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Abstract

Pragmatists have always made use of indispensability arguments. This paper starts with a debate that raged between the founders of pragmatism over William James's idea that if it is good for me to believe that *p* is true, then I ought to believe that *p* is true. Chauncey Wright and C. S. Peirce took James to task and Peirce put forward an argument about how we need to hope that the regulative assumptions of inquiry are true. This insight was later picked up by C. I. Lewis and W. V. O. Quine, who argued that a priori "truths" are not necessarily true. They are simply what we need to articulate our world view. The paper concludes with some remarks about where the future of pragmatism lies.

Keywords: Pragmatism, The Will to Believe, Truth, Regulative assumptions, Peirce, James, Santayana, Lewis, Quine, Rorty.

The Classical Pragmatists: Wright, James, Peirce

In the early- to mid-1870s, William James started to argue that if one *needs* to believe something, then one *ought* to believe it, even if there is no evidence in its favor. It is not easy to unwind the various things that James said about what he called the will to believe, but one thing is clear. He was initially tempted to put forward a very strong point and despite the refinements he was eventually to make, his is the most contentious version of pragmatist indispensability arguments. Most importantly, it set the stage for how pragmatism was to evolve.

In some remarks made in an 1875 review in the *Nation*² and in the penultimate draft of "The Will to Believe," James argues that, given the dearth of evidence for or

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against the existence of God, if believing in God makes me happier, then I have a *duty* to believe in God. He makes a shockingly strong point: “any one *to whom it makes a practical difference* (whether of motive to action or mental peace) is in duty bound to...it.”³

Chauncey Wright, the unsung third founder of pragmatism (with James and Peirce) was appalled by this idea. He laid in wait for an opportunity to have what he thought was a much-needed “duel” with his friend over the matter. It is worth quoting extensively from Wright’s account of those interactions:

I have carried out my purpose of giving Dr. James the two lectures I had in store for him. I found him just returned home on Wednesday evening. His father remarked in the course of talk, that he had not found any typographical errors in William’s article. . . . I said that I had read it with interest and had not noticed any *typographical* errors. The emphasis attracted the youth’s attention, and made him demand an explanation, which was my premeditated discourse. . . . He fought vigorously . . . but confessed to having written under irritation. On Friday evening I saw him again and introduced the subject of the ‘duty of belief’ as advocated by him in the *Nation*. He retracted the word ‘duty.’ All that he meant to say was that it is foolish not to believe, or try to believe, if one is happier for believing. But even so he seemed to me to be more epicurean (though he hates the sect) than even the utilitarians would allow to be wise. . . .⁴

James altered his position in light of this onslaught. When “The Will to Believe” was finally published twenty years later, he argued that one has a *right* to believe ahead of the evidence, if one is happier for believing.

All readers of James will know that he at times argues that there is a class of beliefs so important that we can’t wait around for the evidence to come. Whether to believe in God is one of those “forced” beliefs. Peirce was also fond of this argument: if a matter isn’t “vital,” as Peirce says, or “momentous” as James says, we can wait and make up our mind when “objective evidence has come.” “In scientific questions, this is almost always the case” because action does not require an immediate answer. But in matters of law, ethics, and religion, we cannot wait until inquiry takes its full course. We have no choice but to act and so we need to go on our instincts (Peirce) or our passions (James) (1979 [1896]: 26–7).⁵

But this interpretation runs up against both James’s “duty to believe” inclination and the other examples he gives of situations in which we need to believe. One non-momentous, non-forced situation in which I can will to believe is when I have no evidence for whether Mary likes me or not. If I believe that she does like me, then that belief will lead to

actions that support friend-making and make it more likely that Mary will end up my friend and that I will reap benefits. If I fail to believe, that will lead to actions that undercut friend-making; it will make it less likely that Mary will become my friend; and I will forgo the potential benefits. Similarly, an alpine climber who needs to jump across a chasm should believe he can make it, for that belief increases the likelihood of a successful jump.

James, that is, takes it as generally unreasonable to be committed to self-fulfilling defeatist prophecies—where the belief that one will fail ensures or encourages the failure.

The very idea of warrant or of truth, for James, is tied up with our interests and passions.⁶ Here is one of James's staunchest defenders, Howard Knox, in 1909 linking James's view of truth with his view of the will to believe:

All that Prof. James had actually contended was that certain risks had to be taken by faith by both parties; but it was tempting to treat this doctrine merely as intended to revive the apologetics of Pascal's wager, and to glorify faith by the sacrifice of Reason. His essential purpose was, however, to challenge the very conception of 'pure Reason' which created the antithesis, and to mitigate their divergence by showing that Reason, no less than Faith, must be justified by works.⁷

All beliefs, that is, are made true by being good to believe. Science and faith are not separate spheres of activity, one the province of reason and the other the province of what is desirable. Religious belief is in the same camp as scientific belief, true if it "pays," false if it does not. Reason and truth themselves are inextricably linked to what pays. James is not arguing that our passionate natures must decide between propositions only when they can't be decided on intellectual grounds. He wants to broaden the scope of "intellectual grounds" so that they include the passionate.

In his own words: "Any idea upon which we can ride . . . any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor, is . . . true *instrumentally*" (1907 [1975]: 34). "Satisfactorily," for James (and this is the crux of the matter): "means more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently. To a certain degree, therefore, everything here is plastic" (1975 [1907]: 35).

His point is that prudence or benefit is tied to truth. That is the very radical nature of James's proposal. He could not be more clear than in the preface to *The Will to Believe* volume, when the famous essay was finally published:

If religious hypotheses about the universe be in order at all, then the active faiths of individuals in them, freely expressing themselves in life, are the experimental tests by which they are verified, and the only means by which their truth or falsehood can be wrought out. The truest scientific hypothesis is that which, as we say, 'works best'; and it can be no otherwise with religious hypotheses. [1979 (1896): 8]

And here is J. B. Pratt in 1909, pointing out the fatal flaw in James's position:

Pragmatism . . . seeks to prove the truth of religion by its good and satisfactory consequences. Here, however, a distinction must be made; namely between the 'good', harmonious, and logically confirmatory consequences of religious concepts as such, and the good and pleasant consequences which come from believing these concepts. It is one thing to say a belief is true because the logical consequences that flow from it fit in harmoniously with our otherwise grounded knowledge; and quite another to call it true because it is pleasant to believe. [1909: 186–7]

The essential difference⁸ between James's and Peirce's accounts of truth is that the Peirce latches on to the first option of which Pratt speaks. Peircean pragmatism links truth to good and satisfactory consequences—those which are empirically confirmed, fit with our otherwise grounded knowledge, etc.⁹

James dedicated his book *The Will to Believe* "To My Old Friend, Charles Sanders Peirce, To whose philosophic comradeship in old times and to whose writings in more recent years I owe more incitement and help than I can express or repay." Peirce owed a rather lot to James, who tried vainly to keep his difficult friend in academic work, and Peirce was clearly touched by the dedication. Nonetheless, he does not have much good to say about James's essay. He writes to James: "I thought your *Will to Believe* was a very exaggerated utterance, such as injures a serious man very much. . ." (*CWJ* 12: 171; 1909).¹⁰ He scorned what he took to be James's view: "Oh, I could not believe so-and-so, because I should be wretched if I did" (*CP* 5: 377; 1877).¹¹

Peirce was himself very interested in the indispensable. But he disagreed with James's idea that if we need something to be true, that warrants us in believing that it is true. Here is the key passage in Peirce's "The Fixation of Belief," in which he knocks down every way of fixing belief but the scientific method of paying attention to evidence and argument. The a priori method (or the method of going on what seems reasonable) is a "failure," for it

makes of inquiry something similar to the development of taste; but taste, unfortunately, is always more or less a matter of fashion . . . [And]

I cannot help seeing that . . . sentiments in their development will be very greatly determined by accidental causes. Now, there are some people, among whom I must suppose that my reader is to be found, who, *when they see that any belief of theirs is determined by any circumstance extraneous to the facts, will from that moment not merely admit in words that that belief is doubtful, but will experience a real doubt of it, so that it ceases to be a belief.* [W3: 253; 1877 emphasis added]

Peirce's point is that a genuine belief—one that is aimed at truth—is such that it resigns in the face of recalcitrant experience or in the knowledge that it was put into place by a method that did not take experience seriously.¹²

Indispensability comes into Peirce's position in the following way. He thinks that there are "regulative assumptions" that we have to accept.¹³ For instance, we must assume that, in general, our observations can be explained and that there are real things whose characters are both independent of our beliefs about them and can be discovered through empirical investigation (W3. 254; 1877).

A related assumption is that for any matter into which we are inquiring, we would find an answer to the question that is pressing on us. Otherwise, it would be pointless to inquire into the issue: "the only assumption upon which [we] can act rationally is the hope of success" (W2. 272; 1869). Thus we need to assume the principle of bivalence—for any p , p is either true or false—holds for any question into which we are inquiring.

But it is important to see that Peirce does not want to make any claim about special logical status (that the principle of bivalence is a logical truth); nor even that it is true in some plainer sense; nor that the world is such that the principle of bivalence must hold. The principle of bivalence, Peirce says, is taken by logicians to be a law of logic by a "saltus"—by an unjustified leap. He distinguishes his own approach from that of the transcendentalist:

when we discuss a vexed question, we *hope* that there is some ascertainable truth about it, and that the discussion is not to go on forever and to no purpose. A transcendentalist would claim that it is an indispensable 'presupposition' that there is an ascertainable true answer to every intelligible question. I used to talk like that, myself; for when I was a babe in philosophy my bottle was filled from the udders of Kant. But by this time I have come to want something more substantial. [CP 2. 113; 1902]

Peirce wants to naturalize Kant. He thinks of indispensability arguments in a modest, low profile way.¹⁴ Not only should the fact that an assumption is indispensable to our practice of inquiry not convince us of its *necessary* truth, it should not even convince us of its truth. He

says: “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” (*CP* 2. 113; 1902, see also 3. 432; 1896). We must make these assumptions “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” (*CP* 7. 219; 1901).

Peirce’s view is that “we are obliged to suppose, but we need not assert.” A regulative assumption makes a claim about a practice and what those engaged in that practice must assume in order for the practice to be comprehensible and able to be carried out. His point is a point about the successful continuation of a practical matter—whether it be making friends, preventing your country from being ruined, or jumping a chasm. If we want to succeed in these endeavors, we need to make assumptions—assumptions that allow the practice to go on in the way that is desired. Our reason for making the assumptions is driven, Peirce says, by “desperation.” If we do not make the assumptions required by inquiry, for instance, we will “be quite unable to know anything of positive fact” (*CP* 5. 603; 1903). Faced with an assumption without which we cannot continue an important practice, we must somehow embrace it, without believing it, “however destitute of evidentiary support it may be” (*CP* 7. 219; 1901)¹⁵:

The sole immediate purpose of thinking is to render things intelligible; and to think and yet in that very act to think a thing unintelligible is a self-stultification. It is as though a man furnished with a pistol to defend himself against an enemy were, on finding that enemy very redoubtable, to use his pistol to blow his own brains out to escape being killed by his enemy. Despair is insanity. . . . We must therefore be guided by the rule of hope. . . . [*CP* 1. 405; 1890]

If that practice is at the very heart of what we think makes us human—seeking right answers to our questions, for instance, then these regulative assumptions are going to be hard to dislodge. Nonetheless, they are mere assumptions or hopes—without which, it is true, the human world as we know it is imperiled.¹⁶ There will be questions in the air about whether the propositional attitude envisioned by Peirce is one that makes good sense, but we shall see that his idea fares better than James’ as the history of pragmatism marches on.

The Next Generation: George Santayana and C. I. Lewis

George Santayana, student of James and pragmatist fellow-traveller, weighed into the indispensability debate in an illuminating manner. Like Peirce (although without acknowledging it), Santayana holds that:

In regard to the original articles of the animal creed—that there is a world, that there is a future, that things can be sought and found, and things seen can be eaten—no guarantee can possibly be offered. I am sure these dogmas are often false; and perhaps the event will some day falsify them all; and they will lapse altogether. But while life lasts . . . this faith must endure. [1923: 180]

Santayana was a whole-hearted supporter of one of the central tenets of pragmatism: we have to start with where we find ourselves, laden with a body of belief which we cannot simply shed in light of Cartesian requirements for certainty. Try as we might to suspend beliefs that are in want of guarantees, life and the need to act get in the way of that suspension.¹⁷

Santayana is at pains to distinguish his position on this matter from that of James.¹⁸ He notes that he, like James, makes use of the idea of “the fundamental presuppositions that I cannot live without making” (1951 [1940]: 499; 505). But Santayana does not infer from the fact that we have to accept some beliefs that we can choose the beliefs we should accept. James’s view that sometimes “faith in success could nerve us to bring success about, and so justify itself by its own operation” is, he says, “a thought typical of James at his worst—a worst in which there is always a good side” (2009 [1920]: 60).

Santayana, Wright, and Peirce struggled mightily to articulate the good side of the thought. Their friend and fellow founder of pragmatism, Oliver Wendell Holmes, puts their point beautifully:

Chauncey Wright a nearly forgotten philosopher of real merit, taught me when young that I must not say *necessary* about the universe, that we don’t know whether anything is necessary or not. I believe that we can *bet* on the behavior of the universe in its contact with us. So I describe myself as a *betabilitarian*.¹⁹

When Santayana uses the word “faith” and Peirce uses the word “instinct,” they do not mean to mark something that is unbacked by experience and reasons. They mean to say that they have reason to bet on the truth being such-and-such. Santayana says that instead of using “so brutal a term as animal faith,” he might have used “cognitive instinct, empirical confidence, or even practical reason” (1951 [1940]: 586). We can’t just choose what to believe. He could not be any clearer:

Why does belief that you can jump a ditch help you to jump it? Because it is a symptom of the fact that you *could* jump it, that your legs were fit and that the ditch was two yards wide and not twenty. A rapid and just appreciation of these facts has given you your confidence, or at least has made it reasonable . . . otherwise you would have been a fool and got a ducking for it. [2009 (1920): 61]

Echoing Peirce, Santayana thinks that experience comes by way of “*shocks*” to which we must pay attention.²⁰ “In the tangle of human beliefs,” one can distinguish “a compulsory factor called facts or things from a more optional and argumentative factor called suggestion or interpretation” (1923: 3). These compulsory factors are a check on what we can assume.

C. I. Lewis was also James’s student and, unlike Santayana, consistently a self-described pragmatist. Lewis was only twenty years younger than Santayana. But his engagement with the logical empiricists and his influence on his own student, Quine, provides an argument for thinking of Lewis as the bridge between classical and contemporary pragmatism.

In the great debate between Peirce and James, he sides with Peirce (whose papers he “lived with” for two years upon arrival at Harvard as a faculty member): “When we determine truth, we determine that which it is correct to believe and that upon which it is desirable (not merely desired) to act” (1970 [1940]: 111). Lewis is dead set against the abandonment of evidence and reasons to the vagaries of wants and needs.

He calls his position “conceptual pragmatism” and offers us “a pragmatic conception of the a priori.” For Lewis, as with Peirce and Santayana, it is experience that is compelling: “no conscious being . . . can fail to be aware of that element in his experience which he finds, willy nilly, as it is and not otherwise.” The a priori, on the other hand, is the “uncompelled initiative of human thought” (1970 [1923]: 238). It is a conceptual framework or network of categories and definitive concepts (1970 [1923]: 237). Such frameworks, he says, “are peculiarly social products, reached in the light of experiences which have much in common, and beaten out, like other pathways, by the coincidence of human purposes and the exigencies of human cooperation” (1970 [1923]: 239). They are not necessary, as Kant argued. They are simply indispensable if we are to make sense of experience. The laws of logic are “principles of procedure, the parliamentary rules of intelligent thought and speech” (1970 [1923]: 232). Definition, analytic truths such as “all brothers are male,” categories that underlie science such as that of absolute space and time, and the laws of inference are “addressed to ourselves” and “represent no operations of the objective world, but only our categories of mind.” They “are subject to alteration on pragmatic grounds when the expanding boundaries of experience reveal their infelicity as intellectual instruments” (1970 [1923]: 239).

Lewis argues that there are, for instance, several logics, each self-consistent under its own terms. The choice of which to adopt is a pragmatic one. The law of excluded middle merely

formulates our decision that whatever is not designated by a certain term shall be designated by its negative. It declares our purpose to

make, for every term, a complete dichotomy of experience, instead—as we might choose—of classifying on the basis of a tripartite division into opposites (as black and white) and the middle ground between the two. Our rejection of such tripartite division represents only our penchant for simplicity. [1970 (1923): 232]

Here is how Lewis suggests we think of the a priori. The anticipation of Quine, it will be noted, could not be stronger:

the whole body of our conceptual interpretations form a sort of hierarchy or pyramid with the most comprehensive, such as those of logic, at the top, and the least general such as [‘all swans are birds’] etc, at the bottom; that with this complex system of interrelated concepts, we approach particular experiences and attempt to fit them, somewhere and somehow, into its preformed patterns. Persistent failure leads to readjustment. . . . The higher up a concept stands in our pyramid, the more reluctant we are to disturb it, because the more radical and far-reaching the results will be. . . . The decision that there are no such creatures as have been defined as ‘swans’ would be unimportant. The conclusion that there are no such things as Euclidean triangles, would be immensely disturbing. And if we should be forced to realize that nothing in experience possesses any stability—that our principle, ‘Nothing can both be and not be,’ was merely a verbalism, applying to nothing more than momentarily—that denouement would rock our world to its foundations. [1929: 305–6]

This is from *Mind and the World Order*, written in 1929, long before Lewis’ own students—Quine and Goodman (and Morton White) bizarrely started to use these very thoughts against Lewis himself.²¹ And it is very similar to Peirce’s view of how we should regard what we find indispensable. A priori “truths” are not necessarily true. They are simply what we need to articulate our world view. They could be revised, but only at great cost to that world view.

The Debate Continues: Contemporary Pragmatism

I want to turn to some brief and speculative thoughts as to how the debate manifests itself today. Although Quine started off calling himself a pragmatist,²² he soon grew wary of the label. Perhaps he wanted to seem to not be simply trumpeting his teacher’s view, although trumpet Lewis’ view he most certainly did. Perhaps he felt that James had captured the pragmatist flag and wanted to distance himself from the position that had attracted so much scorn from Russell, Moore, and others.²³ Whatever the explanation, Quine abandoned the pragmatist camp,²⁴ leaving the ground wide open to be taken over by a new Jamesian.

That new Jamesian was Richard Rorty, who wanted to “substitute the idea of ‘unforced agreement’ for that of ‘objectivity’” (1991: 38). It

is no surprise to find Rorty saying that his own narratives about pragmatism “tend to center around James’s version . . . of the pragmatic theory of truth” (Rorty 1995c: 71). For one way of thinking of Rorty’s position is as follows: if we need to think p , then we ought to believe p . There is nothing to say about truth and warrant over and above that. Given that norms are human norms, there is nothing but play and irony left to adjudicate between them. There is no place for the check of experience. All is chosen, if not by individuals, then by communities. By redescribing history and circumstances from our own point of view, we can say “thus I willed it” and we can make ourselves authors of our own stories (Rorty 2000 [1989]: 40).

But we must return, I submit, to the more moderate view first articulated by Peirce and Wright. We need to take seriously that which we need to believe while avoiding two mistakes. We must not make the mistake of taking what we need to believe so seriously as to think that it is necessarily true (the mistake of Kant and, I would argue, Habermas²⁵) or true in some plainer sense (the mistake of James). The future of pragmatism, I submit, lies in this modest stance, in which there are norms and standards, which come from within our practices of inquiry, reason-giving, and justification. They are not given to us by a direct connection with the world-as-it-is independently of inquirers. They are not given to us by God. And they are not given to us by the requirements of necessity. They are human standards, held in check by the force of experience.

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NOTES

1. Thanks go to Diana Heney, the philosophers at the New School for Social Research, and the audience at the C. S. Peirce Society, for comments on an earlier draft.

2. James (1987 [1875]: 293).

3. (1987 [1875]: 293); emphasis in original.

4. Part of this letter can be found in Thayer (1971 [1878]: 341–43). But one must turn to the excellent Madden (1963: 45) to find the longer, more interesting excerpt quoted here.

5. See Peirce "Vitality Important Topics" (*CP* 5: 616–661; 1898).

6. For a sustained interpretation of James on this score, see Misak (2012).

7. Knox (2001 [1909]: 5).

8. Another difference is that James sometimes takes truth to be what works here and now, whereas Peirce always takes truth to be what would be good to believe in the long run, were we to have all the evidence and argument we could have. At times (for instance, in "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life"), James presents us with something very close to Peirce's view of truth.

9. That this is Peirce's view is made very clear when we see how he handled the question of whether it is rational to believe in God. He was just as keen as James in inquiring whether theism is a legitimate doctrine, but the test for legitimacy he tries to put in place is tellingly different. He thought that there is one and only one way to show that the hypothesis is belief-worthy—to show that it is such that we can get an old-fashioned kind of evidence for or against it. The consequences relevant to belief can't be of the sort 'it is satisfying to me' or 'it has a commanding influence on my life'. For Peirce, truth is not linked to this kind of consequence. For James, it is.

10. Peirce thinks that James's *Pluralistic Universe* is even "more suicidal" (*CWJ* 12: 171; 1909). The view of truth James advances is "careless" and needs to be altered lest it "flatly condemn all human reasoning" (*CWJ* 12: 171–172; 1909).

11. In 1908 he distances himself from the Jamesian brand of pragmatism, which he attributes to James, Schiller, and "the pragmatists of today":

It seems to me a pity they should allow a philosophy so instinct with life to become infected with seeds of death in such notions as that of . . . the mutability of truth, and in such confusions of thought as that of active willing (willing to control thought, to doubt, and to weigh reasons) with willing not to exert the will (willing to believe). [*CP* 6. 485; 1908]

12. Peirce argues that recalcitrant experience can take many forms—it can be had in diagrammatic contexts, for instance.

13. Wright was interested in a similar idea, but it was undeveloped in his scant writings. He thinks that we need to make the "a priori assumption," for instance, that there is physical causation. (See 1871: 131)

14. He has no grandiose plans for them: "I am not one of those transcendental apothecaries, as I call them—they are so skilful in making up a bill—who call for a quantity of big admissions, as indispensable *Voraussetzungen* of logic" (*CP* 2. 113; 1902).

15. Peirce seems to be suggesting that there is a propositional attitude, alternative to belief, which is appropriate in certain circumstances. It is of course an open question whether adopting this kind of attitude towards the proposition ‘this chasm is jumpable’ or ‘we can capture this position’ would be sufficient to instill the confidence required to successfully jump the chasm or capture the position. But that is a side-issue. The main matter is that Peirce very clearly pulls apart the desirability of p ’s being true from the rationality of believing p or from the likelihood of its truth.

16. In “The Dilemma of Determinism,” also collected in *The Will to Believe* volume, James seems to move towards the Peircean position. He argues that we have to act as if we have freedom of the will, if we are to continue in the way we think necessary.

17. Either Santayana or Peirce could have made this remark: “I stand in philosophy exactly where I stand in daily life; I should not be honest otherwise.” It happens to come from Santayana’s pen (1923: vi). Indeed, the first sentence of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* tells us that the philosopher is compelled to “plunge in *media res*” (1923: 1).

18. To complete the picture of the classical pragmatist response to “The Will to Believe,” here is Dewey: the happy consequences for a believer of a belief in God “can not prove, or render more probable, the existence of such a being, for, by the argument, these desirable consequences depend upon accepting such an existence” (*Middle Works* 4. 98: 107; 1908). Note that in moral and political matters, a belief’s making life go better might indeed be relevant to its warrant. For there the inquiry might well be about what makes life go better.

19. Holmes-Pollock Letters vol. 2: 252; 1929.

20. (1923: 139f), emphasis his. For Peirce on the brute compulsion and shock of experience, see *CP* 1. 332–336; 1905, *CP* 2. 146; 1902, *CP* 5. 45; 1903, and *CP* 5. 382; 1877.

21. As Murphey (2005: 331) notes, Lewis, in fitting in with the logical empiricist debates that were current during his later work, sometimes moved towards a sentence-by-sentence kind of verificationism. That is what is attacked by Quine. It goes against the grain of the holism that is expressed in the above passage.

22. See, for instance, Quine’s essay “Ontological Relativity,” part of the inaugural Dewey Lectures (1969: 26).

23. See Russell (1992 [1909]) and (1992 [1966]), Moore (1992 [1907]) and Misak (2008: 197–223) for a sustained discussion of the reception of James’s view.

24. See “The Pragmatist’s Place in Empiricism.”

25. One view that styled itself after Peirce is that of Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, who argued that it is a “pragmatic presupposition” of communication that we aim at and expect consensus in our deliberations and that we treat others equally and with respect. They concluded that these claims—these things that we presuppose in communication—are necessary truths. The objectivity of morals and politics and the democratic principles of discourse are grounded, they argued, “in an undisputably valid manner” (Apel 1990:24, see Habermas 1990: 79–80) They are the ‘universal’, ‘necessary’, ‘non-contingent’ preconditions of communication. See Misak (1994): “Pragmatism and the Transcendental Turn in Truth and Ethics” for the argument that this is too strong a view, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 30: 4, pp.739–775.