the object's parts. Time-parts are not such parts," but whatever duration of time we may select "represents a finite length of thought's stream" (WWJ 8:269). James's claims that these segments of time are fractional, that the continuum of time is constituted of points, and that consciousness is spread over a finite length will be especially important when we turn to Peirce later.

The second pertinent claim James makes is that the German psychologists, such as Helmholtz and Wundt, are wrong to regard perception as a kind of unconscious inference. James argues that on the one hand if we think of this as meaning "every time a present sign suggests an absent reality to our mind, we make an inference; and if every time we make an inference we reason; then perception is indubitably reasoning" (WWJ 9:755). For instance, if I have a visual image of a blue cup on the table and infer that there is a blue cup on the table, then if this is an instance of reasoning, obviously perception is inferential. The problem, James argues, is that this leaves "no room in it for any unconscious part" (WWJ 9:755) because one is conscious of both the visual image and the perceptual judgment.

On the other hand and more plausibly, we might think of the thesis that perception is unconscious inference as the claim that some part of the reasoning process is unconscious. James postulates that what is unconscious must be the middle term M of the inference that S is M, M is P, so S is P. But James holds "there seem no good grounds for supposing this additional wheelwork in the mind" (WWJ 9:756). To the standard argument that it explains color contrast illusions, James had earlier argued that these are "purely sensational affairs, in which inference plays no part" (WWJ 8:170). Moreover, he holds that regarding perception as unconscious inference leads to an infinite regress. The classification of S as M is already an act of perception. If perception is unconscious inference, then that S is M must be inferred from other premises. Yet those other premises must also be inferred insofar as they are acts of perception by which something is classified as something else, and so on ad infinitum.

p. 78 In "The Law of Mind" Peirce makes a brief and oblique allusion to James's theory of the duration of consciousness over time when he remarks: "It has already been suggested by psychologists that

consciousness necessarily embraces an interval of time” (W 8:137, 1892). The context for the allusion is a discussion of ideas and how a past idea can be present to the mind. On the one hand we think of ideas as being transmitted from one person to another, of the same idea being thought at two different times, and of ideas being similar or dissimilar. On the other hand if we think of an idea as “an event in an individual consciousness” (W 8:136) the idea cannot possibly be transmitted, recur, or be like any other. An event in my consciousness cannot be transmitted to your consciousness even if the contents of our consciousnesses can be identical (as when, e.g., we are both thinking of the Pythagorean theorem).

The question for Peirce is how we should think of ideas: Should we think of them “as if they were substantial things” (W 8:136) or as events in an individual consciousness? The question, he states, is “analogous to the question of nominalism and realism” (W 8:137); that is, are universals such as justice and triangularity real features of the universe or are they only inventions of the mind? Peirce maintains “logic leaves room for one answer only” (W 8:137) and it is that we should think of ideas as if they were substantial things independent of individual consciousnesses. Treating ideas as events in individual consciousness makes it inexplicable how a past idea can be present to one’s mind and how ideas can be communicated from one mind to another.

Peirce holds that ideas are as if substantial things (this should not be taken to imply that they are material things) and not events in individual consciousnesses. This is not to deny that people are conscious of ideas. Rather, it is to affirm that ideas are not identical to events in the mind of any individual person or consciousness. This will be relevant later. For now, it is important to note that Peirce denies one account of how past ideas can be present, namely, that ideas are spread over a finite period of time. This is the very claim James argues for in “The Stream of Thought.” Peirce thinks there is a problem hidden here. If thought embraces a finite interval of time, the account faces a sorities problem: “If the sensation that precedes the present by half a second were still immediately before me, then, on the same principle the sensation preceding that would be immediately present, and so on *ad infinitum*. Now, since there is a time, say a year, at the end of which an idea is no longer *ipso facto* present, it follows that this is true of any finite interval, however short” (W 8:137). Suppose I think that the pack of cards is on the table. Consciousness, as James argues, embraces this whole thought. If we think of the interval of time over which thought extends as a finite, discrete block of time—say, a half second—and this thought takes more than half a second to think, then not only must the immediate half second be present to my mind in an instant but so must the half second prior to the immediate half second. Yet this seems to lead us on a forced march: Not only must the immediate and immediately prior half second be present, but the half second before those two, and so on *ad infinitum*. Moreover, this thought did not come to me *ex nihilo*. It is related to other thoughts, perhaps thoughts had hours, days, or years earlier. But surely an idea had a year ago is not embraced in a finite, discrete block of time at the present. That cannot be how a past thought is present.

The alternative is to hold, as Peirce does, that consciousness does not extend over a finite, discrete block of time but over an infinitesimal interval of time. These infinitesimal intervals of time are not fractional, as James had claimed. The fractions, or rational numbers, stand in a one-to-one correspondence with the natural numbers and so are insufficient to account for the continuity of thought. Although between any two rational numbers we can always find another fraction between them (e.g., $3/8$ is between $1/4$ and $2/4$; $5/16$ is between $3/8$ and $4/8$, etc.) the real numbers do not stand in a one-to-one correspondence with the rational numbers. But Peirce also denies that continuity can be understood in terms of the points on a line, as James also suggests. This requires thinking of continuity metrically whereas Peirce affirms that the distinction between continuity and discontinuity is nonmetrical. That is, Peirce embraces a non-Cantorian conception of continuity.

Peirce’s theory of continuity at this time need not detain us; he ultimately rejects it (see CP 6.174, 1906). The essential point for Peirce is that consciousness is spread over an infinitesimal interval of time. That infinitesimal interval of time has a beginning, middle, and end. In addition, the infinitesimal intervals of

time are related to each other much in the way that James had claimed: They melt or dissolve into each other. Let there be four successive infinitesimal intervals denoted by subscripts and each with a beginning (B), middle (M), and end (E). We might depict the succession of these intervals like so:

B ₁	M ₁	E ₁
B ₂	M ₂	E ₂
B ₃	M ₃	E ₃
B ₄	M ₄	E ₄

Peirce holds that $M_1 = B_2$, $E_1 = M_2 = B_3$, $E_2 = M_3 = B_4$, and $E_3 = M_4$; B_1 and E_4 are the beginning and end of the entire succession of intervals. Peirce writes, “upon this interval follows another, whose beginning is the middle of the former, and whose middle is the end of the former. Here, we have an immediate perception of the temporal sequence of its beginning, middle, and end, or say of the second, third, and fourth instants” (W 8:138). Accordingly, Peirce states, “consciousness essentially occupies time; and what is present to the mind at any ordinary instant, is what is present during a moment in which that instant occurs. Thus, the present is half past and half to come” (W 8:146). In a stream of thought, the subsequent instances are virtually contained in the former instances insofar as they follow from them and are partially constituted by them. Moreover, the former instances are effectively contained in the latter instances insofar as those latter instances are partially determined by them.

p. 80 We now get to the primary point of contention between Peirce and James. Peirce follows up his conception of lapsing but overlapping infinitesimal moments of consciousness by noting: “From these two immediate perceptions, we gain a mediate, or inferential, perception of the relation of all four instants.” He later remarks: “Let there be, not merely an indefinite succession, but a continuous flow of inference through a finite time; and the result will be a mediate objective consciousness of the whole time in the last moment” (W 8:138). Peirce’s claim is that to account for how a past idea can be present, we should think of the flow (or stream) of thought as a continuum of inference wherein past ideas determine future ideas and future ideas are virtually contained in past ideas as a consequences of those past ideas.

Peirce’s project in “The Law of Mind” is of a piece with his views as found in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* series. As explained in chapter 2, in that series Peirce endeavors to understand all mental action as being of the nature of an inference. Although Peirce eventually abandons that view, he never denies that we can use inference to model mental processes (see my 2014b, 2017a, and 2017c). In “The Law of Mind,” he affirms: “Mental Law Follows the Forms of Logic” and that deduction, induction, and abduction “correspond to [the] three chief modes of action of the human soul” (W 8:151, 1892). Recall that in “On the Natural Classification of Arguments” in 1867 Peirce had presented the general form of all inference as S is M, M is P, So, S is P. But this is clearly akin to the infinitesimal intervals presented earlier, as is especially evident if we write it like so:

S	M
M	P

where the identity of the middle term is what accounts for the connection between S and P. In like manner, the identity of the middle parts between B_1 and E_4 is what accounts for the connection between past ideas and present ones.

Yet in *Principles*, as already noted, James explicitly argues against the thesis that perception is unconscious inference. Importantly, Peirce needs perception to be a sort of unconscious inference in order to reduce all mental action to a valid inference. Moreover, the thesis that mental action is of the nature of a valid

inference is essential to Peirce's early theory of truth and reality. It is because mental action is of the nature of a valid inference and because valid inferential processes alight on the truth and root out errors that Peirce can claim truth is "the predestinate opinion" and reality is what is represented in a true proposition (W 3:273, 1878, and see Atkins, 2018). The consequence is that if James is correct to deny perception is a sort of unconscious inference, significant parts of Peirce's philosophical edifice come tumbling down.

p. 81 This readily explains why Peirce devoted the entire second half of his review of James's *Principles* (see W 8:234–239) to the section titled "Is Perception Unconscious Inference?," a section that takes up a scant three pages of James's enormous work. Here is not the place for a detailed evaluation of James's objections to the theory or of Peirce's responses. (For an evaluation, see Vargas 2017.) The essence of Peirce's reply is that James wrongly thinks the thesis that perception is unconscious inference is that a part of the inference—the middle term—is not conscious to the person making the inference whereas the thesis is actually that the person is not aware of drawing inferences when in fact she or he is. More important in the present context is why Peirce would object to James's conception of pure experience as an instant field of the present. For Peirce, such an account ignores the relation of past, present, and future ideas to each other, a relation that can be modeled inferentially. To put it another way, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as an instant field of the present, for consciousness is spread over an infinitesimal interval of time. That infinitesimal interval of time has a beginning, middle, and end. Its beginning and middle are identical to the middle and end of other, earlier infinitesimal intervals, and its middle and end are also identical to the beginning and middle of later infinitesimal intervals. James is correct that these intervals melt into each other; he is wrong to think of them as finite and fractional and to deny that their relations are inferential or can be modeled inferentially.

Although this idea has its roots in the *Monist* series of 1890–1892, which predates his recognition of phenomenology as a distinct science, it is clear that Peirce has not abandoned its essential insights in 1903 (even though, as noted, he does reject his earlier theory of continuity). In an essay titled "Telepathy and Perception" Peirce claims: "It is a difficult question whether the serial principle permits us to draw sharp lines of demarcation between the percept and the near anticipation, or say the *antecept*, and between the percept and the recent memory (may I be permitted to call this the *ponecept*, a distant and dubious memory being perhaps quite another thing?), or whether the percept is at once but an extreme case of an antecept and an extreme case of a ponecept" (CP 7.648). Consciousness is continuous, but it is not clear whether one should regard the present moment of consciousness as overlapping with both the immediately past and the immediately anticipated percept or whether the present moment of consciousness is simply the limit between the immediately past and immediately anticipated percept. Critical of using the doctrine of limits that "two values, that differ at all, differ by a *finite value*" (CP 6.176, 1906, and see W 8:138–139, 1892), Peirce adopts the former view. He maintains: "The present moment will be a lapse of time, highly confrontational, when looked at as a whole, seemingly absolutely so, but when regarded closely, seen not to be absolutely so, its earlier parts being somewhat of the nature of memory, a little vague, and its later parts somewhat of the nature of anticipation, a little generalized" (CP 7.653). That is, the present moment of consciousness extends over an infinitesimal interval of time, the earlier parts of that interval overlapping with previous moments of consciousness and the later parts overlapping with future moments.

p. 82 *The Unity of the Phenomenon*: Peirce's second complaint is that James speaks of pure experiences in the plural (see, for example, WWJ 3:19), but Peirce has a conception of the object that phenomenology studies as the collective total of all possible experience, as when he states that phenomenology studies "the *collective total* of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind" (CP 1.284, 1905, emphasis added). As I will show later in this chapter, Peirce himself vacillates between speaking of one phaneron ("the phenomenon") and of several phanerons. Eventually, he does settle on speaking of one phaneron but recognizes that the phaneron itself is constituted "direct objects of consciousness," which Peirce calls prebits. I shall say more about this later.

What I wish to stress here is the reason that Peirce insists on the unity of the phenomenon. In *Principles*, James embraces pluralism. What he means by pluralism in the context of the *Principles* is that there are discontinuities (1) between mind and matter, (2) between lower and higher thought, and (3) between two minds. (I have already detailed the distinctions between James's pluralism and Peirce's monism as we find them in 1896–1898 in Atkins 2016, chap. 1.)

Claims (1) and (2) come out clearly in “The Mind–Stuff Theory,” and claim (3) is expressly stated in “The Stream of Thought,” chapters 6 and 9 of the *Principles*, respectively. Taking up the mind–stuff theory first, the theory is borne of the idea that “[i]f evolution is to work smoothly, consciousness in some shape must have been present at the very origin of things” (WWJ 8:152). On this theory, every material atom has with it a sort of mental atom; mind or consciousness may be traced all the way down to the atom. As James states, for the theory to work, one must “postulate consciousness in the nebula,—the simplest way being, of course, to suppose every atom animated” (WWJ 8:157n10). Moreover, just as complex material bodies are built out of simple material atoms by a process of combination, so too are complex thoughts built out of “primordial mind–dust”—the animated atoms—by a process of summation or self–compounding (WWJ 8:152). The mind–stuff theory, then, involves two claims. First, material atoms have some minimal degree of consciousness or thought attached to them; there are no material atoms not combined with some mind–dust. James calls this view atomistic hylozoism. Second, higher thoughts are simply combinations or summations of lower thoughts. That is, the higher thought is identical to some set of lower thoughts or mind–dust.

p. 83 The mind–dust theory, James argues, is to be traced to the work of Adolf Fick. Fick found that when “only a very small portion of the skin was excited through a hole in a card, the surrounding parts being protected by the card” (WWJ 8:153) patients made mistakes as to whether they had been touched or merely warmed by radiant heat. The regularity of such mistakes was especially common when the patient's back was so stimulated. James reports that Fick concluded “the elementary nerve–tips affected was too small to sum itself distinctly into either of the qualities of feeling in question” (WWJ 8:153). Running with this idea, James reports that Herbert Spencer argues that all “individual ↳ sensations and emotions” are built up out of elementary feelings (WWJ 8:154). Most notable among such individual sensations is a musical sound. If a tapping sound is made at a rate lower than sixteen taps per second, one perceives each as a separate noise. However, if the rate is increased, “the noises are no longer identified in separate states of consciousness, and there arises in place of them a continuous state of consciousness, called a tone” (WWJ 8:154). Spencer, James remarks, proceeds to reference other experimental data purportedly supporting the conclusion that our apparently simple sensations are actually complex and result from the combination of more primordial elementary sensations.

James objects to this view. Although he admits the question cannot be decided on the basis of the experimental data, he argues that Spencer's account flies in the face of analogous phenomena. For instance, when the nerves of a frog's leg are repeatedly excited, the leg does not twitch faster, as we might expect if the elementary feelings are still individuated in the compound feeling. Rather, the leg becomes rigid and does not twitch at all. This suggests that the compound sensation emerges from but is not identical to the elementary sensations. James holds that if the mental state of the perceiver when the duration between the tapping sounds is extremely short just is the tapping sounds (the elementary feelings) over again, then the compound feeling is not one feeling at all. If the compound feeling is something in addition to those elementary feelings, then the feeling is not identical to those elementary feelings: “[W]e are reasoning altogether about the *logic* of the mind–stuff theory; about whether it can *explain the constitution* of higher mental states by viewing them as *identical with lower ones* summed together. We say the two sorts of fact are not identical: a higher state is not a lot of lower states; it is itself” (WWJ 8:164n17). James holds that his view “establish[es] a sort of disjointedness” that “sweep[s] away all chance of ‘passing without break’ either from the material to the mental, or from the lower to the higher mental; and they [James's arguments]

thrust us back into a pluralism of consciousness” (WWJ 8:165). While mind emerges from matter and while higher mental states emerge from lower ones, it is a mistake to think that mind just is matter or that higher mental states just are lower ones.

Turning to claim (3), James asserts without argument that “[e]ach of these minds [i.e., personal consciousnesses] keeps its own thoughts to itself. There is no giving or bartering between them. No thought even comes into direct *sight* of a thought in another personal consciousness than its own. Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law” (WWJ 8:221). Any given thought, on James’s view, is the thought of some individual, some “concrete particular I’s and you’s,” and “[e]veryone will recognize this to be true” (WWJ 8:221).

p. 84 Peirce does not recognize this to be true. The reason has already been indicated in the earlier discussion, namely, thoughts, ideas, can be transmitted from one person to another. James errs in regarding thoughts as events in consciousness rather than as if they were “substantial things.” In direct response to claim (3) and the quotation from James’s *Principles* about irreducible pluralism ↪ being the law, Peirce remarks: “Is not the direct contrary nearer observed facts? . . . You think there *must* be such isolation, because you confound thoughts with feeling-qualities; but all observation is against you” (CP 8.81, 1891). Peirce’s comment is highly revealing in two ways. First, Peirce thinks James confuses the thought with the material quality of a sign, as explained in chapter 2 here. Whereas every thought-sign has some material quality, thought-signs are not identical to the material quality. Whether a proposition be uttered or written, whether it be expressed in Macedonian or in English, it is the same thought though it has a different material quality. Second, Peirce’s hyphenation of “feeling-quality” suggests he now sees a way to resolve a problem that arose with respect to his earlier account of firstness, namely, how can feelings be regarded as exemplifying firstness when feelings are two-sided states of determination involving both what is felt and the mind that feels? On the one hand Peirce wants his category of firstness to correspond to qualities, but he also wants it to correspond to feelings. He is here intimating an idea that he would develop for the next several years but later abandon, namely, that a feeling just is a quality as viewed from the inside (so to speak) and a quality is a feeling viewed from the outside. Feelings and qualities are only conceptually distinct, much like the recto and verso of a sheet of paper or the concavity and convexity of a curve. I will say more about this in chapter 6, when I turn to a chronological development of Peirce’s thinking about the categories.

Peirce’s rejection of claim (3) also leads him to a rejection of claim (1). In “The Architecture of Theories,” Peirce appears to embrace something like the mind-stuff theory, endorsing “some form of hylopathy, otherwise called monism,” which rejects the “old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance” (W 8:105, 1890). On Peirce’s view, *res cogitans* and *res extensa* are not really distinct; rather, there is only one kind of substance, which has both inward (or psychological) and outward (or physiological) features. An inward, psychological feeling is no more than an outward, physiological quality. The distinction lies in which way each is viewed; again, they are only conceptually distinct. It is hard not to see Peirce’s hylopathy as a refinement or clarification of the atomistic hylozoism James criticizes according to which material, physical atoms and mental, psychic “atoms” are always conjoined. Nevertheless, we all recognize a difference between matter and mind insofar as matter is highly regular and reacts in near perfect conformity to laws whereas mind is not regular and reacts spontaneously. The question for Peirce is how to explain the divergent laws of each. Granted that mind and matter are not distinct substances, is their apparent difference to be explained by the fact that the laws of mind have emerged from the laws of matter, or have the laws of matter emerged from the laws of mind? Peirce endorses the latter. Idealism is the thesis that regards “the physical law as derived and special, the psychical law alone as primordial” (W 8:105), and he regards “objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate ↪ habits becoming physical laws” as the “one intelligible theory of the universe” (W 8:106). (For an excellent study of Peirce’s realist and idealist commitments, see Lane 2018.)

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With respect to James's claim (2), Peirce concurs that a higher thought (or feeling) is not identical to a summation of lower thoughts (or feelings). Rather, "general ideas are not mere words, nor do they consist in this, that certain concrete facts will every time happen under certain descriptions of conditions; but they are just as much, or rather far more, living realities than the feelings themselves out of which they are concreated" (W 8:154). On Peirce's view, feelings affect one another, and the ways in which they affect one another follow the forms of logic. General ideas arise from the subsumption of a conjunctive class of predicates (in abduction) or an enumerative class of subjects (in induction) under one idea, as explained in chapter 2 here. That is, general ideas emerge by "concreting" some conjunctive or enumerative class together. Of course, since James denies that perception is unconscious inference (as explained earlier), he cannot appeal to logic as a model for how higher thought emerges from lower thought.

At the root of all of this is Peirce's monism and, in particular, his synechism, the "tendency to regard continuity . . . as an idea of prime importance in philosophy" (W 8:136). Peirce denies that there is any disjointedness between mind and matter; consistent with his hylopathy, mind and matter are simply two sides of the same coin. In addition, we can pass without break from lower to higher thoughts. We can pass without break between them because they stand to each other in inferential relations. These inferential relations establish the continuity of mind, one moment blending into another much as the middle term in an inference blends together the subject and predicate terms of the conclusion. Finally, personal consciousnesses overlap with each other just insofar as they have the same idea. Ideas are not events in consciousness but akin to "substantial things" that can be instantiated in personal consciousnesses. (For a more detailed development of this idea, see Lane 2009 and Atkins 2016, chap 4.)

The foregoing considerations are rooted in Peirce's prephenomenological writings; they constitute a part of Peirce's immediate response to some of the views James espouses in *Principles*. How do they bear on Peirce's phenomenology? There is little room for doubt that Peirce's hylopathy is a metaphysical, and not a phenomenological, hypothesis. Phenomenologically, Peirce is ultimately compelled to deny that feelings and qualities are only conceptually distinct. As I will show in more detail in chapter 6, qualities are feelings *in posse* and all feeling involves two elements, namely, what is felt and the one who feels.

p. 86 What Peirce never denies is that ideas are related to one another in a way that can be modeled inferentially. As such, there are no absolute breakages in "the phenomenon." Since consciousness may be modeled inferentially, whatever could come before the mind in whichever way would stand in inferential relations to what has come before the mind in the past. Accordingly, Peirce emphasizes the unity of the one phenomenon. None of this is to deny, however, that we can distinguish among different parts of what does come before the mind. The phenomenologist is still tasked with analyzing the one phenomenon, as I will show in chapter 5.

Furthermore, Peirce thinks we have no reason to doubt that whatsoever may come before the mind of any one person is substantially the same as whatsoever may come before the mind of any other person. Consequently, even though the phenomenologist will study her own consciousness, she has no reason to deny that her observations cannot be generalized to other minds. If James were correct that there is an absolute breach between individual consciousnesses, this would not be so.

The Ethics of Terminology: A third reason Peirce declines to use James's "pure experience" in place of his conception of the phenomenon is that it violates the ethics of terminology. He complains that what James calls " 'pure experience' is not experience at all" (CP 8.301, 1904). To appreciate Peirce's objection, we need to understand what pure experience is.

The problem that motivates James's theory of pure experience is how we can explain knowing if mind and matter are two different sorts of stuff. "Knowing" here means knowledge by acquaintance. If knowing is some relationship between a mind and an external, material object, it would seem that all we can ever know

is how the object appears to us and not the object itself. James's thesis is that if we start with one basic sort of stuff—which he calls pure experience—rather than the “equipollent” division of mind and matter, then we can explain knowing as “a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter” (WWJ 3:4). This one sort of stuff can stand in two different groups or sets of relations. Take, for instance, some pure experience blue. This blue stuff can be combined with solidity, with a conic section, with the relationship of being on a table, etc., and when the blue stuff gets combined with all of these other bits of pure experience (and others) we have a blue cup sitting on a table. (It is helpful to note that James endorses the Millian view that material objects are mereological sums of permanent possible experiences.) But that same basic blue stuff can also be combined with previous thoughts in a stream of experience. What distinguishes the blue stuff qua matter from the pure experience qua mind is the sort of relations in which it stands. The upshot is that that one sort of stuff stands in two groups of relationships, such that “in one group it figures as a thought, in another group as a thing. And, since it can figure in both groups simultaneously we have every right to speak of it as subjective and objective at once” (WWJ 3:7). That is, the very blue stuff that figures into the actual blue cup on the table (qua possible experience) is the very same blue stuff that figures into my seeing a blue cup (qua actual experience). It is objective in its grouping as thing and subjective in its grouping as thought, but it is one and the self-same stuff regardless.

p. 87 Here is not the place for a detailed examination of James's theory of pure experience; from what has been said it should be clear why Peirce finds James's terminology objectionable. We speak of experience in both a broad and a narrow sense (among other senses). In the broad sense, an experience is something, whatever it may be, coming before the mind. One might have an experience of a flashing yellow light or have the experience of lucid dreaming. Visualizing relations in a diagram might be regarded as having a sort of mathematical experience. In this broad sense of experience, it is clear that pure experience is not an experience at all. Experience is rather the result of the basic stuff that James calls pure experience standing in various relations. What makes that basic stuff into an experience is the relations in which it stands, the “group in which it figures.” The basic stuff is not the experience but is constitutive of the experience. Moreover, that very same basic stuff may stand in a grouping that makes it part of a material object, and that material object may not even be presently experienced or have ever been experienced even if it could be experienced. As a consequence, there may be some unexperienced pure experience, which is absurd. At best, pure experience is only stuff that could possibly be experienced.

Taken in a narrow sense, Peirce holds that experience is “that state of cognition which the course of life, by some part thereof, has forced upon the recognition of the experient, or person who undergoes the experience, under conditions due usually, in part, at least, to his own action; and the Immediate object of the cognition of Experience is understood to be what I call its ‘Dynamical’, that is, its real object. I fear this statement stands nearly as much in need of elucidation as the term it defines” (LI 344, 1906). In this rather heady quotation, we can see that experience narrowly conceived concerns what actually forces itself upon the mind whereas Peirce regards phenomenology to be the study not just of what appears but of what may come before the mind in any way whatsoever. James, moreover, would not want to limit his conception of pure experience to what actually forces itself “upon the recognition of the experient.” According to James, affectional facts such as love and pain are also bits of pure experience, as I will show momentarily. Before proceeding, though, I should note that Peirce does not always respect this technical conception of experience and frequently uses the word experience in the broader sense. Throughout this book, unless otherwise noted, I shall use “experience” in its less technical and broader sense.

The Very Nearness of Pure Experience and the One Phenomenon: In spite of these criticisms, Peirce remarks that his own conception of the object of phenomenological investigation is very near to James's conception of pure experience. There are at least three important points of overlap between Peirce's conception of the one phenomenon and James's conception of pure experience.

First, Peirce no doubt understood that James conceived of the stuff of pure experience not as an actual experience but as what one could possibly experience. Peirce aims at a conception of the object of phenomenological investigation as the collective total of whatsoever could come before the mind howsoever. Moreover, he thinks that the collective totality has parts. As the objects of possible experience, James's pure experiences would be parts of that collective total.

Second, Peirce no doubt saw James's theory of pure experience as taking a step toward monism. In fact, a major advantage of James's theory is that it makes it possible for him to explain how two minds can know one thing even though there is a breach between personal consciousnesses, even though he embraces pluralism. Two minds know the same thing when one and the same bits of pure experience get grouped into two different streams of consciousness.

In the context of James's theory of pure experience, along with this step toward monism comes the refusal to prejudge whether whatever does come before the mind is merely a representation of external reality or external reality itself. For James as for Peirce, the distinction between subject and object is not directly, immediately given in experience but discovered in the flow of experience. Properly speaking, a pure experience in itself is neither subjective nor objective but becomes subjective or objective depending on the groupings to which it belongs. It is both subjective and objective when it "figure[s] in both groups simultaneously" (WWJ 3:7). I can readily change an imagined blue cup into a green cup with mental effort; in contrast, I cannot readily change a perceived blue cup into a green cup merely with mental effort. The distinction between a merely imagined object and a perceived one is discovered in the course of experience. Similarly, what James calls affectional facts are discovered to be features of the mind rather than of external objects because it "does not work to assume that physical objects are going to act outwardly or inwardly on one another by their sympathetic or antipathetic qualities" (WWJ 3:74). I shall have more to say about this in chapter 7.

Third, Peirce does not restrict what does or may come before the mind merely to impressions, sensations, or sense perceptions. On Peirce's view, we can perceive necessary truths and generality. (For an exploration of these matters, see Legg 2014 and Wilson 2012 and 2017.) In addition, we have experiences of brute reactions, about which I shall say more in chapter 6. Similarly, as early as the *Principles*, James had maintained that "we ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*" (WWJ 8:238). He continues to affirm this view in *Essays in Radical Empiricism* when he writes, "*the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system*" (WWJ 3:22), which is the thesis of radical empiricism. James does not restrict the stuff he calls pure experience to qualities or substances but holds that "[p]repositions, copulas, and conjunctions, 'is,' 'isn't,' 'then,' 'before,' 'in,' 'on,' 'beside,' [etc.] flower out of the stream of pure experience, the stream of concretions or the sensational stream, as naturally as nouns and adjectives do, and they melt into it again as fluidly when we apply them to a new portion of the stream" (WWJ 3:47).

British Empiricism and “Ideas”

In a letter to Lady Victoria Welby in 1904, Peirce opts to change “phenomenology” to “ideoscopy,” in deference to the British empiricists’ use of the word idea and to underscore the fact that phenomenology is primarily an observational (-scopy) rather than a discursive (-logy) science. He writes to her: “You know that I particularly approve of inventing new words for new ideas. I do not know that the study I call *Ideoscopy* can be called a new idea, but the word *phenomenology* is used in a different sense. *Ideoscopy* consists in describing and classifying the ideas that belong to ordinary experience or that naturally arise in connection with ordinary life, without regard to their being valid or invalid or to their psychology” (CP 8.328, 1904). Peirce proceeds to note that pursuing this science has led him to classify all ideas as firsts, seconds, or thirds, and so it is clear that he is not proposing another science in addition to phenomenology but, in the interest of terminological precision, rejecting the name phenomenology in favor of the name ideoscopy.

A Scopic Science: Let us first consider the introduction of -scopy and then turn to his use of ideo-. Peirce would consistently use the suffix -scopy for the science we call phenomenology until the end of his life. There are, though, two exceptions worth mentioning. First, in one manuscript Peirce refers to phenomenology as phanerochemistry, “the chemistry of appearances” (see LI 295 and 300). (His use of the prefix phanero- will be explained later.) Peirce’s use of the suffix -chemistry is inspired by a chemical analogy he uses to illustrate his mathematically based conception of phenomenology. The basis of that analogy ought to be clear from the previous chapter: The adicities of propositional forms are akin to the unsatisfied valencies of chemical elements. We can derive complete propositions by compounding the three basic propositional forms, much as the wants of chemical elements are satisfied by compounding them with other elements to form molecules.

Elsewhere, Peirce refers to phenomenology as phanerochemistry (R 338, c. 1905). This is noteworthy because the use of the suffix -scopy has led some Peirce scholars to conclude that those engaged in phenomenological inquiries are barred from using arguments or discursive reasoning in general. This is a mistake. Though Peirce surely means to signal that phenomenology is primarily an observational science, that does not entail it is merely an observational science. He writes that in phenomenology “there is little reasoning” (Ketner 1998, 329, 1909)—that is, there is reasoning, little though it may be. Moreover, sciences such as microscopy and telescopy, both of which Peirce was intimately familiar with, are observational sciences even though they do employ discursive argumentation. What is particularly noteworthy about these sciences in relationship to phenomenology is that they are also arts wherein one employs techniques to render the object of study clearer. For example, microscopists use different sorts of illumination and use stains in order to make the object under observation clearer under the microscope. Likewise, astronomers use different lenses, filters, and techniques of observation, such as the use of averted vision to see dim objects (see Downard 2015 for a parallelism between Peirce’s phenomenology and astronomy). Similarly, as I will show in the next and in later chapters, those engaged in phenomenological inquiry must also use techniques in order to isolate the various elements that make up the phaneron, the object of phenomenological investigation.

Yet what likely primarily motivates Peirce’s preference for the suffix -scopy over -logy is his insistence that phenomenology abstains from answering the question of whether what is “present to the mind” represents the way the world in fact is independently of mind. While phenomenologists obviously aim to accurately describe what is present to the mind as assuredly as mathematicians aim to draw conclusions that necessarily follow from their hypotheses,¹ both phenomenologists and mathematicians abstain from making claims about the way the world is “out there.” As Peirce says, phenomenology studies what is present to the mind “quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not” (CP 1.284, 1905); it “draw[s] up an inventory of appearances without going into any investigation of their [the appearances’] truth” (CP 2.120, 1902). Patently, what seems or appears may well be or be representative or indicative of the way the world is, but whether what seems in fact exists or is representative or indicative of the way the

world is “out there” phenomenologists abstain from saying. Clearly, Peirce’s conception of phenomenology is, in this respect, of a piece with Husserl’s.

Ideas: While Peirce is content to retain the “-scopy” of “ideoscopy,” he is less pleased with the prefix *ideo-*. In one way, the use of “idea” is an improvement over Kant’s “phenomenon,” for the British empiricists do not restrict the word *idea* to what is presented in sensibility. On the other hand it is clear that the term also does not capture what Peirce has in mind. T. L. Short rightly remarks, “Locke took ideas to be (a) passive and (b) atomistic episodes (c) contained within (d) individual minds” (2007, 66), and Peirce would reject these as characterizations of the *phaneron*. Some features of the *phaneron* are actively produced, others are continuous (such as the passage of time), and Peirce maintains that individual minds can have the same thought (see Lane 2009 and Atkins 2016, chap. 4).

p. 91 There are other important differences between Peirce’s conception of the object of phenomenological investigation and the notion of an idea found in British empiricism. First, the British empiricists do speak of ideas in the plural whereas Peirce, as I have shown, wishes to speak of only one phenomenon as a collective total of “ideas,” though more shall be said about this later. Second, for the British empiricists, “[a]n idea is generally supposed to be entirely present to consciousness in an instant, while a *phaneron* may not be capable of being so known” (R 337s:8, 1904). Not only does Peirce reject the atomism of the British empiricists’ conception of an idea, he rejects the claim that the idea is entirely presented in that instant. What is present to the mind might only be present in a mediated sort of way, as is the back of an object of perception. When one sees an apple on a counter, for instance, one sees only one side of the apple, namely, the side facing the perceiver. But the side of the apple facing away from the perceiver is, in a sense, present to the mind as well. Minimally, it is present to the mind insofar as the perceiver realizes that she could move around the apple (or turn the apple around) and see it. Second, should she in fact walk around the apple while perceiving (or turn it around), the whole apple (or at least the front and back of it) would be present to mind but not “in an instant.”

Third and fourth, Peirce complains that the “English philosophers have . . . restricted the meaning of [‘idea’] too much to cover my conception (if conception it can be called), besides giving a psychological connotation to their word which I am careful to exclude” (CP 1.285, c. 1904). With respect to their conception being overly restricted, Peirce is especially peeved that the British empiricists sometimes claim that they have no idea of something while describing it. While, in one sense, we have no idea of a square circle insofar as we cannot picture one in the mind’s eye, there is another sense in which the idea of a square circle is present to the mind. At the very least, the idea of a square circle is present to the mind with respect to its impossibility. As Peirce states: “The fact that something mentioned is devoid of all meaning or is self-contradictory does not prevent it from being a *phaneron*” (R 336:7). André De Tienne puts this point nicely when writes: “We can deny something to be thinkable, but this denying is enough for that something to become thinkable and thus be a *phaneron*” (1993, 281).

With respect to the British empiricists giving the notion of an idea a psychological connotation, we must turn to Peirce’s criticisms of George Berkeley and his ilk (see Wilson 2016 for a detailed study of Peirce’s empiricism). To appreciate the origin of Berkeley’s view, it is helpful to begin with Locke. Locke maintains that we gain our general ideas by abstraction. However, he rejects the Aristotelian position that there are forms in objects that we then abstract from our sense impressions of those objects. For example, Locke denies that there is anything like whiteness actually in milk, snow, and chalk that I abstract from my sense impressions of those objects. Rather, he claims that one “considers that Appearance alone [that is, the appearance of the white independently from its location, extension, time, etc.], makes it a representative of all of that kind; and having given it the name *Whiteness*, it by that sound signifies the same quality wheresoever to be imagin’d or met with; and thus Universals, whether *Ideas* or *Terms*, are made” (1975, 159 [2.11.9]). Later, in his discussion of essences, he is explicit that we sort substances by their names and that

p. 92 these ↪ “nominal essences” are “*made by the Mind, and not by Nature*” (453 [3.6.26]). Peirce, as numerous scholars have shown, rejects such a view (see Forster 2011, Mayorga 2007, and Boler 1963).

Such concepts, Locke thinks, are created by the mind by attaching words to appearances, but this raises a question: Can we apprehend a concept without imagining or perceiving instances of it? For example, to be thinking of the concept white, must I be thinking of white things? This poses a special problem for mathematics, as Locke realizes. He asks:

Does it not require some pains and skill to form the *general Idea of a Triangle*, (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult,) for it must be neither Oblique, nor Rectangle, neither Equilateral, Equicrural, nor Scalenon; but all and none of these at once. In effect, it is something imperfect, that cannot exist; an *Idea* wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent *Ideas* are put together. (1975, 596 [4.7.9])

Locke’s comment suggests it is possible but difficult to form such a general idea, but Berkeley seizes on this claim and denies that forming such an abstract general idea of a triangle is possible at all: “I do not deny absolutely there are general ideas, but only that there are any abstract general ideas” (2008, 74). Berkeley must maintain that it is possible to have general ideas, for otherwise it would be impossible to prove anything about triangles in general. What he is objecting to is having an abstract general idea, an idea of a triangle that is not equilateral, isosceles, or scalene but is at the same time all three at once. Rather, whenever we have the idea of a triangle, we must be thinking of one that is equilateral or one that is isosceles or one that is scalene.

Peirce, however, maintains that Berkeley is conflating a psychological question with a logical question. He writes, “Berkeley and nominalists of his stripe deny that we have any idea at all of a triangle in general, which is neither equilateral, isosceles, nor scalene. But they cannot deny that there are propositions about triangles in general, which propositions are either true or false; and as long as that is the case, whether we have an *idea* of a triangle in some psychological sense or not, I do not, as a logician, care” (EP 2:227, 1903). We have just seen that Berkeley actually concedes that we have a general idea of a triangle, just not an abstract general idea of one. Nevertheless, Peirce’s point holds. The concept triangle is a conventional sign that plays a role in our linguistic practices. Insofar as it plays such a role, the concept has a meaning, and that meaning is independent of the (purported) psychological fact that whenever we conceive of a triangle we must also imagine or perceive a specific kind of triangle. The psychological question of whether to conceive of a triangle we must imagine a specific kind of triangle is different from the logical question of the meaning of our concept triangle. For it is evident that we can reason as follows: A triangle has interior angles the sum of which is 180 degrees; 180 is greater than 179; so, a triangle has interior angles the sum of ↪ which is greater than 179 degrees. Whether we imagine a specific triangle while reasoning thusly is irrelevant both to our ability to follow the line of reasoning and to its soundness.

Now consider, again, the concept of a square circle. Suppose I reason thus: Squares have straight sides; circles have no straight sides; therefore, there are no square circles. This is a perfectly reasonable and meaningful line of thought. And yet it is impossible for me to imagine a square circle, to picture it in my mind’s eye as I can a triangle. Nevertheless, as noted previously, the idea of a square circle is, in some sense, before the mind. Similarly, regardless of whether I do picture a triangle when I think of one, the idea of a triangle can, in some sense, be before the mind. Moreover, its being before the mind can be independent of my imagining some triangle, just as square circles are before the mind with respect to their impossibility even though they are not imagined. It is for this reason that Peirce complains that the British empiricists’ “idea” is tinged with a psychological connotation he is careful to exclude, and so he denies that it captures what he means by the object of phenomenological study.

Peirce's "Phaneron"

Having rejected Kant's and Hegel's "phenomena," James's "pure experience," and the British empiricists' "idea," Peirce settles on the term phaneron in late 1904.² "Phaneron" comes from the Greek word for manifest. Roughly, phaneroscopy is the observational study of whatever could be manifest or thinkable in any way whatsoever. Peirce writes, "the word [phaneron] is next to the simplest expression in Greek for *manifest*. Etymologically, *evident* is nearer to it, but *manifest* and *evident*, in straining at emphasis, have with us quite interchanged their meanings" (R 337:2, 1904). "Phaneron" is certainly a technical-sounding term for a conception that differs a hair's breadth from other conceptions, and so Peirce is quite pleased to retain it. Accordingly, out of a concern for terminological precision, he calls the science we now generally regard as phenomenology by the name phaneroscopy. Peirce, then, settles on the name phaneroscopy because it captures both that it is primarily an observational science and that it studies the collective total of all that may come before the mind in any way whatsoever, that is, the phaneron. To fully appreciate his conception of phaneroscopy, though, we will need to turn to the developments in his characterizations of its object of study, the phaneron.

Peirce's Characterizations of the Phaneron

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I have now shown how Peirce's commitment to terminological precision ultimately leads him to change the name of phenomenology to phaneroscopy. The previous section emphasized how Peirce wishes his conception of the science ↴ and its object, the phaneron, to differ from those conceptions of other theorists. Unlike Hegel, Peirce thinks phenomenology ought to study not what actually appears but whatever may appear. Unlike Kant, Peirce thinks the phenomenologist studies not merely what appears in sensibility but whatever seems howsoever. Unlike James's conception of pure experience, Peirce thinks the object of phenomenological investigation is one and not limited to the present instant. Similarly, Peirce rejects the British empiricists' restriction of "idea" to an instantaneous idea. In addition, he objects to the British empiricists' denial that they have ideas of absurdities, such as square circles, or abstract general ideas, such as triangularity.

In this section, I turn to Peirce's own changing characterizations of the phaneron as he attempts to render the conception of it more definite. I must note at the outset that the title of this section does not mention Peirce's definitions of the phaneron. That is intentional. There is one sense in which Peirce's characterizations of the phaneron are definitions. That is the sense in which the characterization renders our conception of the phaneron more definite. But Peirce's characterizations of the phaneron are certainly not definitions in the sense of presenting necessary and sufficient conditions to delineate what the phaneron is. In my own judgment, Peirce cannot provide a definition of the phaneron in this sense because it would require antecedently demarcating a boundary between what can come before the mind and what cannot (see Atkins 2017b). In fact, Peirce repeatedly states that his characterization of the phaneron is quite vague and even hesitates to call it a conception at all. For instance, in 1904, after noting that he means "phaneron" in a way that approximates the British empiricists' use of "idea," he states that they restrict the meaning of *idea* too much "to cover my conception (*if conception it can be called*)" (CP 1.285, emphasis added). And after characterizing the phaneron as "the single entirety, or total, or whole, of that which the reader has in mind in any sense" he proceeds to note that "[t]his is vague, and is meant to be so" (R 338, 1905).

One further point before proceeding: De Tienne (1996, 337) and Cornelis de Waal (2013, 37) have claimed a similarity between Peirce's conception of the phaneron and his earlier conception of substance or the object of attention in his essay "On a New List," explained in chapter 2. Short (2013, 291–292) claims that this is a mistake. The truth is somewhere in between. As I will show in the next chapter, a key technique of

phenomenological investigation involves attentional analysis and, insofar as substance in the essay “On a New List” is simply whatsoever we are attending to, it is not far removed from what Peirce means by the phaneron. On the other hand Short is correct that in Peirce’s mature phenomenology the categories are in the phaneron as parts of it and not derived from the application of predicates to it. In addition, there are parts of the phaneron to which we are not attending. De Waal states that the two conceptions “resonate,” and this may well be the best way to put it. They are not identical but share some similarities.

p. 95 **Four Concerns**

Peirce’s diverse characterizations of the phaneron are motivated by four different concerns. I shall here state those concerns directly and in the next subsection explain how they emerge in the chronological development of Peirce’s conception of the phaneron.

Concern 1: The first concern arises from Peirce’s conception of what phenomenology is. On the one hand, as I have shown, Peirce wishes phenomenology to be a study of the possibilities of consciousness. On the other hand, phenomenology is a positive science in the sense that it studies whatever is actual. As a consequence, we sometimes find Peirce characterizing the phaneron as whatever is before the mind and at other times characterizing it as whatever can or could be before the mind:

by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. (CP 1.284, 1905, emphasis added)

The term phaneron is to apply to whatever is thinkable or which, not being thinkable, admits the suggestion of its being thinkable, in so far, for example, as this is suggested in denying it to be thinkable; and it makes no difference when or to whom the suggestion occurs. (R 336:6, 1904)

We might worry that Peirce cannot consistently admit of these two views. Yet this worry admits of an easy solution. Chemistry, for example, studies the possible sorts of elements and the possible combinations of elements, even those that are not actual. The science progresses by studying what elements are known and then inferring what elements and molecules could exist. In like manner, phenomenologists can study whatever is before the mind and then develop theories about what could be before the mind.

Concern 2: The second concern is that we can only study our own consciousness. Phenomenology, however, is supposed to study the elements and combinations of any possible consciousness. Accordingly, we sometimes find Peirce characterizing the phaneron as whatever is before the mind and also as whatever is before the reader’s mind:

by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. (CP 1.284, 1905, emphasis added)

By the *Phaneron* (a Proper noun) I mean the single entirety, or total, or whole, of that which the reader has in mind in any sense. (R 338, c. 1905, emphasis added)

p. 96 He has two replies to this worry. His first reply is that it can be a worry only if we have some antecedent grounds for doubting that minds are similarly structured ⁴ or composed, made of the same sorts of elements. He reports that, for his part, he has never seriously entertained that his mind is substantially different from anyone else’s. As a consequence, this sort of doubt cannot enliven genuine inquiry: “If anybody finds that he cannot doubt [the phaneron has such and such features], as far as his own mind is concerned,—as well as he can discover,—and that he does not seem to have any real doubt of the matter’s

being the same in other minds, he may as well admit that, for him, there is no doubt about it” (NEM 4:196, 1904). This reply is part and parcel to Peirce’s claims, held consistently from the beginning of his work to the end, that inquiry cannot begin with tin or paper doubts but must begin with genuine doubt as well as all the prejudices we already have when inquiry commences (see W 2:212, 1868, and EP 2:336, 1905). Even though we obviously have different beliefs and have had different experiences, those beliefs and experiences are made up of the same sorts of “stuff” as anyone else’s, namely, conceptions, affections, qualities, etc., and these fall into distinct classes (as I will show in later chapters). As Peirce writes, he has never “entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds” (CP 1.284, 1905). His second reply is to invite the reader to a candid investigation of the contents of her own mind just as Peirce does his own and see whether their descriptions compare favorably (see CP 1.286, 1904, and CP 1.299, 1905). He remarks, “[phenomenology] does not need particularly to insist upon their [the general elements of the phenomena and their possible modes] universality, since this is evident to everybody, who knows by his own portion of human experience something of what human experience generally is like” (NEM 4:196, 1904).

Concern 3: The third concern is to render his own conception of whatever may come before the mind in any way whatsoever more definite. He does this by drawing attention to various possible items of consciousness that he does regard as parts of the phaneron. For example, he points out that the phaneron includes both memory and habitual cognition. In addition, it includes whatever is thinkable and not merely what is thought. Further, the phaneron is not merely what presents itself phenomenally but also what presents itself cognitively, as with a mathematical proof.

Concern 4: Finally, as I have shown with respect to James’s conception of pure experience, Peirce wishes to conceive of the phaneron as a totality, the unity of consciousness. However, he also needs a way to speak of the parts of the phaneron. Accordingly, we sometimes find him characterizing the phaneron in the plural (“phanerons” or “phanera”) and at other times he writes of the elements or constituents of the phaneron:

There is nothing quite so directly open to observation as *phanerons*. (CP 1.286, 1904, emphasis added)

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[T]hat which is observed, as a percept is observed, must be objectified, while mere tones of consciousness are *phanerons*. (R 337s:10, 1904, emphasis added)

Let us call the collective whole of all that could ever be present to the mind in any way or in any sense, the *Phaneron*. Then the substance of every Thought (and of much beside Thought proper) will be a *Consistituent [sic] of the Phaneron*. (NEM 4:320, 1906, emphasis added)

I invite you to consider, not everything in the phaneron, but only its indecomposable *elements*, that is, those that are logically indecomposable, or indecomposable to direct inspection. (CP 1.288, 1906, emphasis added)

In my judgment and as I will show later, Peirce resolves this terminological ambiguity in 1909 with the introduction of the term “prebit.”³ On this point about the constituents of the phaneron, it ought to be obvious that we cannot possibly list—in the sense of draw up a catalogue of—every part of the phaneron. This is because the phaneron will include an infinity of parts, if only because every number will be a part of the phaneron. Moreover, it will include every order of infinity, the rational and irrational numbers, and every conceivable curved line. For this reason, Peirce aims to isolate the classes of constituents of the phaneron and how they can possibly combine. As I will show in the next two chapters, Peirce primarily aims to draw up a sort of phanerochemical table of elements of consciousness and not a table of all of the molecules that might be made up of those elements.

The Chronological Development of Peirce's Conception of the Phaneron

Peirce's characterizations of the phaneron become more complex over the course of his work from 1902 to 1909, and so it is best to begin at the beginning if we hope to understand his developing conception of the phaneron. As I showed above in relation to Kant and Hegel, Peirce initially opts for "phenomenon," but he tries to broaden the conception of it. Accordingly, his initial characterizations of phenomena are meant to address the third concern just mentioned. At first, the phenomenon is merely "all that in any sense appears" (CP 1.280, 1902). The "in any sense" is surely meant to extend the conception of the phenomenon beyond what is merely presented in sensibility to what may be dreamed or imagined. But he realizes almost immediately that this characterization is fatally narrow in its use of "appear." He writes, "'phenomenon' is to be understood in the broadest sense conceivable; so that phenomenology might rather be defined as the study of what seems than as the statement of what appears" (CP 2.197, 1902). André De Tienne sums up the difference: "We can doubt that something, at some point, appeared; we do not doubt, however, that it seemed to appear" (1993, 281).

The previous comments might lead one to believe that Peirce means to restrict his characterization of the phaneron to perception-like seemings (i.e., seemings with phenomenal content, such as dreams and imaginings) and to exclude beliefs, judgments, or the like. In 1903, though, he is perfectly explicit that the phaneron includes both perception-like seemings and beliefs, propositions, and judgments. He writes that phenomenologists, "look well at the phenomenon . . . whether that phenomenon be something that outward experience forces upon our attention, or whether it be the wildest of dreams, or whether it be the most abstract and general of the conclusions of science" (EP 2:147). The phenomenon includes not only perceptions and dreams but also our beliefs, our conclusions. To capture this broader conception, Peirce shifts from speaking of what appears or what seems to speaking of what is before the mind: "[T]he Phenomenon [is] whatever is before the mind in any kind of thought, fancy, or cognition of any kind" (R 464:28, 1903). Almost immediately after writing that last sentence, though, he would expand his conception even further. He states that by "phenomenon" he means "whatever is present at any time to the mind in any way" (EP 2:259, 1903). Peirce's introduction of the temporal aspect—"at any time"—is novel. But why is he compelled to include it?

As I have shown, Peirce is critical of James for restricting his conception of pure experience to the present, and I have also shown that Peirce is critical of the British empiricists for treating ideas as entirely presented in an instant. Why Peirce desires a more latitudinous conception should be evident from the considerations presented earlier in this chapter: Peirce's view is that "there is no such thing as an absolute instant, there is nothing *absolutely present* either temporarily or in the sense of confrontation" (CP 7.653, 1903).

Consciousness extends over an infinitesimal interval of time. The anterior parts of that infinitesimal interval are identical to the posterior parts of the previous infinitesimal interval whereas the posterior parts of it are identical to the anterior parts of the next. Peirce wants to clarify that the phaneron includes cognitions of the past and the anticipation of the future.

In 1904, we begin to see the first and second concerns referenced earlier come to the fore. As I showed in his criticism of Hegel for restricting phenomenology to what is actually experienced, Peirce maintains what phenomenologists really aim to study is not what is present to the mind but what could be present to any mind. Accordingly, in 1904, he writes,

I propose the word *phaneron* to denote anything that *can* come before the mind in any sense whatsoever. . . . I certainly do not intend to confine the term *phaneron* to what is before the mind *at any one time*. . . . [A]nd I do not restrict the word *phaneron* to what comes before *any single* mind. The term *phaneron* is to apply to whatever is thinkable or which, not being thinkable, admits the suggestion of its being thinkable, in so far, for example, as this is suggested in denying it to be

thinkable; and *it makes no difference when or to whom the suggestion occurs*. (R 336:2, 6, 1904, emphases added)

Although he continues to include the qualification “at any time,” Peirce no longer needs it because what is thinkable might be thought at any given time. Moreover, Peirce also wishes to stress that by “the mind” he does not mean any particular person’s mind. Again, clearly, what is thinkable need not be thought by any particular mind. Nonetheless and also in 1904, Peirce states that the reader “must actually repeat my observations and experiments for himself” (CP 1.286), since readers will have to generalize from the contents of their own consciousness to what could be present to any mind. This is his second strategy for addressing the second concern previously mentioned.

In 1905, Peirce attempts a new way of characterizing the phaneron by stating that it is whatever is throughout its entirety open to assured observation. Drawing first on the etymology of the word phaneron, Peirce writes it is

next to the simplest expression in Greek for *manifest*. . . . There can be no question that [phaneros] means primarily *brought to light, open to public inspection throughout*. The *manifest* is that which a person who does not willfully shut his eyes to has no choice but to believe in. We find ourselves rather forced to accept the cognition than persuaded by any ulterior reason to do so.

Such being the implications of the Greek word [phaneron], in the interest of that exactitude of terminology without which no study can become scientific, I desire to have the privilege of creating an English word, *phaneron*, to denote whatever is throughout its entirety open to assured observation. No external object is throughout its entirety open to observation. (R 337:2–4, 8)

Peirce’s reason for this change is suggested in a passage in 1904: “There is nothing quite so directly open to observation as phanerons” (CP 1.286). Notice that in the block quotation above Peirce requires that the observation be assured observation.

This experiment in characterizing the phaneron, though, is quickly abandoned, and Peirce returns to his earlier characterizations. We can see why Peirce abandons this experiment if we consider this passage written at the same time:

I beg the privilege . . . of creating an English word, *phaneron*, to denote whatever is open to assured observation in all the entirety of its being, even if this observation be not quite as direct as that of a percept is. . . . When I say a phaneron is open to observation, I use the word “observation” in a pretty broad sense. Whatever, whether in a purposive or cognitive sense, we mean or rather, when there is any distinction, what we think we mean is a phaneron, although it may be vague and is usually general, so that it cannot react upon us as a percept does, is a phaneron. (R 337s:6–10)

p. 100 This quotation evidences three misgivings Peirce has about characterizing the phaneron as whatever is throughout its entirety open to assured observation. First, it would seem to exclude from the phaneron dim or vague memories, which are not open to assured observation. It is not entirely uncommon for us to hesitate as to whether our memories are quite accurate. When we try to call up distant memories, we sometimes close our eyes tightly, trying to bring those memories more distinctly into consciousness. But this alone reveals that such memories are not open to assured observations even though they are part of the phaneron. Similar considerations apply to, for example, logical or mathematical proofs. We sometimes complete proofs or construct arguments and then wonder whether the conclusions really do follow from the premises. That they do, in such cases, is not always open to assured observation. Yet, as I have also shown, Peirce conceives the phaneron to include whatever is before the mind *in any way*, including such distant and vague memories and such complex proofs.

The second problem with this characterization of the phaneron is the use of the word observation to characterize the phaneron itself. It is too restrictive of a term, for observation is typically restricted to attentive perception, as when we say things such as “observe what happens when I mix vinegar and baking soda.” For this reason, Peirce is compelled to state that he uses the term observation latitudinously, in a way not limited to perception but intended to include purposive observation (e.g., looking for one’s car keys without yet seeing them) and cognitive observation (e.g., “looking at” imagined mathematical diagrams). Although, as I will show in the next chapter, phenomenological investigation does involve observation of the phaneron, Peirce’s conception of the phaneron is not limited to what is open to assured observation.

The third worry is that there seem to be parts of cognition that are not entirely and throughout open to assured observation. Again, if I am looking at an apple, the side of the apple that faces away from me is nevertheless in some sense before my mind. I have a sense that if I were to walk around the apple, then I would see its backside. I also realize that if the apple had no backside, then it would fall down. Accordingly, the backside of the apple is in some sense before my mind. It is not, however, throughout its entirety open to assured observation.

Because of these problems, Peirce would return to his 1903 characterization of the phaneron as whatever is before the mind in any way. In his most well-known (if only because it is the first in the *Collected Papers*) statement of what the phaneron is, he writes, “by the *phaneron* I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. If you ask present *when*, and to *whose* mind, I reply that I leave these questions unanswered, never having entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds” (CP 1.284, 1905). He reiterates the characterization twice more in 1905: “I use the word *phaneron* to mean all that is present to the mind in any sense or in any way whatsoever, regardless of whether it be fact or figment” (CP 8.213); and “[b]y the Phaneron (a Proper noun) I mean the single entirety, or total, or whole, of that which the reader has in mind in any sense. This is vague, and is meant to be so; but the clause ‘in any sense’ renders it less vague, since it thereby includes symbolic and habitual cognition. One has in mind all that he can think, or think of, and all tones of mental state” (R 338, 1905). Peirce excludes the qualification “at any time” from these characterizations, but that is only because he now thinks that “in any way” includes memory, habits, and anticipations. He makes this clear in yet a fourth statement from 1905 in which he characterizes the phaneron: “I propose to use the word *Phaneron* as a proper name to denote the total content of any one consciousness (for one is substantially any other), the sum of all we have in mind in any way whatever, regardless of its cognitive value. This is pretty vague: I intentionally leave it so. I will only point out that I do *not* limit the reference to an instantaneous state of consciousness; for the clause ‘in any way whatever’ takes in memory and all habitual cognition” (EP 2:362, 1905). Two points about these last four characterizations deserve mention. First, what is especially novel about all of these four characterizations of the phaneron from 1905 is Peirce’s insistence that the phaneron is the collective total of consciousness and not merely the elements or constituents that come before consciousness. Peirce had not insisted on this in 1903 as he does here, though I have shown that in 1904 Peirce had rejected James’s use of “pure experience” because he wishes to speak of only one phenomenon. In 1905, we see this come to the fore: The phaneron is “the collective total,” “all that is present,” the “single entirety, or total, or whole,” the “the total content” of consciousness.

Second, Peirce indicates that the phaneron is the collective total of some consciousness but maintains it is irrelevant whose consciousness. He states that he has never doubted that the features of his mind are the same as anyone else’s, the first strategy for addressing the second concern discussed above. In the quotation from manuscript R 338, he makes the phaneron the collective total of the reader’s mind. He also states that the content of any one consciousness is substantially the same as any other. As noted, Peirce would clearly be mistaken about this if he were claiming that the beliefs of any given person or the perceptions of any given person are the same as anyone else’s. His point is rather than the classes of

elements that make up consciousness are the same, or, more precisely, that he has no reason to suspect otherwise.

p. 102 Peirce realizes that each of these features poses its own challenge. The first problem is that if the phaneron is the collective total of consciousness, he now needs terminology for the parts of the phaneron, the fourth concern discussed earlier. As I type this, for example, I see my computer, a bookcase, and my door. I also hear a bell chiming outside. I am thinking about the next sentence I will type, and so on. These are all parts of the collective total of my consciousness, and in phenomenological investigations we will need to analyze not merely the totality of what is before the mind but the parts that make up that totality. Accordingly, in 1905, he writes of the elements of the phaneron, which may be either decomposable or indecomposable (see CP 1.294). This terminology, though, is somewhat redundant given the analogy Peirce intends to draw to chemical elements, for all chemical elements are indecomposable. The second problem is that by restricting phenomenology to the study of what is before some given mind, Peirce will have to generalize from one's own consciousness to everyone's. But this is problematic: What guarantees that the subjective features of one's own consciousness are objective features of anyone's consciousness? This is the second concern mentioned earlier.

With respect to both of these problems, in 1906, he states: "Let us call the collective whole all that could ever be present to the mind in any way or in any sense, the *Phaneron*. Then the substance of every thought (and of much beside Thought proper) will be a Constituent [*sic*] of the *Phaneron*" (NEM 4:320, 1906). Here, with respect to the first problem just mentioned (that of developing a terminology to refer both to the collective totality of what is before the mind and to its parts—the fourth concern), he continues to conceive of the phaneron as the collective totality and then notes that that total has constituents. Peirce's recourse to what could ever be present to the mind helps to resolve the second problem—that of objectivity—just mentioned: Phenomenology will study the possibilities of consciousness by generalizing from what is present to the mind, whether one's own or anyone else's. Moreover, "[t]here can be no psychological difficulty in determining whether anything belongs to the phaneron or not; for whatever seems to be before the mind *ipso facto* is so" (CP 1.288, 1906).⁴

Backpedaling on his commitment to regard the phaneron as the collective total of a consciousness, in 1908, Peirce would also speak of the phaneron in the plural:

If you will kindly join me in creating for your and my service the word *Phaneron* (plural, *Phanera*) to denote any object that any person is *Immediately* aware of, where I take object in the most general sense to denote anything that can receive a name, and meaning by "Immediately" in this connexion that he does not infer or suspect it because of his being aware of something else, but just is aware of it, without any "because" at all, then the list I just gave [a list of kinds of "experiences"] was of as many general types of *phanera* as occurred to me. But it will be important for the purpose of our boy [who is trying to become a better thinker] that he should in thought collect those types of *Phanera* into a small number of broad classes. (R 611:22–23, 1908)

p. 103 This relates to the fourth concern mentioned earlier: Peirce needs a way to speak of the constituents of the phaneron. It might be more philosophically economical to merely speak of the immediate objects of consciousness as *phanera* rather than the collective total as the phaneron and also of its constituents. Possibly, Peirce's modification of his conception of the phaneron in 1908 is motivated by a consideration of sets. For if the phaneron is a collection or set, we might wonder whether the phaneron is a member of this set, too. After all, the phaneron itself is something that can come before the mind, and so it would seem to follow that the phaneron must be a member of itself. Hence, instead of treating the phaneron as the collective total, we may simply reserve the term "phaneron" for the constituents, for the collective total is itself a constituent of the phaneron. A comment from Peirce in December 1905 suggests this very point: "we should have no idea of a *Phaneron* [if it were to consist entirely of elements altogether uncombined

mentally] (since this, if we have the idea, is an idea combining all the rest), which is as much to say that there would be no Phaneron, its *esse* being *percipi* if any is so” (EP 2:363–364, and see also Stearns 1952, 198). That is, the phaneron’s very being depends upon us thinking of it, in which case it must be a member of the collective total of all that is before the mind.

Whatever the case may be, Peirce abandons this strategy in 1909. Instead, he introduces the term “prebit” to denote direct objects of consciousness while retaining “phaneroscopy” as the name for his science, indicating he means to keep “phaneron” to refer to the totality of those direct objects of consciousness. He writes, “it seems to my own self-observation that Feelings, Volitions, and Thoughts are Prebits, that there are in truth in those three Prebits three utterly different Phaneroscopic elements that appear as so many kinds of Awareness, and no more, that are severally contained in those three kinds of Prebits mentioned” (Ketner 1998, 330).

Nevertheless, this raises the question of whether Peirce had doubts about the term phaneron and whether he might not have eventually abandoned “phaneroscopy” for “prebitoscopy” or some such neologism. For example, André De Tienne has noted to me in a personal communication that

“Prebit” comes from praebitum <*praebere*> in Latin, which is a contraction of praehabere (and of course habere gives habitum, whence “habit”). Praebere means to give, grant, furnish, supply; to occasion, exhibit. And thus the praebitum or prebit is something like the “datum,” a term Peirce did not want to use because it was already too loaded with undesired meanings. . . . He thought “prebit” was superior to “phaneron” because he came to realize that there were certain elements of experience that could not be said to be manifest in any legitimate way (such as certain mathematical entities) even though they were part and parcel of what experience supplied. (April 14, 2010)

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This account, though, raises the question of why Peirce continued to retain the word phaneroscopy in the quotation from 1909 when he was so clearly happy to abandon his earlier terminology. In addition, it is not clear that a word meaning to exhibit or to give (prebit) is any better than to manifest (phaneron), especially when it is not odd to claim that some mathematical truths are made evident or manifest by way of a proof. Furthermore, I showed previously that as early as 1905 Peirce had shied away from conceiving of the phaneron as what is open to assured observation and yet retained the term phaneron.

My view on the matter is the one just indicated: Peirce introduces “prebit” to speak of the constituents of the phaneron so that he can retain “phaneron” to refer to the totality of those constituents. Peirce is not dissatisfied with “phaneron” as a term for the collective total of whatsoever may come before the mind howsoever, but he recognizes the need to introduce another technical term for the members that make up the collection of all that may come before the mind in any way whatsoever. Moreover, I think the passage in which Peirce introduces the term prebit can be read in a way that bears this interpretation out. He writes: “By Phaneroscopy I mean the study of whatever consciousness puts into one’s Immediate and Complete possession, or in other words, the study of whatever one becomes directly aware of in itself. For such Direct objects of Consciousness I venture to coin the term ‘Prebits.’ . . . By a ‘Prebit’ [I mean] a *single* Object of immediate consciousness, though usually indefinitely denoted” (Ketner 1998, 328, emphasis added). He can retain “phaneron” for the totality of “whatever” may come before the mind while employing “prebit” to refer to those parts that make up the phaneron, the single “objects”—where “object” is taken in the sense of anything that comes before the mind (see SS 69)—of which we are in possession.

We might yet wonder why Peirce coins this peculiar term prebit. The etymology that De Tienne provides is correct, but there is another sense of “habit” that I think Peirce is drawing on. In some medieval thinkers, “habitus” refers to a disposition toward something, whether the possessor of the habit or to some other external object. Accordingly, the “pre-habit” is whatsoever is before the mind considered prior to it

directing or disposing us toward some external object. The prebit is that which is exhibited considered prior to what it exhibits. That is, the term prebit captures the idea that phaneroscopy is the study of whatsoever direct objects of consciousness are or may be before the mind quite regardless of whether those direct objects of consciousness dispose us toward any externally real thing or not.

Conclusion

p. 105 Peirce's changing characterizations of the phaneron reveal his evolving concerns over how to conceive of phaneroscopy—or, as I have and will continue to call it, phenomenology—and its object of study, the phaneron. To summarize, on Peirce's mature view: ↴

- (1) Phenomenology is primarily but not exclusively an observational science.
- (2) Phenomenology is the study of the phaneron.
- (3) We study the phaneron by studying its instantiations, namely, our own minds, and generalizing from that study.
- (4) The phaneron is the collective totality of what could come before any mind in any way whatsoever. It is whatsoever is thinkable howsoever—even if what we are thinking of is impossible, as a square circle is—regardless of time and regardless of whether it is seen, imagined, believed, concluded, suspected, etc.
- (5) Since the phaneron is a collection, it has parts, which we may term prebits.
- (6) Some of those parts will be analyzable or decomposable into more basic parts.
 - (6) In phaneroscopy, we will primarily aim to isolate the indecomposable parts or elements of the phaneron and to determine the most basic classes of elements that make up the phaneron, though this is not the sole aim.

Notes

1. Peirce follows his father in defining mathematics as the science “which draws necessary conclusions” (CP 4.229, 1902) and as the science that studies “what is true of hypothetical states of things” (CP 4.233, 1902). See also Hull (2017) for a comparison of Charles's and his father's views on mathematics and metaphysics.
2. I should note that Peirce had only a passing knowledge of Husserl's work and his comments on it are never positive. As Spiegelberg (1956) notes, Peirce's and Husserl's contemporaneous recognition of a distinct science of phenomenology is likely coincidental rather than a consequence of interaction.
3. See Short (2007, 67), who claims that we simply cannot say whether using the plural form phanerons is permissible, and De Tienne (1993), who emphasizes the unity and continuity of the phaneron. Peirce clearly uses “phaneron” both in the singular to refer to the collective total of consciousness and in the plural; I explain these changes by a terminological need.
4. The editors of the *Collected Papers* date this passage to c. 1908, but Robin dates it to 1906. Robin's date is correct.