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mechanics, astronomy, and weights and measures. Mathematics was the subject to which Peirce contributed the most definitions (about 4900 by his own reckoning), logical terms coming into second place (2900 terms defined or critically examined). But Peirce contributed to many more fields than cited on the front page: he provided nearly all definitions related to universities, and composed hundreds of definitions related to color, constellations, instruments, numbers, philosophy, mathematical physics, chronology, psychology, astrology, geodesy, plus thousands of other definitions for general terms (MS 1163: 2). Peirce also supplied hundreds of quotations to serve as examples, and provided cuts for 200 illustrations (mostly curves, constellations, and instruments).

Houser has pointed out that the impact of Peirce's massive dictionary work on the evolution of his thought "was surely very significant, though it has yet to be seriously examined" (W4: lvi). Quantitatively speaking, Peirce contributed one of the largest numbers of definitions ever provided by a philosopher to an encyclopedic dictionary. From the time of his hiring, he seems to have worked steadily for nine years with few significant distractions, until 1891, when the last (24th) fascicle of the C.D. appeared (the fascicles were then bound into six volumes). It is unfortunately impossible to reconstruct even an approximate chronology of Peirce's work throughout those ten years. It has generally been assumed that Peirce composed his definitions in alphabetical order, from A to Z, working his way through the volumes of the *Imperial Dictionary*. But the surviving material is terribly incomplete. Although the extant documents mostly contain fragmentary drafts of a scattering of definitions running through the alphabet, it is apparent that Peirce also worked by topics, focussing at one time on mathematical definitions alone, and at another time on colors, on constellations, or on philosophical terms. B.E. Smith would also send Peirce definitions composed by other contributors for his input. Few of the surviving documents bear dates, and not many more can be dated with any precision by deduction from clues found in the correspondence or other manuscripts. What leaves no doubt, however, is that

Peirce's extensive and continual research had a profound impact on the general direction of his thought.

Characteristically, Peirce did not hesitate to write several drafts of his definitions, especially when they bore on significant terms. Part of the difficulty was of course to classify the many shades of meaning for any given term, and to subcategorize them accordingly so as to allow the reader to distinguish them perspicuously. As he put it, "the task of classifying all the words of language, or what's the same thing, all the ideas that seek expression, is the most stupendous of logical tasks. Anybody but the most accomplished logician must break down in it utterly; and even for the strongest man it is the severest possible tax on the logical equipment and faculty" (CSP to B.E. Smith, L80: 39–40, summer 1897).

For Peirce a good definition must do two things: it has to state the signification of the definiendum (what is essential to its conception), and it has to give an explanation of how a given kind is distinguished from all other kinds. In September 1908 Peirce jotted down the following remark in his Logic Notebook: "A dictionary definition will be (or at any rate contains) a definition proper in the case of a scientific or other exact conception; but an ordinary word needs an explanation, not a definition which almost itself needs to be expounded. . . . [A] definition proper offers as a substitute for a word whose difficulty consists in its prescissive abstractness, a composite of words more abstract still, while an "explanation" familiarizes the mind with the use of the word by bringing together in the briefest terms possible the subclasses of occasions in which it is used and giving an interpretation of it in each of them" (MS 339: 574, 576). Peirce's C.D. definition of the verb "to explain" similarly insists that the aim is to make something evident to the minds of others by analysis, description, interpretation, elucidation, and exemplification. Hence the great importance given to the selection of many quotations that show precisely the different classes of use of a definiendum—a "much superior method" (MS 339: 576) for which Peirce especially praised the *Oxford Dictionary*. Hunting for and selecting the most relevant quotations was thus one of the many activities Peirce devoted himself to (the Century editors also sent him hundreds of quotations compiled by their employees and pasted on paper slips).

Criticizing definitions and improving them was a major component of Peirce's methodological arsenal. Having spent years of his life composing definitions for the C.D., he spent years studying the dictionary almost daily. He was occasionally called upon to review other dictionaries (e.g., the Funk & Wagnalls *Standard Dictionary* in the *Nation* of 8 March 1894) or works about dictionaries (e.g., the review of R.O. Williams's *Our Dictionaries*, in the

Nation, 30 October 1890). On such occasions Peirce would invariably subject the dictionaries to statistical comparisons, notably because "one of the first questions to be asked concerning a dictionary is whether it is well proportioned in the sense of doing equal justice to different parts of the alphabet" (*Contributions to The Nation*, part 2, p. 40, 8 March 1894). He thought for instance that the space occupied by the As in the *Century* was disproportionately large. He had great respect for *Murray's Dictionary* (the future OED), but no single work gained his complete approval. He was not impressed with the increasing number of words dictionaries claimed to define: "the strenuous effort of the good lexicographer is to keep down his vocabulary. In an ordinary dictionary of reference, 25,000 words comprise all that anybody ever looks out. The rest is obstructive rubbish. Completeness is not to be thought of in any dictionary" (ibid.).

The correspondence between Peirce and the Century editors must have been vast, but unfortunately very little remains (the financial and editorial records of the Century Company, which ceased to exist in 1933 when it merged with Appleton, have apparently not been preserved), and the letters we do have mostly date from after 1891, after the first publication of the C.D. We may suppose, however, that the bulk of the correspondence consisted of notes reminding Peirce of deadlines for certain sets of definitions or for sending proofsheets back, notes asking for definition clarification, special requests (sometimes from other contributors), criticisms from Peirce regarding how entries (his or others') were being edited, etc. Peirce seems to have had occasional difficulties in getting entries as he intended them into the final publication. One particular instance involved his definition of the word "university," phrased as follows: "An association of men for the purpose of study, which confers degrees which are acknowledged as valid throughout Christendom, is endowed, and is privileged by the state in order that the people may receive intellectual guidance, and that the theoretical problems which present themselves in the development of civilization may be resolved." Century editors suggested a revision stressing that a university had been and continued to be an institution for instruction. Peirce replied that this view was badly mistaken, and that until Americans understood that a university had nothing

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"FOR THE COMMUNITY OF INQUIRERS"

EDITOR'S NOTE

I'm glad the PPNL is out to all of you.

If you encounter information that you believe would be of interest to others in the Peirce community, please send it on either to me, to Nathan Houser or just to the PEP offices at IUPUI. Also please be sure to send a copy of your books relating to Peirce for the PEP collection. —RWM