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Abstract: In communication theory, the distinctive contribution of pragmatism is often construed in terms of providing a comprehensive orientation to inquiry. In this article, I argue that this appropriation, plausible as it is, has been partly hampered by a neglect of significant tensions between different pragmatist conceptions of inquiry, rooted in the philosophies of Peirce and Dewey. I identify a number of central commonalities and divergences between these viewpoints, focusing on the question of the aims of inquiry. The undeniable points of difference include core issues such as the significance of truth and the social-melioristic motives for inquiry. Yet, the article finds that the gaps between the pragmatists are not as wide and debilitating as they may at first appear; and a closer consideration of the implications of these fissures can actually be beneficial for the development of a more nuanced and robust pragmatist framework for social research. At the centre of this reconstruction is a minimal-meliorist conception of inquiry understood as habit-formation and habit-modification. I conclude the article with a brief review of the alleged critical deficit in pragmatism, and suggest some distinctive ways in which the classical pragmatists can contribute to critical communication inquiry.

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