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- Author:** Kasser, Jeff
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- Abstract:** This essay offers an elucidation and a critical examination of Joe Ransdell's striking suggestion that Peirce is the first real heir of Socrates other than Plato. Ransdell links Socratic perplexity and Peircean genuine doubt in a communicative conception of epistemology and philosophy of science. This approach, which makes actual acceptance the key to understanding success in inquiry, is contrasted with the dominant criterial approach to these matters. Criterial conceptions maintain that formal standards for successful inquiry are crucial to the explanation of successful inquiries. The paper argues that Ransdell is right about the importance of actual acceptance and also that he is right to acquit Socrates and Peirce of the charge of psychologism. But, drawing on recent work by Hintikka and Mayo, the essay argues that Ransdell overdraws the contrast between communicative and criterial approaches. Ransdell's Socratic tradition can and should find more room for formal evaluations of hypotheses and inferences than Ransdell seems to realize. That said, mainstream epistemology and philosophy of science would do well to see themselves as engaged in the study of perplexity management.
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