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Author: Klein, Alexander
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Abstract: A central theme of Cheryl Misak's new history is that there are two key strands in the pragmatist tradition. The Peircean strand does 'justice to the objective dimension of human inquiry,' she thinks, while the Jamesian strand allegedly does not. I argue that at least when it comes to philosophical inquiry, just the opposite is true. Peirce advocates adopting technical vocabulary in philosophy. But in practice, extensive use of jargon means only trained specialists can participate in inquiry. There is no assurance that consensus in such a restricted community would transcend individual and small-group bias-an important requirement for objectivity. In contrast, James's Darwinian account of inquiry requires him to practice philosophy with an audience of what he calls the 'seriously inquiring amateur.' A community of inquiry that includes amateurs would contain a greater variety of temperaments, James argues, and would thus be proportionately more likely to produce a consensus that transcends individual and small-group bias.

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