the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper, small passions, restricted emotions, dramas of the reception-room, tragedies of an afternoon call, crises involving cups of tea. ("Zola as a Romantic Writer," Frank Norris: Novels and Essays, New York: Library of America, 1986, pg. 1106)

Instead, James's public philosophy offered manly and morally valuable discourses. "James marshaled his considerable powers of evocation, explication and exhortation to convert those Americans whose 'bogey was dessication' [sic]--individuals caught in the desert of doubt, unable to think or act in religious and moral terms" (78).

James's melioristic philosophy offered no guarantees but it made a convincing (and appealing) case that human lives involved significant triumphs along with painful losses, converted opportunities as well as missed chances. As Cotkin repeatedly and convincingly documents how James made life meaningful and that James anodyne to "the Hamletian state of passivity (99)" in the face of chaos and the abyss, on the one hand, and determinism and absolutes, on the other, was very effective. His readers--more significantly and importantly for James, his listeners--responded to his philosophy of energy and heroism with the result that they were able to see themselves as "empowered individual[s]" (103).

Cotkin's strong suit is cultural history. That vantage allowed him to paint a penetrating and persuasive portrait of James as a man of his times. This alone makes this book valuable and important; moreover Cotkin gives needed emphasis and attention to James's popular, public lectures: Cotkin notes that "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" was one of James's favorites. James, persuaded as he was of the difficulty of appreciating another's values and visions, would have recognized himself in Cotkin's portrait. He would have been especially delighted and enthused to see his popular philosophy given such prominence. Public Philosopher is, as Cotkin's convincingly argues, an accurate and important description of William James.

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Colapietro's perspective of the Peircean self provides scholars with two important contributions. First, the book is
offered as a debate for clarity (2), in which Colapietro juxtaposes the writings of numerous authors (e.g., Saussure, Eco, James, and Singer) to produce and define doubts about Peirce's discussions of doubt and belief (see CP 5.394-398; 416-7, 1934, for examples), Colapietro then establishes an argument, clarifying the belief that Peirce did have a cogent view of the self. The debate has a give and take style that makes it easy to lose the thesis, but which provides a frame for the issues surrounding the analysis. The book requires a careful reading because a cursory reading can easily miss precisely where Peirce is within the debate.

Second, the book offers a supportive and more comprehensive view of Peirce's writings about the self and its development, than is available elsewhere. Beginning with an argument that Peirce's theory of signs is truly general, Colapietro sets out to provide an approach that defines the tension between the internal self and the external manifestation of that self. For that effort, we are indebted to him, because the innovative thesis that Peirce suggests is both complex and unavailable in one place. There is no single Peircean work, for example, that will enlighten social philosophy or the social sciences about his perspective of the self and its development, as there is from each James, Dewey, or even Mead. As a result, the book is valuable for numerous courses, with the cautions suggested herein. (I used it several semesters in a philosophy of education course, with moderate success.)

Colapietro sets for his task the provision of a map of Peirce's semiotic self through its intricate tangle of notions which are defined by Peirce's logic and psychology. The map shows the various paths and clearly states: that Peirce's theory of signs is truly general; that there is an interrelation between the internal and the external components of the self and the environment; that the semiotic is, indeed, Peirce's theory of thought; and that the self is a sign. It is not always clear however, what that semiotic looks like within the development of the individual as a sign.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the work is that Colapietro only circles the essence of the semiotic process of thought and development and he fails to adequately develop the relation between habit and the ultimate logical interpretant (see 58), which is a revised habit. Such an argument if it had been made more explicit and central to the thesis, would have strengthened the conclusions about the autonomy of the self and how the internal/external tensions are resolved semiotically.

For example, Colapietro only discusses selected components of the semiotic process which allow for the classification of signs. He does discuss icons, indexes, and symbols, which are the relations of the sign to the object. He does not address:
the sign, itself—qualisign, singsign, and legisign; the relation of the sign to the interpretant—rheme, dicent, or argument; the nature of the object(s) or interpretants; or the relation of the interpretant to the object. Because of their centrality to sign action, each of these portions of Peirce’s semiotic are needed to define how the self develops over time and comes to define a personal sense of self. Likewise, they define how and why Peirce could call the self a sign.

To expand, briefly, the interpretant is manifested as a habit in the animal world and, according to Peirce operates deductively in the form of Barbara—"from Rule and Case to Result" (CP 2.711-13, also W 4:421-3). The formation of these habits, from sign action, defines the interactions of the self with others, and needs explication, which Colapietro does not offer.

In fairness to Colapietro, he covers much ground that needed covering and he provides an excellent debate on the centrality of Peirce’s semiotic to the self. He indeed shows that Peirce had not ignored that centrality. The details of the semiotic process, suggested above, however, are still to be delineated, as can be seen in recent articles on Peirce’s interpretant in the Transactions. As it stands, the book is foundational and is the precursor of a work needed in the field that articulates the dynamic semiotic development of the self and which will provide a philosophically solid sociopsychological theory of mind/brain.

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Daniel Wilson’s splendid book tells a story that begins with the intellectual turmoil of the 1860s, the immediate aftermath of the publication of Darwin’s Origin of Species. It concludes in 1930 after having traced the movement of American philosophy through a series of historical crises: Darwinism and the challenge of the natural sciences, the secularization of American universities, World War I, and the professionalization of academic philosophy. In doing so, Wilson covers some of the same territory and touches on some of the same themes that Bruce Kuklick did in his now classic study of The Rise of American Philosophy, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930. Yet, as his title indicates, Kuklick chose to focus attention on the illustrious philosophers at and around Harvard during this period. The scope of Wilson’s study is broader, moving from Harvard to Hopkins to California, etc., with frequent stops at meetings of the American Philosophical Association. Moreover, Wilson selects