



# Minima Trivialia Bypassed

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## Abstract

Peirce’s pragmatist theory of truth holds that truth will be the outcome of an indefinitely adequate amount of scientific research. According to the *minima trivialia* objection, Peirce’s theory of truth is refuted by such common sense truths as that about what I ate for breakfast, which is hardly the outcome of a prolonged collective scientific endeavour. The argument does not work, however, if we endorse Sellars’s distinction between the manifest image and the scientific image of mankind in the world and the connected scientific realism: in this Sellarsian context, *minima trivialia* can be seen as false views from the perspective of the manifest image, like the existence and persistence of material objects, and not as proper truths, which are appreciated as such only from the point of view of the scientific image. Therefore, the endorsement of this distinction, which is quite compatible with Peirce’s framework, bypasses the *minima trivialia* objection.

**Keywords** *Minima trivialia* · Peirce’s theory of truth · Realism · Sellars’s two images · Truth

## 1 Introduction

Peirce’s pragmatist or pragmatic theory of truth holds that truth will be the outcome of an indefinitely adequate amount of scientific inquiry, or also “the settled opinion that inquiry ultimately will or would result in if inquiry would continue long enough” (de Waal, 1999: 748).<sup>1</sup> This conception is subject to a certain number of

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<sup>1</sup> Peirce modified this formulation numerous times throughout the years, and I’m not interested in sorting them out or determining which is the best. See Atkins (2018), Haack (1976), Howat (2014), Künne (2003: 396–98), Legg (2014), and Misak (2021) for more information on these variations. Some of these versions of Peirce’s account may turn out to not be vulnerable to the MT objection or compatible with Sellars’s two images (see below); hence, I leave these possibilities open and just focus on the versions usually exploited for discussing the MT objection, such as Künne’s (2003: 395).

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objections (see, e.g., de Waal, 1999; Künne, 2003). One of the most popular and intuitive objections is the so-called *minima trivialia* (MT): Common sense truths such as what I ate for breakfast, which is hardly the outcome of a prolonged collective scientific endeavour, show that we have plenty of handy counterexamples to Peirce's view (Künne, 2003; Ayer, 1968; Moore, 1908; Russell, 1939).

Things change, however, if we relocate this objection in the context of a fundamental distinction between a manifest and a scientific image of mankind in the world (Sellars, 1963: 1–41). The scientific image is concerned with what science has to say about us and the reality we live in, whereas the manifest image is concerned with the people, institutions, and norms that usually fall under the category of common sense. In this particular context, scientific findings contradict our beliefs in such things as the existence and persistence of material objects in space and time, which essentially belong to our manifest image. Furthermore, as Sellars remarked, science is the ultimate authority about things that exist and that do not, and in general about how things really are (Sellars, 1997[1956]: § 41). Hence, such trivial and common sense truths like MT here hardly count as true. Therefore, the MT objection is bypassed by the qualifications involved in a context like this. Furthermore, Peirce's view on truth is not incoherent at all in such a context.

In what follows, Section 2 introduces the basics of Peirce's theory of truth; then, Section 3 presents the MT objection to Peirce's theory; Section 4 introduces Sellars's distinction between the manifest and scientific images of mankind in the world; Section 5 exploits Sellars's distinction to revisit the dialectics concerning MT and shows how this context bypasses the objection; and Section 6 concludes the article.

## 2 Peirce's Theory of Truth

In his key article *How to Make Our Ideas Clear* (Peirce, 1878), Charles Sanders Peirce defends the claim that truth will be the result of an indefinitely adequate amount of scientific inquiry. Hence, in the long run of scientific progress, truth will turn out to be what can be believed by scientists based on their inquiries. This view clearly puts constraints on beliefs commonly held in our ordinary lives and targets a certain mind-independence of truth:

The individual may not live to reach the truth; there is a residuum of error in every individual's opinions. [...]. This final opinion, then, is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think. Everything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else (Peirce, 1932: 8.12).

Wolfgang Künne, who called this the 'consensus view' of truth, expressed this conception semi-formally as follows:

(Cons)  $\forall x (x \text{ is true} \leftrightarrow x \text{ is a belief that all who investigate would finally share if their investigations were pursued long enough and well enough})$  (Künne, 2003: 395).

According to this version, truth would be the outcome of a sufficiently prolonged collective scientific endeavour. This conception traditionally belongs to the realm of epistemic theories of truth, which usually establish a tight connection between truth and knowledge. In this particular case, truth is secured by the peculiar knowledge that will be acquired by a sufficiently extended amount of time dedicated to inquiry according to proper scientific credentials. So, scientific knowledge, more than knowledge as such, is the engine of this peculiar epistemic conception.<sup>2</sup>

Even though this is an epistemic conception, in a sense, its rationale mainly belongs to a different order of considerations: it should be understood as a “pragmatic” or “pragmatist” theory of truth. A starting point of this view is that belief is a kind of habit or disposition to act (Peirce, 1878; Engel, 2002: 35). Accordingly, if George believes  $p$ , then George is disposed to act in light of  $p$ . As Pascal Engel nicely glosses, “this definition presupposes that, for an action to be the successful realization of our desires [...], the beliefs in question have to be *true*” (Engel, 2002: 36; see also Misak, 1991: 129 and Haack, 1976). So, the better (e.g., truer) the belief, the more successful the action. When and how are our beliefs mostly true (and so useful for successful action)? For Peirce, according to Engel, “our beliefs are true when they are held “at the limit of scientific enquiry” by a community of researchers” (Engel, 2002: 37). Hence, there is indeed an underlying conceptual connection between this action-guiding view on beliefs and truth as the ideal maximisation of beliefs’ usefulness for action: scientific inquiry is the special context in which beliefs reach the highest or maximum degree of warranty. In the long term, the level of assurance provided by scientific processes and methodologies tends to offer those final ideas as the best contenders or ideal candidates for truth.<sup>3</sup>

### 3 The *Minima Trivialia* Objection

A popular objection to this pragmatist theory of truth goes by the name of MT. It is the idea that many truths are ordinary common sense and are of no scientific interest whatsoever, like “it is true that Tottenham Hotspur did not win the Premier League last year,” “I was struck by a falling nut yesterday,” “the cat was on the mat this morning,” “that is a blood orange,” “there are exactly 45 stars printed on that sweater,” “I have four silver coins in my pocket right now,” and many more. The argument goes as follows: if we have such trivial truths, and if they do not need any scientific inquiry

<sup>2</sup> This is especially important if we take into account Peirce’s peculiar views on scientific methodology. Haack (1976).

<sup>3</sup> See Misak (2021: 201) for a radically different interpretation of Peirce’s view: according to this, a true belief is “one that would withstand doubt, were we to inquire as far as we fruitfully could on the matter” (Misak, 2021: 187). In fact, “inquiry begins with the irritation of doubt and ends with a stable, doubt-resistant belief” (Misak, 2021: 190). As argued in Lynch et al. (2021: 152): “Understanding truth in this way, [...], makes truth a regulative ideal—a guide as to how we should conduct our inquiries, rather than a predicted terminus of those inquiries.” As mentioned in footnote 1, there are many versions and interpretations of Peirce’s view on truth, and it remains unclear if they are all susceptible to the MT objection; this could also be the case for Misak’s view. Hence, again, I leave these possibilities open.

to be stated, established, and recognised, it is especially implausible, in light of them, to adhere to a theory of truth claiming that truth will be the outcome of an adequate amount of scientific inquiry. So we have truths that do not need any scientific inquiry to be truths, which is counterevidence to Peirce's pragmatic view of truth. Given this counterevidence, the story goes, Peirce's theory is falsified and must be rejected.

Wolfgang Kühne has renamed the objection this way, but as he rightly recognised, the rationale of the objection goes back, in its main lines, at least to the work of Bertrand Russell and George Edward Moore in the early days of analytic philosophy (Kühne, 2003; Ayer, 1968; Moore, 1908; Russell, 1939). They already saw a problem with this view in everyday truths about what we ate for breakfast or the number of dots that can be found on the back of a playing card. These truths are of hardly any interest to scientists, not even in the long run. Concerning Moore's example of the back of the card, Kühne states that “[m]any a truth isn't worth a candle, and the correct answer to our dull question is such a truth if anything is. But a conception of truth must cover trifling observations as well as bold scientific hypotheses” (Kühne, 2003: 397). Thus, some trivial truths do not belong to the set of truths picked out by Peirce's criteria. Exploiting a metaphor, we can say that Peirce's basket is too small for all the truths that can be relevant for us, and hence we would better find baskets that are bigger and more fit for the task.

As a consequence, according to critics, Peirce's pragmatist view of truth is destined to be judged incomplete and untenable. In fact, scientific agreement at the end of inquiry appears to establish too high standards for the many insignificant truths that surround our everyday lives and practises. We are required to provide theories of truth that are capable of accounting for both trivial facts and scientific endeavours, and Peirce's view fails to do this, or so the story goes. The pragmatist emphasis on inquiry risks losing touch with such ordinary and down-to-earth truths. A defender of Peirce's view is thus required to provide some bridge principle to put such recalcitrant trivial truths in the right basket, which does not seem, at least *prima facie*, a promising endeavour.

Is this all there is to Peirce's theory and MT? I do not think so. Let us try to rework a bit of the relevant framework.

#### 4 A Fundamental Distinction

To dig a bit deeper into this discussion, it is convenient to address such an argument from a quite different perspective. Wilfrid Sellars made an important distinction between two fundamental images of mankind in the world: the manifest image (MI) concerns a sphere of common sense in which we find persons, institutions, and norms, and the scientific image (SI) concerns what science tells us about us and the reality we inhabit (Sellars, 1963: 5–25). According to Sellars, we should not just conflate such images with common sense on the one hand and with science on the other, but as something similar to Max Weber's “ideal types,” and hence as working idealizations that are useful for explanatory purposes (Weber, 1978[1922]).

This distinction can be defended on multiple grounds by showing how MI truths and SI truths can radically diverge on the very same items. Let us start with the SI.

The SI can be easily defined in terms of Sellars’s *Scientia Mensura* principle: “[...] in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not” (Sellars, 1997[1956]: § 41). This means that reality, properly speaking, is what science tells (or *will tell*—with a fallibilist twist) us reality is.<sup>4</sup>

For example, while objects are taken to endure, to be coloured, or to be located somewhere in space and time according to perspectives that are internal to the MI, Sellars defended the claim that “*speaking as a philosopher*, I am quite prepared to say that the common sense world of physical objects in Space and Time is unreal” (Sellars, 1997[1956]: § 41, emphasis original). Hence, from a metaphysical point of view, according to Sellars, science is in the long run authoritative about what there is and about the ultimate nature of what there is (Tuomela, 1985: 13). This is, according to the aforementioned *Scientia Mensura* principle, the core of Sellars’s scientific realism and naturalism.

Another argument for this claim is the so-called myth of the categorial given: “If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorial status C, then the person is aware of it as having categorial status C” (Sellars, 1981: I, § 44). According to Sellars, thinking that direct experience can reveal the categorial status of things around us is not only mythical but also the source of all the versions of the myth of the given;<sup>5</sup> it is a kind of naive realism about the categorial structure of the world. Scientific inquiry, as a matter of fact, dismisses this simplistic view by simply observing—via many cases highlighted by historians of science—that usually things turn out to be very different from how they appear. Scientific explanation, furthermore, proceeds by positing theoretical entities, and this feature has a revisionary impact on common sense observations. Common sense, sensory perception, and ordinary language do not suffice in order to establish the categorial structures of reality. As Christias (2023: 16) nicely puts it: “The categorial structure of the world or of the mind cannot be somehow directly ‘read off’ or intuited on the basis of the basic descriptive and explanatory concepts of the categorial framework we actually employ in our everyday language.” This means that the categorial status of whatever is ultimately revealed only by empirical scientific research, and this dismisses as mythical all accounts based on some kind of direct experience, like those we undergo in our ordinary lives (see also O’Shea, 2021 and Christias, 2023). As Sellars points out: “*To reject the myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world - if it has a categorial structure - imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on a melted wax*” (Sellars,

<sup>4</sup> I’m not going to argue about the general goodness and viability of this Sellarsian take on scientific realism. See Christias (2019, 2023) and Dorato (2023) for some relevant discussions in recent debates on the subject.

<sup>5</sup> The myth of the given can be defined in epistemic and semantic terms: “[...] a certain (usually mental) state functions as a epistemic Given if (1) it is *epistemically independent*, that is, has an epistemic content independently of any [...] inferential relations to which it may stand in with other such contents and (2) it is *epistemically efficacious*, that is, capable of ‘transmitting’ its epistemic status to other states or contents, thereby accounting for the possibility of objective knowledge [...]. (Again, if we substitute ‘semantic’ for ‘epistemic’—and ‘purport’ for ‘knowledge’—in the above definition, we arrive at a definition of the semantic Given.)” (Christias, 2023: 15–16). See also deVries and Triplett (2000: xxv–xxvi), O’Shea (2021), and Tuomela (1985: Chap. 3).

1981: I: § 45, emphasis original). Because avoiding the categorial myth of the given prescribes attributing a kind of authority to scientific inquiry over direct experience and common sense appearances, this also counts as a key Sellarsian argument for his take on scientific realism.

There is indeed a conceptual connection between the defence of this distinction between the MI and the SI and the endorsement of a somehow scientific realist conception.<sup>6</sup> One could say that Sellars's distinction is a manoeuvre to save both the autonomy of the MI, that is, the legitimacy of persons, norms, institutions, and so forth, from the invasion of science on the one hand, and the recognition of a metaphysical and epistemological priority of the SI on the other. Hence, as some critics may notice, the distinction seems to be deeply committed to some kind of scientific realism: a denier of scientific realism, a scientific instrumentalist, for instance, could in principle object to the tenability of the distinction for this very reason.<sup>7</sup> I will not go into this here, since for the aim of this paper, Peirce's realism and faith in scientific progress is sufficiently in line with this Sellarsian perspective, and this will be sufficient for the point at stake. Both Peirce and Sellars, in fact, see scientific inquiry as a rational and "self-correcting" (indeed, *fallible*) endeavour.<sup>8</sup> There is indeed an easy way to connect Peirce's realism with the scientific realism highlighted by Sellars's pivotal distinction.

## 5 *Minima trivialia* and the Two Images

If we endorse the Sellarsian distinction between the two images, the MT objection can be reconsidered. For example, trivial truths will no longer count as truths, but just as 'MI truths,' which philosophers should not count as truths in the actual sense. Only scientific—or scientifically established—truths, accordingly, would do properly. If things stand this way, Peirce's conception of truth can be safely coupled with a type of Sellarsian scientific realism according to which "[...] in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not." Peirce, in fact, stated similar views to Sellars about 'the real,' anticipating important aspects of the *Scientia Mensura* view: "[the real is] [...] that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you"

<sup>6</sup> Scientific realism is a multifarious thesis and is often taken to imply a commitment to the existence of theoretical entities or to the fact that scientific theories are true descriptions of reality. See, for example, Chakravartty (2017). In this paper, scientific realism must be simply declined in Sellarsian terms: in the context of description and explanation, science is authoritative about what there is and about the ultimate nature of what there is—hence it has epistemic and metaphysical authority.

<sup>7</sup> In the philosophy of science, instrumentalism is the view that the main point of scientific theories and conceptual tools consists in how well they support the clear formulation of empirical hypotheses or the resolution of conceptual issues, rather than by their 'literal' truth or degree of 'correspondence' to reality. See, for example, Stanford (2015). See also the constructive empiricism defended in van Fraassen (1980) as an influential alternative developed in dialectical connection with Sellars's realism. See Musgrave (1985) for a realist criticism of van Fraassen's view.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Haack (1976: 245) about Peirce's view and Sellars (1997[1956]: § 38) about his own perspective. The link between fallibilism and self-correction is here meant to counter a fully-fledged scientific interpretation of such a view about scientific progress.

(Peirce, 1868: 155; see also Hookway, 2002, 2006: 129, and Heath, 1998).<sup>9</sup> In this context, the MT objection is bypassed by the strategic distinction between the two images. Fair enough, a scientific instrumentalist can object to this distinction and Sellars's scientific realism, but since this view is coherent and compatible with Peirce's realistic stance, it is sufficient to satisfy many defenders of pragmatic and epistemic theories of truth about this particular objection.<sup>10</sup>

One can ask why trivial truths like “this chair is black,” from the perspective of the SI, are not actual truths. Are they meant to be false? In what sense can they be considered false? These questions bring us back to the implications of the categorial given. The inadequacy of trivial truths is not a denial of the existence of the things we talk about in everyday words but rather questions the system of categories that underpins them. Only scientific research discloses reality's categorial structure; therefore, MI truths depend on approximate categories; this makes them flawed, and their proper categorial status cannot be determined within the MI.<sup>11</sup> As a result, MT truths are not proper truths and hence do not count as counterexamples to Peirce's theory of truth.

Furthermore, the goodness of this distinction can be defended in quite different terms. For example, the philosopher of the social sciences Stephen Turner has distinguished between what he called Good Bad Theories (Turner, 2010) and proper scientific theories.<sup>12</sup> This sociologically fueled distinction mostly works in terms of proper scientific explanations as opposed to ‘pseudo’ or ‘folk’ explanations. Turner's definition of Good Bad Theories (in this context concerning normative explanations) is as follows:

Using “theory” here is merely extending our folk language to talk about our folk language. With that qualification, we may describe these various folk conceptions as “Good Bad Theories”, meaning that they are good theories for a particular, unspecified set of purposes in a particular setting, but bad theories if we are thinking of them as adequate explanations of anything, or as proto explanations that can be turned into genuine explanations with a little empirical vetting and some minor revision (Turner, 2010: 43).

<sup>9</sup> Sellars also acknowledged that Peirce's view on truth was a crucial ingredient for his metaphysics with a scientific turn. See Sellars (1968: vii). See also Sachs (2018) and Tuomela (1985: 12).

<sup>10</sup> It must be said that despite this shared realist stance between Sellars and Peirce, there is a relevant difference in the background. The difference concerns *universals*: while Peirce was a scholastic realist, Sellars embraced nominalism (much as Quine and Goodman did, even though in different ways). According to scholastic realism, universals are real and what general terms refer to. This was important for Peirce, as epistemic progress can be seen as an approximation to real universals (that, in his view, were not separable from what we call laws of nature and fundamental truths). See Misak (1991: 74). According to Sellars's nominalism, abstract entities do not really exist, and we can safely separate platonistic talk of abstracta from platonistic ontologies. See deVries (2005: Chap. 4).

<sup>11</sup> See Sellars (1997[1956]: § 41). See also Christias (2023: 16–17) on the inadequacy of the MI categories. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the convenience of making this fully explicit.

<sup>12</sup> Turner leads a naturalistic trend in the social sciences and in the philosophy of the social sciences, according to which causal explanation plays a major role in social science explanations. See Adair-Toteff (2021) and Risjord (2016).

Good Bad Theories, in an important sense, can be assimilated into MI conceptions (Salis, 2023: 166), while only scientific explanations count as adequate. Therefore, as only scientific explanations are supposed to work, and assuming that truths belong to such proper explanatory endeavours, ‘MI truths,’ MT, and Good Bad Theories all differ from truths in the actual sense. Hence, also from this renewed version of this distinction, the MT objection is bypassed. MT truths belong to the realm of Good Bad Theories and are systematically superseded by those truths that belong to proper explanatory endeavours such as scientific inquiry. Hence, MT truths are not proper truths and, again, do not count as counterevidence to Peirce’s theory of truth. Even though this view can be assimilated to Sellars’s distinction, there is a relevant difference in place. While in Sellars there is the aim of fusing the two images and thus acknowledging the relevance of the MI in what he called the “stereoscopic vision,” in Turner there is a clear tendency of scientific explanations and truths to supersede MI truths and Good Bad Theories—Turner’s naturalism, concerning common sense truths, in the end is more revisionary (and less conciliatory) than Sellars’s.<sup>13</sup> Sellars, as already pointed out, acknowledged the epistemological and metaphysical priority of the SI but nonetheless wanted to save the indispensability of the MI concerning such topics as free will, rules, and persons. Sellars’s belief in the indispensability of these topics for mankind’s self-concept was indeed the main motivation for resisting the temptation of embracing the SI as a complete and fully viable conception of reality. According to his perspective, this attitude entailed a difficult—and often taken to be ultimately unresolved<sup>14</sup>—attempt at reconciling or fusing the two images in a sort of stereoscopic vision of reality in which free will, normativity, and persons must be “added” to the truths of science (Sellars, 1963: 38–40).

An important consequence of this discussion appears to be the need for an argument against scientific realism and the metaphysical and epistemic authority of science, as a necessary complementary point to the MT objection. If we have independent, successful arguments against the authority of science at our disposal, then MT become actual and relevant counterexamples to Peirce’s view of truth. But without such successful arguments, the relevance of MT is not to be taken for granted in a context in which we do confer epistemic authority on scientific inquiry. This also means that MT begs the question with Peirce’s view of truth, implicitly denying the kind of authority of scientific inquiry that Peirce took for granted. Hence, there is no common ground between Peirce’s theory and MT: one view—Peirce’s—implicitly affirms a kind of authority of science (subscribes to a kind of SI), while the other view—MT—implicitly denies such an authority or crucially limits its scope (by advancing MI truths). Things stand this way, especially if we remind ourselves of Peirce’s emphasis on the fact that “[e]verything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else” (Peirce, 1932: 8.12). This view

<sup>13</sup> See Christias (2015) for an extended discussion of the differences between Sellars’s and Turner’s attitudes and views, with a focus on the issue of normativity. See also Salis (2023).

<sup>14</sup> See Christias (2019, 2023) for a thorough reading of Sellars’s philosophy, according to which no tension or unresolved dualism between the two images is tenable. If one agrees with Christias that there is no unresolved tension in Sellars’s philosophy, the difference between Sellars’s and Turner’s naturalism only concerns the nature of the normative: while Sellars defends the normative as genuine, Turner claims it can be explained away. See Christias (2015). See also Tuomela (1985: 14–21) for a more nuanced take on the reconciliation of the conflicting images.

clearly sets a metaphysical privilege on scientific inquiry that is on a par with Sellars's. So, at the end of the day, since there is no common ground between the two options at stake, MT alone do not count as direct counterexamples and would need an independent, successful argument against the authority of scientific inquiry.

There is a potential way out that the pragmatist scholarship finds in Peirce's works (published and not). It depends on another idea called 'critical common-sensism' (CCS), which is the view that some contents, whose credentials are still to be established, are indispensable assumptions and starting points in inquiry. Peirce does not believe that if something practically works in daily life and if we lack reasons to question it, it must be replaced by a scientific truth. Could this perspective save the MT objection? This would surely contrast with Turner's ambitions, but CCS does not interact with Sellars's view about the MI. It rather anticipates, in fact, Wittgenstein's hinge propositions, as these propositions are to be *kept certain* or *free from doubt* to have a genuine inquiry. Hinge propositions are background beliefs or certainties that are never questioned, like "I've never been to Mars," "the world existed long before I was born," and so on. MI truths differ from hinge propositions, as they can be seen as views and beliefs that are warranted only by a partial amount of inquiry and not as something simply assumed or taken for granted. In fact, hinge propositions mostly play a framework function, that is, they are given in the unquestioned background, while MI propositions are claims that we legitimately utter against this background. This means that there is a significant functional difference in place between hinge propositions and MI claims: while MI propositions are claims that can be advanced in context *C*, hinge propositions belong to the set of default assumptions that implicitly determine context *C*. For Wittgenstein, their function makes them like the rules of a game or even like "rails" for empirical propositions (Wittgenstein, 1969: §§ 95–96). Because of this, MI truths differ from hinge propositions, and CCS does not suffice to save MT from Sellars's distinction.<sup>15</sup> MI truths usually change in view of experience, like in "the cat is on the mat" once I testify that the cat is no longer on the mat, while hinge propositions are held firm whatever happens, as in the case of "the world existed long before I was born."<sup>16</sup> Hinge propositions are indeed held true whatever happens. Does the fact that CCS claims are supposed to be exempt from scientific doubts save them from the SI reconceptualization? This is a tricky question since it presupposes a questionable continuity between the MI and the SI: proper scientific doubts belong to the SI, while in the MI we could conceive at least 'roughly empirical' and common sense doubts. MI and SI doubts belong to different categorial frameworks, as Sellars defends a categorial discontinuity between the two images. Peirce would be delighted about this discontinuity, as

<sup>15</sup> See Wittgenstein (1969) on hinge propositions, Hookway (1990) on critical common-sensism, and Fabbrichesi Leo (2004) on Peirce's common sense and Wittgenstein's hinge propositions.

<sup>16</sup> Another relevant feature of hinge propositions is that these would count as free from doubt only synchronically, while diachronically they could be superseded or abandoned as false empirical claims. Think of Wittgenstein's example about the fact that men have never been to the moon (1969: §§ 106, 108): for Wittgenstein this would count as a hinge proposition, even though, later, it has been falsified. This possible change of status over time of hinge propositions would make them more compatible with Sellars's distinction: the hinge proposition would count as a MI long-held background belief, while going to the moon would be an endeavour internal to the SI. Many thanks to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this possibility.

otherwise, putative instances of ‘MT free from doubt’ would serve as counterexamples to his theory of truth. By the way, ‘MT free from doubt’ would only be available if the discontinuity is incorrect; Sellars’s distinction works against this possibility. So, again, MT’s tenability would need an argument against scientific realism.

Does this mean that Peirce’s theory of truth is still relevant for theorists? Is it still a live option? Well, it depends. Sure enough, philosophers persuaded by some epistemic or pragmatic theory of truth will welcome this point as good news. This would mean bypassing MT and focusing on potentially more pressing matters (see Künne, 2003). So far, so good.

Things change if one is not convinced by epistemic and pragmatic views. For example, I am sceptical of this possibility for two reasons. The first is that this view on truth could not appreciate, for evident historical reasons, the many insights derived from Alfred Tarski’s groundbreaking work: the fact that truth adds expressive power to the language, that is, we can say and do more things with a concept of truth than without; the fact that Tarskian biconditionals, such as “‘Snow is white’ is true in *L* if Snow is white,’ are always true, and so are truths about how truth is used; and the fact that such insights right now deeply shape our understanding of the concept of truth. Tarski’s stated aspects of the concept of truth can currently be viewed as very relevant constraints that every theory of truth must attempt to meet. Theories of truth developed only based on other insights—like Peirce’s, for instance—end up being somehow limited in view of such constraints.<sup>17</sup> A renewed Peircean view on truth should necessarily engage with Tarski’s legacy and its putative deflationary consequences, such as Paul Horwich’s minimalist view, according to which equivalence schemas ‘exhaust’ the concept of truth.<sup>18</sup> The second concerns a consequence of our current post-Tarskian attitude towards truth: from the point of view of the lessons learned in the post-Tarskian debates, Peirce’s view seems to be more a theory concerning ‘the contents’ that would be believed at the end of all research than a theory about ‘the concept’ of truth.<sup>19</sup> The former answers a question about how things really are, while the latter answers a question about how the concept of truth works.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Alethic pluralism, that is, the idea that truth behaves differently in different contexts, for example, is today one of the main attempts to take into account epistemic and realist insights about truths, together with many deflationary consequences drawn from Tarski’s work. See, for example, Wright (1992), Lynch (2009), Pedersen and Wright (2013), and Wyatt et al. (2018).

<sup>18</sup> According to this view, equivalence schemas exhaust truth by telling us everything there is to say about it. According to Horwich (1998: 65) “such biconditionals exhaust the theory of truth.”

<sup>19</sup> Since Peirce’s conception of truth has multiple forms in his writings, as highlighted in footnotes 1 and 3, there are interpretive challenges surrounding it. My last comment dealt with the version of the theory I employed, namely the one that faces the MT objection. It makes perfect sense that different interpretations of it may easily stray from this inference and cause issues. One example that immediately comes to mind is the following: because of Peirce’s scholastic realism, there is a convergence in the long run between the opinions that would be held applying the scientific method thoroughly and the real (that for Peirce encompasses both the ultimate structure of reality and the ultimate version of concepts); this convergence would be incompatible with the separation between the ‘contents’ and the ‘concept’ that I propose. Naturally, this convergence would need solid grounds to revive scholastic realism as a live option. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for highlighting this.

<sup>20</sup> Once this difference is acknowledged, it remains to be seen that theories of truth are only devoted to investigating the second aspect and not the first.

## 6 Conclusion

The distinction between the manifest and the scientific images of mankind in the world generates a context in which MT do not count as truths but only as folk views to be superseded by what science has to say in the long run. Hence, the tenability of the distinction and the scientific realism connected to it are premises capable of bypassing MT as a sound objection against Peirce's theory of truth. Finally, showing that MT can be bypassed as a sound objection does not mean that Peirce's theory of truth automatically gains new traction; in a post-Tarskian environment, this would arguably be useful only for supporters of epistemic views and require some new independent argument.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of Interest** None.

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