

## **"Unless Truth Is Recognized as Public...": Toward a Pragmatic Clarification of 'Objectivity'**

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Although the notion of 'objectivity' has been frequently attacked and dismissed in recent decades, the concept has proven remarkably resilient. In spite of the seemingly overwhelming criticisms of postmodernist philosophers, radical social theorists, constructivists, and neopragmatists, talk of 'objectivity' – or perhaps more accurately, something or other being *objective* – seems to be difficult to eradicate. While many of us would agree that achieving perfect objectivity is humanly impossible, actual claims of somebody or something being *insufficiently objective* still seems to play a substantial discursive and normative role in many practices, such as scientific inquiry and journalism.

Still, even a superficial examination of the actual uses of 'objectivity' reveals an almost bewildering pluralism of applications. The concept is not only employed in diverse domains of practice; even within one and the same field of inquiry, there can be disagreement as to what classes of things can be called 'objective' and what a claim to objectivity involves and necessitates. And perhaps in no other school of thought is the tension as tangible as it is in pragmatism; opinions range from outright dismissals of the usefulness of the concept (the Richard Rorty wing) to the claim that an objective stance is presupposed in any genuine communicative act (the Nicholas Rescher line). Still, irrespective of one's take on the expediency of 'objectivity', it can be argued that pragmatism should be able to contribute to the *elucidation* of the concept. This, of course, implies a return to the very roots of pragmatist thought, to the pragmatist method or principle of conceptual clarification first articulated by C. S. Peirce and later adopted (in altered form) by William James.

In this paper, I will attempt to outline what pragmatic clarification can entail, and I will briefly discuss what such a procedure could yield for our conception of objectivity. For the most part, I will follow in Peirce's footsteps; but using 'objectivity' as an illustration, I will also suggest some ways in which I think pragmatic clarification could move beyond the parameters set by the originator of the method. In this, I will mostly sidestep the ongoing scholarly discussion about the nature and development of Peirce's principle and the purported tension between verificationist and pragmatist 'themes' therein (Hookway, 2012; cf. Misak, 1995; 2010). Also, to avoid disappointment, I must confess that this paper will make no claim of providing a complete pragmatic elucidation of 'objectivity'; at best, it will indicate why a complete clarification may not be possible within any definite timespan – and why that seeming failure is not a cause to ditch the concept of objectivity and to embrace subjectivism.

### **Three Stages of Clarification**

Beginning with the first printed presentation of the method of pragmatism (1878), Peirce casts the pragmatist principle as the third stage in a course of conceptual elucidation. Although he refines and revises his account in numerous ways, this three-step progression is still present in his final published version of the method, which also makes explicit the semiotic framework of his mature 'pragmaticism' (CP 6.481 [1908]).

According to Peirce, the first step toward "acquiring full mastery" of the meaning of a concept entails learning "to recognize the concept under every disguise, through extensive familiarity with instances of it" (CP 6.481 [1908]). In other words, the primary stage can be described as empirical (or at least experiential); it is a matter of getting to know how a concept is *de facto* used.<sup>i</sup> The next phase is that of abstract logical analysis, the breakdown of the concept into its ultimate elements (CP 6.481 [1908]). The typical products of second-degree clarifications are general definitions of the form 'A is B (and not C)', which in effect are equivalent to classifications of our existing sets of beliefs. Accordingly, Peirce argues that the analytical phase of clarification does not enable us to learn anything new; its value is primarily one of "intellectual economy" (CP 5.392 [1878]).<sup>ii</sup>

The third degree of clarity is that of pragmatic clarification, that is, the kind of comprehension that would or should ensue upon the application of the pragmatic maxim. This gist of the principle is easy enough to grasp in broad outlines; but largely due to Peirce's search for a satisfactory expression, the more detailed implications of the idea remain elusive. In some variants of the maxim, Peirce seems to hold that the pragmatic meaning of a concept needs to be spelled out in terms of (verifiable) sensible effects; but in others, references to sensation are explicitly excluded (e.g., CP 8.191 [c. 1904]). Sometimes, conceivable practical consequences are interpreted in terms of the expected behaviour of *objects* to which the concept in question is applied; but in other formulations, the emphasis shifts to the habits of action (in a broad sense) that would or should develop in rational agents as the result of deliberation. Such formulations seem to differ in their scopes of application as well as in the degree and even kind of normativity they suggest.

In view of the varying appearances of Peirce's principle, it is easy to agree with Christopher Hookway's (2012) claim that "there is *no* canonical form for pragmatist clarification: how the information should be presented reflects the cognitive concerns that guide our search for a clarification" (p. 177). Nonetheless, Peirce himself does not appear to perceive any drastic tension between his shifting expressions of the pragmatist method. Thus, in the following passage from 'Issues of Pragmaticism' (1905), two typical variants of the 'pragmaticistic' principle are presented side by side, as more or less straightforward translations of each other:

[I] Pragmatism was originally enounced in the form of a maxim, as follows: Consider what effects that might *conceivably* have practical bearings you *conceive* the objects of your *conception* to have. Then, your *conception* of those effects is the whole of your *conception* of the object.

[II] I will restate this in other words, since oftentimes one can thus eliminate some unsuspected source of perplexity to the reader. This time it shall be in the indicative mood, as follows: The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol. (CP 5.438 [*numerals added – MB*])

Whether these variants are actually pragmatically equivalent (*sic*) or not is debatable. Here, I will put that question aside, and simply focus on the latter, which seems to embody the type of formulation that Peirce prefers in his mature philosophy.<sup>iii</sup>

Some alternative expressions in the same style as [II] add some significant elements or stipulations to Peirce's principle. Without laying any claim to completeness, we may at this stage take note of the following:

1. At times, Peirce underscores that the conceivable practical upshots of the acceptance or denial of a concept are traced out in *imagination* (e.g., CP 8.191 [c. 1904]). In other words, pragmatic clarification typically takes place as 'internal' experiments, in which the meaning of a concept *C* is explicated in terms of the kind of effects (on potential experience or conduct) that something being *C* would have. This can be also viewed as a gloss on 'conceivable' and 'conception', which play such a conspicuous role in the original version of the maxim (see italics in [I] above).
2. Sometimes, Peirce emphasises that the relevant upshots are consequences for *deliberate, self-controlled* conduct (e.g., CP 8.191 [c. 1904]). This suggests that not just any effects on action will do; only those consequences that contribute to critical deliberation and controlled experimentation constitute the veritable pragmatic meaning of a concept.
3. Some of Peirce's formulations maintain that the 'true' or definitive pragmatic meaning of a concept presumes that conduct is "guided by reflexion carried to an ultimate limit" (CP 6.490 [c. 1910]). This suggests a connection between Peirce's notion of pragmatic clarification and his view of the final end of inquiry; an ultimately clarified meaning requires complete deliberation on the matter at hand – and not just the limited processing of some individual agent, but the complete thought process of any ideal intelligence.

All of these provisos specify and thereby also restrict the scope of the pragmatist method. Taken collectively, they imply that the true pragmatic meaning of a concept is acquired as the ultimate

product of unlimited deliberation. Peirce insists that a thorough application of the principle would yield an account of “the *whole* of the purport of the word, the *entire* concept” (CP 8.191 [c. 1904]). From these considerations, it seems reasonable to conclude that *complete* pragmatic signification of any concept is an ideal notion, something toward which the process is directed, but which is never actualised in any finite timespan.

This points toward a theory of what meaning in its highest grade ultimately entails. But is such a notion of any use for the clarification of concepts? Is it even pragmatically meaningful to talk about conceptual signification in such an ideal sense, abstracted from conditions of concrete inquiry? Arguably, much here depends on how we interpret the conditionality clause (“conditionally upon the possible different circumstances and desires”) in formulation [II]. One possible construal, supported by some other passages (e.g., CP 6.490 [c. 1910]), would be that a pragmatic clarification – and the ‘ultimate’ pragmatic meaning – should *encompass* all circumstances in which a concept could be conceivably applied. Put differently, an apt result of the elucidation process would be a comprehensive exposition of the meaning of some conceptual object, which would include the entire collection of conceivable settings of its manifestation and application.

A more modest reading of the conditionality clause could interpret ‘circumstance’ as *context* and ‘desire’ as *interest*,<sup>iv</sup> further maintaining that any actual clarification of a concept must refer to the pragmatic context of assertion in which it takes place and the intentions that guide the process. This viewpoint is perhaps easier to appreciate if put in terms of inquiry: in order to be effectual, a pragmatic clarification of a specific concept ought to be framed in terms of the relevant context of inquiry and the cognitive interests that fuel the investigation in question. Of course, delimiting such contexts and identifying pertinent concerns is not a simple task; but this indicates bounds that arguably cannot be excluded from a fruitful elucidation in the here and now.

This second reading may give rise to (at least) two worries. Firstly, it may be argued that it gives too much weight to utilitarian preoccupations with the expediency of pragmatism and too little to its status as general truth; does not Peirce explicitly distance himself from the notion that the principle would be “a handy tool” that could put to use “so far as it may be found serviceable” (CP 8.191 [c. 1904])? Yes, but he clearly also expects that his maxim will be able to do some work as a ‘rhetorical’ or ‘methodeutic’ principle. At any rate, he maintains that the third degree of clearness should provide such a representation of an idea “that fruitful reasoning can be made to turn upon it, and that it can be applied to the resolution of difficult practical problems” (CP 3.457 [1897]). As a “far-reaching theorem” grounded in the study of signs (CP 8.191 [c. 1904]), the principle of pragmatism ought to

have practical applications (in a narrower sense) as well as a more comprehensive philosophical function.

Secondly, a Peircean may have misgivings about the seemingly contextualist – if not relativist – implications of the proposed approach. For even if the second reading does not require us to deny that comprehensive pragmatic meaning is ideal in the sense discussed, it appears to prescribe a piecemeal approach to conceptual clarification, in which sensitivity to context trumps over symbolic continuity. What, then, prohibits us from identifying ever more finely grained contexts and interests, arguing for a virtually limitless pluralism of concepts? And what becomes of one of the primary practical motivations behind Peirce's pragmatism, that of being able to determine when two seemingly diverse conceptions in fact mean the same in a pragmatic sense – to provide a criterion for evaluating when a nominal difference really makes a difference and when it does not? Will not any such analysis be rendered toothless if context and intention are allowed to affect the proceedings as proposed?

These are difficult questions. Here, I will not even attempt to provide criteria for pertinent contexts and interests.<sup>v</sup> Suffice it to say that we are commonsensically familiar with at least some relevant contexts of inquiry in the sciences and the professions. No doubt, there will always be considerable latitude of interpretation in such cases, but in this instance – or at least at this stage – a clarity of degree one may be enough to allow us to discern contexts such as 'physics' and 'journalism'. However, the issue of conceptual continuity over such contextual borders needs to be addressed – that is, the question of how contextualist pragmatic clarification can account for the fact that we often use one and the same term differently in different contexts of inquiry, while still apparently recognising some common core to the concept.

I believe that we can provide an answer to the latter question in terms of Peirce's pragmatic account of indeterminacy. Without going into the intricate details of his 'logic of vagueness', it may be noted that Peirce often defines 'vagueness' in terms of that which is left unspecified or open-ended in assertion. Arguably, this is precisely the kind of indeterminacy that is suggested by the reference to "possible circumstances and desires". In a broader elucidation, these are left indefinite, so that a question of "what circumstances?" would be met by the non-committal answer "any circumstance I (the utterer) care to identify". The possibly controversial point here is that a broader, more comprehensive elucidation will inevitably be vague in such a sense; the breadth of application of a clarification implies not only generality (interpretative leeway), but perhaps more crucially, vagueness of context and interest. A perhaps somewhat less contentious upshot of this solution is that *any* pragmatic clarification, apart from an all-inclusive elucidation at the ideal end of inquiry, must be

indefinite to some extent. A third, more positive but again potentially controversial, suggestion is that vagueness can play a positive role in conceptual clarification.<sup>vi</sup>

This last claim may have a somewhat paradoxical ring to it; it is perhaps best elucidated by recourse to an example.

### **Vagueness in the Third Degree: The Case of 'Objectivity'**

Peirce himself does not provide an explicit pragmatic clarification of 'objectivity'; nor have I been able to locate any later attempts to pursue such an elucidation in a Peircean spirit. This is not to say that Peirce and Peircean pragmatists would not have had important things to say about the concept and its uses; but apart from some notable exceptions (e.g., Misak, 2004; Short, 2007), the discussions seem to settle for first-degree clarity or even a wholly unanalysed notion of 'objectivity'. In other words, where the term appears, it is mostly employed as a characterisation or delimitation of some other concept (e.g. 'objective truth' or 'objective idealism') and not taken up as an object of study in itself.

This state of affairs is somewhat surprising, as 'objectivity' would seem to be precisely the kind of concept that could benefit from efforts toward pragmatic elucidation, perhaps even more so than the oft-discussed cases of 'truth' and 'reality'. Indeed, how *should* we select apposite candidates for clarification from the rather extensive arsenal of concepts at our disposal? In view of this question, some of Peirce's illustrations may feel rather oddly chosen – for example, his elucidation of the concept of 'hardness' (CP 5.403 [1878]).<sup>vii</sup> Of course, in this case Peirce strives to make a general point about the pragmatic signification of our intellectual signs; but still, it can be argued that his approach lacks a plausible rationale for identifying concepts in need of clarification. However, I believe that this deficiency can be quite easily remedied if we grant that a course of elucidation in effect amounts to a process of inquiry, and that inquiry should set out from genuine doubt or cognitive conflict – with an addition of a dose of "economy of research" to boot. Accordingly, an endeavour to clarify a concept such as 'objectivity' is motivated by the contested nature of the object itself; it simply *is* of cognitive concern for our current and relevant conceivable practices.<sup>viii</sup>

If we were to follow the plan of clarification roughly outlined above, then the first two steps ought to be relatively straightforward, at least on paper (which is not to say that they would be easy to pursue in practice). The initial stage would entail getting to know diverse uses of the concept, as it is employed in everyday talk as well as in specialised discourses. This would produce an inventory of types of things that can be characterised as 'objective' – such as reality, method, claim, report, knowledge, scientist, journalist – but also a register of relevant contexts of employment, with an eye on the third phase of clarification. A study of the historical development of the concept – which happens to be unusually

interesting in the case of 'objectivity' (see Daston & Galison, 2007) – could also contribute some breadth and depth to first-grade clarification.

The second stage would encompass attempts to formulate one or several abstract definitions based on the information acquired in stage one. To a large extent, this entails classifying concepts in a scheme that accords with our web of current beliefs, or devising definitions of the dictionary type. However, in the case of contested concepts such as 'objectivity', this process may quickly turn out to be rather complex, as different uses of the concept may require different – even incompatible – characterisations. Furthermore, philosophers or scientists are likely to craft rather different definitions of 'objectivity' than scholars of journalism, although some mutual influence is of course to be expected. However, the overall drift in definition tends to be toward generalisation.

In theory, this is where pragmatic clarification steps into the picture (in real life, the stages are always more or less intermingled, of course). Perhaps surprisingly, given the Peircean starting points of my argument, I do not think that its *first* task is to look for most general account pragmatically possible. Rather, it is better described as contextualisation, investigating the possible practical upshots of different conceptions of objectivity in relevant pragmatic contexts (which in this case means such practical 'circumstances' in which the concept is used or could be employed). This is where abstract definitions can prove wholly inadequate. One and the same classificatory definition of objectivity will not necessarily have the same consequences for different practices, such as on-line journalism and theoretical physics.

This may sound almost foolishly simple-minded – and why even compare the elevated practices of pure scientists with the mundane (if not downright disreputable) activities of journalists? However, the fact of the matter is that transfers of some potent understanding of a concept from one context to another are not at all unusual and may in some cases be detrimental. The case of journalistic objectivity provides an apt historical illustration of this point. Although by no means the only source for the development of the objectivity norm in this particular context of inquiry,<sup>ix</sup> Walter Lippmann's promotion of a more scientific approach to journalism arguably paved the way for a narrow conception of journalistic objectivity focused on neutral and value-free reporting of "just the facts". At the other end of the spectrum, philosophical claims of the theory-ladenness of perception (and the like) have been taken to indicate the principled impossibility of journalistic objectivity. Frequently, the result of this is a rather unproductive stand-off between the radical critics of journalistic objectivity and the defenders of the embattled traditional ideal – a situation almost calling for pragmatic clarification, and even the development of a notion of *pragmatic objectivity* that is purportedly more

appropriate for present-day and possible future practices of journalism (cf. Ward, 2004; Hildebrand, 2011).

Of course, much more ought to be said about contextual pragmatic clarification; but I hope I have at least managed to suggest how this stage – that is, the first sub-phase of third-degree clarification – could be beneficially pursued. Basically, it requires the application of the pragmatist maxim (or an appropriate version thereof) with explicit reference to context of inquiry and investigative interest.

But what, then, are we to make of a context-transcending conception of 'objectivity'? Does the process of pragmatic clarification, reformulated in this manner, even allow for such a thing? If an abstract characterisation of this kind could somehow be concocted by tolerating a high degree of vagueness, would it not be pragmatically empty? What use – actual or potential – could it have?

Arguably, a completely de-contextualised notion of 'objectivity' is neither desirable nor really feasible at any given stage of inquiry. However, the presence of a high level of vagueness (in the sense indicated above) does not necessarily condemn a clarification to utter ineffectualness; and if this approach is not completely off track, some vagueness there will be. Hence, the problem can be articulated as one of identifying the *opposite* degree of vagueness in order to bring out *relevant* common features between conceptions – to draw out what potential unity the concept may possess in the broadest pragmatic contexts feasible.

In the case of 'objectivity', the most appropriate context for general clarification seems to be that of inquiry itself (cf. Short, 2007, p. 324). And although Peirce does not provide any overt clarification of the concept, this seems to be the setting in which his employment of the term sits most comfortably. Thus, he asserts that the *meaning* of the "objectivity of truth" consists "in the fact that, in the end, every sincere inquirer will be led to embrace it", adding that the effect of inquiry upon the inquirer tends to be to produce such a habit of sincerity (CP 5.494 [1907]). Roughly, this is pragmatically equivalent to the idea of eventual agreement concerning any genuine question that is investigated to its ultimate end (cf. CP 7.259 [c. 1900]).<sup>x</sup> Viewed from a somewhat different angle, 'objectivity' will then signify ideal public availability; it involves an implicit reference to the 'unlimited' community of inquiry in the sense of transcending narrow personal interests (see CP 5.355 [1868]).

The gist of this standpoint is neatly packed in a passage where Peirce refers to the public character of truth rather than objectivity, but in a manner that suggests that the word 'objective' could be substituted for 'public'.

Unless truth be recognized as *public*, - as that of which any person would come to be convinced if he carried his inquiry, his sincere search for immovable belief, far enough, - then there will be nothing to



prevent each one of us from adopting an utterly futile belief of his own which all the rest will disbelieve. Each one will set himself up as a little prophet; that is, a little 'crank,' a half-witted victim of his own narrowness.

But if Truth be something public, it must mean that to the acceptance of which as a basis of conduct any person you please would ultimately come if he pursued his inquiries far enough; - yes, every rational being, however prejudiced he might be at the outset. (SS 73 [1908])

Although not explicitly framed as a pragmatic clarification, this passage arguably gives us some clues as to how 'publicness' or 'objectivity' could be elucidated in the broad context of inquiry. The 'public' or 'objective' is explicated as that which any inquirer would come to believe if he or she were able to pursue investigation sufficiently far, which suggests the convergence of opinion characteristic of Peirce's 'conditional idealism'. This, of course, is a controversial position on truth, although Peirce goes to great pains to emphasise that his account concerns the meaning of 'truth' merely, providing no transcendental or infallible guarantees that there *is* any 'Truth' (CP 5.494 [1907]; SS 73 [1908]). However, here it is of more interest to note how Peirce articulates a pragmatic consequence of the *vague* conception of 'objectivity', contextualised only in terms of a highly generalised notion of inquiry. Namely, he focuses on the negative effects on general conduct or character of *not* recognising the public character of truth. Purportedly, a pragmatic upshot of accepting objectivity in this manner is the avoidance of undesirable habits of conduct ('crankiness' and 'narrowness').

Admittedly, this at best a rather impressionistic clarification of the generalised conception of objectivity. Moreover, the elucidation in question does not really reduce the initial vagueness of context, apart from possibly making the inquiry setting more explicit. But the point is that the concept does have some pragmatic consequences even on this abstract level. The acceptance or denial of objectivity could conceivably have practical bearings on us as inquirers, and would (if the analysis is correct) thereby have effects on our development as persons. With the on-going debates in journalism in mind, it is also of interest to note what the vagueness of the conception allows. As T. L. Short (2007) submits, this view of the objectivity of inquiry does not entail "freedom from error, or from values, or from passion, or from private motivations, or from social pressures and institutional constraints, or from guesswork" (p. 324); what this notion pragmatically prescribes is a recognition of the public and future-oriented character of objectivity – a vague but not empty idea that ought to be variously specified in different contexts of inquiry.

### **Conclusion: Clarification as Inquiry**

What kind of activity is pragmatic clarification and what can we expect from it? In the account I have outlined above, I have suggested that Peirce's method and principle might be most fruitfully

interpreted as a form of inquiry. I have also strived to give some weight to the pre-pragmatic stages of clarification as significant aspects of the process, in particular drawing attention to the often neglected empirical aspect of the first phase. This point could perhaps be augmented; to me, at least, it seems feasible to argue that the process of clarification is not one of linear progression, but is perhaps better portrayed as a cycle or (hopefully upward) spiral. Hence, having obtained clarifications of 'objectivity' at different levels of contextual abstraction, these elucidated conceptions can – perhaps even ought to – be tried in terms of their viability and fruitfulness in inquiry. The idea here is not utilitarian, at least not primarily; rather, the point is that putting pragmatically cultured concepts to the test may produce occasions for further analysis and refinement, new and perhaps unexpected instances and consequences of use.

Here, I seem again to be reaching beyond Peirce. Arguably, his emphasis on internal experimentation can be needlessly limiting. External experiments (in the broad sense) – actual inquiry in a social setting – may produce surprises that we cannot even imagine. In this instance, Peirce may have taken his defence of theory against the 'practicalism' of other pragmatists and the utilitarians too far; for does not his notion of the communal character of truth – indeed, his imbedded conception of general objectivity – also imply that results of inquiry should be open to experiential and public scrutiny? This suggests a virtually continuous process of clarification, which nonetheless can produce tangible results – even progress – in terms of habits of conduct. Any specific clarification – including our general pragmatic conception of 'objectivity' – will be provisional in the sense of being in principle open to revision and improvement.

This, in turn, implies that pragmatic elucidation should perhaps not be understood as a *strictly* internal process, if by this we mean tracing out potential consequences of an extant concept in imagination. Although I may stretching my argument too far and thin here, I wish to conclude by suggesting that conceptual clarification *as* inquiry does not need to be restricted to making explicit that is already there. Arguably, the process contributes to what Peirce sometimes designates the "growth of symbols". This is not to say that we, as philosophical inquirers, would be capable of transforming living concepts by mere acts of will or stipulation; Peirce's anchoring of such signs in real habits of action in effect negates any such voluntarism. Yet, by probing our concepts – and making the results public – we may, usually to a rather modest extent, contribute to the development of their meanings in the pragmatic sense. This can be taken as a gloss on Peirce's suggestive but obscure claim that human beings and their concepts "reciprocally educate each other" (CP 5.313 [1868]); it may even be interpreted as a nod toward moderate constructivism.

Be that as it may, Peirce does suggest something along these lines when he indicates that there is “a still higher grade of clearness” beyond the thorough application of the pragmatic maxim (CP 5.3 [1902]). This greater clarity is explicitly dynamic; however, in Peirce’s view, it is to be pursued in view of what he somewhat abstrusely calls “the development of concrete reasonableness” (and which is manifested in habits of cognition and other ‘artefacts’). This fourth level of clarity thus suggests a significant connection between ultimate pragmatic meaning and a regulative ideal of conduct; abstractly, it indicates the need to pursue clarification in view of goals and ideals, which themselves can be conceptualised as habits of conduct open to criticism and thus a degree of control. However, this point might also be given a somewhat more down-to-earth interpretation in view of Peirce’s claim that “continual amelioration of our own habits [...] is the only alternative to a continual deterioration of them” (MS 674:1 [c. 1911]). It is toward this broadly melioristic end – both in a personal and a social sense – that pragmatic clarification of contested concepts such as ‘objectivity’ hopefully can contribute.

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<sup>i</sup> Peirce does not always emphasise the inquiry aspect of the first stage in this manner. In 'The Logic of Relatives' (1897), he asserts that the first grade of clearness of our apprehension of meaning consists in "the connexion of the word with familiar experience" (CP 3.457). In this more passive sense, the first degree seems to be nearly equivalent to being able to use abstract concepts such as 'reality' in everyday discussion. There is no suggestion that active *learning* by empirical acquaintance with instances of concept use would be called for in the initial stage of clarification.

<sup>ii</sup> This does not entail that Peirce would disparage analysis and definition. On the contrary, he emphatically asserts that his variant of methodological pragmatism is a "theory of logical analysis or 'true definition'", but one that goes beyond mere classificatory definition in providing a "living comprehension" of a conceptual sign (CP 6.490 [c. 1910]).

<sup>iii</sup> Cheryl Misak (2010, p. 80) underlines the difference in perspective between these main variants, contrasting the "more generous expressions" of Peirce's later formulations to his early semantic verificationism (cf. Hookway, 2012).

<sup>iv</sup> In the 1903 lectures on pragmatism, Peirce talks about a concept's "connection with other conceptions and intentions" as affecting its pragmatic import (CP 5.196 [1903]).

<sup>v</sup> It is of some interest to note that Peirce is not altogether adverse to pragmatic contextualisation; arguably, his conception of 'universes of discourse' plays precisely such a role in the domain of logic.

<sup>vi</sup> This contention is at least partly supported by Peirce's assertion that "vagueness [...] is no more to be done away with in the world of logic than friction in mechanics" (CP 5.512 [c. 1905]).

<sup>vii</sup> Peirce's analysis produces the remarkably uninteresting and probably wholly useless result 'will not be scratched by many other substances', followed by his notorious nominalistic lapse in which he asserts that the 'hardness' of a diamond that has not been put to actual test is merely a matter of verbal convention.

<sup>viii</sup> From a somewhat different angle, Misak (2010, p. 80) and David Wiggins (2002, p. 316) have contended that pragmatic elucidation is not about definition (in the analytic sense), but about getting 'leverage' on a concept that is already an established component of thought by exploring its connections with practice. This is true as far as it goes, but it might nonetheless be helpful to identify some criteria – however vague – by which interesting concepts are to be identified. At this stage in our cognitive development, getting leverage on 'hardness' is arguably of limited interest in spite of the fact that the concept can be construed as fundamental to human thought.

<sup>ix</sup> In a broad Peircean-Deweyan sense, journalism can be viewed as form of inquiry.

<sup>x</sup> This should not be confused with Richard Rorty's (1991, p. 38) contention that the normative notion of 'objectivity' should be replaced by a more concrete idea of 'unforced agreement'. Peirce is talking about ultimate or ideal concord, not limited and temporary consensus.