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Chapter 11
Toward a Psychology of Gesture

Abstract: In this chapter, I argue that a broader understanding of pragmatism can contribute to a psychologically informed development of Giovanni Maddalena's philosophy of gesture. Many contemporary studies, ranging from the philosophy of mind to the social sciences, testify to the centrality of the psychological perspective in the debates surrounding gesture. My proposal is to supplement Maddalena's theory with a Jamesian-inspired philosophical psychology of gesture. By integrating James' idea of psychological concreteness with Maddalena's notion of gesture and Peirce's theory of perception, I posit that a pragmatist psychology of gesture can improve the recognition of personal identity. This approach has potential applications not only in the philosophical sciences but also in psychology and social sciences.

Keywords: philosophy of gesture, pragmatism, concreteness, relational psychology, perception

1 Introduction

In recent decades, the traditional view of identities as fixed and unchanging has been challenged in scientific and cultural contexts. The metaphor of *solidity* to talk about identity turned into *fluidity* (Bauman 2000) as an opposition, carrying on another set of theoretical and socio-political problems whose effects are now being experienced. In the fragmentation of the public sphere, how we recognize evolving identities is a core theme for philosophy, psychology, and social sciences. Although constructing a social ontology is not the primary goal of social sciences, an epistemological and ontological understanding of how individual and collective subjects are recognized through time and change is needed to elaborate more convenient methodological instruments and approaches to analyzing social phenomena.

For at least three reasons, I claim that adopting a pragmatist epistemology in philosophical psychology could be a viable alternative to other epistemologies dominating the scientific panorama—namely, phenomenology, constructivism,

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new forms of positivism, and different dichotomous approaches to knowledge and reality.[1]

1) Firstly, pragmatism shows deep compatibility with dynamic views of experience, drawing on an original reception of evolutionary continuity (in both epistemological and ontological aspects). For pragmatists, there is no change without novelty and no permanence (hence, identity) without continuity.

2) Secondly, pragmatism developed an integrated vision of humans as natural and cultural/enlanguaged beings. On the view shared by all classical pragmatists, normative and contingent aspects of reality are deeply intertwined (cf. Calcaterra 2019 and Dreon 2022).

3) Finally, pragmatism supports a specific synthetic approach to psychological issues by adopting internal and external criteria to evaluate experience, thus avoiding radical cognitivist and behaviorist outcomes.

This chapter paves the way for the development of a pragmatist philosophical psychology built in the philosophy of gesture and its connections with relational approaches to psychology and social sciences. I suggest that gestures enable us to fruitfully put relational conceptions of sociality developed in contemporary social sciences (Dépelteau 2018; Donati 2021; and Bellini 2024) in dialogue with the philosophical idea of changing identity (Maddalena 2015 and 2021), thus contributing to a more concrete and integral understanding of personal identity. My proposal is to supplement Giovanni Maddalena's theory of gesture, which relies mainly on Peircean epistemology, with a Jamesian-inspired philosophical psychology of gesture. By integrating James' idea of psychological concreteness with Maddalena's notion of gesture and Peirce's theory of perception, I posit that a pragmatist psychology of gesture can improve the recognition of personal identity. To this purpose, I will first adopt Maddalena's notion of gesture to recognize changing identities. Secondly, by considering some critical aspects of Peirce's theory of perception, I will focus on specific claims made by James that I wish to recover as complementary features of a pragmatist philosophical psychology of "gesture," specifically concerning the recognition of identities. In particular, for my purposes, it is significant that James insisted that 1) philosophical and psychological knowledge is rooted in direct perception; and 2) the embodied understanding of feelings is sensationally and relationally fringed.

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1 This step is crucial for social psychology and its dialogue with other social sciences.

2 Philosophy of Gesture: A Phenomenological and Semiotic Analysis

Maddalena's hypothesis of the "gesture" as a synthetic tool for acquiring knowledge comes to the fore as a contemporary reinterpretation of the notion of "synthesis" that he derives from Peirce's logical-mathematical conception of the continuum. In gestures, Maddalena identifies the completely synthetic instrument to acquire knowledge longed for by all classical pragmatists. Gestures are tools for synthetic reasoning, which is the way we understand something new, construct our knowledge and recognize identity.

> The gesture is any performed act with a beginning and an end that carries meaning (from *gero* = I bear, I carry on). Meaning will be pragmatically understood as the cluster of conceivable effects of an experience. (Maddalena 2015, 69–70)

Complete and incomplete gestures show different levels of syntheticity according to the semiotic and phenomenological elements they blend. Respectively, these are generality (symbolicity), actuality (indexicality), iconicity (possibilities of forms and feelings); firstness (feeling), secondness (reaction), and thirdness (generality). Complete gestures are the original forms of reasoning from which all other reasonings (language included) derive (Maddalena 2015, 171). Liturgies, rites, performances, and experiments are complete gestures. They are "the expression of meaning embodied in one person at a singular moment, and [they tend] to become [habits] for the person and eventually for the generalized person, the people or the tradition" (72).

Maddalena underlines that complete gestures possess: 1) a "threefold relationship" in which two subjects (objects) are related according to a general law, to which they teleologically tend to embody a possible idea in a determinate way (2015, 72–73). 2) The embodiment enhances the general law and the path of determination that proposes, fosters, or reinforces a habit of action. 3) This relationship singles out the objects (by indices) according to an interpretative path that helps in determining and transforming some "form" connected to the two objects (icons). 4) And that the determination reinforces or proposes the interpretation or meaning.

In this framework, recognizing personal identity is part of the general problem of recognizing diachronic identity, which is the starting point of Maddalena's philosophy of gestures. We relationally recognize personal (diachronic) identity—the new in the same or the novelty in a continuity—through complete gestures (Maddalena 2015, 103). We cannot remember all of our personal history; we only remember some "actions (as relationships, encounters) as significant to establishing the

continuity of our identity [. . .] complete gestures that determined our identity" (Maddalena 2015, 109). Meaningful gestures have driving energy related to their semiotic nature. What is most relevant for personal identity, accordingly, is teleology: embodied meanings tend (phenomenologically and semiotically) to a telos. Actually, "The telos is the embodied meaning itself" (Maddalena 2015, 73), where *telos* means the tendency to generalization (from vagueness to meaningful generality), that is, the tendency to habit taking that the structure of (complete) gestures that form our identities possesses. In a nutshell, teleology relies on the semiotic nature of the embodied signs that we are. Personal identities can be seen as embodied signs, and in this perspective, gestures possess the potential for generalization to be interpreted by others contributing to a new understanding of ourselves through different embodiment and performance. In this way, personal identity is the result of the teleological drive of complete gestures (Maddalena 2015, 74) and a matter of continuity through time, novelty, unique embodiment, and significant relations.

3 Perception between Peirce's Logic and James' Psychology

Maddalena's view of personal identity relies on Peirce's phenomenology and semiotics. Accordingly, his understanding of the self as relational depends on the relational nature of the embodied signs that we are.[2] In line with Peirce's view, Maddalena prioritizes a logical and metaphysical analysis of identity, admitting that while the psychological analysis is important, he postpones it for further investigation through his theory of gesture.

In order to elaborate a psychological analysis of personal identity informed by gesture theory, it is first necessary to highlight the risks and propose possible solutions to a perspective that looks at subjectivity primarily from the point of view of generalizable aspects. In other words, it is necessary to identify the limits of a logic that tends to foreground generality and communicability in all individual expressions. Perception is a privileged domain for making this point, as it is the first level of the relationship between the individual and the world. It is not surprising that developing a psychology of gestures related to the recognition of personal identity involves analyzing perception: the ground on which the game between a logical and a psychological declension of the issue could ever be

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2 Peirce famously considered the self a symbol. For Peirce, "[t]he subject in its innermost being is itself a form of semiosis" (Colapietro 1989, 37).

played. The study of perception shows the distance that exists between a logical-inferential interpretation of the relationship with reality, which tends to always bring the actual and relational aspects of perception to a level of communicability, and a reading of perception that emphasizes the central role of sensibility in its specific shaping of subjective experiences instead. The latter, although not (or not yet) communicable, produce decisive effects on the recognition of personal identity. From a psychological perspective, paying less attention to the fringes of feeling does not allow for a complete understanding of the singular character of the causal relations that contribute to determining personal identities.[3]

Maddalena has made progress in overcoming the limitations of logical-inferential analysis of perception. He places more emphasis than Peirce on the embodied aspects of synthetic reasoning by exploring the potential of its "gestural" nature. However, his investigation of the qualitative contribution of the perceptual-sensational dimension to reasoning is still primarily explained through logical and mathematical means.

Although Peirce's interest in experimental psychology is well known today (Cadwallader 1974; Fisch 1987; and Ambrosio 2016), his assessment of psychology and its relationship with epistemology remains debated. Peirce insisted that logic should not rely upon psychology, but rather the reverse, arguing that psychology could not disregard the requirements of logic and ultimately required a metaphysics (Peirce, MS 1099, and Girel 2003, 174).[4] His has been interpreted as a claim for disentangling the logical and the psychological (*as in* Bellucci 2015) or as a general warning on the limited role that psychology could have in logic and a specific objection against introspective psychology (Wilson 2024). Wilson underlines that Peirce draws on socio-psychological facts, as in his late 1870s essays, namely, "behavioral habits knowable by common experience" (Wilson 2024)[5] and intentionally not on introspective analysis. For Peirce, introspective psychology posed epistemological problems related to the status and role of perception for knowledge.

An in-depth analysis of Peirce's theory of perception goes far beyond the scope of this work.[6] My aim in touching upon perception is to get a sense of the roots of the disagreement between Peirce and James' epistemologies, which is, I claim, behind Maddalena's postponement of psychological analysis. This step is

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3 Probably this is a point at which Peirce and James' views can integrate with one another most fruitfully.

4 Cristalli argues that in the Telepathy manuscript, we can find Peirce's definitive idea in favor of a metaphysical investigation of perception (cf. Cristalli 2020, 206).

5 For introspective psychology, Peirce meant that "which focuses on *feelings* rather than on the mental phenomena that he [Peirce] tends to focus on—namely habits" (Wilson 2024).

6 See Wilson 2024 and Legg 2017.

necessary to further develop his philosophy of gesture from a psychological perspective.

The "percept" to which James refers in his psychological and philosophical works (James 1979) is the natural bone of contention. Peirce's and James' views channel diverging concerns on the subject that can be summarized as "logical-metaphysical" and "sensational-physiological," respectively. According to Peirce, what people generally think to be immediate perceptions result from unconscious reasoning. Peirce investigates the logic of perception and accordingly classes it as: "anything [. . .] wherein a positive qualitative content is forced upon one's acknowledgment without any reason or pretension to reason" (CP 7.623). More specifically, he distinguishes the "percept," "perceptual judgment," and the "percipuum," by which Peirce means the whole process of perception keeping together the two previous elements (CP 7.629). Peirce describes the percept as something "absolutely dumb" (CP 7.622) forced upon us, which phenomenologically is composed of elements of firstness (qualities) and secondness (vividness). The perceptual judgment, which is in relation to the percept as an index, neither differs from the "condition of forcefulness nor that of irrationality" of the percept safe for the fact that it "professes to represent the percept" (CP 7.628). As Cristalli remarks: "The perceptual judgment testifies about the percept and gives it a name; it thus introduces in perception an element of mediation [. . .] it goes beyond the pure singularity of the percept" (2020, 194). Peirce's strategy seems to shift the focus from the dumb percept to the whole perceptual process and foreground the reflexive element introduced by the perceptual judgment over the percept. Moreover, in line with his inferential view, Peirce finds that "the percept, in spite of its appearance as a dumb presence, is in fact the result of an unconscious process" (Cristalli 2020, 199).[7]

While Peirce's theory of perception follows the inferential hypothesis of Wundt (Cristalli 2022), James' opinions on perception are derived from the sensationalist hypothesis of Ewald Hering (Madelrieux 2008). James was not against understanding perception as a form of reasoning, as he knew its meaning depends on a narrower or broader definition of reasoning. He strongly resisted associating reasoning with unconscious activities because he did not want the explanation of lower physical activities and logical operations to collapse into one another.[8] The concept of "unconscious inferences," is either *a useless metaphor, or a positive*

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7 "[T]he perfection of the percept's surdity consists in its not so much as professing anything" (CP 7.628).
8 Klein (2020) argues that James' rejection of unconscious mentality results from his objection to psychological elementarism: "So what I am calling James's Master Objection to elementarism goes like this. Elementarism presupposes the existence of an unconscious mentality. If there is unconscious mentality then mental states can violate the logic of identity. But mental states so-

misleading confusion" (James 1981, 756). For James, perception and reasoning are two sides of the same coin, which is the psychological process of "the association of ideas" that in cerebral physiology corresponds to "the law of habit" (James 1981, 756; cf. Bella 2019).

For his part, Peirce believed James misunderstood the definition of unconscious inference since he thought about an argument with an utterly unconscious premise or term. Instead, the meaning for Peirce is nuanced and indeed behavioral: general beliefs exist in the form of *habits,* represented by the association "If A, then B." That is why, upon a particular suggestion, we behave in a certain way without knowing why. In this view, perceptual judgments would be non-controlled operations of the mind close to logical inferences (Girel 2021). Perception misses two fundamental features of logical inferences: it is not generalizable to all (or most) analogous cases, and accepting its conclusion is not the result of a conscious inference (CP 8.67). These shortcomings justify why Peirce considers perceptual judgment not precisely as a logical judgment.

James is not interested in analyzing perception from a specific logical perspective. Instead, he appeals to an "uncritical" approach to immediate experience which was supposed to free psychology from the burden of metaphysical implications.[9] In an 1885 essay, he offers elements for comparison with Peirce's analysis. Here he does not address the specific content of perception but rather investigates the function of a "feeling of q" to notice its cognitive value. In this respect, one of the main upshots of the paper is the acknowledgment that 1) "A feeling feels as a gun shoots"[10] and 2) the assessment of the cognitive value of feeling on the practical level, for "all feeling results in action" (James 1975, 23).

Not unlike Peirce's analysis of the percept as "pure unreasonableness" presence (CP 7.628), James considers the feeling or sensation "speechlessness" (James 1975, 13). However, he harshly criticizes any philosophical attempt to make this notion meaningless by way of an "everlasting slip, slip, slip, of direct acquaintance into knowledge-about until at last nothing is left about which the knowledge can be supposed to obtain" and "all 'significance' depart[s] from the situation" (James 1975, 13). In this respect, both Peirce and James believe percepts are the compelling and

construed would be queer sorts of things that could not possibly be subject to scientific study. Thus, elementarism undermines the goal of establishing a genuine science that takes the mental state as its proper object, a goal elementarists themselves claimed to pursue" (304).

9 The disconnection of common-sense methodological assumptions from metaphysics was discussed between Peirce and James (see Girel 2003 and Bella 2019).

10 "A feeling feels as a gun shoots. If there be nothing to be felt or hit, they discharge themselves *ins blaue hinein.* If, however, something starts up opposite them, they no longer simply shoot or feel, they hit and know" (James 1975, 20).

unaccountable starting point of knowledge, and neither considers perception an "incorrigible" ground for it (cf. Putnam 2017, 35).[11] Perception is a complex and through and through fallible process that Peirce insists on investigating on a logical level, while James first and foremost explores in physiological terms and defends the sensational elements of perception as the real backbone of any gnoseological discourse.

Over the years, however, more than remaining loyal to the invocated separation between psychology and metaphysics, which proved unbearable on practical grounds, James wishes to renovate the categories coined by traditional empiricist philosophy into a pragmatical jargon informed by psychological knowledge, thus getting to the double goal of de-transcendentalizing the philosophical language concerning psychology and encourage philosophy and psychology's mutual information. In this view, his 1885 essay foresees James' debated theory of truth and his emphasis on the importance of the "transitive" parts of thought.[12] In this paper, the author tries to establish that the cognitive value of feeling is related to the function it performs, which means the behavioral consequences it produces in helping our adaptation to reality. This entails that one can only make hypothetical judgments about others' beliefs based on the effects they produce. For James, the feeling's function of cognition results in its practical self-transcendency: for two persons meaning the same world should result in "pointing to" the same world. The fact that another human being acts as I would act if I had a (feeling of a) headache, or that they are affected by my headache as if they had had the same feeling, is the sign by which I can think that we (or our feelings) are meaning the same world. In James' view, practical effects are the self-transcendence of feeling, that is to say, another human being knows my world in as much as they affect my world as I do much of it; and "before I can be sure you mean it as I do, you must affect it just as I should if I were in your place. Then I, your critic, will gladly believe that we are thinking, not only of the same reality, but that we are thinking it alike, and thinking of much of its extent" (James 1975, 23–24).[13]

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11 Like the Pragmatism/Pragmaticism debate, in connection with James' "radical empiricism" (EP2, 334), Peirce revindicated himself as a "radical empiricist": "I myself happen, in common with a small but select circle, to be a pragmatist, or "radical empiricist,"†7 and as such, do not believe in anything that I do not (as I think) perceive: and I am far from believing in the whole of that" (CP 7.617; see also Wilson 2016, 31).

12 For the terminological discussion on the "transitive" parts of thought between Peirce and James, see Bella (2019, 80 ff.).

13 Despite James considering it a "chapter in descriptive psychology—hardly anything more," the text was later republished in *The Meaning of Truth* (1975 [1909]), thus testifying to its importance for James' mature epistemology, as well as his attitude to move between psychology and philosophy on the epistemological level of analysis.

Against this backdrop, I can hint at divergencies between James' and Peirce's views that are relevant to the goal of developing a pragmatist psychology built in the philosophy of gesture. Peirce and James respectively foreground mediate or immediate processes of knowledge. On the one side, James distinguishes two kinds of knowledge—the knowledge by *acquaintance* and the knowledge *about*— to preserve the perceptual order as the natural origins and necessary conclusion of any conceptual chain. On the other, Peirce's inferential theory of perception excludes the possibility of immediate knowledge, at the same time remaining ambiguous about the compulsory force that percepts (and perceptual judgments) have on our consciousness.

Regarding perception, James' and Peirce's viewpoints are not necessarily in opposition to one another. They focus on different aspects of perceptual knowledge, which are related to their different ontological perspectives. Peirce's main concern lies in exploring the modal category of possibility, while James is more focused on actuality.[14] Although both Peirce and James believe that the original matrix of knowledge lies in perception, they have different approaches to this cognitive process. While Peirce stresses the limits perception poses to the freedom of interpretation, James emphasizes the sensational richness that is given in perception. According to James, percepts provide us with a fuller understanding of reality, while concepts are "forever inadequate to the fullness of the reality to be known" (James 1979, 45) but serve as useful tools for practical purposes.

4 Developing a Relational Psychology of Gesture

As a psychological development of the philosophy of gesture, I should consider what James' sensationalist view of perception adds to the picture. James identifies an element of concreteness in how each person *feels* the ordinary reality largely shared by human beings. The sensational element of feeling conveys the importance of paying attention to psychological concreteness, which means the concrete embodiment coloring our feeling and relations, not only as dragged by the symbolic level, that is, by the many possible interpretations of feeling. In James'

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14 A hint to this interpretation can be detected in Peirce's analysis of the "two kinds of definiteness" of the percept: "The percept, however, exhibits itself in full. These two kinds of definiteness, first, that the percept offers no range of freedom to anybody who may undertake to represent it, and secondly, that it reserves no freedom to itself to be one way or another way, taken together, constitute that utter absence of "range" which is called the singularity, or singleness, of the percept, the one making it individual and the other positive" (CP 7.626). Peirce also criticized James for his almost exclusive attention to the modality of *actuality* (CWJ).

description of the "stream of thought," the continuity felt by consciousness in its thinking activity is ultimately traced back to our biological existence, which more or less consciously we perceive as a constant presence that tinges all our experiences with "warmth and intimacy" (James 1981, 316). The problem of recognizing personal identity can be seen in the continuous rebound between stability and change. In passing through different mental states, we perceive continuity with our bodily self, which allows us to recognize those thoughts as ours. Personal thoughts are suffused with the particular warmth and intimacy with which we perceive our bodies. Feelings change, but a sense of the continuity of personal identity is recognizable at this level.

From the point of view of this "fluctuating material" (James 1981, 279), it is difficult to draw a definite line between what is ours and ourselves: these things provoke the same emotions (cf. James 1981, 279–280). Self-awareness produces a kind of "organic emotion" whereby we feel our thoughts and the actual direct perception of our bodily existence wrapped in a kind of "warmth" (James 1981, 316).

The sense of personal identity that corresponds to the feeling of continuity between thoughts suffused with warmth and intimacy is not a logical condition for James but a concrete perception. For this reason, even if the psychologist could show that the judgment of personal identity was wrong, this would not invalidate the existence of the very sense of personal identity:

> The sense of our own personal identity, then, is exactly like any one of our other perceptions of sameness among phenomena. It is a conclusion grounded either on the resemblance in a fundamental respect, or on the continuity before the mind, of the phenomena compared. (James 1981, 318)

The perceptual judgment from which we derive the sense of personal identity concerning different moments of our experience is not different from any other perceptual judgment about external phenomena. The feeling of "warmth" that pervades our different selves connects them in the same stream of thought without implying a substantial unity and, therefore, without excluding aspects of discontinuity, novelty, and change. This means that in the "flow" of subjective consciousness, judgments of partial similarity between feelings experienced as continuous constitute "the real and verifiable 'personal identity which we feel'" (James 1981, 319) and also that where similarity or continuity are no longer felt it is impossible to conclude a judgment of personal identity.

Getting back to the connection with Maddalena's paradigm, the recognition of an identity between two gestures that are part of a single relational experience can be seen in terms of the recognition of the relatively "substantive" aspects with respect to the "transitive" parts in the flow of personal experience.

It is worth noting that Peirce was convinced by the conceptual distinction between "substantial parts" and "transitive parts" elaborated by James in his *Principles*, considering it a good psychological description of the theoretical process of reasoning in the field of logic. For Peirce, the difficulty of grasping and converting a "transitive thought" into a "resting place" of the mind was, as Girel has well expressed, "exactly the difficulty of diagrammatic reasoning: to make the relations appear as relations" (Girel 2003, 188). In James' classical analysis, the practical purpose of the transitive parts of thought is stabilization, while the substantive parts are constitutively fringed or relationally connoted. The substantive and transitive parts are comparatively defined with one another, some are more transitive than others, but there is gradation and instability. Fringed thoughts depend on the bodily perception, the self is described as the "storm centre" (cf. James 1976, 86), which is our constitutive medium—illness and health, old age and youth (James 1981)—but also on biographical, familial, historical, geographical, cultural, and linguistic situationality as more or less consciously affecting the body.

To recognize oneself as the same person at different moments, James pays great attention to the sensational and relational dimension through which personal continuity develops. In Maddalena's hypothesis, personal identity finds expression in gestures as "embodied" signs that potentiate the significance. These gestures express a person's temperament and attitudes, the same nuances with which meanings are understood, and also become the constituents of the very memory of personal identity. Hence, even the figural identity between so-called complete gestures, which is not mere similarity, seems to describe a continuous and unified development related to the complex semiotics of these signs that makes it possible for them to be recognized as the completion of meaning *a posteriori* and anticipation of the future realization of another "embodied" gesture (Maddalena 2009, 77).

5 Concluding (or Opening) Remarks

Recognizing evolving identity occurs through gestures that are characterized by psychical concreteness. The appeal to the sensible concreteness of mental states fits well with James' idea that the original matrix of knowledge is perceptual and the fullness of reality is given in perception. Without attention to psychological analysis, many levels of relationship with others would not be understandable. In Peircean terms, this translates into the idea that iconic and indexical aspects guide perceptual judgment and condition it decisively. James' dogged intention to save "*dumb* or anonymous psychic states" (James 1981, 239) from suppression or

reduction to conventional mental states about predetermined objects confirms the importance of preserving the plurality of nuanced idiosyncrasies of feelings. The image of the "sounding board," used by James, clarifies his view: personal identity consists of a network of unique sensory reverberations. Understanding how one feels impressions and situations requires attention to the specific psycho-physiological and biographical constitution of persons, which includes their history of meaningful personal relationships and how these condition the way they reframe historical-socio-cultural sensibility.

From the categorical point of view, Peirce accused James of focusing mainly on secondness and thus on the mode of actuality—besides committing several other categorical confusions.[15] James only partially accepts the inferential idea of Peircean continuous sign reference. Even when he carries out a philosophical investigation of perception in later years, he distances himself from Peirce by emphasizing the significance of the mute and sensational element of psychological phenomena, however uninterpreted. From this point of view, preserving mere presence without seeking a level of symbolic communication expresses a desire to give citizenship to all unidentified sensations while waiting to develop a psychological vocabulary capable of considering them. Meanwhile, it is good to remain in the vague linguistic territory to preserve the perceptual richness of mental life.

Peirce and James meet at the end of the road with the idea of habit-taking, and that embodiment enriches the meaning of signs. However, Peirce needs James' attention to the depth and delicacy of the phenomenology of psychic life to say this. The specific way each person feels is something that psychological descriptions must consider, even when an interpretive explanation remains inaccessible to the person themselves.

This has to do with people's physiological-biographical and relational-affective history: every meaningful action shows a potential for interpretation that arises from and depends—especially in the actual dimension—on the quality of meaningful relationships. People we have become familiar with are usually good interpreters of our actions. This means bringing to the forefront the contingent aspect of the biographical moment and the emotional-physiological condition of the individuals involved in gestures. Accordingly, recognizing personal identity is a unitary cognitive-emotional relational process not reducible to a mere comparative conceptual analysis of its contents considered in an absolute (non-relational), timeless,

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15 Peirce detected four kinds of categorical confusions in James' *Principles*: between Peirce's first and second; second and third; third and first; and between different aspects of the same category and their hypostatization as different categories. (cf. Peirce 1891, R 1099).

and decontextualized way. From this perspective, the meaning of personal continuity is established as *a posteriori* within a continuity that is directional and, therefore, potentially implies an ultimate goal.

The contingency of lived situations is where novelty and the concrete possibility of driving complete gestures arise. Such gestures show potential for comprehension (generalization) by others best appreciated in a philosophy of gesture informed by Jamesian philosophical psychology. From an integrated perspective, how psychological difficulties can lead to misinterpretations or even preclude possible levels of understanding of situations can be better acknowledged. Psychological balance, or lack thereof, contributes to constructing meaning and directs the disambiguation of gestures. The way we try to disambiguate or flesh out subtle meanings occurs by privileging, in Maddalena's words, the iconic and indexical elements of gesture (tone of voice, conviction, etc.). Since psychological issues make most of the difference in these cases, many issues still need to be explored from this perspective to clarify the fact that at the phenomenological level, phenomena experience relations with themselves, with other phenomena (objects or subjects), and "with a relation that presides over any kind of generality" (Maddalena 2015, 71). Among these issues, we highlight the following: (1) the peculiar sensory/physiological aspects, which we have tried to rehabilitate through the Jamesian perspective on perception; (2) the role of significant others and meaningful relationships in recognition of personal identities—and how sensitively unique these relationships are; and (3) how sensory aspects are reshaped by meaningful relationships–the reciprocal feedback effect between concrete relationships and each person's sensibility. Relationships can develop into relational habits with significant others, and the psychological warp of these relationships significantly qualifies, or we would say with James, "colors" the gestures with a unique nuance. From this point of view, if relationships are the *sine qua non* of gesture completeness, psychologically significant relationships and their sensitive qualities can, in turn, contribute to the level of gesture completeness. Psychological relationships are the privileged locus where sensitive and relational qualities can be seen in action and recognized as influencing gestures. It suffices here to consider the therapeutic relationship: the psychologist does not judge the patient's universe of values. However, there must be common ground to allow a therapeutic relationship to start, and the relationship quality between patient and therapist inevitably influences the therapeutic process.[16]

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16 Consider the therapeutic relationship and epistemologies that seek to privilege a complex qualitative rather than quantitative assessment of the treatment outcomes (George Kelly). Generalizability of meanings is what common sense considers the standard of mental health.

In Maddalena's Peircean paradigm, personal diachronic identity is not entirely given in life because it is a "dynamic object," and as such, it is only partially given as an "immediate (conventional) object." However, it can be prefigured by considering what we have been and what we will be in the future, our future gestures. The tendency toward stabilization of personal identity does not preclude, within certain limits, the possibility of sudden changes in habits—i.e., think of conversions—insofar as it remains that the gestures made influence future possibilities for change, at least regarding the qualities of change.

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