
Critical Notice

CHRISTOPHER HOOKWAY, *Truth, Rationality and Pragmatism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000. Pp. viii+313.

Truth, Rationality and Pragmatism [TRP] presents the fruits of Christopher Hookway's thinking about the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce since the publication of *Peirce* in 1985. Unlike the earlier work, this 'does not pretend to be a general introduction to Peirce's philosophy [but] ... deals [instead] with a range of important and central issues in more detail than was possible in that volume' (v).¹ As his title indicates, Hookway's chief aim is to articulate pragmatism's most promising ideas about the nature of truth and rationality — well, as just noted, for 'pragmatism' read 'Peirce'; but the wording of the title is not inappropriate given the regular use of James and Dewey as foils for interpreting Peirce.

Eight of the book's twelve chapters are based on previously published work, while four appear in print for the first time. Three of these new chapters, containing the most recent material in the volume, are concerned with Peirce's ideas about truth, and in particular with the provocative thesis that inquiry well conducted in the indefinitely long run

1 Page references in parentheses without further qualification are to *Truth, Rationality and Pragmatism*. References to works by Peirce are made according to the following key: *The Collected Papers* edited by Hartshorne and Weiss (volumes 1-6) and Burke (volumes 7-8) are referred to by volume number followed by paragraph number; *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, edited by Fisch, Houser, Kloesel et. al. as W followed by volume and page number; *The Essential Peirce*, Volume 1 edited by Houser and Kloesel, Volume 2 by the Peirce Edition Project, as EP followed by volume and page number; *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, edited by Ketner and Putnam, as RLT followed by page number; and the *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce*, edited by Robin, as MS followed by manuscript number of the Robin catalogue.

is, not just likely, but *destined* to yield whatever truth there is concerning its subject matter. The remaining nine chapters deal with one aspect or another of a nexus of issues about the nature of inquiry and its objects; three of them, by my count, deal with issues in metaphysics, specifically, Peirce's ideas about design and chance (chapter 6), about the relationship between science and metaphysics (chapter 7), and about God (chapter 11), and the other six with the character of theoretical inquiry and its place within human affairs generally.

Hookway rightly holds that 'many of the issues raised in Peirce's papers are of continuing philosophical importance' (20), and he is throughout the book characteristically successful at weaving scholarly work on what-Peirce-said-when-and-why-he-said-it together with philosophical reflection on what we can learn from his best ideas. In what follows, I will not try to comment on the full gamut of topics dealt with in TRP, but will instead subject two lines of argument to close scrutiny. I will take up, in order, Hookway's interpretation of Peirce's theory of truth, where I will focus on the problem of what Peirce called 'buried secrets,' and his interpretation of Peirce's conception of the relationship between theory and practice, where I will focus on the relationship between the pursuit of truth and the making of 'vitally important' decisions.

Truth

As Hookway notes at the outset, Peirce's *Ur*-thought about truth is that 'inquiring well and responsibly will take us to [it]' (1-2). In 1878, in the second paper of a six part series entitled 'Illustrations in the Logic of Science,' Peirce proposed a test for clarifying the intellectual or cognitive significance of concepts, the Pragmatic Maxim,² which, when applied to the concept of truth, allegedly delivers, not just the relatively uncontroversial contention that well-conducted inquiry is our best *hope* of getting at the truth, but the provocative thesis that such inquiry (in the indefinitely long run) *must* arrive at the truth. Critics have scoffed ever since, objecting that, to put it in a 17th century way, the view can be defended only on the assumption of a kind of 'preestablished harmony'

2 The maxim, or 'rule for attaining the third grade of apprehension [of ideas],' is this: 'Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the objects of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object' (5.402/EP1:132).

between the human mind and the world it seeks to understand;³ in mid-20th century jargon, self-styled metaphysical realists find in Peirce's theory a fatal taint of verificationism, in consequence of which, they argue, the product is as unsound as the Viennese wares taken off the philosophical market some five decades ago; and more recently still, deflationists about truth such as Paul Horwich and Scott Soames argue (in their different ways) that 'truth is not a contentious metaphysical or epistemological notion,' a 'successful analysis' of which should 'be laden with controversial philosophical consequences' (Soames [1999], 229).

Hookway and I think better of Peirce's idea. We are convinced that the pragmatist⁴ method of clarifying concepts is useful, and that we learn something important when we appreciate the intimate connection between the notion of truth and the notion of a certain 'activity of thought,' inquiry, 'by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a foreordained goal' (5.407/EP 138). In genuine inquiry we aim at truth — this much is mere verbal definition, a piece of lexicography rather than philosophy; and truth is the 'foreordained goal' of genuine inquiry in the indefinitely long run, not only its desired destination but its ultimate destiny — this is the Peircean thesis purportedly rich in philosophical insight. But what exactly is the nature of this latter, philosophically pregnant connection between truth and the destined upshot of inquiry? If it is supposed to be a strict conceptual identity, the thesis seems plainly open to the objection that there are 'many facets of reality which will be forever hidden from us, no matter how long and carefully we carry out our inquiries' (51). If something is *hidden* from us *forever*, it will not be the subject of agreement on the part of inquirers, no matter how prolonged and industrious their efforts; but then there is truth that cannot be accounted for by reference to the fated ultimate agreement of investigators. This is the problem of buried secrets, much discussed in recent work on Peirce's account of truth.⁵

One way with the difficulty, canvassed in Hookway's second chapter 'Truth and the Convergence of Opinion,' is to change the grammatical

3 Peirce does suggest, in his 1870 review of Fraser's edition of Berkeley's works that the avoidance of any 'improportion between the mind and the thing in itself' is a philosophical desideratum (8.30/EP1:100).

4 'Pragmatism' was coined by Peirce in 1905 in order to distinguish his version of pragmatism from those of William James and F.C.S. Schiller (see 5.414/EP2: 334-5). Though it has not yet been put to very wide use, I think that the neologism meets the stylistic desideratum of a one-word abbreviation for 'Peircean pragmatism.' Hence my regular employment of it in what follows.

5 See, for example, Misak (1991), ch. 6; Migotti (1999); DeWaal (1999).

mood in the phrase 'the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate' from the indicative to the subjunctive, so that what Peirce is really identifying with the truth is 'the opinion which *would be* — or *would have been* — ultimately agreed to by all who *were to* investigate — or *could have* investigated.'⁶ This seems to make the existence of truths beyond the reach of any actual inquiry irrelevant to Peirce's theory; and since he repeatedly drew attention to the importance of construing the pragmatist principle of clarifying ideas subjunctively, one might conclude that this how Peirce proposed to solve the problem.⁷

Hookway doubts that a subjunctive reading of the provocative thesis will dispose of the problem of buried secrets because, first, it leaves untouched the especially thorny case of states of affairs that could be inspected only at the cost of destroying them,⁸ and second 'it is hard to see how we should interpret the relevant counterfactuals to deal with propositions about the remote reaches of space or about times before any minds or inquirers existed' (55).⁹ He maintains moreover that Peirce's reasons for insisting that the pragmatic maxim and the provocative thesis about truth be read subjunctively have to do, not with the problem of buried secrets, but with the relationship between dispositions and their manifestations. Hookway denies, for example, that buried secrets are on Peirce's mind in the following passage from 1905, in which he

6 I see no way that a subjunctive reading of the pragmatic maxim could permit the crucial reference to a *fated* agreement, and this seems to me to provide another reason such a reading cannot be the last word on the subject.

7 As the following manuscript note from 1872 indicates, Peirce was aware of the distinction between an indicative and a subjunctive reading of the idea behind the pragmatic maxim very early on: 'Thus we find the physicists, the exactest of thinkers, holding in regard to those things which they have studied most exactly, that their existence depends on their manifestations *or rather on their manifestability*. We have only to extend this concept to all real existence and to hold these two facts to be identical, namely that they exist and that sufficient investigation would lead to a settled belief in them ...' (MS 204, emphasis added). I am grateful to Rosa Mayorga for the reference.

8 These are what C.B. Martin (1994) might call 'finkishly' hidden facts. Hookway refers readers to Shope (1978) for an exposition of the so-called 'conditional fallacy' allegedly inherent in proposals to analyze the meaning of a class of categorical statement in terms of the truth of certain subjunctive conditional statements.

9 Cheryl Misak argues that another reason for doubting that Peirce himself would have been satisfied with a subjunctive solution to the problem of buried secrets is that it is too powerful; it removes the problem so effortlessly as to call into question the idea that truth has been linked to inquiry in a philosophically illuminating way (see Misak (1991), 153-4).

appears to recant a bold claim made in 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear,' the paper that includes the original published formulations of the pragmatic maxim and the provocative thesis:

The article of 1878 ["How to ..."] endeavoured to glose over [the ontological status of possibilities] ... as unsuited to the exoteric public addressed; or perhaps the writer wavered in his own mind. He said that if a diamond were to be formed in a bed of cotton wool, and were to be consumed there without ever having been pressed upon by any hard edge or point, it would be merely a question of nomenclature whether that diamond should be said to have been hard or not. No doubt this is true, except for the abominable falsehood in the word **merely**, implying that symbols are unreal. Nomenclature involves classification; and classification is true or false, and the generals to which it refers are either reals in the one case, or figments in the other (5.453/EP2:354).

In Hookway's view, Peirce regrets his unfortunate 'merely,' not because it raises the problem of buried secrets, but because it suggests that there is only a verbal difference between the ordinary, true, and scientifically important claim that all diamonds are hard and, for example, the perverse claim that they are all soft until tested for hardness or the incredible claim that they are all hard except that singular one mentioned above, formed in cotton wool and consumed without being tested for hardness (55-6). A subjunctive strategy solves this problem by making hardness a matter of what *would* happen *were* suitable tests applied (or what *would have* happened *had* such tests been made). When the pragmatist explains hardness in this way, the ordinary claim about diamonds being hard is correctly deemed true, while the other two are correctly deemed false, there being no reason to think that testing for hardness does anything to produce hardness, or that a diamond that happens never to leave a bed of cotton wool is idiosyncratic in respect of hardness.

In fact, Hookway argues, Peirce was not especially preoccupied by the problem of buried secrets, and given the aims of his pragmatism he was right to give it short shrift (45, 59). As heirs of the century of philosophical work that has taken place since Peirce's death, we tend to think that this problem looms larger than it needs to because we assume that the dispute between some sort of verificationist 'anti-realism' — according to which reality and truth are, as such and by nature, discoverable — and some sort of realist anti-verificationism that denies this — or at any rate insists on the radical independence of truth and reality from anything to do with human attempts to fathom them — is of the very first importance. But, suggests Hookway, albeit more by intimation than explicit statement, we have not in fact made as much progress on the fundamental issues as is usually assumed. For all the logical advances of the past century, Peirce's basic approach to the theory of truth,

refreshingly innocent of today's less than pellucid opposition between realism and anti-realism, remains defensible.

By way of a framework for displaying the virtues of Peirce's outlook, Hookway distinguishes three different aims that a theory of truth might have.¹⁰ Inquiry into the notion or nature of truth might, he writes, be seeking:

1. 'an account of the meaning of the word "true" and its equivalents' (44).
or
2. 'an account of the normative role of the concept of truth in assessing beliefs and assertions or keeping track of the progress of our investigations' (ibid.).
or
3. 'some heavy-duty metaphysics designed to provide deep philosophical explanations of the relations between thought and reality' (ibid.).

Occasional indications to the contrary notwithstanding, Hookway maintains, Peirce's provocative thesis about truth is not intended to perform the first of these tasks. Since it is not meant to be entered in the 'A sentence S is true iff _____' fill-in-the-blank competition, it is no mark against it that it does not fare well in this role, with respect to which Hookway appears satisfied with 'a minimalist or redundancy theory of some kind' (80). And though pragmatism's account of truth naturally 'gives rise to metaphysical questions about the mode of being of the objects of [inquiry],' it is in itself, argues Hookway, 'metaphysically neutral' (ibid.).

According to Hookway, the pragmatist account of truth responds to the second of the three theoretical needs identified above, it is meant to shed light on 'the normative role of the concept of truth.' Beyond what we learn about truth from minimalist accounts in the manner of Frank Ramsey, the later Wittgenstein, or Paul Horwich,¹¹ the 'destined upshot' conception of truth 'links the normative function of the concept to the fact that in forming a belief or making an assertion we are aware of the possibility that a subsequent "better" opinion may force us to reconsider our current view' (77). Epistemically responsible belief and assertion, in other words, require a commitment to the abandonment of current belief and the retraction of current assertion in the face of a balance of evidence turned decisively against them. Since nothing evidence-transcendent could be a part of the future evidence that already has a potential claim

10 This tripartite distinction seems closely to resemble those of Kirkham (1992) and Frapolli (1996).

11 Hookway's list from page 97.

on our attention as believers, asserters, and inquirers, nothing evidence-transcendent, according to Peirce as Hookway reads him, can play a role in the context of belief, assertion, or inquiry; so 'it is no loss that the [Peircean] pragmatist clarification assigns [to a proposition known to be verification-transcendent] no content that could be relevant to inquiring into it' (61).

In Hookway's hands, then, Peirce's provocative thesis appears to be the claim that *if* something is inquired into, *then* the truth about it is to be identified as that opinion 'which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate.'¹² And if something is not inquired into, the pragmatist need not provide an account of what its truth or falsity might consist in; things not inquired into simply fall outside the scope of the theory. Of propositions whose subjects are events that may or may not have occurred sufficiently long ago that it would now be impossible to determine whether they occurred or not, and whose predicates are whatever you like, we can safely say that they have become verification-transcendent, and belief in propositions of this sort 'is not a rational option' (61). '[Peircean] pragmatist clarifications of concepts,' writes Hookway, 'are attempts to explain what is involved in (or what commitments would result from) believing or asserting that the concept applies to something' (ibid.): *ergo*, the pragmatist clarification of truth cannot — and need not — say anything one way or the other about verification—transcendent truth. This, if I have understood him correctly, is the nub of Hookway's denial that buried secrets pose any grave threat to Peirce's provocative thesis about truth. I find it open to objection.

Consider the following claim, U: Much that goes on in the universe goes unattended (by anyone). The truth of U would explain the existence of buried secrets, for a typical buried secret is simply something that was not attended to way back when and cannot be unearthed for attention now.¹³ And, true or not, U is believed by virtually everyone, or at least by Peirce and Hookway and you and me. Buried secrets only pose a problem for Peirce's theory of truth on the assumption that they exist. So U cannot be verification-transcendent by Hookway's lights, since if it were, he would have to conclude that believing it is not a rational option. But how is it that evidence can speak in favour of U? Its logical form is 'Much F is

12 In Hookway's words, the thesis relevant to the present discussion is expressed as follows: 'Any evidence that a proposition would not be the object of a stable long-run consensus among competent inquirers should be taken as evidence that the proposition is not true' (80).

13 I owe the suggestion that buried or lost facts are a sub-class of unattended facts to Ali Kazmi.

G,' and the customary way of providing evidence in support of quantifications of this sort, producing some F that is G, will not do for it. What can count in favour of the truth of U are states of affairs that themselves constitute or include evidence of earlier, causally related but wholly unattended states of affairs, as when my dead plants are exhibit A in support of the claim that Jones did not water them while I was away, and when the rampant accumulation of dust in the apartment indicates that the plants were not so much as looked at over the course of my vacation.

This explanation of the plausibility of U makes the problem of buried secrets look less distant from the problem of distinguishing epistemically good generalizations from perverse and incredible ones than Hookway seems to think. I suspect, in fact, that Hookway's interpretation of the point of the unscratched diamond example rests on a false dichotomy. He argues that *since* the example is aimed at the second of the two problems just named, it is *not* aimed at the first. I take it to be aimed at both at once.¹⁴ For my dead plants can constitute evidence for their unwatered-and-otherwise-unattended existence during the time I was away only on the assumption that plants do not pop out of existence when not attended to and back into existence when observed. So the task of distinguishing 'there are unattended facts' from 'facts become actual only when and insofar as they are attended to' is recognizably akin, if not identical, to that of distinguishing 'diamonds are hard' from 'diamonds are soft until tested, at which point their hardness increases in proportion to the pressure with which they are scratched' (56).

It would be surprising if this affinity between the problem of distinguishing valid from perverse generalizations and the problem of buried secrets had not been noticed by Peirce himself. So it is reassuring to turn back to 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear' and read that the fact that 'there are gems at the bottom of the sea, flowers in the untraveled desert, etc. are propositions which, *like that about a diamond being hard when it is not pressed*, concern much more the arrangement of our language than they do the meaning of our ideas' (5.409/EP1:140, emphasis added).

Since both the problem of buried secrets and the problem of distinguishing valid from perverse generalizations have to do with the relationship between singular facts and events on the one hand and laws, patterns, and generalizations on the other, a philosopher's treatment of them will be strongly influenced, if not determined outright, by his position on the dispute between nominalist and realist views of this

14 More precisely, I take the example to be perfectly well suited for double duty of the suggested sort. I am not claiming that Peirce consciously thought of it in just the same way.

relationship. From, at the latest, the publication in 1868 of his so-called 'cognition series' of papers in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Peirce was convinced both of the depth and importance of this dispute and of the superiority of the realist alternative. Nominalism, in his view, is seductive but false; realism subtle and true.

Though Hookway devotes due attention in TRP to the role played by Peirce's quite distinctive conception of the dispute between realists and nominalists in the character and development of his thought, it is unfortunate that he nowhere takes up its bearing on the problem of buried secrets. He knows, of course, that Peirce regarded the pragmatist account of meaning and truth as intimately bound up with a commitment to the reality of 'natural classes' (8.12/EP1:88) from the very beginning. But he thinks that not until the 1880s, when he recognized that 'reference to external things is primarily indexical or demonstrative' (108), was Peirce able finally to put forward a coherent form of realism. I think better of Peirce's earlier position.

Here is an early statement of the difference between the nominalist and the realist views of reality as Peirce understood it:

Where is the real, the thing independent of how we think it, to be found? There must be such a thing, for we find our opinions constrained; there is something, therefore, which influences our thoughts, and is not created by them.... This thing out of the mind, which directly influences sensation, and through sensation, thought, because it is out of the mind, is independent of how we think it, and is, in short, the real. Here is one view of reality, a very familiar one. And from this point of view it is clear that the nominalistic answer must be given to the question concerning universals.... [The] other, or realist conception [of reality], if less familiar, is even more natural and obvious. All human thought and opinion contains an arbitrary, accidental element, dependent on the limitations in circumstance, power, and bent of the individual; an element of error in short. But human opinion universally tends in the long run to a definite form, which is the truth.... This final opinion ... is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think. Everything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else (8.12/EP1:89).¹⁵

Peirce here virtually identifies the realist conception of reality with the provocative pragmatist thesis that truth is the destined upshot of genuine inquiry.¹⁶ So it is not surprising to find him later declaring that

15 I am inclined to regard the last three words of this passage as unfortunate, on the grounds that if buried secrets are possible, then so are realities that are not thought to exist in the final opinion, and I suspect that Hookway would agree with me.

16 That there is a very close connection between realism and pragmatism is suggested

'pragmaticism could hardly have entered a head that was not already convinced that there are real generals' (5.503). By the time he said this, 1905, he had come to think that one of nominalism's cardinal flaws was its failure to distinguish between reality and existence: '*reality* means a certain kind of non-dependence on thought, and so is a cognitionary character, while *existence* means reaction with the environment, and so is a dynamic character; ... the two meanings ... are clearly *not* the same' (ibid.). In the early 1870s Peirce marked this contrast differently, taking mind-independence as such to be the generic hallmark of reality and subdividing the genus into two distinct species: those realities that are altogether external to the mind on the one hand, and those that are neither mind-external nor dependent on the vagaries of any particular mind or collection of minds on the other. Something is external to the mind if it 'is what it is, whatever our thoughts may be *on any subject*' (W3 29, emphasis added); something is real, but not mind-external, if it is what it is 'independent of how we may think or feel *about it*' (8.13/EP1:90), emphasis in original).

Truth, on the pragmatist account, is a reality of this second sort. *Qua* opinion, it is not external to mind; but *qua* final opinion, the destined upshot of the ongoing investigations of the community of inquirers, it is nonetheless a reality, in no way dependent for its identity on what any particular individual might think it to be (cf. 5.405/EP1:137). While realism, according to Peirce, is 'highly favorable to a belief in external realities' (8.13/EP1:90), just the sort of realities on which the nominalist focuses exclusively, nominalism cannot account for the knowability of reality and the accessibility of truth, which means that it makes a mockery of genuine inquiry, the endeavour to pursue truth and increase knowledge.¹⁷ Realism is favorable to belief in external realities because the existence of such realities explains why prolonged inquiry tends necessarily to banish the accidental, arbitrary element of error from the shared opinions of the community of genuine inquirers. Nominalism is hard put to explain how reality can be knowable, because it conceives of a real thing as 'a thing existing independently of all relation to the mind's conception of it' (8.13/EP1:90), which makes a real thing something

also by the fact that the 1870 Berkeley review includes an early formulation of the pragmatic maxim: 'a ... rule for avoiding the deceits of language is this: Do things fulfil the same function practically? Then let them be signified by the same word? Do they not? Then let them be distinguished' (8.33/EP1:102).

17 'Indeed, out of a contrite fallibilism combined with a high faith in the reality of knowledge, and an intense desire to find things out, all my philosophy has always seemed to me to grow' (1.14).

'absolutely incognizable in itself' (ibid.). That some generals are real, then, is, according to Peirce, a consequence of pragmatism because pragmatism presupposes that genuine inquiry is possible, and if no generals were real that possibility would be unintelligible.¹⁸

Hookway thinks that until the 1880s Peirce was stymied by the problem of reconciling the fact that

1. The real object is what we would believe that object to be if we were to inquire into it long enough and well enough. (125)

with the fact that

2. The real object of a judgment is always or usually involved in constraining or producing that judgment through, for example its causal impact on us. (ibid.)

The lurking 'paradox,' as Hookway calls it, is supposed to be brought to light by considering the following questions: do real objects depend [for what? MM] on their being stably believed to be such in the indefinitely long run? Or does the long run stable belief in real objects depend on them? As my parenthetical interjection is meant to indicate, Peirce's later distinction between existence and reality reveals an ambiguity in the first question. If the question is 'do real, existing objects owe their *existence*, their ability to interact causally with an environment, to their being believed to be such in the indefinitely long run?' the answer is 'no, their external existence is as it is independently of anybody's believing anything.' But if the question is 'do they so depend for their *reality*' the pragmatist-realist answer is 'yes, for reality is "a cognitionary character," grounded in the idea of a destined upshot of inquiry.' When we turn to the second question, does the long run stable belief in real objects depend on them? The answer is unambiguously 'yes.' The long run stable belief is not an external reality and does not *exist*, in the strict meaning of the term, at all; so there is no ambiguity parallel to that identified in the first question, and in any case the long run stable opinion is supposed to take the form it does *because* independent and externally existing objects have the characters that they do.¹⁹

18 The theory according to which reality is defined by reference to the destined upshot of inquiry 'is inevitably realistic [...] because general conceptions enter into all judgments, and therefore into true opinions. Consequently, a thing in the general is as real as in the concrete' (8.14/EP1:90).

19 Paramount among these characters in the present context is 'the power of external things to affect the senses' (8.12/EP1:89, emphasis deleted) and thereby to ensure 'a general *drift* in the history of human thought which will lead it to one general agreement, one catholic consent' (ibid.).

I have, in the preceding paragraph, relied on the mature Peirce's technical distinction between reality and existence, and I would not, of course, deny that Peirce made many advances and discoveries over the course of his long career — about reference, indexicality, and the ultimate significance of the debate between realism and nominalism among other things. But I see no unresolved paradox or dissonance in Peirce's 1870 position on the issue at hand. Let it be granted for the sake of argument that his later philosophy affords him a clearer and deeper explanation of how it is that externally existing objects can play a role in causing belief in them to arise and that truth and reality are nevertheless defined by reference to the destined upshot of inquiry; let us agree that the mature explanation of this compossibility is more economical in formulation and more fruitful in consequences than anything available previously. I nevertheless maintain, *pace* Hookway (cf. 126), that in the Berkeley review and the aborted *Logic Book* of the early 1870s Peirce has assembled all the materials required for a satisfactory account of the matter.

The bearing of all this on the problem of buried secrets is as follows: buried secrets are possible because human minds can register only a small portion of all that goes on in the mind-external world; knowledge is possible because much that goes on there can nevertheless be accurately enough registered by the senses or correctly conjectured or otherwise validly inferred. And in the indefinitely long run the world cannot do other than deliver up the truth about that portion of itself investigated by the ongoing community of genuine inquirers. Thus, in compressed form, a 'double-aspect' account of Peirce's attempt to integrate metaphysics and epistemology, to do justice equally to the independence of truth and reality *from* thought and to their accessibility *to* thought.²⁰

To sum up: while Hookway seems to think that pragmatists can dismiss the problem of buried secrets with the entirely negative observation that their doctrine does not entail the claim that 'all truths are discoverable' (61), I think that we need to go further and provide an explanation of how U (and its ilk) can be true, one which cannot of course eviscerate the pragmatic maxim in the process. A remark Peirce makes immediately after the classic statement of the pragmatist view of truth and reality suggests that he would side with me rather than Hookway. 'It may be said,' admits Peirce, 'that this [pragmatist] view is directly opposed to the abstract definition we have given of reality, inasmuch as it makes the characters of the real to depend on what is ultimately

20 A more detailed account of the view can be found in Migotti 1999. The phrase 'integration of metaphysics and epistemology' was, I understand, coined by Christopher Peacocke.

thought about them' (5.408/EP1:139). Peirce acknowledges here that his pragmatist clarifications of truth and reality need to be defended against the charge that they undermine rather than illuminate the abstract definitions of these concepts. If the charge were to stick, the application of the pragmatic maxim would not afford us the deepened understanding of our actual concepts of truth and reality, from which, as philosophically inclined prospective inquirers, we are supposed to benefit so substantially, but would instead fob us off with inferior, anthropocentric replacement concepts. Hookway notes this internal tension (46-7) but gives it short shrift. I cannot anyway see how limiting Peirce's theory to the claim that the character of *that portion of reality that comes up for investigation* (and that portion only) is dependent on 'the real fact that investigation is destined to lead, at last, if continued long enough, to a belief in it' (ibid.) rebuts the objection Peirce himself raises or solves the problem of buried secrets.

Theory and Practice, or 'Philosophy and the Conduct of Life'

I turn now to Peirce's views on the relationship between 'the project of pure inquiry'²¹ and the rest of life.

Unable in the space available to do justice to the welter of topics involved, I will raise some questions about Hookway's interpretation of Peirce's view of this relationship by examining closely the argument of his opening chapter, 'Belief, Confidence, and the Method of Science.' This paper takes as its point of departure the striking anomaly that Peirce, the founder of pragmatism — the chief point of which, one would have thought, was to place action and belief at the centre of the philosophical stage — can be found, mainly in the 1890s, roundly insisting 'that it [is] unscientific and indeed, improper, for investigators to believe current scientific results' (21). On the basis of the most extensive piece in this vein, the first of the eight lectures Peirce gave under the auspices of the Cambridge Conferences in February and March of 1898, Thomas Nagel is prompted to declare that '[f]ar from being a pragmatist in the currently accepted sense, [Peirce] seems much more of a Platonist' (Nagel 1997, 127). You don't need to be a regular reader of *The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* to want to know what is going on.

In the first section of 'Belief, Confidence ...' Hookway brings the interpretive problem into relief: in the 1890s, especially in 'Philosophy

21 To use Bernard Williams' phrase.

and the Conduct of Life,²² the Cambridge Conference lecture mentioned above, Peirce contends that 'there is ... no proposition at all in science which answers to the conception of belief' (1.635/RLT:112); in the 1860s and 70s, especially in 'The Fixation of Belief,' the first of the 'Illustrations in the Logic of Science' series of 1878/9, he had (a) defined inquiry as 'a struggle to attain a state of belief [caused by] the irritation of doubt' (admitting nonetheless 'that this is sometimes not a very apt designation') and (b) insisted emphatically that: 'the sole object of inquiry [so understood] is the settlement of opinion' (5.374/EP1:114).

Turning in the second section of the paper to the thesis that science has no place for the concept of belief, Hookway concludes that Peirce did not mean to insist that it is wrong *tout court* for a scientist to believe that a scientific result is true, but only to deny that scientific inquiry should ever issue in 'full belief' (30). Full belief, 'belief (in the proper and usual sense),' says Hookway, 'will always have causes over and above any reasons we may have for holding it' (*ibid.*). Prominent among such non-rational causes will be sentiment and instinct, neither of which, according to 'Philosophy and Conduct,' should be allowed 'any weight whatsoever in theoretical matters, not the slightest' (1.634/RLT 111). But Peirce does explicitly grant that the 'accepted propositions [of science]' are opinions, and an opinion, presumably, is a belief in some sense or to some degree. According to Hookway, opinions, in this technical sense, are 'beliefs about which we are tentative or uncommitted, in which case the grip of the causal processes which have transformed scientific assent into (weak) belief will not be strong enough to inhibit the further operation of rational self-control' (31-2). So the 'Philosophy and Conduct' position is not quite as hopeless as one might have feared.

Turning next to 'The Fixation of Belief,' Hookway argues that the exclusion of the concept of belief from science, and therefore the tension between this exclusion and the thesis that inquiry aims at nothing but belief, is 'prefigured' in the earlier essay itself. According to Hookway, 'Fixation' is riven by two 'competing argumentative strategies' that Peirce at the time 'could not bring ... together into a coherently structured whole' (32). Sometimes it appears that Peirce thinks the scientific method of belief fixation, the method of observation and reasoning, to be uniquely sustainable because it alone 'provides a non-accidental source for our opinions [in the realm of external things "upon which our thinking has no effect"], thereby assuring us that any settled belief it provides will be truly stable' (34). But sometimes he can be read as

22 Henceforth cited in the text as, 'Philosophy and Conduct.'

seeking to establish the more promising thesis that the method of science is to be employed only with respect to matters 'that are subjected to reflective rational monitoring and control' (36).

The paper's fourth section on belief and scientific assent broaches the idea that Peirce's considered position is that science is grounded not in faith but in hope. This proposal is found wanting, first because it does not resolve the internal tension, as it is hard to see how a mere hope could justify the claim that one who chooses the scientific method of fixing belief (as his 'logical bride' no less!) '*knows* that he has made the right choice' (5.387/EP1 123, emphasis added),²³ and second because hope is too tenuous an attitude, practically speaking, 'to motivate someone to ... contribute to scientific activity' (40). In the fifth section, 'Confidence: The Life of Science,' Hookway first marshals the considerations which, he thinks, mandate the disappointing conclusion that neither in 'Fixation' nor in 'Philosophy and Conduct' did Peirce provide a satisfactory answer to the question 'How can we have the confidence in our contributions which is required if we are to be able to make a serious commitment to the life of science?' (42), and then reassures us that 'a number of themes prominent in Peirce's thought after 1900 contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the "practice of theoretical science"' (ibid.).

This last idea implies that Peirce's philosophy progressed over time, reaching its zenith in the final decade or so of his life. Hookway endorses the first claim explicitly and the second implicitly. In his Introduction, he invites us to 'look at the development of Peirce's thought [in a way that] ... reflects his own ideas about inquiry' (17). At any particular juncture, that is, Peirce espouses a congeries of more or less integrated views. Time passes, and some of these views are disturbed — by, as it might be, a surprising discovery, or a difficulty unearthed in the process either of tracing out the consequences of the present 'system,' or of trying to improve its scope or integrity. Disturbance calls for refinement at least, and sometimes for outright recantation. In sum: '[the] history of Peirce's thought is the history of ... new doubts that emerged and ... new ideas that were employed to settle them' (ibid.).

Hookway discusses 'Philosophy and Conduct' with almost palpable embarrassment. He regards the thesis that science has no room for the concept of belief as so implausible on the face of it that one could be forgiven for dismissing its appearance as 'a temporary lapse from philosophical good sense' (23), and he finds the piece to be shot through with 'exaggerated rhetoric' (29) and marred (a) by argumentation that 'leads

23 The passage is from the final paragraph of 'Fixation.'

to ... implausible claims about applied science' (ibid.) and (b) by an adventitious admixture of Peirce's 'conservative distaste for allowing any role for rational reflection in practical or political matters' (24). It is this distaste, Hookway supposes, that leads Peirce to adopt the demonstrably false view that scientific reasoning has no place in matters of vital importance.

It is true that the circumstances surrounding the composition of 'Philosophy and Conduct' did not bode well. Peirce had little more than a month in which to write the lecture, and was more or less assigned his topic by William James, at whose benevolent instigation the lecture series had been arranged. On December 18th 1897, Peirce sent James a synopsis of the eight lectures he proposed to deliver. The opening discourse, entitled 'Logical Graphs,' was to introduce the audience to 'a novel method of treating formal logic including the logic of relatives' (RLT 19). Responding four days later, James admonished Peirce to 'be a good boy and think a more popular plan out,' remarking as well that 'the lectures need not by any means form a continuous whole. *Separate topics of a vitally important character* would do perfectly well' (RLT 25, emphasis in original). But however excusable some loose ends, even some stretches of less than water tight reasoning, would have been, what Peirce came up with is, I believe, as carefully crafted and searching a piece of philosophy as any in his corpus. So far from being anomalous, the lecture seems to me to provide strong evidence for the claim that Peirce's *oeuvre* bears throughout the stamp of 'a completely determinate philosophical sensibility.'²⁴

As we have seen, Hookway's attempt to put the best face possible on 'Philosophy and Conduct' takes the lecture to be concerned chiefly with 'a distinction between "full belief," which is linked to action and the "vital" concerns of life, and "scientific belief" (or "assent"), which is not' (26). On this, the most charitable interpretation in the offing, the burden of the piece is to establish that the method of science must be used whenever (but only whenever) we reason deliberately and systematically, thereby aspiring to exercise 'full rational self-control' (37) over our ... well, not over our full beliefs of course, but perhaps over our 'opinions' in the technical sense noted above. The converse claim that 'it [is] wrong to trust theory or scientific reflection in connection with "vitally important matters," [which] ... should be settled with aid of instinct [and] sentiment' (14) is treated as an ill-advised corollary to the thesis that links science to self-control in a way that excludes full belief from both.

24 To use a phrase of Nietzsche's from a letter to Georg Brandes of 8 January 1888 (Nietzsche (1986), 228). Nietzsche was attributing such a sensibility to himself.

Hookway's objection to Peirce's claim that instinct, sentiment, common-sense, and tradition do or should hold exclusive sway over vitally important affairs takes the form of a constructive dilemma. Assume that '[among] the most pressing vital questions confronting an individual are those about what fundamental ends to adopt: which projects should we allow to give shape and meaning to our lives?' (41). Now, either self-controlled rational inquiry can or should be employed in deliberations between two or more competing fundamental projects, or it can not or should not be so employed. In the first, positive, alternative 'Peirce [is] wrong to deny [the] relevance [of self-controlled rational inquiry] to vital questions' (41); in the second, negative, one, since the life of scientific inquiry can be among the fundamental projects between which such an individual might need to choose, and since, on the hypothesis in question, sentiment and instinct will determine whether a given individual embraces or refuses this form of life, 'Peirce's denial that sentiment and instinct have a role in science is compromised' (ibid.). Q.E.D.

This argument is invalid and rests on a false assumption. To begin with the first point, the inference from 'in *choosing science over* other walks of life we are "guided by sentiment and instinct"' to 'sentiment and instinct have a role *in science*' is a *non sequitur*. What follows from the premiss in question is the conclusion that sentiment and instinct have a role to play in *bringing people to science*, in prompting them to commit themselves to it, not that they have a similar role to play in the activity itself, in what they do when they carry out their commitment.

Attentive readers of TRP may think that this objection is rebutted by Hookway's assumption that 'once we have adopted the "life of science," decisions about which disciplines to work in, which specialties to enter, and which problems to tackle produce vital dilemmas which are not wholly solved by reference to the exigencies of funding' (42). But there are two interlocking reasons for thinking that Peirce would not have accepted this thesis. The first is that he says so: 'nothing is *vital* for science, nothing *can* be' (RLT 112, first emphasis in original, second emphasis added). The second reason will take a bit of explaining.

As Hookway notes (23, n.7), 'Philosophy and Conduct' was written with James's recently published 'The Will to Believe' in mind. It is therefore significant that in that essay James makes it plain that as far as he is concerned questions about 'which [scientific] problems to tackle' are not questions of vital importance. Here is the proof text, in which James explicates his technical distinction between a momentous and a trivial option:

Finally, if I were Dr. Nansen and proposed to you to join my North Pole expedition, your option would be momentous; for this would probably be your only similar opportunity, and your choice now would either exclude you from the North Pole

sort of immortality altogether or put at least the chance of it into your hands. He who refuses to embrace a unique opportunity loses the prize as surely as if he tried and failed. *Per contra*, the option is trivial when the opportunity is not unique, when the stake is insignificant, or when the decision is reversible if it later proves unwise. Such trivial options abound in the scientific life. A chemist finds an hypothesis live enough to spend a year in its verification: he believes in it to that extent. But if his experiments prove inconclusive either way, he is quit for his loss of time, no *vital* harm being done. (James [1992], 458-9, emphasis added)

James, then, thinks it evident that decisions about how best to direct one's time and energy within the scientific life are not vital decisions properly speaking, not decisions with regard to which vital harms or benefits are at stake. If Peirce had disagreed with James on this point, we would expect him to have made this known, to his friend and colleague and to posterity. Since he never did this, and since his own words quoted above point in precisely the same direction, we can conclude that Peirce would follow James in rejecting the claim that 'decisions about ... which problems [in science] to tackle produce vital dilemmas' (42).

Even granting its key assumption, then, the constructive dilemma argument against Peirce's firm separation of science from vital affairs fails. Let me turn now to the assumption. If the adjective 'vital' is taken in the OED's sense 7c, in which the word means 'paramount, supreme,' it is probably true that 'the questions of whether to be a scientist or philosopher, an engineer or surgeon, whether to live contentedly without ambition, and so on, are clearly ... vital questions' (41). Practically speaking, such questions are fundamental, and therefore paramount in that answers to more local, superficial questions presuppose answers to them. But this cannot have been the sense that Peirce had in mind in 'Philosophy and Conduct,' or that James had in 'The Will to Believe.'

In the *tour de force* with which Peirce concludes a draft version of 'Philosophy and Conduct,' he maintains that 'vitally important facts are of all truths the veriest trifles' (1.673). If 'vital importance' here meant 'supreme importance,' Peirce would be espousing the incoherent doctrine that facts of supreme importance are of negligible importance.²⁵ It is, if you can forgive the jest, vital to understanding the drift of 'Philosophy and Conduct' to realize that it is shot through with sardonic play — at the expense of his sponsor, James, his *alma mater*, Harvard, which had

25 Likewise the formulation of the claim found in the delivered version, that 'once you become inflated with [the idea that "the Eternal is ... a world, a cosmos, in which the universe of actual existence is nothing but an arbitrary locus"] vital importance seems to be a very low kind of importance, indeed' (RLT 121).

refused to host the event on university property, and, presumably not least, his audience — on different meanings of the word ‘vital.’

Of the nearly two dozen entries apart from ‘paramount, supreme’ listed by the OED for the adjective ‘vital,’ three seem to me have a bearing on what Peirce is up to in ‘Philosophy and Conduct’: the first sense, ‘consisting in ... that *immaterial* force or principle which is present in living beings or organisms and by which they are animated’ (emphasis added), the fourth, which makes no mention of anything immaterial and in which ‘vital’ simply means ‘of, pertaining, or relating to, accompanying, or characteristic of life,’ and the fifth, labeled ‘poetical,’ in which it means ‘conferring or imparting life or vigor; invigorating, vitalizing; life-giving.’ Consider now the following passage, in which Peirce sets out to explain the remarkable statement that vitally important truths are ‘the veriest trifles’:

For the only vitally important matter is my concern, business, and duty — or yours. Not in the contemplation of “topics of vital importance” but in those universal things with which philosophy deals, the factors of the universe, is man to find his highest occupation. To pursue “topics of vital importance” as the first and best can lead only to one or other of two terminations — either on the one hand what is called, I hope not justly Americanism, the worship of business, the life in which the fertilizing stream of genial sentiment dries up or shrinks to a rill of comic tid-bits, or else on the other hand to monasticism, sleepwalking in this world with no eye nor heart except for the other. (1.673)

What unites the ‘Wall Street Philistine’ (1.668) and the somnambulant monk is an overweening concern for the good of the individual self, a preoccupation with *their* ‘concern, business, and duty’; the two types differ only(!) as to whether their business is rampantly to accumulate ‘bread and butter, power and pleasure’ (5.382 n.1) or scrupulously and with due ascetic disdain for bread, butter, power or pleasure to prepare for eternal beatitude.

By the standards of ‘Philosophy and Conduct,’ then, vital matters pertain to the survival or thriving of individual entities, either physical organisms, or, where appropriate, their immortal animators, immaterial souls;²⁶ and they require as well an intimation of crisis;²⁷ they arise only

26 Not that Peirce need assume that humans have immortal immaterial souls. The point, familiar from Pascal’s wager, is simply that to anyone who believes they do have (or ‘are’) such a thing, its health will be as, indeed more, vital an affair as (or than) the health of the body.

27 In the delivered version of ‘Philosophy and Conduct,’ Peirce speaks of ‘vital crises’ exactly as many times as he speaks of ‘vital importance’ (the first letters of which,

in circumstances in which survival or thriving are perceived to be at risk. This is why in both the final and the draft versions of the lecture, Peirce harps on the philosophy of religion.

If [he writes in a draft] walking in a garden on a dark night, you were suddenly to hear the voice of your sister crying to you to rescue her from a villain, would you stop to reason out the metaphysical question of whether it were possible for one mind to cause material waves of sound and for another mind to perceive them? If you did, the problem might probably occupy the remainder of your days. In the same way if a man undergoes any religious experience and hears the call of his Saviour, for him to halt till he has adjusted a philosophical difficulty would seem to be an analogous sort of thing, whether you call it stupid or whether you call it disgusting (1.655).

When we face an imperative of the form 'do thus or face the consequences,' in other words, or more accurately, when we take ourselves to face such an imperative, metaphysical reasoning is grotesquely out of place; whether the crisis one faces pertains to one's this-worldly condition or one's other-worldly fate is not to the point. When it comes to the 'pot-boiling arts,' says Peirce, (to which, he declares, the philosophy of religion is 'degraded' if it is regarded as practical), it makes no difference 'whether the pot to be boiled is today's or the hereafter's' (1.670).

So, in the sense of 'vital' that Peirce must have been assuming in 'Philosophy and Conduct,' it is not the case that decisions about careers or life-occupations are, as such, vital affairs.²⁸ Those who at one point or another in their lives feel 'called' to this or that occupation or life project²⁹ will likely feel themselves in the grip of a vital question as they decide

presumably in mock deference to James, he puts three times in capitals, and [this time the whole phrase] once in italics), five in each case. He also speaks once of 'great crises,' once of 'terrible crises,' twice of 'vital matters,' once of 'vital interest,' and once of 'vital change.'

28 And it is striking that in the Introduction to TRP, Hookway too softens his assumption that career or life-occupation choices are as such vital, writing that one of the things he wanted to do in 'Belief, Confidence ...' was to 'take ... seriously the thought that participation in science is itself *usually* the result of a vital decision, the adoption of a particular way of life' (15, emphasis added). Unless 'participation' can include dabbling, to choose the life of science certainly is, as such, to adopt a particular way of life, or at any rate, a particular walk of life. So the 'usually' here must imply that while more often than not the decision to pursue science is a vital one, on certain occasions it might not be. But Hookway says nothing about how to distinguish usual from unusual cases.

29 And, no doubt equally importantly, called *away from* their present course of life. Consider as examples a spiritually frustrated junk bond trader who, hearing the call of his Saviour, abandons Wall Street for a monastery; or, a more painfully actual instance, a Palestinian teenager who feels called to volunteer for a suicide mission.

whether or not to heed the call. But consider a bright, socially conscious undergraduate wondering whether to go to Law School or do a PhD in philosophy. Such a favored specimen does not necessarily confront what James would call a forced option, since some universities offer joint LLD/PhD programs; and even supposing an option that is forced (as, for example, a choice between attending grad school in philosophy and working on behalf of the starving in Benin would seem to be), it need not be momentous, since 'decisions about fundamental projects can be revoked' (41) — our fledgling philosopher can grow sick of the academy and take up the post in Benin, and our apprentice social reformer can move in the reverse direction.³⁰

Hookway's frustration with 'Philosophy and Conduct' stems, I think, from his misprising the lecture's priorities. While he allows that Peirce 'was certainly determined to dissociate himself from those who anticipated vital benefit from the study of metaphysics and to urge that a true scientific spirit should govern work in that discipline' (24), he appears to regard this theme as relatively inconsequential. I take it to be the main point of the lecture. Responding to James's 'pragmatic' concern that the audience not be frightened away by abstruse technicalities on the first evening, Peirce prefaces the dry stuff with an argument for why it is indispensable, why philosophy can become a respectable branch of theoretical inquiry only if it resolutely abjures all pretensions to competence in the realm of urgent practical questions and forswears all temptation to try to serve any end beyond the pursuit of truth and knowledge.

Suppose that one were to reply as follows to the claim that not all cases of choosing a way or walk of life count as responses to vital questions in Peirce's sense: the reasoning must be specious, for whenever any of us asks ourselves 'How should I live? What should I do with (the rest of) my life?' and *mean* it, we thereby and thereupon pose to ourselves a vitally important question, crisis or no crisis. Let it be granted that to ask oneself seriously what one should do with (the rest of) one's life is to ask oneself a vitally important question, as it presumably pertains at least to one's (perceived) thriving, if not one's very survival. Can one really do this without thereby creating something very like a crisis for oneself? Is not a signal respect in which this, let us call it, existential question (what *to* do with my life?) differs from the hypothetical question (what *might* I do with my life?) the fact that the former cannot be seriously posed without introducing an element of urgency? If time were not of the essence, could the existential question grip us in just the way we are

30 Hookway, ironically from my perspective, notes this fact and takes it to speak in favor of his critique of Peirce (cf. 41-2).

supposing that it can and does? Let us answer these rhetorical questions 'no, yes, and no,' and agree that a sense of crisis is always in the offing when an existential question is posed in a genuinely practical fashion; we are thus led to yet stronger grounds for preferring my reading of 'Philosophy and Conduct' to Hookway's.

With regard to departments of inquiry other than philosophy (and perhaps theology), the claim that theoretical knowledge has nothing useful to say to people in times of existential crisis seems sound. It is not even clear to me that we can so much as understand how someone genuinely unsure about 'what fundamental ends to adopt' could find her burden lifted, or even lightened, by knowledge gleaned from mathematics, or chemistry, or geology, or history, or When it comes to philosophy, though, we are familiar with a venerable, influential, and lofty tradition dedicated to the view that the chief point and value of the activity lies in the help it can be to troubled souls in time of need, just the tradition, in fact, against which Peirce directs his considerable rhetorical and dialectical energy in 'Philosophy and Conduct.' Hence the two and a half page long opening paragraph (RLT 105-7) unfavorably comparing the typical 'early Greek philosopher' found in the pages of Diogenes Laertius, who thought that philosophy should 'affect life ... forthwith in the person and soul of the philosopher himself' (*ibid.* 106), to Aristotle, who sharply distinguished theoretical science from morals and aesthetics; hence the disparaging portrayal of Boethius in a draft version (1.659); and hence, finally, the firm pronouncement (from the same draft) that 'philosophy ... is, at its highest valuation, nothing more than a branch of science' (1.663). If philosophy is understood, as Peirce clearly wants his audience to understand it, as neither more (nor less) than a branch of theoretical inquiry, his claim that it is useless in times of vital crisis is unexceptionable.

Now, Hookway may be wrong about Peirce's priorities in 'Philosophy and Conduct,' but right in his criticisms of its main argument. Perhaps, to return to an earlier point, Peirce and James are wrong to deny that vital questions can arise within science. What difference, after all, is there between the avowedly momentous decision about whether to accept Dr. Nansen's offer and the case of an MIT scientist who needs to decide whether to accept an offer from Cal Tech? Suppose our scientist accepts the offer, because he believes that his chances of winning a Nobel Prize will thereby improve substantially, even though the move brings in its wake a fractious, disgruntled family. What can James mean by supposing that this poor soul would be 'quit for the loss of time' should the Cal Tech project turn out after a decade or so to be a bust? How can it be that the failure of a scientific research program does not inflict vital harm on those whose careers are bound up with its success? What James means, to put it in Aristotelian terms, is that while scientists whose pet ideas end

up in the scrap heap can certainly be said thereby to suffer vital harm *qua* this, that, or the other — *qua* family member and seeker of the Nobel Prize, in the case of the scientist imagined above, for example — they are immune to vital harm *qua* theoretical inquirer.

When James distinguishes momentous from trivial options, he does so by means of stipulative definitions. A trivial option as James defines it is not simply an option with insignificant stakes. Rather, there are three sufficient conditions for an option to count as trivial in this sense, and the significance of the stakes is only one of them; the other two are non-uniqueness and reversibility, and it is in virtue of this last feature especially that the decisions that arise within the course of theoretical inquiry, about which hypotheses to test, which questions to ask etc., qualify as trivial in the taxonomy of 'The Will to Believe.'

James's point is, I contend, also Peirce's point in 'Philosophy and Conduct':

The scientific man is not [in his capacity as scientific man, MM] in the least wedded to his conclusions. He risks nothing upon them. He stands ready to abandon one or all as soon as experience opposes them.... It seems probable that any given proposition [to which no competent man today demurs] will remain for a long time on the list of propositions to be admitted. Still, it may be refuted tomorrow; and if so, the scientific man will be glad to have got rid of an error. (RLT 112)

It would be remarkable if Peirce thought that someone who for many years 'cherished' an hypothesis (of his own devising, say) so intensely as to have 'made it his companion by day and by night, and given to it his strength and his life, leaving all other occupations for its sake' (5.393/EP1:127) only to have the hypothesis refuted would be, as a human being, as a matter of emotional fact, *pleased at the turn of events*. *Qua* the man who gave the better part of his life to the hypothesis and who very much *wanted* it to be true, he will be devastated. It is only *qua* scientific man that he must find the negative result just as useful and valuable as a positive one would have been. For a scientific man is identified as such by his stake, not in this or that turning out to be true, but simply in turning up the truth, whatever it may be; the 'dominant passion of his ... soul [is] to find out the truth in some department, regardless of what the color of that truth may be (7.605).³¹

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