Of Hopes and Hinges:
Peirce, Epistemic Constraints on Truth, and the Normative Foundations of Inquiry

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ABSTRACT: Charles Sanders Peirce has commonly been interpreted as a proponent of an epistemic theory of truth. Such a theory has the apparent advantage of directly undercutting radical skepticism, but the disadvantage of implausibly entailing that there are no truths concerning irretrievably lost facts. Recently Andrew Howat has defended Peirce's epistemic constraint on truth by recasting Peirce's claim that all truths would be believed following sufficient inquiry, not as constitutive of truth, but as a Wittgensteinian hinge proposition. I begin with a twofold historical reply to Howat: first, Peirce can at least plausibly be read as claiming that the claim in question is analytic of the concept <truth>; and second, while Peirce did think we must accept without evidence the further claim that there *are any* truths (so characterized), he regarded this further claim not as a Wittgensteinian hinge but as a reasonable *hope*. I then substantively defend the latter Peircean proposal, arguing that hopes, as against beliefs, are chiefly warranted pragmatically, and so can be warranted even to a sufficient level to render them properly action-guiding in cases where belief in the same proposition would remain unjustified. I conclude by suggesting, first, that this proposal is superior to Wittgenstein's own epistemology in evading psychologism, and second, that it attractively vindicates the reasonableness of inquiry on Peircean grounds that don't require an appeal to an implausible epistemic theory of truth.

1. The Hinge Reading of Peirce

Radical skepticism confronts us with the unsettling prospect of an unknowable world. If we're brains-in-vats or beleaguered by evil demons, then however extensively we investigate the world, we won't reach the truth. Reality would lie beyond our epistemic grasp.

Philosophers offer various replies to radical skepticism. But one reply that meets its challenge head-on—one commonly attributed to the founder of pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce—involves imposing epistemic constraints on truth. Peirce accepts the following claim:

> (T) If a hypothesis *H* is true, then, if inquiry into *H* were pursued long enough and well enough, *H* would be believed. (Cf. Howat 2013: 451.)

Further, many interpret Peirce as claiming that (T) is analytic, since *what it is* for a hypothesis to be true is simply that it would be believed following sufficiently extensive and well-conducted inquiry. Such an epistemic theory of truth, if successful, would dispatch radical skepticism straightaway, rendering the skeptic's suggestion that some truths might be in principle unknowable downright incoherent.

Satisfying though this result would be, many philosophers—myself included—find epistemic theories of truth unacceptable. If skepticism foists too much epistemic humility on us, epistemic theories allow for too little. Consider the *problem of buried secrets* (or *lost facts*), which Peirce articulates thus:

> But I may be asked what I have to say to all the minute facts of history, forgotten never to be recovered, to the lost books of the ancients, to the buried secrets. … Do these things not really exist because they are hopelessly beyond the reach of our knowledge? (*W* 3: 274 [1878]).[1]

Assuming (T), if no propositions concerning these forgotten entities would be believed following sufficient inquiry, none is true. Yet it's quite implausible that there are no truths about forgotten historical incidents: their past occurrence grounds truths concerning them, even if those truths are henceforth undiscoverable.

Peirce initially replied that "it is unphilosophical to suppose that, with regard to any given question (which has any clear meaning), investigation would not bring forth a solution of it, if it were carried far enough" (ibid.). But is it really "unphilosophical" to doubt our inquiries could ever succeed in fixing belief about, say, exactly how many times Winston Churchill sneezed in 1945? (Misak 1991/2004: 139). Isn't it clearly doubtful that answers to such questions will ever reemerge, given how much pertinent evidence appears irretrievably

[1] I cite Peirce's works by abbreviations to standard editions. See the Bibliography, §1.

lost? Anyway, what Peirce must show to render an epistemic theory of truth viable isn't merely that we're *not justified in disbelieving* that the truth about *any particular* buried secret would eventually be unearthed, but that we *are justified in believing* that the truth about *all of them* would be. This latter, stronger claim is quite implausible.

To avoid this problem, Andrew Howat offers an interpretation of Peirce's account of truth on which Peirce regards (T), not as analytic, but as a Wittgensteinian *hinge proposition*. Hinge propositions are "immune from both rational support (and thus genuine claims to knowledge) and rational criticism (and thus genuine claims to doubt), by virtue of the epistemological role that they play in our lives and practices" (Howat 2013: 456; cf. Wittgenstein 1969: ¶¶341–43). Such claims don't admit of rational support because no grounds for them are more certain than they are (ibid: ¶¶243, 307). Yet they're immune to doubt—at least without the doubter's suffering a "mental disturbance" (ibid.: ¶71)—because doubting them would require doubting most of one's other beliefs, too. Considering an interlocutor who denies that Wittgenstein really knows his name is 'L.W.,' Wittgenstein confesses that he couldn't offer a reply. (After all, if they'd challenge that claim, what justification *would* they accept?) Still, he would remain certain that it's his name: "there is no judgment I could be certain of if I started doubting about that" (ibid.: ¶489–90). Wittgenstein's belief about his name functions as a hinge proposition.

Peirce regards (T), Howat suggests, as such a proposition. We cannot know it to be true (by analyzing the concept <truth> or otherwise). Indeed, no grounds for accepting it as true are more certain than it is. Yet we cannot doubt (T) without calling all our beliefs into question, since (T) is a necessary presupposition of inquiry: since inquiry aims at the truth, if I doubt that—however well and extensively I inquired—I'd ever attain the truth, I shouldn't bother inquiring. Apparently, then, (T) plays a fundamental role in our epistemic lives that

renders it immune from rational support and from rational criticism—that of a hinge proposition.

In this paper I argue that Howat's interpretation, while well-crafted and initially attractive, is mistaken. Personally, I think Peirce does regard (T) as analytic, and I explore this reading and its textual basis in §2. I don't expect it to be uncontroversial: the present interpretive consensus is that Peirce accords pragmatic elucidations of concepts—including (T), Peirce's pragmatic elucidation of <truth>—a weaker status than analytic truths, and perhaps even thinks them defeasible. I'm not so bold as to claim that §2's examination of my reading's textual basis will decisively shift that consensus, but I do think it shows that basis to be substantial enough that even some of the unpersuaded will recognize my reading as a defensible alternative and be interested to explore its consequences for evaluating Howat's interpretation.

If (T) is indeed analytic, then it admits of rational support, and so isn't a hinge proposition. But this would only push the interesting question back a level: why think that there *are* any truths, so characterized? If Howat is mistaken to think that Peirce regards (T) as a mere "regulative assumption of inquiry" (2013: 453), still, I show in §3, Peirce did regard an inquirer's affirmation that there's a truth of the matter about the particular subject of her inquiry as such a regulative assumption. But he didn't regard the claims thereby assumed as hinge propositions: while he thought commitment to them necessary for inquiry to be reasonable, he didn't think we must be certain of them (or that doubting them must result in "mental disturbance"). Rather, he contends, such claims are *hopes* of a distinctive kind.

Howat notes Peirce's frequent descriptions of regulative assumptions of inquiry as hopes, but thinks it less promising to construe them as hopes than as hinge propositions. In §4, I argue that this assessment is unpersuasive. In particular, Howat's doubts that we can

satisfactorily distinguish the norms of assessment governing hopes from those governing beliefs can be answered. Drawing both on Peirce and on contemporary writings on hope, I argue that, while beliefs are subject only to evidential norms, hopes are subject primarily to pragmatic ones, and so can be warranted (in sufficient degree to render them properly action-guiding) even when corresponding beliefs remain unjustified.

My argument is thus of more than historical interest. While the argument of §§2–3 is exegetical, §4's argument is primarily substantive. It aims to show the defensibility of a construal of what is perhaps our most basic epistemic commitment—our affirmation that there are ascertainable truths—as a reasonable hope that properly guides our subsequent thinking and acting. And §5 notes two further advantages of the proposal: first, that unlike a more orthodox Wittgenstein version of "hinge epistemology," it entirely avoids psychologism; and second, that it carries force in response to skepticism while remaining independent of an implausible epistemic theory of truth. If successful, this substantive argument may bear interestingly on debates about the structure of justification and the proper response to skepticism.

2. Did Peirce Regard (T) as Analytic?

If (T) were analytic, it wouldn't be a hinge proposition. For it would admit of rational support: support provided by an analysis of <truth>. Since Howat contends that Peirce thought (T) was a hinge proposition, then, he naturally denies that Peirce regarded it as analytic:

> (T) is not a conceptual analysis of [the concept] TRUTH in the conventional sense; it does not purport to define or to provide necessary and sufficient application-conditions for our concept TRUE. Instead, (T) is a so-called 'pragmatic elucidation' of TRUTH. This means (T) tells us what practical or experiential consequences we can expect when TRUE applies to a hypothesis (namely that our inquiries concerning that proposition will have a certain kind of outcome). (2013: 452).

This suggests that (T) isn't analytic of <truth>, but merely specifies a practical consequence we expect—perhaps defeasibly—to follow upon its correct predication. Howat isn't alone in denying that Peirce regarded pragmatic elucidations like (T) as analytic: Christopher Hookway (2000: §2.6), David Wiggins (2004: §1), and (sometimes) Cheryl Misak (2013: 30–31) make similar claims. But I interpret Peirce differently: though Peirce offered (T) as a pragmatic elucidation of <truth>, I think he nevertheless regarded it as analytically true. In this section, I explore what support this interpretation finds in Peirce's texts: I think it's sufficiently extensive to render an examination of the interpretation's consequences for the hinge reading of Peirce of some interest.

While Howat suggests that (T) doesn't purport to define <truth>, Peirce does sometimes call something resembling (T) a definition. The clearest such passage comes, naturally, from the entry "Truth and Falsity and Error" he contributed to Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*.[2] We may, he there asserts, "defin[e] what it is that truth

[2] Someone might doubt whether this source constitutes suitable textual evidence of Peirce's views: wouldn't a dictionary entry provide only Peirce's statement of the generally-accepted usage of 'truth,' not his own account of its meaning? This expectation is natural, but it doesn't fit the entry's text. Peirce distinguishes in the entry between claims made by others and claims he's willing to endorse in his own voice: he scrupulously attributes some points to historical sources (e.g., Plato or the scholastics: *CP*: 5.571–72), but recommends "*our* defining what it is that truth consists in" as follows in the main text (5.569; my italics). Further, the entry doesn't allude to, e.g., Aristotle's or Kant's influential definitions of truth, which Peirce knew and discussed elsewhere (MS 870: 18½–18¾ [c.1901]; *EP* 2: 379 [1906]), but does include such recognizably—and somewhat idiosyncratic—Peircean features as the denial that any proposition is exactly true (5.565–68; cf. *W* 4: 490 [1883]); the distinction between percept and perceptual judgment (5.568; cf. 7.626ff. [1903]); and semiotic terms like *interpretant* and *icon*, the latter in connection with mathematical propositions (5.567–69; cf. *W* 5: 164 [1885]). These features likely explain why numerous prominent Peirce scholars cite the entry as evidence of Peirce's own views (Hookway 2000: 47; Howat 2015: 435–37; Lane 2018: 26; Misak 1991/2004: 41; Wiggins 2004: 111–13). Notably, this list includes all those scholars just cited as denying that pragmatic elucidations yield analytic truths: none of them could consistently offer the objection I'm considering here.

Anyway, both key claims I'm suggesting that Peirce asserts in the Baldwin entry appear present elsewhere in his writings, too. I'll show this concerning the claim that truth *consists in* indefeasible belief momentarily in the main text. Concerning the claim that we can *define* 'truth' as indefeasible belief, see, first, a suggestive passage where, critiquing an interlocutor's "metaphysical," non-epistemic conception of truth, Peirce exhorts him to regard 'truth' as "definable in terms of doubt and belief and the course of experience (as for example [it] would be, if you were to define the 'truth' as that [toward] … which belief would tend if it were to tend indefinitely toward absolute fixity)" (*EP* 2: 336 [1905])—the claim on which opinion would finally converge following sufficient inquiry. Peirce doesn't explicitly endorse this definition here, but it would be odd

consists in" thus: "A true proposition is a proposition belief in which would never lead to … disappointment" by misdescribing our future (possible) percepts (*CP*: 5.569 [1901]). Rather: "The truth of the proposition that Caesar crossed the Rubicon consists in the fact that the further we push our archaeological and other studies, the more strongly will that conclusion force itself on our minds forever – or would do so, if study were to go on forever" (*CP*: 5.565). What's striking here isn't merely Peirce's use of the word 'definition.' (On its own, that might be dismissed as loose talk—although, since the context is an entry for 'truth' in a philosophical dictionary, that reply seems questionable.) Peirce further explicitly asserts that the fact that, having sufficiently inquired, we would forever believe that Caesar crossed the Rubicon is what the claim's truth *consists in*—what it is for it to be true. Later he would reiterate this point more generally, noting his contention in "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" that: "'a settlement of Belief,' or, in other words, a state of *satisfaction*, is all that Truth … consists in"—namely, "the satisfaction which *would* ultimately be found if the inquiry were pushed to its ultimate and indefeasible issue" (*EP* 2: 449–50 [1908]). If this were indeed Peirce's account of what truth consists in, then (T) wouldn't represent a mere defeasible elucidation of truth—a contingent practical expectation we form in taking-true. It would be analytic of <truth>.

One reason the aforementioned scholars deny that pragmatic elucidations yield analytic truths stems from Peirce's distinction between three grades of clarity concerning our concepts' meanings. The first grade requires correct application of the concept in ordinary contexts, and the second, an abstract definition of it. But, Peirce thinks, since a definition presupposes a *definiens*, which is itself composed of meaningful concepts, we cannot grasp all

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to supply it otherwise, given its situation in a recommendation to the interlocutor and its resonance with Peirce's own appeals to the final opinion. And consider, second, his rhetorical question—discussed in my §3—what the truth "can … possibly mean except … [the] destined upshot to inquiry with reference to the question in hand – one result, which when reached will never be overthrown" (*CP*: 3.432 [1896]).

our concepts' meanings through such definitions: there must be a third, highest grade of clarity. His most famous statement of the pragmatic maxim describes how to achieve it: "consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (*W* 3: 266 [1878]). (T) specifies such a practical effect of predicating <truth>: it's <truth>'s pragmatic elucidation. But definition concerns the second grade of clarity, not this third one. Hence, these scholars conclude, (T) cannot be a partial definition of <truth>: it cannot be analytic.

This line of thought is natural, but it might be replied that it overlooks the role Peirce accords concepts' practical effects in constituting their meanings. Why does he insist that claims that aren't "capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences" are, if not "downright absurd," "meaningless gibberish,—one word being defined by other words, and they by still others, without any real conception ever being reached" (*EP* 2: 338 [1905])? Because he thinks only a successful pragmatic elucidation—not an abstract definition in non-practical, non-experiential terms—shows whether a term expresses a real conception and what content it has. Indeed, since "[t]he entire meaning of a hypothesis lies in its conditional experiential predictions" (ibid.: 96 [1901]), its pragmatic elucidation—which specifies all the experiential results its assertion implicitly predicts—seemingly constitutes a full statement of its meaning. Call the fact that "if a given prescription for an experiment … ever is carried out … an experience of a given description will result" an *experimental phenomenon* (ibid.: 332 [1905]). Peirce maintains that a "general description of all the experimental phenomena which the assertion of [a] proposition virtually predicts" may "be called its very meaning" (ibid.: 340), or that a specification of "all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could

imply" constitutes "a complete definition of the concept" (ibid.: 332). He regards the experiential predictions and practical effects involved in our asserting claims as their very meanings. True specifications of these thus would seem to be true in virtue of meaning—to be analytic, their association with the third grade of clarity notwithstanding.

This interpretation of the relationship between the second and third grades might be further supported by Peirce's explication of <truth>. He suggests that its abstract definition as "the correspondence of a representation with its object" is a perfectly satisfactory "merely … nominal definition of it." But, he insists, only a pragmatic elucidation can tell us what "this correspondence … consist[s] in" (ibid.: 379–80 [1906]). And his unsurprising answer is that "truth can be nothing more nor less than the last result to which the following out of [the right method of thinking] would ultimately carry us" (ibid.: 380)—that which we would finally believe following sufficient inquiry. This suggests that, for Peirce, (T) (with its converse) tells us what the definition of <truth> in terms of correspondence *means*, and therefore constitutes the most adequate specification of the meaning of <truth>.[3]

[3] Commentators who deny that pragmatic elucidations yield analytic truths often cite Peirce's insistence in a late manuscript that "the pragmaticistic grade of clearness could no more supersede the … Analytic grade … than this latter grade could supersede the first. That is to say, if the Maxim of Pragmaticism be acknowledged, although Definition can no longer be regarded as the supreme mode of clear Apprehension; yet it retains all the absolute importance it ever had, still remaining indispensible [sic] to all Exact Reasoning" (MS 647: 2 [1910]; cf. *CP* 8.218 [c.1910], where Peirce repeats—without explaining—the claim that the second grade isn't "superseded by" the third). Concerning this passage, note three things. First, Peirce subsequently remarks that his own preoccupation with "Sciences of Reasoning" like physics, logic, and mathematics made this claim seem too obvious to require explicit statement: in such fields "nobody can well doubt the high and eternal importance of Definition" (MS 647: 2). This elaboration suggests that Peirce's point is methodological, not semantic: though the pragmatic(istic) grade is "the supreme mode of clear Apprehension" of concepts, disciplines like logic and mathematics operate at a level of abstraction better served by analytic definitions than interminable conjunctions of subjunctive conditionals describing "experimental phenomena." This reading is confirmed, second, by the parallel Peirce draws between the second grade's relation to the third and the first's to the second, since the first is obviously only methodologically independent of the second: in practice, knowing a concept's definition is no substitute for being able to correctly apply it in ordinary cases, and yet it's precisely the definition that determines whether concrete applications of the concept count as correct. Finally, my interpretation may be supported by its capacity to explain why, just after denying that the third grade supersedes the second, Peirce initially wrote—though later struck out—"even though, relatively considered, it should, or perhaps necessarily would" (ibid.). Given these three points, I don't think that these very late, underexplained manuscripts constitute stronger evidence that pragmatic elucidations cannot yield analytic truths than the passages marshalled in the main text constitute evidence that they can.

I think this textual evidence makes it viable to read Peirce as claiming that being finally believed following sufficient inquiry is what truth consists in, and therefore that (T) (with its converse) constitutes the most perspicuous definition of <truth>. But suppose I'm wrong about that. Would this render it implausible to claim that, according to Peirce, (T) is analytic? Not necessarily. Consider another interpretation on which, for Peirce, a hypothesis's practical "consequences are part of what the hypothesis means," but don't exhaust its meaning (Misak 1991/2004: 35; cf. 2016: 17). One reading of Peirce's conception of truth along these lines is Robert Lane's *dual-aspect* reading, on which "the idea of a belief that is *true* … has a *representationalist* aspect, on which a true belief is one that represents the real world, and an *investigative* aspect, on which a true belief is one that would be permanently settled in the minds of those who use the method of science" (2018: 13). Since this interpretation also treats <truth>'s pragmatic elucidation or investigative aspect as part of its meaning, it equally suggests that (T) is analytic of <truth>.

The competing interpretation that threatens (T)'s analyticity is exemplified by Hookway's suggestion that Peirce's clarification of <truth> "provides an account of just what commitments I incur" in accepting a claim as true, but doesn't yield an account of what truth consists in—or even a necessary condition of truth. Hence it doesn't commit Peirce to regarding all truths as discoverable: it allows for buried secrets (2000: 60–61). But this interpretation doesn't fit the textual evidence. Peirce claims explicitly that the connection between a proposition's truth and opinion's finally converging on it is necessary and indefeasible:

> There may be questions concerning which the pendulum of opinion never would cease to oscillate, however favorable circumstances may be. But if so, those questions are *ipso facto* not *real* questions, that is to say, are questions to which there is no true answer to be given. (*EP* 2: 358 [1905]; cf. *CP*: 5.565 [1901]).

Indeed, he goes further, maintaining that, if opinion would never finally converge on any answer to a question, the question isn't even about anything real:

> [W]hile there is a real so far as a question that will get settled goes, there is none for a question that will never be settled; for an unknowable reality is nonsense. (*W* 5: 228 [1885]; cf. *CP*: 8.156 [1901]).

And since Peirce clearly accepts that "[t]hat which [a] truth represents is a reality" (*CP*: 8.153 [1901]; cf. *W* 3: 282 [1878]), this latter passage likewise entails that, if inquirers would never finally agree in affirming a claim, it's *ipso facto* not true.

It's implausible, then, that Peirce regarded (T) as defeasible: as a mere expectation involved in taking-true that needn't hold of all truths. It's more plausible to read him as claiming that it states (at least a central part of) what we *mean* in calling a proposition true—what the proposition's truth consists in—and therefore is analytic.

3. The Existence of Truths: A Hope, Not a Hinge

As I noted in §1, I'm sure not every reader will accept the interpretation we've been exploring, on which Peirce regarded (T) as analytic. But I hope they'll see it as sufficiently well-motivated to be interested in the consequences it would imply. The chief consequence would be that Peirce didn't regard (T) as a hinge proposition—that he didn't think we must accept without grounds that a true belief will prove to be "the predestined result to which sufficient inquiry *would* ultimately lead." On this interpretation, he thought we could know this through reflection on the concept <truth>: that "predestined result" is simply *what the truth is*, "so far as there is any 'truth'" (*EP* 2: 419 [1907]). This wouldn't dispel the question of the relationship between hinge propositions and Peirce's account of truth, though. It would just push it back a level when we ask the natural follow-up question: *And how far is that, exactly?*

Though Peirce thinks us justified in asserting that every truth would be believed following sufficient inquiry, he concedes—for that very reason—that "we cannot know that there *is* any truth concerning any given question" (ibid.):

> We cannot be quite sure that the community ever will settle down to an unalterable conclusion upon any given question. … All that we are entitled to assume is in the form of a *hope* that such conclusion may be substantially reached concerning the particular questions with which our inquiries are busied. (*CP*: 6.610 [1893]).

Given (T), if we lack reason to think the community would ever reach a final opinion about any given question, we lack reason to think there's a truth of the matter about that question—or perhaps even about any question whatever. Perhaps deep disagreement will always keep rearing its head.

The question, then, might seem to be whether, since we cannot justify the claim that there's some truth of the matter concerning every meaningful question, this claim must be classified as a hinge proposition or as something else—perhaps, as the block-quotation above suggests, some sort of *hope*. Actually, though, Peirce's answer is that we needn't accept this general claim at all. He regards the general law of excluded middle (on which, for any proposition *p*, either *p* is true or ~*p* is true) as a "*saltus*"—an unjustified "leap" or *non sequitur*—from inquirers' rationally indispensable hopes concerning any particular inquiry they undertake that "some definite answer to it may be true" (*NEM* IV: xiii). The general (pseudo-)law isn't a necessary presupposition of particular local inquiries, since "in the discussion of one question nothing at all concerning a wholly unrelated question can be implied" (*CP*: 3.432 [1896]). At most we're entitled to assume that it holds of "the single case that has come up" (*CP*: 2.113 [1901]): the single proposition about which we're presently inquiring.

We've finally reached the fundamental question. Peirce grants that our inquiring concerning some particular question presupposes our accepting in some sense that there's a true answer to it—otherwise, we shouldn't bother inquiring about it. Yet, he also concedes, we lack any evidence for accepting this claim. In particular, although we must assume it for our inquiry to be rational, that doesn't justify us in believing the claim, since it doesn't indicate that the claim is likely to be true:

> I do not admit that indispensability is any ground of belief. It may be indispensable that I should have $500 in the bank—because I have given checks to that amount. But I have never found that the indispensability directly affected my balance, in the least. (ibid.).

What epistemic standing does Peirce accord the claim that there's a true answer to the question under investigation, then? Is it a hinge proposition?

I think not, for reasons having to do with indubitability. Howat notes that a hinge proposition must be "ceteris paribus indubitable": not subject to doubt without calling into question most of one's other beliefs, and so giving rise to a mental disturbance (2013: 457). Is the assumption that there's a true answer to the question at issue *ceteris paribus* indubitable? Often it isn't. Considering whether "the sciences have to suppose … that for every question there is [exactly one] true answer," Peirce first notes that this could be true at most concerning the particular questions scientists actually take up, and then offers a deeper critique:

> as to an inquiry presupposing that there is some one truth, what can this possibly mean except it be that there is one destined upshot to inquiry with reference to the question in hand – one result, which when reached will never be overthrown? Undoubtedly we hope that this, or *something approximating to this*, is so, or we should not trouble ourselves to make the inquiry. But we do not necessarily have much confidence that it *is* so. Still less need we think it is so about the *majority* of the questions with which we concern ourselves. (*CP*: 3.432 [1896]).

We may well lack confidence that particular questions we're inquiring about have true answers. Nor do such unconfident inquirers face consequent mental disturbance: they carry on inquiring and acting perfectly well, Peirce suggests. Thus, the fact that any inquiry presupposes that there's a truth about its subject matter doesn't show that this presupposition functions as a hinge proposition.

In fairness to Howat, it's not any such local claim that he thinks Peirce regarded as a hinge proposition: it's (T). This passage again suggests that that's incorrect: Peirce apparently claims that the idea of a true answer *can only mean* the belief on which inquirers would finally converge, so that (T) is indubitable because it's analytic. Still, the generality of the hinge Howat posits might suggest that what Peirce regards as a hinge proposition is simply the claim that *some truths exist*. And it's plausible that this claim is *ceteris paribus* indubitable: we couldn't doubt it without doubting the correctness of all our other beliefs, since belief aims at truth.

Still, the passage just quoted suggests that *indubitability* is the wrong explanation for why Peirce counts even this most general commitment as a necessary presupposition of inquiry. His point isn't that we feel confident that it's true, or even that if we came to doubt it we would feel disturbed. These are psychological facts, and from early in his career, Peirce emphatically opposed the psychologistic attempt to measure claims' standing as bases for inquiry by reference to such facts (see, e.g., *W* 3: 244 [1877]; *EP* 2: 353 [1905]). Accordingly, he sidesteps the question whether "there might be some *psychological* excuse, or even warrant, for a 'will to believe'" that a necessary presupposition of inquiry is true: he's interested in what "logic warrants," not what our psychology dictates (*CP*: 2.113 [1901]). Arational confidence or even certainty, however important they may be in Wittgenstein's explanation

of claims' status as fundamental bases of inquiry,[4] cannot be central to Peirce's. The hinge metaphor distorts Peirce's account of the bases' credentials.

So, what are these credentials? Peirce concedes, not only that we can never be certain that there's a truth of the matter concerning any given subject, but even that we "have no reason to think" there is—no reason to think inquiry would ever finally converge on a single answer to any question (*CP*: 6.610 [1893]). Our acceptance that truths exist lacks *epistemic* credentials. But if the psychological facts of our confidence in it—and unmooredness without it—don't count in its favor either, what's left?

In answer, although our necessary presuppositions of inquiry aren't knowable or justifiable via independent grounds (i.e. *epistemic* reasons: Howat 2013: 457), it doesn't follow that they're "immune from … rational support" altogether (ibid.: 456). To identify the alternative form of rational support of which they admit, let's finally turn to Peirce's recurrent characterization of them as *hopes*. Though we may have a psychological excuse to believe them, Peirce maintains that:

> all that logic warrants is a *hope*, and not a belief. It must be admitted, however, that such hopes play a considerable part in logic. [Specifically,] when we discuss a vexed question, we *hope* that there is some ascertainable truth about it, and that the discussion is not go on forever and to no purpose. (*CP*: 2.113 [1901]).

It's plausible that, for Peirce, we can attain epistemic warrant for (T) by recognizing that it's analytically true. And we can attain the sort of warrant proper to hopes—or perhaps a special kind of hopes—for the claim that truths exist, and likewise the claim that there's a truth of the matter concerning our present inquiry. We don't need to fall back on

[4] At many points in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein questions whether mere feelings of confidence have epistemic import (1969: ¶¶2, 13–15, 30, 42, 172, 194, 273, 365, 404, 415, etc.). Still, I'll suggest in §5 that Peirce's anti-psychologism contradicts Wittgenstein's appeals to animal instincts as the basis of our (epistemic) practices. (I'm thus sympathetic to Misak [2016: §7.8] concerning Wittgenstein's relation to Peirce.)

commitments that are grounded merely psychologically rather than normatively. We needn't appeal to hinge propositions.

To make good on this claim, though, Peirce must explain the warrant proper to hopes and how it accrues to the claims just mentioned. In §4, we'll examine his explanation, considering how it avoids doubts Howat raises about the viability of Peirce's appeal to hope.

4. Defending Peirce's Appeal to Hope

Howat recognizes that Peirce regarded some claims that cannot be epistemically warranted but serve as necessary presuppositions of inquiry as hopes.[5] But he dismisses the idea, "[d]espite its exegetical strength," suggesting instead that "the best way to articulate and defend Peirce's view is by appealing to Wittgenstein's notion of a hinge proposition" (2013: 455n17, 455–56). Why? Howat presents two brief[6] doubts that appealing to hope enables us to identify a distinct type of rational standing for the claims in question. Examining and responding to them, especially the second, will helpfully lead us into the requisite details of Peirce's understanding of the hopes to which he appeals.

4.1. Distinguishing Belief from Hope

Both Howat's doubts address Peirce's claim that inquirers lack justification to believe, but have warrant to hope, that there's a truth of the matter concerning their subject of inquiry. First, Howat worries about the very distinction between believing and hoping: "if we understand belief as a disposition to act (as Peirce does), then there is no pragmatically

[5] Hookway (2000: 185–86, 277), Misak (2013: §3.9), and Atkin (2015) also note this.

[6] Recognizing that his statement of these doubts was quite compressed, Howat noted his plan "to criticize [the strategy of appealing to hope] in future work" (2013: 455n17). To my knowledge, though, his development of this criticism hasn't appeared.

legitimate way to draw the distinction Peirce needs here between a rational/justified hope and a belief" (ibid.: 455n17). Peirce's claim is naturally interpreted as the suggestion that, while inquirers aren't warranted in *feeling confident* (i.e. believing) that there's a truth regarding their subject matter, they're warranted in *assuming* there is *as a basis for action* (which seems related to hope—more on this relationship below). But if he understands belief not as a feeling of confidence but as a disposition to act, then, for him, to assume a claim so as to dispose oneself to act on it *just is* to believe it. The distinction he draws between belief and hope wouldn't be available.

I agree with Misak, however, that, as closely as Peirce tied belief to action, nevertheless he "was not willing to [endorse] a pure dispositional account of belief," but instead "asserted that the disposition to behave … is but one 'property' of belief" (2016: 19). Not only does belief "establish[] in our nature … a rule of action" or habit, it's further "something that we are aware of" (*W* 3: 263 [1878]). There's a characteristic "feeling of believing," one which "is a more or less sure indication of … some habit which will determine our actions" (ibid.: 247 [1877]), but isn't reducible to such a habit. Belief's phenomenology, Peirce notes, thus differs from doubt's: someone who believes a claim feels confident that it's true, while someone who doubts it feels uncertain regarding its truth. But since hoping, too, involves uncertainty—I cannot hope for something I know to be impossible, but equally cannot hope for something I'm certain will obtain (Downie 1963: 248–49)—hope's phenomenology likewise differs from belief's, grounding their distinctness as mental state types.

4.2. Reasons for Hope

That hope differs from belief, however, doesn't establish its viability for illuminating claims' standing as legitimate presuppositions of inquiry. That viability requires that hope in a given claim can be warranted even if belief in it isn't, and Howat expresses "skeptic[ism] about the prospects of identifying a distinctive set of norms governing hopes versus beliefs to which we can appeal in saying a hope is 'justified' or 'rational'" (2013: 455n17). To answer this second doubt, then, we must specify the sort of rational support proper to hopes.

Let's begin by returning to Peirce's explanation of how logic warrants our assumption that there's a truth about the subject of our present inquiry without justifying the belief that there is, now considering an example he uses as an analogy:

> When a hand at whist has reached the point at which each player has but three cards left, the one who has to lead often goes on the assumption that the cards are distributed in a certain way, because it is only on that assumption that the odd trick can be saved. This is indisputably logical … But all that logic warrants is a *hope*, and not a belief. … [W]hen we discuss a vexed question, we *hope* that there is some ascertainable truth about it, and that the discussion is not go on forever and to no purpose. (*CP*: 2.113 [1901]).

Compare a contemporaneous passage:

> there is … a hypothesis which we must embrace at the outset, however destitute of evidentiary support it may be. That hypothesis is that the facts in hand admit of rationalization, and of rationalization by us. That we must hope they do, for the same reason that a general who has to capture a position or see his country ruined, must go on the hypothesis that there is some way in which he can and shall capture it. We must be animated by that hope concerning the problem we have in hand … [Specifically, we're] bound to hope that, although the possible explanations of our facts may be strictly innumerable, yet our mind will be able, in some finite number of guesses, to guess the sole true explanation of them. *That* we are bound to assume, independently of any evidence that it is true. (*CP*: 7.219 [1901]).

Peirce suggests here that our hope for a truth about the subject of our inquiry is not merely indubitable but positively reasonable. It's *logically warranted*; it's supported by a *reason*. Yet this reason doesn't justify belief in such a truth, since it's non-evidential: it doesn't render this belief likely to be true. Rather, these passages suggest, it's a *practical* reason.

Is the whist player with the lead justified in believing that the particular card distribution she assumes to obtain really does so? Presumably not. Is the general justified in believing he can capture the crucial position? Let's suppose not. Their reasons for hoping these claims are true don't favor their actually being true. That's why they aren't justified in believing these claims, since a belief cannot be justified if it's "determined by any circumstance extraneous to the facts"—i.e. based on considerations that don't reliably indicate the truth of the claim believed (*W* 3: 253 [1877]; cf. 257). Reasons for hope are chiefly non-evidential, and so don't warrant belief.

Reasons for hope are instead chiefly practical. The whist player and the general have reasonable goals (winning the game; saving the country), and the truth of these respective claims is necessary for their respective goals to be achievable. As mentioned above, there are epistemic constraints on reasonable hope: if I know something is absolutely impossible, I cannot reasonably hope for it. Indeed, perhaps I cannot hope for it at all: theorists "generally agree that hope involves … the *desire* for an outcome and a *belief* that the outcome is possible" (Stockdale 2021: 14). But there's a sizable gap between *not knowing something to be impossible* and *being justified in believing that it's true*. So, these constraints can be satisfied even when the evidence falls far short of justifying belief. In such cases, what contributes most to hope's reasonability isn't evidence for the hoped-for claim, but the practical rationality of our desiring it to obtain.

For example, suppose I can purchase (only) one lottery ticket. Only ten tickets are issued, the price of a ticket is $1, and the prize is $1 million. It's obviously reasonable for me to hope to win the lottery—and, further, motivated by that hope, to purchase a ticket. Winning's a desirable outcome. Further, it wouldn't be just barely possible, but a very live possibility, and the costs required to render it so are miniscule. Surely, then, I should play,

and surely it's reasonable to harbor hopes (of significant intensity) of winning. If I do play, however, clearly I remain unjustified in *believing* that I'll win: after all, my evidence shows that I have only a 10% chance of winning, and so doesn't favor the truth of the claim that I'll win. That's how hopes that satisfy very permissive epistemic constraints can be reasonable to adopt, given strong practical reasons in their favor, even as corresponding beliefs remain unreasonable, given the insufficient evidence for them.

4.3. Reasonable Action-as-if

The standards governing warranted hope are indeed distinct from those governing warranted belief. But a problem remains: given the normative role Peirce ascribes to inquirers' hope for a truth of the matter concerning the subject of their inquiry, he needs this hope to be warranted to a stronger degree than is required for garden-variety hopes to count as reasonable. Specifically, he needs it to be warranted sufficiently as to warrant *acting as if* a truth of the matter exists (more specifically, inquiring). And it's unclear not only whether such sufficient warrant must likewise suffice to warrant belief, but whether it's even possible to warrant the hope in question sufficiently in the first place.

Return to the lottery case. My fairly strong hope to win the lottery seems reasonable, and so I seem warranted in imagining, yearning for, and planning for the possibility of winning the lottery. What I don't seem warranted in doing is straightaway *acting as if* I'll win the lottery. In advance of the drawing, manifestly it wouldn't be reasonable to put a down payment on my dream mansion, max out my credit cards, etc., expecting that my lottery winnings will reimburse me. My chances of winning remain 10%: if I may reasonably hope to win, nevertheless I should *expect* to lose, and the latter weighs more heavily in determining the (un)reasonableness of my actions. Reasonable hope, then, doesn't straightaway yield

reasonable action-as-if: it's sometimes reasonable to hope for unlikely events but still unreasonable not to plan for their failing to obtain (Martin 2014: 21–22).

That's important because Peirce clearly regards the particular hopes to which he appeals as warranting action-as-if. The whist player and the general seem warranted, not merely in viewing the likelihood of their respective victories favorably, but in *accepting* that necessary conditions for their victories obtain—i.e. guiding their reasoning and action by the assumption that these conditions obtain (Elgin 2010: 64).[7] Peirce needs something similar to be true of inquirers, since he aims to show that logic warrants not merely our regarding inquiry's prospects of success favorably, but our actually undertaking to inquire. But if my acting straightaway as if I'll win the lottery is unreasonable absent (at least) a justified assessment that I'm likelier than not to win the lottery, then by parallel it might seem that inquiring is unreasonable absent (at least) a justified assessment that it's likelier than not that there's a truth of the matter concerning the subject of inquiry.

That result would be doubly problematic. First, it would vitiate the appeal to practical reasons as a response to Howat's second doubt, since it would raise the worry that inquirers' hope for a truth about the subject of their inquiry cannot be sufficiently warranted to play the normative role Peirce accords it except by considerations that would likewise justify their holding the corresponding belief. Worse yet, since Peirce himself concedes that "we have no reason to think" there's such a truth of the matter about any particular question concerning which we inquire (*CP*: 6.610 [1893]), seemingly he'd likewise have to grant that we lack reasons to hope this that are sufficiently strong to warrant our undertaking to inquire. His defense of the rationality of inquiry would fail.

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[7] At least for certain purposes: very roughly, purposes internal to the enterprise in question. (In lieu of a criterion, an illustration: it's reasonable for the whist-player to guide his decision about which card to lead by the assumption that the cards are distributed in the way necessary for his victory. It's not reasonable for him to guide his decision whether to wager that his partnership will win the hand by that assumption.)

In reply, in the lottery case, acting straightaway as if I'll win would indeed be unreasonable. But that case is disanalogous to Peirce's in a way that suggests that the result that reasonable action-as-if requires one's evidence to support the hoped-for claim on balance doesn't generalize. Compare the lottery case to that of Peirce's general: consider the relationship in each case between acting as if the hoped-for outcome will obtain and the likelihood of its obtaining. In the lottery case, once I've bought my ticket, further action as if I'll win doesn't affect my chances of winning. However desirable winning might be, then, this desirability cannot render acting as if I'll win practically reasonable. In the general's case, by contrast, guiding his thought and action by the assumption that there's a way to capture the all-important position is necessary for his capturing it: if he doesn't carefully plan out how to capture it and act on his plan, he won't succeed. If, then, the general's end of saving the country, and so of capturing the position, is a reasonable one, then it's likewise practically reasonable for him to *accept* that he can capture the position, since doing so is a necessary means to his practically reasonable end.

Someone might object that this reply faces an insuperable dilemma. For even if acting as if I'll win the lottery—by, say, putting a down payment on my dream mansion—isn't a necessary means to my aim of winning the lottery, it may well be a necessary means to my end of owning my dream mansion. Is that end practically reasonable? Suppose owning my dream mansion is a deep, abiding desire of mine. Even so, the proponent of this reply cannot grant that this end is practically reasonable without opening Peirce's position to the charge that it licenses clearly unreasonable behavior (in this case, putting a down payment on my dream mansion in advance of actually winning the lottery). On the other hand, if this end isn't practically reasonable, it's seemingly simply because my evidence suggests that it's likely unattainable, in virtue (*inter alia*) of suggesting that I'm unlikely to win the lottery. But so,

too, the objector might suggest, the general's evidence may well suggest that he's unlikely to capture the all-important position, and inquirers' evidence may well suggest that they're unlikely to attain the truth.

Two compatible replies can be made to this objection. The first is simply that the general's evidence needn't positively tell against the likelihood of his capturing the position: it might be neutral. If so, while he'd remain unjustified in believing that he'll succeed in capturing the position, he might be practically warranted in assuming that he'll do so as a basis for subsequent thought and action. By itself, however, this reply doesn't help much. After all, we could alter the lottery case so that only two tickets are issued, one of which I buy. In this variant, my evidence doesn't tell against my winning: it's neutral. Yet it still seems unreasonable for me to make the down payment on my dream mansion before the drawing.

Peirce's defender must also reply, then, that the ends in the two cases are desirable to different degrees. Avoiding his country's ruin is presumably of paramount importance to the general: it may well be essential to his happiness. Purchasing my dream mansion, meanwhile, for all its attractions presumably is one of many domicile-acquisition options that are adequate for my well-being. That's why it seems reasonable for the general to aim to realize the former end even absent evidence that he'll succeed, but not for me to aim to realize the latter absent such evidence.

It can indeed, then, be practically rational not merely to hope that an event will obtain but to act as if it will, even absent justification to believe that it's likely to obtain. This will be so when such action-as-if is a necessary means to realizing one's practically reasonable ends. And such ends can be practically reasonable even where justification to believe that they're likely attainable is lacking. The claim that some such end is nevertheless

practically reasonable will be more plausible if either—or especially both—of two conditions are met: first, one's evidence doesn't suggest that it's unattainable, but is merely neutral concerning its attainability; and second, attaining it is very strongly desirable, or even essential for one's well-being.

This established, let's return to inquiry. I'll now show that Peirce argued persuasively that both these conditions are met, not necessarily concerning claims that there are truths of the matter about subjects of particular inquiries—though for some such claims they will be—but at least concerning the general claim that *some truths exist and are attainable through inquiry*. Peirce thought that this claim, while unsupportable by suitably independent evidence, couldn't be confuted by evidence either. And he saw acting as if it's true as necessary to attain a good of paramount importance to human well-being.

Consider Peirce's conclusion to "Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic":

> the assumption that man or the community [of inquirers] … shall ever arrive at a state of information greater than some definite finite information, is entirely unsupported by reasons. There cannot be a scintilla of evidence to show that at some time [intelligence won't permanently vanish from the universe] … [T]he question is single and supreme, and ALL is at stake upon it. We are in the condition of man in a life and death struggle; if he have not sufficient strength, it is wholly indifferent to him how he acts, so that the only assumption upon which he can act rationally is the hope of success. So this sentiment is rigidly demanded by logic. … [I]t is always a hypothesis uncontradicted by facts and justified by its indispensableness for making any action rational. (*W* 2: 271–72 [1869]).

Thinking and acting as if there's a truth of the matter concerning any particular topic of possible inquiry may or may not be practically valuable. But the practical value of thinking and acting as if *there are truths ascertainable through inquiry* isn't similarly contingent. For if we don't accept this, we won't inquire at all—what would be the point? We won't learn any new truths and, further, will suspend belief in those we already know. And then we'll lack any basis for assessing actions as reasonable or unreasonable: without knowledge about how things are, we won't be in a position to judge what would be reasonable to do. But acting in

ways we can recognize on reflection to be reasonable is clearly an intrinsically valuable aim. (Moreover, this aim is seemingly presupposed by, or implicated in, the very act of deliberation. Since we humans can't opt out of deliberate action—to try is *ipso facto* to fail!—foreswearing the aim of rational action is pragmatically self-undermining.) Acting on the assumption that truths exist is thus a necessary means to our valuable end of rational action.

Further, we cannot have any positive evidence that this assumption is false or that this end cannot be realized. As Peirce says, "it is always a hypothesis uncontradicted by facts"—or at least by the facts as we know them. Concerning any given local inquiry, we might have evidence that the truth about its subject matter is presently unattainable, or even non-existent. But we cannot have positive knowledge that casts doubt on the existence of ascertainable truths *sans phrase*, for the obvious reason that items of such knowledge would themselves constitute truths, and reflectively appealing to them as reasons for doubt would require recognizing them as such. Our epistemic standpoint can never cast doubt on the claim that inquiring can sometimes yield the truth, then: it can, at worst, be neutral. This neutrality would prevent our being justified in believing this claim, but it would still allow for the reasonableness of our hope in it and, further, our accepting it as a basis for thought and action. It would still allow for the practical rationality of inquiry.

5. Conclusion

Plausibly, Peirce regarded (T) as analytic of <truth>, not as a hinge proposition. The law of excluded middle—the claim that there's a true answer to every meaningful question—isn't a hinge proposition either, for Peirce: it's an illegitimate generalization. What Peirce grants we cannot be justified in believing, but must nevertheless accept for inquiry to be reasonable, is that some truths exist. But even this claim isn't a hinge proposition. While it may be

indubitable, that's no reason to accept it. Nor is it altogether unsupportable by reasons. Rather, this claim we must accept without *epistemic* warrant is a hope supported by *pragmatic* warrants. And if my argument in §4 succeeds, these warrants are sufficiently weighty not only to render this hope reasonable, but to render it appropriately action-guiding—and so to secure our warrant to inquire.

Once this is secured, inquiry may yield positive evidence that some particular further question has a true answer. If we then undertake to inquire concerning it, we won't treat the claim that there's a true answer to our question as a hinge proposition: we'll justifiedly believe it. But even absent such evidence, this claim needn't serve as a hinge. Instead, there will be two possibilities: either we have strong practical reasons for undertaking the inquiry or we don't. If we do, then these practical reasons will warrant us in hoping—and acting as if—this claim is correct (at least, absent evidence that it's false). And if we don't, then it won't be reasonable for us to accept this claim, because it won't be reasonable for us to conduct the inquiry. In neither case does the claim function as a hinge: in the former, it's a pragmatically-warranted hope, and in the latter, it's a claim to which we can—and ought to—withhold commitment.

Peirce doesn't rely on hinge propositions, then, either in imposing epistemic constraints on truth or in affirming that there are truths. Still, his epistemology bears important parallels to Wittgenstein's. If we call an epistemological account on which justification presupposes "a system of assumptions which are not, in turn, justifiable" a *hinge epistemology* (Coliva 2015: 42; cf. Wittgenstein 1969: ¶105), then Peirce's epistemology qualifies. He'd agree wholeheartedly with Wittgenstein that "justification"—*evidential* warrant—"comes to an end," and further that this end it bottoms out in is "our *acting*." He'd concur that this Wittgensteinian position "sounds like pragmatism" (ibid.: ¶¶192, 204, 422).

He'd vehemently reject, however, Wittgenstein's suggestion that our way of acting is itself rationally "ungrounded": that it not only "lies beyond being justified or unjustified," but that we should therefore regard it "as something animal," grounded not in reasons of any kind but only in "primitive … instinct" (ibid.: ¶¶110, 359, 475). Peirce would see this Humean retreat to "mere description" of our basic commitments as unpalatably psychologistic (ibid.: ¶189), and moreover as necessary only given a false dilemma. We needn't choose between securing *epistemic* warrants for our basic epistemic commitments (good luck!) and merely describing their causes. Just before discussing our "primitive," instinct-driven state, Wittgenstein remarks that, although the "game" of inquiry "proves its worth" practically, "[t]hat may be the cause of its being played, but it is not the ground" (ibid.: ¶474). But for Peirce, it *is* the ground: our inquiry is warranted because it's a necessary means to the reasonable end of rational action. In offering this normative foundation for inquiry even while allowing that justification must come to an end, his position seems more attractive than Wittgenstein's.

I'll conclude by noting one additional attractive feature of his position: it renders epistemic constraints on truth otiose. I noted in §1 that, while epistemic theories of truth represent attractively direct responses to radical skepticism, they seem unacceptable in light of the problem of buried secrets. Howat's interpretation seemed appealing in casting (T) as a hinge proposition, thereby denying that Peirce regarded truth as constitutively epistemically constrained. But if the competing interpretation I've been exploring is correct, Peirce instead thought (T) was analytic: he saw this epistemic constraint as constitutive of truth.[8] What we

[8] Mightn't Howat reply that, even so, his interpretation might sketch a broadly Peircean account of truth that is more substantively defensible by our own lights? (Hookway [2000: e.g., 64] and Wiggins [2004: 89] would likely make similar replies to my argument in §2.) My rejoinder would be that the primary utility I see for Peirce's views in this area is their potential to secure—in the face of radical skeptical doubts—the rationality of our undertaking to inquire. And as I contend below in the main text, I take this paper's argument to show that,

can now see, though, is that this constraint doesn't ultimately do any anti-skeptical work, anyway. (T) initially seemed useful for opposing skepticism because it provides that truths would be agreed on by inquirers, given sufficiently good epistemic conditions. But this only pushed the skeptical problem back a level. Why, after all, should we think there are any truths in the first place? What enables us to answer this deeper question is not (T)—it's our pragmatic warrant to accept that there are truths ascertainable by inquiry, warrant which is secured by the value of rational action. And if we have a good answer to this deeper question, one might think, we've already defanged radical skepticism: we already have good reason to suppose that there are true, knowable answers to any questions concerning which we have sufficient practical reasons to inquire. We don't need further to impose epistemic constraints on truth. Since such constraints proved implausible, this is a welcome result.

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while this potential is genuine, (T) doesn't contribute to realizing it. Perhaps it can be demonstrated that other philosophical problems about truth are best addressed by treating (T) as a hinge proposition. But even if so, that won't undermine my argument that, first, it's reasonable to think that's not the status that Peirce himself accorded (T), and second, neither (T) nor any other hinge proposition seems necessary for the rational vindication of inquiry.

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