Close attention to development is probably not necessary in an introduction. But what is needed is a chapter in which it is possible to see how the four strands, so carefully laid out by Corrington, are tightly plaited together in Peirce's thought. The material in each of the chapters is shown to make contact with material in other chapters, but it is not shown how the four strands constitute a single fabric.

Instead we are given a biographical introduction and a speculative conclusion. The former leaves the impression of being hastily written. Infelicities, which occasionally mar the main body of the book ("Chance is a real ontological event," p. 43; "Taking a brief sidetrack for a moment, we can briefly explore . . ." p. 188), are here more frequent and more excruciating. ("Such clubs were quite common in the Boston area in the 1870s and Peirce's club was certainly no exception" p. 8. "His wife, Zina, fed up with his drinking, sensuality, and possible physical abuse, left him . . . ibid.) This chapter is drawn mostly from Joseph Brent's recently published biography, to which are added some reflections on the significance of Peirce's relationship to his mother—or perhaps 'non-relationship' is a better word, for biographers including Brent, have given far more attention to the influence of Peirce's father. Corrington offers a psychoanalysis that reads Peirce's verbal dexterity and fascination with symbolic plenitude as "a mask for deeper semiotic rhythms of the material that were left behind by the identification with the cultural symbolic codes of the father" (p. 23).

Corrington makes clear later (p. 84) that he regards Peirce's implicit denial of a "presemiotic or preintelligible realm" as a serious weakness. The criticism is stated but not pursued. It is possible that it is followed up in the concluding chapter, where Corrington attempts "an emancipatory reenactment in which a vast unthought insight [i.e. one buried in Peirce's thought] is given the space within which to find its true measure" (p. 216). What Corrington claims to find in the "inner momentum of [Peirce's] own categorical structures" is a drive to something he calls "ecstatic naturalism." This is a view of nature as transfiguring itself from a source which somehow lies outside Peirce's categories. It may be doubted that Peirce's thought has any momentum whatsoever in this direction, but it is a virtual certainty that Corrington's brief conclusion is nowhere near enough space within which to find the true measure of this idea.

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William Joseph Gavin is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southern Maine. More than simply an exposition of James's thought from the standpoint of "vagueness," his book represents an
effort to rethink philosophy from this particular perspective. As he says at the outset, "Now most philosophers, and indeed most people, do not set out to emphasize the vague. Quite the opposite: most have pursued certainty, objectivity, and some form of universal truth" (1). Gavin's wide-ranging discussion attempts to show how even such figures as Marx and Derrida (as well as the Pragmatists Peirce and Dewey) can be criticized for an insufficient appreciation for the vague.

With this rubric of the vague, Gavin, echoing James, seeks to categorize all that eludes the grasp of logic and language, all that pushes beyond our conceptual reach but not our experience: "[W]e have relied too heavily on language and on concepts qua concepts, which are themselves oriented toward exclusivity rather than integrated richness" (18). The vague is to be distinguished from what Gavin calls "bumbling," that activity "wherein one seeks certainty, seeks the apodictic, the fundamental Archimedean point as a necessary desideratum in life, but fails to find it" (2). To emphasize the vague, as James did, is thus to be resolutely contextualist in orientation. It is also to stress the experiential aspects of life—sensation, perception and the affective states of mind—while eschewing any rationalistic a priori systems (29). Not that James gave up logic; "logic remains necessary but not sufficient" (44). It does not do justice to the extraordinary richness and intensity of life nor to the vital realm of possibility within which James found the basis for commitment.

As Gavin asserts, logic is simply not able to deal with possibility. For James, the vague is a bridge to the realm of possibility that gives life to our religious aspirations. But Gavin also demonstrates through James how the vague is also integral to scientific thinking. Since scientific theories are dependent upon, though not reducible to, sensory experience and since sensory experience itself is richer than any formal system can ever be, we can never achieve certainty about those theories. Science and faith—the "will to believe"—thus approach each other. In either case, it is the overdetermination of the welter of experience, bits of which we are endlessly selecting through words and concepts, that undermines our quest for certainty.

James, in short, relinquished the effort to achieve a philosophy of correspondence, opting instead for one of ongoing production (5). Such a shift, which collapses product into process, has shattering repercussions for the world of representation, as attested by the transformations in modern art that James's thought, beginning with the "stream of consciousness" idea he explored in the Principles of Psychology (1890), helps to explain. In Chapter Seven of his study, "James and Modern Art: Process over Permanence," Gavin details some of the implications of James's ideas for abstract art in the early years of the twentieth century. These implications derive from "the discrediting of the object" (a somewhat misleading phrase) which underwrote the break with the illusionism typified by the Renaissance system of single point perspective. They point to the end of any distinction between art and life, as exemplified by dada. No longer could there be a
privileging of reality over fiction, since everything was now equally uncertain. With the primacy of process came a questioning of the old ontological categories of time and space that had helped to separate art from life. Now time and space became functions of each other, leading to the increasing conviction that the work of art -- far from being a distinct and eternal embodiment of the ideal -- is never finished by the artist. The era of environmental art, of ephemeral art, of 'happenings' and performance art, could not be far off.

To make such broad claims for James's notion of vagueness reflects a blurring of focus in Gavin's book, pointing to its one real weakness. Gavin's exposition of the vague is, in sum, itself vague--and not always in the positive way James meant this term. I am troubled by the lack of historical specificity, of context here. Are we to believe that James is really the source for such a protean notion or was he simply one of its more brilliant and self-conscious expositors? It would seem that Gavin's broader philosophical interests have subsumed his specific historical perspective on James: where did the notion of vagueness come from (one thinks most immediately of Emerson, who gets almost no mention) and, even more problematically, how were James's ideas about it passed on? With respect to James's influence on the direction of modern art, one would expect at least some mention of Gertrude Stein, a pupil of James at Harvard who, as a "literary cubist" in Paris in the years before World War I, exercised a telling influence on literary and aesthetic thought.

This might seem to be quibbling, but the point is that we have very little sense from Gavin's book of just who shared James's interest in vagueness and what it indicates about the period and culture he emerged from and helped in turn to shape. A more ambitious, less discipline-bound book than Gavin's might have exploited the contextualist implications of James's thought in the direction of a more historical account that would tie James's interest in vagueness to broader cultural currents. It might also have hazarded some responses to the question the author asks early on, "How can one be articulate about the inarticulate, or clear about the vague, without undermining or 'explaining away what it is that one wants to preserve?" (4). Clearly, Gavin's own somewhat disembodied account of ideas leaves him without a fully adequate antidote to what James's attacked as "vicious intellectualism."

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This is a short book that promises much. It promises a "new way" (p. vi) of writing about Edwards and to be the "first to take advantage of all the new material" on Edwards in Yale University Press' The Works of Jonathan Edwards, of which the author has been General Editor since 1963. Its hard to imagine doing such a thing