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Abstract: Peirce's lecture "Philosophy and the Conduct of Life" has been especially vexing to Peirce scholars. Some have criticized it as a lapse of good sense whereas others have defended it. Even William James, who read a draft of the lecture, claimed it was full of "sass" and "paradoxical irradiations". I argue that Peirce intentionally made the lecture paradoxical as it is an oblique criticism of positions James espoused in *The Will to Believe*. Since James had arranged the lectures for Peirce and was the only person with clout trying to help him, Peirce felt the need to express his criticisms obliquely. Yet he also felt compelled to express the criticisms at all because James had dedicated *The Will to Believe* to him and so Peirce wanted to distance his own philosophical views from those of James.
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