

Peirce's esthetics as a science of ideal ends

A estética de Peirce como uma ciência dos fins ideais

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Abstract: It is argued here that the best interpretation of Peirce's esthetics is as a normative science of ideal ends. Peirce's influences in this regard include Plato's notion of *kalos*, Friedrich Schiller's *The Aesthetic Education of Man*, and Kant's notion of architectonic. Based primarily on drafts of *the Minute Logic* in 1902 and the Harvard Lectures of 1903, the essential features of a normative science are discussed and the relation of esthetics to the other two normative sciences of logic and ethics is analyzed. Peirce's concept of esthetic goodness is explicated, and the criteria for what he counts as a *summum bonum* is examined. Peirce's own formulations of the *summum bonum* are analyzed, including his notion of *concrete reasonableness*, but also an interesting account of ultimate ideals, found in a manuscript fragment in 1903. The paper ends with a discussion between what is called Peirce's positive and negative esthetics, understood as two different approaches to the formulation of ideal ends.

Keywords: Peirce. Esthetics. Ideals. Normative science.

Resumo: Argumenta-se aqui que a melhor interpretação da estética de Peirce é como uma ciência normativa de fins ideais. As influências de Peirce neste particular incluem a noção de *kalos* de Platão, A educação estética do homem de Friedrich Schiller, e a arquitetura kantiana. Baseada principalmente nos rascunhos de *Minute Logic* em 1902 e as Palestras de Harvard em 1903, as características essenciais de uma ciência normativa são discutidas e a relação da estética às outras duas ciências normativas da lógica e da ética é analisada. O conceito de Peirce de bondade estética é desenvolvido, e os critérios para o que ele considera como um *summum bonum* são examinados. As próprias formulações de Peirce do *summum bonum* são examinadas, inclusive sua noção de razoabilidade concreta, como também uma explicação interessante dos ideais fundamentais encontrada em um fragmento de manuscrito de 1903. O artigo conclui com uma discussão entre o que é chamado de estética positiva e negativa de Peirce, entendido como duas abordagens diferentes à formulação de fins ideais.

Palavras-chave: Peirce. Estética. Ideais. Ciência normativa.

“Reason has accomplished all she can, in discovering and expounding Law; it is the task of courageous will and lively feeling to execute it. If Truth is to gain the victory in the struggle with Force, she must first become herself a force, and find some impulse to champion her in the realm of phenomena; for impulses are the only motive forces in the sensible world.”

Friedrich Schiller, *The Aesthetic Education of Man*.

1 Introduction

Peirce's esthetics was clearly a work in progress. As such it is burdened by starts and stops and a variety of vague, sometimes odd and inconsistent accounts. Peirce clearly struggles with the order, role and function of esthetics in its relation to the other normative sciences of ethics and logic, principally because, as he says, he is “lamentably ignorant of it” (CP 2.120, 1902).

As Peirce recalls the matter in 1903, he became convinced as early as 1883 that logic was a normative science, in the sense that it argued for how we *ought* to think and, therefore, was dependent upon ethics, which studies what we ought to do (CP 5.108, 1903; CP 5.111, 1903; and LISZKA, 2012, p. 48ff). By 1901, he certainly made a point of it (KENT, 1987, p. 110; CP 8.158, 1901). Logic is a matter of how one ought to think in order to be more assured of arriving at true claims. As such it was deliberative action, that is, self-controlled action directed to some end or purpose—truth in this case (CP 2.144, 1902; LISZKA, 2012, p. 52ff). Peirce was convinced that no reasoning process can be counted as such unless it involved self-control and self-control was an ethical matter (KENT, 1987, p. 111; R692, p. 3-4, 1901).

At that time in 1883, Peirce says he did not think much of esthetics since, like many others, he believed that esthetics was the study of beauty, and beauty was a matter of taste. But, as he recounts his thinking, he soon changed his mind and realized its importance. If deliberate action was directed to ends, then esthetics would have something to do with the study of those ends, completing the goals of the normative sciences (CP 5.111, 1903). However, as Peirce specifies its duty, it is not just the study of any ends, but “... the science of ideals...” (CP1.191, 1903; SANTAELLA, 2001, p. 179). Peirce sums up what appears to be the most definitive relationship among logic, ethics and esthetics in a letter to William James in 1902. There, he is discussing the problem of providing a systematic unity to his thought:

I had not really got to the bottom of it or seen the unity of the whole thing. It was not until after [...] I obtained the proof that logic must be founded on ethics, of which it is a higher development. Even then, I was for some time so stupid as not to see that ethics rests in the same manner on a foundation of esthetics,—by which, it is needless to say, I don't mean milk and water and sugar (CP 8.255, 1902).

It is thus by way of the study of logic that Peirce comes to the matter of esthetics. Peirce's path to esthetics is the result of a deep and thorough desire to understand logic systematically in all its ramifications, and that is certainly manifested

in his attempted *opus magnum* on the subject, *The Minute Logic*. It was left, as many of his projects, unfinished. But it included a chapter on ethics, and Peirce indicates that he intends to write another chapter devoted to esthetics (CP 2.197, 1902; R 432-434, 1902).

In drafts of the second chapter of *The Minute Logic*, he addresses two fundamental questions about logic: What validates the principles of reasoning on which logic is based, and, why study logic? In regard to the first question, Peirce asks, “what it is that justifies that faith” in reasoning? (CP 2.147, 1902). The second question is made plainly: “... O Reader [...] why is it that you have undertaken the study of logic? (CP 2.123; CP 2.153, 1902). The answer to the second question hinges on the first, because good, sound reasoning tends to lead to true claims and beliefs, and tends to avoid error, which is why people desire to study it (CP 2.125, 1902). Thus, there is a hypothetical imperative, an implicit practical maxim, in the answer to why one should study logic: If one wants to attain true beliefs and avoid error, then one ought to study logic.

But because this is only a hypothetical imperative, a prudential norm, it leads to another, more fundamental question: Why should one seek truth at all? Peirce thought that ethics could answer that question, since it determines what is good to do and, presumably, why it is good to seek truth (CP 2.198, 1902). But even if ethics answered that question satisfactorily, it still left an even more fundamental question: Why should one seek the good or, for that matter, any worthy end? This raises the question of what makes an end worthy of pursuit, what makes something a worthy ideal? (CP 2.199, 1902). In this way, Peirce becomes embroiled in some of the most fundamental, perennial questions of philosophy.

Besides the drafts of *The Minute Logic*, written mostly in 1902, much of what Peirce has to say on the normative sciences and esthetics in particular can be found in his Harvard Lectures of 1903. The 1902 and 1903 work do not always agree, but the more mature view appears to be the 1903 work, since it is not only later, but something that is presented publicly so, presumably, something that was relatively polished. In those lectures, Peirce sees esthetics as the science of ideal ends, worthy ends, and it is a matter of determining what constitutes an ideal worthy of pursuit, its *esthetic goodness*, as he calls it (CP 5.130, 1903). In turn, Peirce sees esthetic goodness as a certain design of parts and wholes that produces an esthetic response such as admiration, or *kalos*—to use the Greek sense of what is perceived as noble, adorable or lovable (CP 2.199, 1902; CP 5.130-132, 1903; CP 6.467, 1908). Peirce also identifies criteria for what will count as a highest good among such ideals. Once ideals worthy of admiration and, thereby, worthy of pursuit, can be identified, they must pass two other tests. One is the test of ethics: if they are worthy of pursuit, are they also good to pursue? (CP 5.133, 1903). Finally, they must pass a pragmatic test, that is, an experimental test—in the sense that, when put into practice, their effects and outcomes are properly measured, presumably, against what the ideal portends (CP 1.608, 1903).

In a draft to the Harvard Lectures, Peirce makes known his candidate for the *summum bonum*—*concrete reasonableness*. However, he gives it very little characterization (CP 1.615, 1903). But besides this proclamation of the highest good, Peirce also provides another picture of an ideal in a manuscript fragment, written around the same time as the Harvard Lectures in 1903, and may have been intended

as part of the lectures (CP 1.589-590, c.1903). It is certainly a progressive vision: a community so constituted as to promote the widest amount of pleasure for its member while, at the same time cultivating their sentiments of altruism toward others, and generating peace and prosperity for the whole. Most importantly, the community is equipped with practices of inquiry that will continue to seek out an ideal, not pre-determined, by a methodology guaranteed to be successful in the long run.

These two different visions of the highest good, suggest that Peirce proposes two sorts of strategies in regard to ideals, based on what he calls positive and negative goodness (CP 5.127, 1903). A positive approach to esthetics is one in which the ideal is drawn up provisionally, passed through various tests, implemented, and tested for how true it remains to that ideal. The second is a negative approach, by which the habits, practices and institutions of a community are so arranged that it can have the best hope of developing a workable ideal, one which evolves over time through some process of self-correction of error. This is illustrated by the vision articulate in the 1903 manuscript fragment.

In defending this interpretation of Peirce's esthetic as a science of ideal ends, the plan is the following: a discussion of Peirce's influences; an examination of Peirce's thoughts about the normative sciences, especially the role and function of esthetics within that grouping; an account of Peirce's criteria for the highest good, the *summum bonum*, and a discussion of Peirce's own candidates for the highest good. As an addendum, there is the matter of the aforementioned approaches of positive and negative esthetics.

2 Peirce's Influences

Given the goal of a systematic study of logic, Peirce feels he must answer the fundamental questions pertaining to its study—if logical reasoning makes it more likely to attain true claims, why pursue truth? If it is good to pursue truth because it is good to do, why pursue goodness? Based on the tradition in philosophy, Peirce can answer these question by taking one of two more common paths: love or duty. In the first, one should pursue the good because of its lovability, desirability, or attractiveness. In the second, it is pursued because of the command to do good, in one or more of the various forms of the natural law. The latter answer requires no other discipline than ethics to articulate that response. The first requires understanding a new class of phenomena in addition to thought and action—feeling.

The first path of duty is the path of the Stoics, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, and Immanuel Kant, and appeals to various versions of the natural law in order to short-circuit this bottomless questioning. The natural law, perhaps most simply expressed by Aquinas, *commands* us by the force of reason to do good and avoid evil (1265-1274, *Summa Theologica*, Q. 94, Art. 2). If we should pursue truth for the sake of goodness, then the reason for pursuing goodness does not lie in another hypothetical imperative but a categorical one, as Kant argues. For him, the ground of ethics lies in the command of moral law, respect (*Achtung*) for the law (KANT, 1784, p. 5). Whether respect is itself a sentiment is not clear in Kant.

Peirce chooses the path of love, or a more sanguine version of it in the notion of *admiration*. The answer to the ultimate question of why logic should be pursued

is that the true and the good must be shown to be lovable, beautiful, admirable, adorable, *kalos*. With this answer, he allies himself more with Plato and Friedrich Schiller, whose series of letters, published as *The Aesthetic Education of Man*, he read as a young man, and which appears to have influenced him for a lifetime (CP 5.402 n3, 1906). As he writes in 1902:

It is now forty-seven years ago that I undertook to expound Schiller's *Aesthetische Briefe* to my dear friend, Horatio Paine. We spent every afternoon for long months upon it, picking the matter to pieces as well as we boys knew how to do. In those days, I read various works on esthetics; but on the whole, I must confess that, like most logicians, I have pondered that subject far too little. The books do seem so feeble. That affords one excuse. And then esthetics and logic seem, at first blush, to belong to different universes. It is only very recently that I have become persuaded that that seeming is illusory, and that, on the contrary, logic needs the help of esthetics. The matter is not yet very clear to me; so unless some great light should fall upon me before I reach that chapter, it will be a short one filled with doubts and queries mainly (CP 2.197, 1902).

It is difficult to summarize Schiller's *Aesthetic Education of Man* and, other than Peirce's specific references to the *play impulse* (*Spieltrieb*), it is not entirely clear how he was exactly influenced by Schiller (CP 1.573, 1906; CP 5.402 n3, 1906). However, in reading the work, one can sense, vaguely, the presence of some of Schiller's themes in Peirce's thought. Schiller reasons concentrically rather than linearly, circling around some central themes by adding a bit more depth each time he surveys them. But it is clear that Schiller strives to explain how it is possible by "aesthetic culture" to "desire more nobly..." (1795, p. 112). If the moral attitude can only inspire us to duty through the command of law, the aesthetic attitude can enable human beings to go beyond duty to nobility (1795, p. 111 n1).

Schiller tells a just-so story of human beings caught in the tension between two impulses. The impulse of sensuousness, founded in the state of nature, wrapped up in physical materiality, and experienced as a multiplicity of sensations. In feeling, one feels subjectively, momentarily in the present state (1795, p. 64). This is contrasted with the formal impulse, stemming from the rational nature of human beings, to bring harmony and unity to the diversity of manifestations and experiences, through the notion of law and universality (1795, p. 65-66). Through sensuousness, human being *apprehend* more and more of the world; and through reason, they *comprehend* more and more of the world (1795, p. 69). The task of cultivation is to train both the sensibility and reason in order to balance and harmonize their drives (1795, p. 69). The object of the sense impulse is *life* in its widest sense, and the object of the form impulse is called *shape*, "a concept which includes all formal qualities of things and all their relations to the intellectual faculties" (1795, p. 76).

But there is a third impulse, the *play impulse*, that is manifested in beauty, that unites and balances the sense and form impulses in an equilibrium. Its object is the *living shape*, "a concept which serves to denote all aesthetic qualities of phenomena and—in a word—what we call *Beauty* in the widest sense of the term" (1795, p.

76). As a sculpture created from a block of marble illustrates, form and matter are integrated in a living shape:

[...] so long as we only think about [...] shape, it is lifeless, mere abstraction; so long as we only feel [...] life, it is shapeless, mere impression. Only as the form of something lives in our sensation, and its life takes form in our understanding, is it living shape, and this will everywhere be the case where we judge it to be beautiful (SCHILLER, 1795, p. 76).

One might speculate that Peirce's candidate for the highest good, the ideal to admire—*concrete reasonableness*—is modeled after Schiller's notion of living shape, but there is no apparent textual justification for this claim.

Peirce also appears to have been heavily influenced by Plato. Indeed, drafts of the fourth chapter of *The Minute Logic* on ethics show a very detailed study of Plato by Peirce (R 434, 1902). Peirce insists that esthetics, as he understands it, is *not* a matter of beauty. In fact, "that science has been handicapped by the definition of it as a theory of beauty" (CP 2.199, c. 1902). Because of that Peirce searched for a more appropriate term that could express the subject matter of esthetics better than *beauty*. He thinks about the Greek term *kalos* and the *kalos k'agathos* as a substitute, obviously alluding to its sense in Plato and Aristotle (CP 2.199, c. 1902; CP 1.586, 1903).

It's not easy to characterize Plato's concept of *kalon* but, like Peirce, he also wanted to dissociate it from artistic beauty (BARNEY, 2010, p. 363). It may not be fruitful at this point to expand on Plato's concept—which would entail a Herculean exegesis—except to note a couple of interesting themes and theses about *kalon* that seem to bear on Peirce's conceptions.

Socrates argues both in the *Symposium* and in *The Republic* that all good things are *kalon* (sometimes translated as *fine*) (*Symposium*, 201c; *Republic* 508e-509a), but apparently not all fine things are good (*First Alcibiades*, 115a-116a). Although Plato is not consistent on this theme, if that is the case, it would argue for a separation of function between ethics and esthetics as Peirce does, even if he wavers about their role. Plato's thesis would suggest that the good is a subset of the fine, so that the study of esthetics would be to identify what is fine (*kalon*), and the function of ethics, in part, would be to select among fine things, those things that are also good to pursue, have or desire. Peirce seems to work on this assumption in the Harvard Lectures of 1903 when, as mentioned, he identifies three tests for a *summum bonum*, esthetics selecting what is admirable, and ethics selecting among admirable ends, those that ought to be pursued (CP 5.133, 1903).

A second theme often expressed in Plato is that *kalon* is characterized by proportion, order and measure, and so related to the idea of the design of parts and wholes (*Philebus*, 64e-65a; BARNEY, 2010, p. 364). This is clearly argued in *The Gorgias*: "it's due to organization (*taxis*) that the excellence of each thing is something which is organized and has order [...]. So, it's when a certain order (*kosmos*), the proper one for each thing, come to be present in it that it makes each of the things there, good" (*Gorgias*, 506e; BARNEY, 2010, p. 365). Peirce does employ this sort of language in characterizing the esthetic as related to an order of parts in a whole that produces a quality in their totality (CP 5.132, 1903).

Rachel Barney argues that another prominent definition of *to kalon* is found in the *Hippias Major*, where Socrates defines it as suitability to function, that is, to a purpose (*Greater Hippias*, 290c-291d; BARNEY, 2010, p. 364-365). This is also reiterated in *the Republic*: “the virtue or excellence, the *kalon* and correctness of each manufactured item, living creature, and action is related to nothing but the use for which each is made or naturally adapted,” that is something adapted to its end—form follows function in the Bauhaus sense (*Republic*, 601d; BARNEY, 2010, p. 365). For example, Socrates argues that something as lowly as a wooden spoon has *kalon*, since its form is adapted well for its purpose. This appears to be something also advocated by Peirce: “The question of the goodness of anything is whether that thing fulfills its end.” As an example, he argues that the end of a hypothesis is to avoid surprise and to establish “a habit of positive expectation that shall not be disappointed.” “This,” he says, “is approximately the doctrine of pragmatism” (CP 5.197, 1903).

If that is so, it clarifies further the difference between the function of ethics and esthetics. Something would have esthetic goodness, for Peirce, if its order or design is conducive to fulfilling a certain end, purpose or function, ethics determining whether such an end or purpose is worthy of pursuit. As Barney argues, order and function are conceptually related, so that “in acquiring the appropriate order, each becomes at once fine and good” (2010, p. 365). For example, Xenophon’s Socrates argues that a dung basket is fine (*kalon*) and a golden shield ugly (*aeschron*), if the one is made right for its work (*ergon*) and the other badly (BARNEY, 2010, p. 366). As Peirce says, “... nothing has any kind of value in itself—whether aesthetic, moral, or scientific—but only in its place in the whole production to which it appertains [...]” (CP 6.479, c.1906).

A final theme in the Greek conception of *kalon* is its role in motivation and desire. Aristotle makes it clear that the noble man (*kalos k'agathos*) is admirable and noble in the sense that his actions are not done for his own benefit, not for something ulterior, but as something beneficial to others and to the community, without regard to the consequences for himself (Rhetoric, 1366a33-1367a33). Peirce uses the term *kalos k'agathos* to characterize the goodness of ideals, as something that is admirable in itself, without ulterior purpose (CP 1.586, 1903). As such, the noble person or the noble thing is a natural object of praise or admiration (BARNEY, 2010, p. 370). Admiration is motivational in the sense that one wants to be what one admires. What one finds admirable, and what one finds loathsome is key to the characterization of a moral self. Peirce often uses the term admiration to characterize the esthetic (CP 5.36, 1903). Plato sees the *kalon* as motivational analogous *to eros*, as a desire to commune with *kalon*, as one might use sex to commune with a beautiful person (BARNEY, 2010, p. 375). We might say that the *kalon* is *lovable* in this respect, much in the way in which a worthy friend is lovable, someone to whom one is attracted, and would choose as a companion in life. It is lovable in the way in which the philosopher is attracted to wisdom, understood precisely as the systematic understanding of all things.

3 Architectonic and Esthetics

Even though Peirce rejects the Kantian path to the fundamental questions about the relation among truth, goodness and *kalos*, he seems attracted to Kant’s notion of

architectonic, as a way to articulate his sense of esthetics. It also shows some family resemblance with Plato's notion of *kalon* as proper order. One can't help noticing that there appears to be a relation between Plato's sense of *kalon* as something that has to do with form, and how something functions within that whole, and Kant's notion of architectonic.

As Nathan Houser notes, Peirce became interested in systematizing his philosophy after the publication of his 1891 piece for *The Monist*, "The Architecture of Theories" (HOUSER, 1998, p. xvii). Peirce writes in the article, "that systems ought to be constructed architectonically has been preached since Kant, but I do not think the full import of the maxim has by any means been apprehended. (CP 6.9, 1891). "By an architectonic," Kant writes, "I understand the art of constructing systems" (1781, A832; B860). "By a system I understand the unity of the manifold modes of knowledge under one idea." This idea, he says, is provided by reason, as an understanding of how the parts occupy relatively to one another and to the whole. "The unity of the end to which all the parts relate and in the idea of which they all stand in relation to one another, makes it possible for us to determine from our knowledge of the other parts [...]" (1781, A832; B860). "The whole is thus an organized unity, and not an aggregate" (1781, A833; B861). Reason, as he urges, demands "systematic unity" (1781, A840; B68).

It is shortly after this, that Peirce revives his interest in the classification of the sciences. Although he started making classifications as early as 1866, there is a rather long gap after that, and he started again around 1892, after which he produced a classification just about every year or so, ending by 1902-1903 (KENT, 1987, p. ix). In his article on the architectonic of knowledge, Peirce imagined, as he says, an order to knowledge that eventually "becomes an absolutely perfect, rational, and symmetrical system [...]" (CP 6.33, 1891).

As Peirce was developing his classification of sciences, Peirce may have started to make a connection between architectonic, understood as a coherent system of parts and wholes, and esthetics, as having to do with the principles of the design of parts and wholes. For example, in his Harvard Lectures of 1903, where Peirce gives perhaps his best account of the normative sciences, he characterizes esthetic goodness as a multitude of parts so related to one another as to impart an immediate quality to their totality (CP 5.132, 1903). Richard Atkins picks up on this and argues that "... aesthetics plays a crucial role in the systematicity of knowledge" (2008, p. 20).

In expounding on the idea of an architectonic, Peirce refers to Kant's use of *cosmic*—clearly in reference to Plato's use in the *Gorgias*—in explaining the core feature of systematizing knowledge in his attempts at the classification of the sciences (CP 1.176, c.1896). For Kant, philosophy can be conceptualized as a *conceptus cosmicus*. On this view, "philosophy is the science of the relation of all knowledge to the essential ends of human reason" (1781, A839; B867). Reason, Kant says, demands complete systematic unity (1781, A840; B866). It is interesting to note that, in Peirce's mature classification of the sciences, esthetics is the third in order of hierarchy, preceded only by mathematics and phenomenology (CP 1.191, 1903; KENT, 1987, p. 115 ff.). If esthetics has something to do with systematization, this would make sense, since any system of knowledge would require its understanding. Additionally, if systems employ mathematical concepts such as symmetry, proportion and the like, this would be another reason for its particular order. This appears

to be something missed by Bent Sørensen and Torkild Thellefsen's analysis of the positioning of esthetics in the classification of the sciences (SØRENSEN and THELLEFSEN, 2004).

4 Peirce's Two Interpretations of the Role and Function of the Normative Sciences

Kant's notion of architectonic and the Platonic themes about *kalos* provide a framework for Peirce's concept of the esthetic but, of course, he is looking to put his particular stamp on the subject. To get a sense of what Peirce meant by esthetics, it is first important to give some account of what he meant by normative science, and the relation among the normative sciences.

In his mature classification of the sciences, the normative sciences of Esthetics, Ethics and Logic, in that order, are one of three divisions of philosophy, the others being phenomenology and metaphysics (CP 1.191, 1903). Philosophy, in turn, is one of three divisions of the sciences of discovery, the others being mathematics and the idioscopic sciences—that is, the psychological and physical disciplines. The sciences of discovery, in turn, is one of three divisions of science generally, the others being the sciences of review and the practical sciences.

Since Peirce sees the classification of the sciences as representing the systematic ordering of principles discovered in each science, the positioning of the sciences is important. In general, the leading principles or laws discovered in the higher sciences inform the lower ones which, collectively, inform the lower ones still. Consequently, the fundamentals of mathematics and phenomenology inform the normative sciences, and the fundamentals of the normative sciences inform metaphysics which, altogether, inform the other sciences in the chain on down. In turn, it would appear that the leading principles of esthetics—whatever they might be—inform those of ethics and logic, and derive its principles from mathematics and phenomenology. If the link between Peirce's sense of esthetics and Kant's notion of architectonic are plausible, this would suggest a reason why Peirce puts esthetics first after mathematics and phenomenology, and above the other normative sciences. If esthetics has something to do with the organization of parts in a whole, systematic unity, then its principles would be needed to draw on the very principles of any classification including, of course, the classification of the sciences.

As to the essential characteristics of a normative science, Peirce claims it “distinguishes what ought to be from what ought not to be” (CP 186, 1903; CP 1.281, 1902; CP 2.156, 1902). What all three sciences of esthetics, ethics and logic have in common is that they “set up norms, or rules which need not, but which ought to be followed” (CP 2.156, 1902). For Peirce, “the word ‘ought’ has no meaning except relatively to an end. That ought to be done which is conducive to a certain end” (CP 5.594, 1903). Peirce concludes, then, that “Normative Science treats of the laws of the relation of phenomena to ends” (CP 5.123, 1903).

Interestingly, Peirce also characterizes the normative sciences as both formal and positive. Formal sciences study the necessary conditions for its subject (CP 2.227, c.1897). In this regard, the three normative sciences “may be regarded as being the sciences of the conditions of truth and falsity, of wise and foolish conduct, of attractive and repulsive ideas” (CP 5.551, 1906). They are positive sciences since they make factual, true claims about experience on the basis of experience (CP

1.184, 1903; CP 1.55, c.1896; CP 5.39, 1903). Most logicians would certainly agree that logic is a formal science, and perhaps many would agree that it is a normative science, but most would be puzzled by calling it a positive science. Most ethicists would certainly agree that ethics is a normative study, some might agree that it is a formal science, but many would disagree in calling it a positive science. On the other hand, it is hard to envision esthetics as either a formal or a positive study, yet alone a science, so this is the science that needs the most explaining.

He does however give us a better picture of logic as a positive science. If the end of logical reasoning is to distinguish the true from the false, then its use in experience must prove up on those claims: “when logic tells us that we can reason about the real world [...] with security, it tells us a positive fact about the universe” (CP 7.524, u.). If logic claimed a type of inference to be valid, or an inductive methodology as truth-testing, yet their use in experience leads to many false conclusions or hypotheses, that would defeat the purpose in having a logic. Logic is a positive science in the sense that the validity of its claims about truth-production “rests on experience” (CP 7.524, u.). Logic’s guarantee is that it devises reasoning methods that, if persisted in, will eventually lead to true claims (CP 2.200, 1902). The claim is that, if people conducted their inquiries logically, then it is more likely that such inquirers will light on true propositions than false ones. The test of that claim is whether that happens cumulatively over time in the course of human history. As Peirce famously argues, truth would be the end result of inquiry sufficiently pursued over time (CP 5.494, 1907). This includes inquiry into induction and deduction itself, and their changes occur because of failures in experience (SHORT, 2012, p.312). This perhaps gives some insight into why Peirce—besides considering ethics and esthetics a normative and formal science—also calls them a positive science, since good conduct, like good reasoning, would find its ultimate test in experience, specifically in practical life.

Once the normative sciences have established their respective norms, then presumably they can be used critically. Once again, logic is the clear example. The norms of logic evaluate reasoning, and determine which types of inference in deductive thinking are valid and which methods of induction are better at confirming or disconfirming hypotheses. In sum, it aims to distinguish good from bad reasoning (CP 2.144, 1902). The task of the normative sciences as finding out

[...] how Feeling, Conduct, and Thought, ought to be controlled supposing them to be subject *in a measure*, and only in a measure, to self control, exercised by means of self-criticism, and the purposive formation of habit, as common sense tells us they are in a measure controllable” (R655, 1910, p. 24).

The opposition between the approved and disapproved, good and bad, is related to purpose (R1338, 1905-1906, p. 34-35). As Vincent Potter argues, “normative science [...] studies the dyadic relation of phenomena to ends and so enables one to form a basis for judging true and false, good and bad, beautiful and ugly” (1967, p. 19). Consequently, just as logic serves a critical standard for reasoning, and ethics provides a critical standard for conduct, then it should be presumed, as Ciano Aydin points out, that esthetics provides standards for overarching ideals by which

ends and goals can be evaluated (AYDIN, 2009, p. 432; CP 8.320, 1906). Peirce summarizes this process of self-control thusly:

When a man trains himself, thus controlling control, he must have some moral rule in view, however special and irrational it may be. But next he may undertake to improve this rule; that is, to exercise a control over his control of control. To do this he must have in view something higher than an irrational rule. He must have some sort of moral principle. This, in turn, may be controlled by reference to an esthetic ideal of what is fine (CP 5.533, 1906).

Based on his key definition of a normative science as that “which treats of the laws of the relation of phenomena to ends,” Peirce attempts to sort out the relationship among logic, ethics and esthetics, principally in two places: in 1902 in drafts of his proposed work on logic, *The Minute Logic*, and, in 1903, in his Harvard Lectures.

In Book IV, Chapter 1 of *The Minute Logic*, Peirce presents a very confusing and contradictory account of the characteristics and relationship among the three normative sciences. Peirce starts by claiming there are three normative sciences (CP 1.573, 1902); but, on the other hand, there may be only two, logic and ethics (CP 1.575, 1902). Since things are beautiful or ugly without a purpose for being so, esthetics is not a normative science since, by definition, it is not directed toward an end (CP 1.575, 1902). Finally, logic may be the only one true normative science, since ethics is “pre-normative,” concerned with aims and not with the relation of phenomena to those aims (CP 1.577, 1902):

Logic is a normative science; that is to say, it is a science of what is requisite in order to attain a certain aim. [...] For the normative science does not necessarily inquire how we are to act in order to pursue a purpose, or to what our efforts ought to be directed; but simply considers what conditions, whether they be voluntarily or involuntarily fulfilled, have to be satisfied” (R432, c.1902, p.1).

In regard to his characterization of ethics, at first, it is called the mid-normative science and the most exemplary of the normative sciences. He renames it *antethics* and *practics* to distinguish it from ethics when it is understood as a study of moral conventions (CP 1.573, 1902). On the other hand, it may not be a normative science at all since it studies only the ends of action (CP 1.577, 1902). Ethics is the “science of aims” (CP 4.241, 1902). “The fundamental problem of ethics is not, therefore, What is right, but, What am I prepared deliberately to accept as the statement of what I want to do, what am I to aim at, what am I after? [...] It is Ethics which defines that end (CP 2.198, 1903).

In regard to esthetics, he claims that it is the normative science concerned with the deliberate formation of habits of feeling (CP 1.573, 1902). In other places, it is the “science of ideals,” ones that are “objectively admirable” (CP 1.191, 1902). It doesn't determine the *summum bonum*, but only assists ethics in that regard

(CP 1.191, 1902). However, if esthetics is the study of the beautiful, then, since the beautiful is what it is regardless of purpose, esthetics cannot be a true normative science (CP 1.575, 1902).

Although there is still some confusion about the normative sciences in the 1903 Harvard Lectures, there is a much more coherent and consistent picture of the normative sciences presented here. In this interpretation, Peirce tries to show how each of the three normative sciences conform to the formal definition of a normative science, as “the relation of phenomena to ends.” Logic is the doctrine of how we ought to think in order to attain the end of truth (CP 5.121, 1903). Logic depends on ethics (CP 5.130, 1903). Although he repeats the same claim he made about ethics in *The Minute Logic* with emphasis, that “*Ethics is the study of what ends of action we are deliberately prepared to adopt*,” in the Harvard Lectures, he qualifies it in the very next sentence, “that is *right action* which is in conformity to ends which we are prepared deliberately to adopt” (CP 5.130, 1903). In other words, ethics is no longer just pre-normative, since it studies only ends, but concerned with the righteous actions that will attain those deliberately adopted ends. Ethics, in turn, depends on esthetics—what ought we to admire as an end. Esthetics is the study of “what constitutes the admirableness of an ideal,” and what makes something admirable (CP 5.36, 1903; and CP 5.130, 1903).

On this interpretation, each of the normative sciences has a distinct end: the true, the good, the admirable (*kalos*). As Peirce writes, “For Normative Science in general being the science of the laws of conformity of things to ends, esthetics considers those things whose ends are to embody qualities of feeling, ethics those things whose ends lie in action, and logic those things whose end is to represent something” (CP 5.129, 1903). As Kelly Parker comments on this, “each subsequent science considers a kind of end that is a narrower aspect of its predecessor’s focus” (2003, p. 30). If each has a peculiar end, they also each concern a distinct category of phenomenon: thought, action, feeling. On the basis of the definition of a normative science as studying the relation between phenomena and their ends, each science should then tell us about the relation of each of these phenomenon to its end: logic is concerned with best reasoning (thought) to achieve the end of truth; ethics is the study of right conduct, “righteousness”, in order to achieve the good; esthetics articulates the best order of things that will evoke feelings of admiration. As Kelly Parker puts it, “Peircean esthetics is explained in terms exactly analogous to logic and practices: the concern of esthetics is to articulate the conditions under which our feelings can reliably be considered to conform to the Admirable” (2003, p. 31).

Moreover, there is a relation of dependency: the end of logic (as well as other ends) are certified through ethics, which determines which ends are good to pursue. Ethics in turn is dependent on esthetics since it certifies which ends are inherently admirable. “The righteous man is the man who controls his passions, and makes them conform to such end as he is prepared deliberately to adopt as *ultimate*.” As he says further, “[...] an ultimate end of action *deliberately* adopted—that is to say, *reasonably* adopted—must be a state of things that *reasonably recommends itself in itself* aside from any ulterior consideration. It must be an *admirable ideal*, having the only kind of goodness that such an ideal *can* have; namely, esthetic goodness” (CP 5.130, 1903). “From this point of view the morally good appears as a particular species of the esthetically good” (CP 5.130, 1903).

As Peirce says in the opening lecture of the Harvard talks, “we cannot get any clue to the secret of Ethics [...] until we have first made up our formula for what it is that we are prepared to admire:

Suppose, for example, our maxim of ethics to be Pearson's that all our action ought to be directed toward the perpetuation of the biological stock to which we belong. Then the question will arise, On what principle should it be deemed such a fine thing for this stock to survive—or a fine thing at all? Is there nothing in the world or *in posse* that would be admirable *per se* except copulation and swarming? (CP 5.36, 1903).

Esthetics addresses the question of what an “ideal state would be, regardless of how it should be brought about and independently of any ulterior reason whatsoever, is held to be good or fine”:

In short, ethics must rest upon a doctrine which, without at all considering what our conduct is to be, divides ideally possible states of things into two classes, those that would be admirable and those that would be unadmirable, and undertakes to define precisely what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal. Its problem is to determine by analysis what it is that one ought deliberately to admire *per se* in itself regardless of what it may lead to and regardless of its bearings upon human conduct. I call that inquiry *Esthetics...*” (CP 5.36, 1903).

So, if ethical goodness rests on esthetic goodness, what is the nature of esthetic goodness?

5 Aesthetic Goodness and the Criteria for Ultimate Ends

Having appeared to clarify the matter of the subject and function of esthetic science in the fifth of the Harvard Lectures, Peirce attempts to set the formal conditions for ultimate ends, the *summum bonum*. In a draft to the 1903 Harvard Lectures, he identifies three such criteria: The ideal must be considered fine or admirable; second, it must pass a test of consistency when acted upon; and, third, “we consider what the general effect would be of thoroughly carrying out our ideals” (CP 1.608, 1903). The latter criterion is less explicit in the public lectures, but certainly explicit here.

In the fifth Harvard Lecture, Peirce tries to flesh out these criteria a bit more. The first criterion is that the ideal must have esthetic goodness. In order for something to be esthetically good, it “must have a multitude of parts so related to one another as to impart a positive simple immediate quality to their totality (CP 5.132, 1903), which recalls the idea of architectonic and principles of design. As Peirce says, “order is simply thought embodied in arrangement [...]” (CP 6.490, 1908). This is perhaps his clearest account of what he means by the esthetic: a certain systemic relation among parts of a whole, a certain order of elements within the whole that produces a certain simple quality that serves as the basis for the esthetic response. It is, perhaps, as Ivo Ibric writes, similar to a “theory of chemical compatibilities,” that

“shows ‘open valences,’ that, a willingness to combine ideas in wider theoretical networks, developing a new capability [...]” (2014, p. 2).

So, for example, the system of knowledge, as expressed in the classification of the sciences as Peirce envisioned it would have a certain esthetic goodness. Each science within in the order has a particular domain of knowledge that produces certain principles, laws and generalizations. These are ordered hierarchically so that the leading principles of the higher sciences inform the lower ones, creating a certain systematic unity. Everything has its place and function that harmonizes with the others.

If this is what Peirce means by the esthetic, then an esthetic science, understood as a positive esthetic science, would essentially be a study of design and, contrary to what Peirce thinks, would have more in common with beauty in art than he suggested. Those who study and teach art have come to a relative consensus about basic principles of design, even if there is some dispute about their meaning. Standard principles include unity, balance, proportion, symmetry, rhythm, repetition, emphasis, and the like (WALLSCHLAEGER and BUSIC-SNYDER, 1992). Many of these principles of design have a mathematical character to them, which fits nicely with Peirce’s sense that esthetics would be dependent upon the leading principles of both mathematics and phenomenology. It would be interesting to explore the mathematical principles underlying these fundamental principles of design. It would also be fruitful to explore esthetics in light of how these principles of design inform certain ideals, for example, community and political ideals such as unity or harmony, ideals of ethics and justice, such as proportion and equality, and personal ideals such as balance in life. In fact, a quality of life could be evaluated in terms of its rhythms, repetitions, proportions, balances, symmetries, tone, timbre, and so forth. It would also be interesting to explore how certain designs result in certain qualities, based on Peirce’s notion of quality (CP 1.422-426, c.1896).

However, alas, as soon as Peirce establishes this suggestive approach to the science of esthetics, and some semblance of a notion of aesthetic goodness, he dismisses its critical function in the very next paragraph. Since a multitude of parts can be related in an indefinite number of ways so as to impart a variety of perceived qualities of their totality, there may be no part-whole relation that is either good or bad, but is what it is and has the esthetic effect that it has. It could be argued that even an inchoate relation of parts in a whole produces an immediate perceived quality—inchoateness, and complexity conveys mystery. Thus, he qualifies his account of esthetic goodness by saying that any order (or disorder) of parts in a whole is esthetically good, “no matter what the particular quality of the total may be.” It doesn’t matter whether it nauseates us, scares us, or disturbs us, it is still counted as esthetically good (CP 5.132, 1903). “Vulgarity and pretension themselves may appear quite delicious in their perfection” (CP 5.128, 1903).

Peirce quickly realizes that this is an account of esthetic goodness that makes it a useless criterion to evaluate anything. If there’s nothing that is esthetically bad, then “there is no such thing as esthetic goodness [...] only various esthetic qualities; that is, simple qualities of totalities [...]” (CP 5.132, 1903). Some of these qualities may be stronger in certain arrangements and not in others, but there will be “no purely esthetic grade of excellence” (CP 5.132, 1903). Thus, frustratingly, the first criterion for an ultimate end cannot be used to evaluate it, only present it. If there

is nothing esthetically good or bad, then esthetics fails as an effective normative science.

However, there may be a possible salvation for esthetics as a normative science. What Peirce seems to miss in his own analysis at this point is that, although there are varieties of the ordering of parts and wholes, as he says, each kind of totality tends to evoke certain types of esthetic response. Certain totalities will tend to evoke nauseous feelings, others fear, but, we also suppose some will evoke admiration, just as the arrangement of the elements of painting such as color, line, space, tone, etc., as ordered by principles of design may evoke certain feelings or emotions in the spectator, or the way in which similar organization of timbre, tone, pitch, loudness and rhythm may evoke certain feelings or moods in music. As Peirce says at one-point, esthetic goodness is “expressiveness” (CP5.140, 1903).

If certain arrangements of part-whole relations are expressive and evoke certain feelings, then some will evoke admiration. For example, in his “A Neglected Argument for the Existence of God,” he writes that “the hypothesis of God’s Reality [...] will come to be stirred to the depths of his nature by the beauty of the idea and by its august practicality, even to the point of earnestly loving and adoring his strictly hypothetical God, and to that of desiring above all things to shape the whole conduct of life...into conformity with that hypothesis” (CP 6.467, 1908). Perhaps better said, it is not so much the idea of God as the idea of God’s design of the world that is to be admired (CP 6.479, 1908).

In any case, it is as if in Lecture V of the Harvard Lectures, Peirce forgot the message in Lecture I, namely, that ethics rests on esthetics, since its goal is to divide “[...] ideally possible states of things into two classes, those that would be admirable and those that would be unadmirable, and undertakes to define precisely what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal” (CP 5.36, 1903). Thus, what appears to make esthetics normative and evaluative, that is, critical, is the task of sorting out admirable designs or systems from unadmirable ones, much in the way in which Critical Logic, as one division of logic or semiotic, has the task of sorting out true from false claims. In that case, by analogy, a grammar of esthetics, one assumes, would entail something like an analysis of the principles of design and a classification of their arrangements so as to entail certain esthetic responses—analogueous to Peirce’s classification of signs. In this regard, the work of Claudio Guerri and William Huff on the design of color comes to mind. They use a Peircean-inspired grid classification—a *nonagon*—which treats color as an element of form design (2006).

Despite his claims here that there is no esthetic goodness or badness, he does bring this topic up again later, and drops hints about their character. This would suggest that he’s not completely satisfied with his conclusion in the Harvard Lectures. In a passage from “The Basis of Pragmaticism,” written in 1906, Peirce makes the claim that “esthetic good and evil are closely akin to pleasure and pain,” but as what the “fully developed superman,” or “the sufficiently matured agent” would find pleasurable or painful (CP 5.552, 1906). As he analyzes pleasure and pain, they are intimately connected to actions of attraction and repulsion: “The feeling of pain is a symptom of a feeling which repels us; the feeling of pleasure is the symptom of an attractive feeling. Attraction and repulsion are kinds of action” (CP 5.552, 1906). Here Peirce seems to revert to an account of aesthetic goodness as

a matter of taste, albeit the cultivated taste of “the sufficiently matured agent” as to what is admirable and attractive—a position he seems to reject earlier in 1903 (CP 5.111, 1903).

This points to a problem Peirce must address if his esthetics is to advance as a critical, normative science. It is the same fundamental question that Kant wrestled with in *The Critique of Judgment*, concerning judgments about beauty: Do the totalities of part-whole relations evoke admiration because they possess an objective property independent of how they are perceived, that tend the perceiver to perceive it as such, or, is admiration a subjective judgment by the perceiver of the totality?

In his account of judgments about beauty, Kant attempted to go between the views of the English thinkers, such as Hume and Burke, that judgments of beauty are subjective matters of taste, and the views of Baumgarten, among others, that beautiful things have objective properties that make them beautiful. If it is subjective, then it is truly a matter of taste and agreement, and consensus of what counts as beautiful seems unattainable. On the other hand, if beauty is inherent in the properties of things, then there is a possibility of such agreement. Yet the latter position is difficult to show. Kant attempts to go between the horns of this dilemma, and poses the following question: “how is a judgment possible which, merely from one’s own feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges this pleasure as attached to the representation of the same object in every other subject, and does so *a priori*, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?” (1790, sect 36, p. 130-131).

Without going into a deep excursus of Kant’s answer to this question, the short answer is that although judgments of beauty are subjective judgments they still involve a universality in the sense that to judge something as beautiful is also a call to all others to appreciate the beauty as one does. It is something that demands a public appreciation—to use Peirce’s terms. The judgment of beauty calls up a communal response, grounded in a *sensus communis*. The fact that anyone in principle can appreciate something as beautiful, something that is disinterestedly appreciated—without consideration of what utility or benefit it might have or, as Peirce would say, “without ulterior reason” (CP 5.36, 1903)—suggests something in common to human judgment in this respect (1790, sect 22, p. 76ff).

Although Richard Atkins argues that there are affinities between Kant’s approach to these esthetic questions and Peirce’s, even granting that Peirce adopts some of Kant’s framework, there is a solution implicit in his pragmatism that provides an alternative to Kant’s solution to the problem, but also avoids the matter of taste (ATKINS, 2008). The solution more or less involves the third criterion Peirce mentions for the *summum bonum*, namely, the general effect resulting from implementing the ideal. The pragmatic maxim argues that the meaning of a concept is clarified through the conception of its practical consequences, much in the way in which a scientific hypothesis is prepared for testing by deducing what its observable outcomes would be. Similarly, the meaning of an ideal considered admirable, will be determined by its practical effects, that is, as a lived experience. This appears to be much of the sense of the third test or criterion for an ultimate end, that is, it is measured by the general effect of actually carrying out the ideal: “Third, we consider what the general effect would be of thoroughly carrying out our ideals. Just so certain ways of reasoning recommend themselves because if persistently carried

out they must lead to the truth. The parallelism, you perceive, is almost exact" (CP 1.608, 1903).

The proof of admirableness of the ideal is in the effects of its implementation in the laboratory of life. Rather than an appeal to a *sensus communis*, Peirce appeals here to a community of inquiry, fitted with a proper method of inquiry that can do better than any other method for fixing beliefs about what is admirable, sufficient enough to pursue. A convergence of beliefs, the result of deliberate inquiry, is how a consensus is achieved, rather than any necessary *a priori* feature in judgments of beauty. As Peirce writes:

Now, just as conduct controlled by ethical reason tends toward fixing certain habits of conduct, the nature of which [...] does not depend upon any accidental circumstances, and *in that sense* may be said to be *destined*; so thought, controlled by rational experimental logic, tends to the fixation of certain opinions, equally destined, the nature of which will be the same in the end, however the perversity of thought of whole generations may cause the postponement of the ultimate fixation. (CP 5.430, 1905).

To find the end which no amount of further deliberation would alter is what matters: The *summum bonum* is what one would conclude after thoroughgoing consideration. Hence, what the man actually felt about it for the greater part of his life is not relevant. (R649, 1910, p. 22-24).

In this case, what is admirable is not a matter of the taste of individuals, no matter how cultivated or matured, but a collective judgement as a result of inquiry and test of the laboratory of life—as a lived experience.

In any case, in order for an order of things to count as a *summum bonum*, it must be attractive and lovable to a wide swath of those who are tasked with its realization. It would make no sense to see the ultimate end as something so repulsive or nauseating that the only reason to participate in its implementation would be the imposition by force by those who have the proper taste. As Peirce emphasizes in a later passage, an ultimate aim "should accord with a free development of the agent's own esthetic quality" (CP 5.136, 1903). The wider the attraction, the more likely its wider approval, and the more likely it qualifies as an ultimate end. It would be strange if the highest good only attracted a few who would admire that particular order of things.

Peirce alludes to this more collective approach to the admirable when he makes an analogy between the system of sciences and architecture. Whereas Kant would prefer the term *cosmic* to describe the architectonic order, Peirce would prefer the use of *public*. Works of sculpture and painting are usually by a single artist and represent a fragment of a larger whole. They are locked up in special venues and seen by a few. "A great building," on the other hand, "[...] is meant for the whole people, and is erected by the exertions of an army representative of the whole people. It is the message with which an age is charged, and which it delivers to posterity" (CP 1.176, c.1896). Peirce repeats this sentiment a few years later in a

report to George Morison on the Hudson River bridge project, on which he worked as a consulting engineer:

For whoever, in allowing his eye of a morning to rest a moment for refreshment on that splendid scene, should catch sight of that bridge and should reflect upon how calmly and simply it performed a great duty, conforming in every detail to the principles of good sense and of sound reason, would certainly receive a moral lesson which would have its effect upon his conduct for all that day (R1357, c.1888, p. 9).

By analogy, the *summum bonum* is like an edifice that can be seen, felt, conceived and lived-in, so that it is sufficiently public to comprehend its effects. For example, if a society had a certain order, constituted by the habits of sentiment and conduct of fellow citizens, and the arrangement of practices and institutions that made up the economic, social and political life of society, but most people living in it only felt contempt, fear, anxiety, and resentment, rather than admiration, loyalty and contentment, then surely that is an indication that it has failed as a highest good.

Having discussed the first and third criteria, the second one for the *summum bonum* is a test using the categorical imperative, in the sense of it as a test of consistency (CP 5.133, 1903). By that Peirce must mean the common interpretation of the categorical imperative as testing the goodness of an action by universalizing it and determining whether it generates inconsistencies thereby. For example, pretense to keeping a promise is wrong since, if universalized, promise-keeping would make no sense, since it would always be a false promise (1785, p. 18). In this case, the second test for a *summum bonum* would be to determine whether the order of things, so presented, would be possible, or whether it would destroy itself in its implementation, the way in which an indefinite war of all against all would make it eventually impossible to wage war. As Peirce concludes, “an aim which *cannot* be adopted and consistently pursued is a bad aim. It cannot properly be called an ultimate aim at all” (CP 5.133, 1903).

What is important to note here, is that Peirce claims this to be an *ethical* test, not an *esthetic* one (CP 5.133, 1903). It is clear at this point, that the test for a *summum bonum* is not the domain of esthetics alone, but it must be evaluated by all three normative sciences. The test must pass the test of feeling (of admiration); it must pass the ethical test of universality, and it must pass the logical-scientific test, based on the effects of its implementation. This perhaps explains Peirce’s various pronouncements as to whether the determination of ends is the subject matter of esthetics or ethics. Esthetics governs the first test of its admirableness, ethics its second test of universality, and logic, in the form of a methodology for inquiry, governs the third test, a study of the effects of its implementation.

The three tests reflect three kinds of norms that are implicit in any deliberative action, that is, an action that aims at some end, and aligns with his ethical thinking (LISZKA, 2012, p. 51ff). Esthetics is concerned with norms about the proper or best selection of ends to desire or want, ethics about whether such ends are also right to pursue, and logic, in the form of scientific methodology, what is the best way to achieve those ends, as measured by its outcomes. These three norms become more

explicit if deliberative action is modeled after standard forms of practical reasoning. Peirce had a desire-belief model of purposive or goal-directed behavior: an agent desires some goal, believes that doing certain things will attain that goal and, consequently, acts on that belief if conditions and opportunities are right (LISZKA, 2012, p.51ff). Norms associated with properly desirable ends might be called *telic norms*, those with the most likely means to attain such ends, *prudential norms*, and those which select among prudential norms, those that are also right to do, *righteous norms* (LISZKA, 2014, p. 477). The norms present in deliberative conduct, conduct aimed at ends, can be expressed comprehensively as the following: *what ought to be done is what is good to do that is likely to attain what is good to want*.

6 Peirce's Proposal for the *Summum Bonum*

Based on a fragment that was written around the same time as the Harvard Lectures, it appears that Peirce make a stab at a list of candidate ends, arguably including ones that he considered as ultimate. It gives a better picture of what Peirce meant by a *summum bonum*. It shows that, as he conceives it, it is constituted by a certain arrangement of feeling, conduct and thought.

Peirce organizes ends into three general types that follow the three phenomenological categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness. An end that would be a simple first would be the end of pleasure, a "purely subjective end," as he calls it (CP 1.589-590, c.1903). An end that would be a simple second would be the continued existence, either of a person or the human race as such.

The third sort of end "is to realize a general ideal" in terms of feeling, action and thought. Consequently, this category is subdivided into three subtypes: a third of a first, represented as a generalization about pleasure. The example that Peirce gives is the utilitarian principle: "to bring about some general state of feeling, such as the greatest pleasure of the greatest number of persons." The third of a second is characterized as an attempt to realize certain "inward" characters (a) in individuals of a community, "such as an altruistic sentiment." But also "outward" characters (b) in communities, such as peace and prosperity.

The third of a third is the most interesting. It is "to further the realization of an ideal not definable in advance, otherwise than as that which tends to realize itself in the long run, or in some such way." This sort of end is subdivided into threes as well. The first would be to realize, in the long run, certain "inward" characteristics, which might be interpreted as habits of feeling in individual members of a community. The second concerns the "outward" type, that is, habits and practices of a community. The third refers to a purely "methodical" ideal (CP 1.589, c.1903). There's no elaboration here, but it could refer to the habits and practices of inquiry of the community into the discovery and realization of ideals.

It is clear that Peirce is promoting the third category of ends, generalizability in terms of feelings, conduct, and thought, one in which there is an arrangement of habits, practices and institutions in a community, an interrelation among parts of a whole, such that the total effect is one that is pleasurable for its members, sows the right sorts of sentiments and conduct toward others, promotes the well-being of the community as a whole, and involves a reliable means and method for continuing to improve its condition in all these respects.

What is interesting about the third type of end, an end to realize “a general ideal not definable in advance” is its open-endedness. This is a view repeated by Peirce elsewhere. In 1902, for Baldwin’s *Dictionary of Psychology and Philosophy*, Peirce writes, “Almost everybody will now agree,” Peirce says, “that the ultimate good lies in the evolutionary process in some way [...]” (CP 5.4, 1902). In drafts to the Harvard Lectures, he writes:

[...] when these ideas of progress and growth have themselves grown up so as to occupy our minds as they now do, how can we be expected to allow the assumption pass that the admirable in itself is any stationary result? The explanation of the circumstance that the only result that is satisfied with itself is a quality of feeling is that reason always looks forward to an endless future and expects endlessly to improve its results” (CP 1.614, 1903).

As Beverley Kent concludes about Peirce’s account of the *summum bonum*, “[...] It is the refusal to grant that the esthetic ideal must be a static result. By admitting process, Peirce is no longer limited to a self-satisfied ideal. He can now adopt an end that will always anticipate an improvement in its results” (1976, p. 270). In this view of things, Peirce seems to think that, rather than developing a pre-formed notion of the ideal, such an ideal will be developed through progressive experimentation with candidate-ideals, much in the way in which science corrects errant hypotheses toward better ones. What is important, then, is that a community is so constituted as to have a good methodology and means for self-correction toward better ideals. From these statements, we can gather that the ideal, the *summum bonum* for Peirce involves continuous improvement, progress and growth—a betterment of the human condition through the use of reasoning, as expressed in the preferred scientific method of inquiry.

Despite this open-ended view of ideals, which also accords with the more collective solution to esthetic judgment, Peirce cannot help but state his nominee for the *summum bonum*. In drafts of the Harvard Lectures and elsewhere, Peirce declares what he considers to be the most admirable ideal:

I do not see how one can have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood. The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness, so far as we can comprehend it. (CP 1.615, 1903).

Earlier in 1899, in a review for *The Nation*, he also calls reasonableness the *summum bonum* (CN 2.220-1, 1899).

However, if Peirce’s more comprehensive sense of the *summum bonum* as a matter of feeling, conduct and thought, then the “fullness” of reason is not restricted purely to thought. In this sense, the reasonableness must be *concrete*. As he writes in his entry on “pragmatic and pragmatism” for Baldwin’s *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, “[...] the only ultimate good which the practical facts to which it directs attention can subserve is to further the development of concrete reasonableness”

(CP 5.3, 1902). As he notes, "This development of reason consists...in embodiment, that is, in manifestation." "It requires [...] all the coloring of all qualities of feeling, including pleasure in its proper place among the rest" (CP 1.615, 1903). By *concrete* reasonableness, Peirce implies that the reasonable is actually operative in the world, presumably in the habit-taking of the natural world, but also the habits of feeling, actions, practices, and institutions of the human community. It is not just a formal principle, as it might be expressed in Kant, but it is a *living shape*, as in Schiller, form that has shaped the lived experience of feelings, habits, and the practices and institutions of a community, its edifice as such. This is how John Dewey interprets Peirce: "[...] in his later doctrine, concrete rationality means a change in existence brought about *through* action, and through action which embodies conceptions whose own specific existence consists in habitual attitudes of response" (DEWEY, 1916, p. 714).

At least as it is presented in the Harvard Lectures, *reasonableness* means simply the use of reasoning in any practical or theoretical matter, where reasoning is understood as the triad of abduction, deduction and induction: "But the saving truth is that there is a Thirdness in experience, an element of Reasonableness to which we can train our own reason to conform more and more. If this were not the case, there could be no such thing as logical goodness or badness" (CP 5.160, 1903). However, as Jaime Nubiola has pointed out, reasonableness also has a cosmic character for Peirce, that is, the tendency of the very order of things to take on a law-like character (NUBIOLA, 2009, p. 129). "Active law is efficient reasonableness [...]" (CP 5.121, 1903); "[...] reasonableness [is] the idea of law [...]" (CP 7.687, 1903). In its most general sense, "[...] reasonableness consists in association, assimilation, generalization, the bringing of items together into an organic whole [...]" (cited in NUBIOLA, 2009, p. 133). Consistent with his objective idealism, Peirce argues that reasonableness of the human mind and the reasonableness of nature "are essentially the same" (CP 7.687, 1903). In this context, as the exemplar of thirdness, reasonableness is contrasted with brute force (CP 6.239, 1908), simple secondness.

There is reason to believe some alignment between the open-ended ideal that Peirce describes in the 1903 manuscript fragment and his notion of concrete reasonableness, since he often describes the latter as an evolutionary, developmental process. In 1904, in a manuscript, Peirce writes that the *summum bonum* consists in a "process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody a certain class of generals which in the course of the development show themselves to be reasonable" (R329, c. 1904, p. 20). He repeats this claim again, in 1905, in his *Monist* article, "What Pragmatism Is" (CP 5.433, 1905). "Reason," as Peirce remarks, is never "completely perfected," but "always must be in a state of incipiency, of growth" (CP 1.615, 1903). It would seem that, if the search for the highest good requires inquiry and good inquiry requires good reasoning in the form of the proper use of inference, then there is a compatibility of concrete reasonableness with the open-ended pursuit of the ideal.

7 Positive and Negative Esthetics

In the Fifth Harvard Lecture, just prior to his account of the three tests for a *summum bonum*, Peirce makes an interesting distinction between two types of goodness:

I hardly need remind you that goodness, whether esthetic, moral, or logical, may either be *negative*—consisting in freedom from fault—or *quantitative*—consisting in the degree to which it attains” (CP 5.127, 1903).

At this point, he notes to his audience that “in an inquiry, such as we are now engaged upon, negative goodness is the important thing” (CP 5.127, 1903).

It’s rather difficult to sort out this distinction on the basis of such a thin description. Later, Peirce talks about the positive and negative goodness of logic. The “negative, and more fundamental, goodness being its soundness and weight, its really having the force that it pretends to have and that force being great [...]” On the other hand, its quantitative goodness consists in the degree in which it advances our knowledge” (CP 5.143, 1903).

One way to think of the difference between positive and negative goodness, might be the difference between having a standard or ideal in place, and measuring progress *toward* that ideal. To evaluate something as to “the degree to which it attains,” would suggest that there is already a standard or ideal which is then used to measure the degree to which some state approximates it. A positive esthetics, then, would be one that measures the current state-of-affairs against some ultimate ideal developed prior to those states-of-affairs. This might express the sense of positive goodness. On the other hand, a negative sense of goodness is a movement *away from* something worse to something better—amelioration. As Peirce defines meliorism in the *Century Dictionary*, it is “the doctrine that the world is neither the worst nor the best possible, but that it is capable of improvement: a mean between theoretical pessimism and optimism” (cited in BERGMAN, 2012, p. 127).

For example, Peirce’s account of progress in science appears to be based on this sense meliorism. Science progresses through the elimination of error in hypotheses. It is easier to recognize error than it is truth. To say that something is true, Peirce says, “means simply that it never can be found out to be false” (CP 5.142, 1903).

If the function of ends is to provide guidance and direction, a negative esthetics can perform that function as well. If a negative esthetics is a matter of “freedom from fault,” then the direction is to move from more error to less error—that is a movement of self-correction. The ultimate good is revealed through the disclosure of error by trial, rather than through the attainment of a pre-conceived end. In the human sphere, problems are the sources of error, and their solution can provide a direction toward betterment of the human condition. The more reasonable the community—in the sense that it will adopt those beliefs that are more likely to resolve its problems—the more likely it will resolve its problems; and the more a community resolves its problems, the more likely it is that it will adopt the methods that have successfully resolved its problems and, thereby, continue to improve its situation. In the framework of negative esthetics, the problems of the day are worked out in order to achieve a better life in the future. An end, better than alternatives becomes more and more revealed through such a process. It is, as Peirce says, “a general ideal not definable in advance,” but revealed through the amelioration of our problems.

Note on citations

Citations to Aristotle's work by the standard Bekker numbers.

Citations to Plato's work by standard Stephanus pagination.

Citations to the work of Charles Peirce published in:

The collected papers of Charles S. Peirce. are indicated by CP, volume, paragraph, and date.

Contributions to The Nation are indicated by CN, volume, and date.

Peirce's manuscripts use standard Robin numbering R, manuscript number, page
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