

# Ethics and reasonableness or how to live creatively

*Ética e razoabilidade ou como viver criativamente*

**Hedy Boero**

Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez – Chile

hedy.boero@edu.uai.cl

**Abstract:** The history of philosophical ethics is, largely, an attempt to elucidate the way in which human beings can foster an *êthos*, in order to reach their own fullness. Were Peirce asked to show, first, what he meant by the *êthos* of the philosopher or scientist, he would easily answer that it is the search for ideal and eternal verities, i.e., the very reasonableness that governs the universe. Were he asked, right after, what the *êthos* of human beings in general is, that is to say, what guides and gives meaning to every person's life, his answer would not differ much from the previous one: all human beings, by their concrete actions, ought to incarnate that reasonableness, admirable ideal or *summum bonum* in their own lives. Peirce's well known answer contains a deeply creative view of ethical life: this is the progressive and continuous construction of various possibilities of action, by which each person configures her own *êthos*, according to that admirable end, which is a representation of what could be a good, desirable and flourishing life. This may not seem original in the context of the history of philosophical ethics—Aristotle had already said something similar. However, there are two very rich and suggestive notions in Peirce's thought, which might arguably be recovered, since they can significantly contribute to that reflection, namely: reasonableness and abduction. As I will try to show, for Peirce to live ethically is to live creatively.

**Keywords:** Abduction. Creativity. Ethical life. Peirce. Reasonableness.

**Resumo:** *A história da ética filosófica é, em grande parte, uma tentativa de elucidar a maneira na qual os seres humanos podem fomentar um êthos, para atingir a própria plenitude. Fosse Peirce convidado a mostrar, primeiro, o que ele entendia pelo êthos do filósofo ou do cientista, ele responderia facilmente que é a busca por um ideal e verdades eternas, isto é, a própria razoabilidade que rege o universo. Fosse ele questionado, logo após, o que o êthos dos seres humanos é, em geral, quer dizer, o que guia e dá sentido à vida de cada pessoa, sua resposta não diferiria muito da anterior: todos os seres humanos, por meio de suas ações concretas, devem encarnar a razoabilidade, o ideal admirável ou o summum bonum em suas próprias vidas. A resposta bem conhecida de Peirce contém uma visão criativa muito profunda da vida ética: esta é a construção progressiva e contínua de diversas possibilidades de ação, por meio da qual cada pessoa configura seu próprio êthos, segundo esse fim admirável, que é uma representação daquilo que seria uma vida boa, desejável e próspera. Isto pode não parecer*

*original no contexto da história da ética filosófica – Aristóteles já tinha dito algo semelhante. Entretanto, há duas noções muito ricas e sugestivas no pensamento de Peirce, as quais podem sem dúvida ser recuperadas, visto que elas podem contribuir de maneira significativa para essa reflexão, a saber: a razoabilidade e a abdução. Como tentarei mostrar, para Peirce viver eticamente é viver criativamente.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Abdução. Criatividade. Peirce. Razoabilidade. Vida ética.*

**Data de submissão:** 13/10/2019

**Data de aprovação:** 08/11/2019

**DOI:** 10.23925/2316-5278.2019v20i1p244-258

## 1 Introduction

In 1898, when Peirce discusses the possibility that philosophy influences people's conduct and ethical life, he concludes that the *only way* this can be possible is if the *ideal and eternal verities*, that philosophy and the other sciences make us acquainted with, gradually reach, by a slow percolation, the very core of people's being and thus come to influence their lives (CP 1.648, 1898). Philosophy and science seek to find "[...] that there is some absolutely valid reasonableness, to ascertain how far this reasonableness governs the universe, and to learn how we may best do its service" (CN 2.208, 1899). According to him, this would be, in essence, what guides and gives meaning to the life of the philosopher or scientist. But the question now is: What about the human being in general? What guides and gives meaning to the life of every person? Peirce's answer—already known to all—is not at all far from what was said about philosophers and scientists: through her concrete actions and habits, every person ought to incarnate, in her own life, that reasonableness, which Peirce identifies with the admirable ideal or *summum bonum* (CP 5.433; EP 2.343, 1905).<sup>1</sup> Each person should configure her own conduct according to that end, to what for her could be a good, desirable and full life; for that reasonableness, as an end or ideal, is a representation of one's life as a totality of meaning (EP 2.245; CP 1.591, 1903).

This Peircean way of conceiving ethics clearly has its roots in the conception about what moral life is initiated by Aristotle. Thus, in the first chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, expressions like this can be read:

If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake, and everything else being desired for the sake of this [...], evidently this end will be the good and the best. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on our life, and, shall we not, like archers who have a target, be more likely to hit upon what is right? (EN I 2, 1094a18-24).

---

1 Cf. PFEIFER, 1971, p. 144-148.

In this context, Peirce's ethics—in particular, from the turn of century—is no longer a simple act according to the law or the application of customary principles to moral conduct, but is the *creative* search for the ways to hit the target. For him, *this* is to incarnate in one's own life the admirable ideal and advance towards the ultimate end (BARRENA, 2007, p. 190-196).

Now, if ethical life is creative life, abduction should be at the core of it as one of its components. It is evident that in everyday situations, human beings ground their decisions and actions on habitual knowledge or on instinct; they act by mere practice and in a more or less customary or automatic way, without the need for any particular inquiry. However, when atypical, unexpected or difficult to solve situations arise, among the possible reactions, one is to try to find out new courses of action, to come up with alternative solutions for an infrequent problem, to which a way out cannot be found. Thus, in ethical life, as in philosophical-scientific research, there is a search for operational hypotheses, and this entails abduction. For Peirce, this is where all the novelty of knowledge lies and, consequently, the strength of the creative process (CP 5.171, 1903; CP 8.209, 1905). In the case of ethical life, abduction will be applied to examine the possibilities of action that human beings have before them and to create new paths of action, when instinct or habitual knowledge fail to give a sufficient response.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the idea of ethical life as a way of living creatively, from the perspective of Peircean thought. Thus, the points of interest are basically two: first, to analyze how reasonableness guides and articulates the person's ethical life; second, to investigate abduction as a constitutive factor of a moral way of life that is truly creative.

## 2 Reasonableness as an ethical way of life

One of the most notable features of Peirce's ethics is its *teleological* character, something, as said before, which bears a clear continuity with Aristotle's ethical thought. Without the guiding idea of an order at end, his ethical theory cannot be properly understood. Especially from 1902 on, the *ultimate end* of human beings acquires a critical role in the moral phenomenon and in its study.<sup>2</sup> Due to its quality of *ideal cause*, the end opens a horizon for human beings in which their own ideal of life is *embraced* and *transcended* by a much higher and universal one: to make the world something increasingly more reasonable, i.e., to collaborate in the incarnation, manifestation and growth of Reason as such or *Noûs*.<sup>3</sup> His representation of what a good and full life could be, of what in Aristotelian terms is the *eudaimonia* or *happiness* (EN I 4, 1095a18-20), manifests an outlook that transcends human being as such. Peirce conceives humankind as a simple speck of dust within a universe of reasonableness. This universe is a *Logos* which embraces humankind, is present in it in a special way, but at the same time goes far beyond it. This is why, in his opinion, every human experience, in

2 Cf. PEIRCE, *Ethics* (MS 432-434; CP 1.575-584, 1903); *On Science and Natural Classes* (MS 427; CP 1.203-283; EP 2.115-132, 1903).

3 Cf. PEIRCE, *What Makes a Reasoning Sound?* (EP 2.255; CP 1.615, 1903).

order to be properly measured in its own worth, must be contemplated from this transcendent perspective of reasonableness.<sup>4</sup>

Now, the teleological character of Peircean morality and the close bond between ethical life and reasonableness are manifested by observing the itinerary followed by Peirce until he concludes that reasonableness is the ultimate end that guides the ethical life of human beings.<sup>5</sup> I will recover four landmarks from that itinerary, keeping the distinction between the formal and the material characterization of the ultimate end in mind. Since Peircean ethical theory is of clear Aristotelian roots, two kinds of questions are also observed at this point. One, with respect to the formal aspect, tries to find out how the end that is being sought should be. The other, with respect to the material or content aspect, inquires what the ultimate end which shapes a good and full life is.

1. When Peirce talks about the end that human beings try to achieve through their free or self-controlled actions, a distinction must be made—which is not always noticed—between two kinds of ends: (a) the end sought in a specific situation, through a particular course of action; and (b) the end of medium and long term, which is beyond any particular situation of action. In other words, when the human self calculates, deliberates and chooses the most appropriate means to obtain her goals, one can distinguish between: (a) the *particular or short-term ends*, to which she points with her concrete actions; and (b) the *medium and long term ends*, which delineate certain total representation of what a good life for the subject is. When Peirce asks what the *ideal of conduct* is, he is thinking about the end understood in the second way. This end is the object of a particular kind of choice, which Aristotle calls *proairesis*, “deliberate decision” (EN III 5, 1113a10; VI 2, 1139a23, 31), understood as a sort of *decision or fundamental choice* for a certain way of life, which gives the frame of reference for all deliberative processes, all decisions and all particular actions. Peirce is precisely in this same line: “Every man has certain ideals of the general description of conduct that befits a rational animal in his particular station in life, what most accords with his total nature and relations” (EP 2.245; CP 1.591, 1903). These ideals are a representation of the person’s life as a meaningful whole, so that human activity cannot be understood in a way that is not tending towards or being guided by those ideals or general representations of one’s life as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

---

4 All human beings must be able to distance themselves from their own personal interests, going beyond themselves and taking charge of their own existence while forming part of a much broader whole: “To learn the ways of Nature and the reasonableness of things, and to be absorbed as a particle of the rolling wave of reasonableness is the *summum bonum* itself” (CN 2.220-221, 1899). Cf. CP 1.611; EP 2.253, 1903.

5 For a detailed study of Peirce’s intellectual itinerary on these topics, the teleological character of ethics as a normative science, and its close relationship with logic and aesthetics, see BOERO, 2014.

6 “The self can only realize itself by exerting control over itself; and it can only exert control over itself by committing itself to ideals” (COLAPIETRO, 1989, p. 95-96).

2. Now, what is—in Peirce’s opinion—the ultimate end which gives meaning to one’s own life as a whole and is the object of that fundamental decision like? In 1902, when he still fluctuates between assigning the question of the end to ethics or aesthetics, he affirms that “life can have but *one end*” (CP 2.198, 1902). But what is the *summum bonum*, what should be sought as the good *per se et simpliciter*, “what is desirable without any reason,” independently of any ulterior result (MS 432-434; CP 1.575-584, 1902). In tune with Aristotle, Peirce doesn’t believe that any class of objects is equally appropriate to meet the requirements of the formal characterization of the ultimate end which corresponds with a rational agent. This formal characterization raises two central questions, in which he closely follows the Stagirite (EN I 5, 1097a15-b21): first, whether each of these kinds of objects may or may not satisfy human beings as the only ultimate good, if it is wanted by itself, i.e., if it is an *end in itself* or *perfect*; second, whether it can be considered an absolute good, which is enough for itself, regardless of its effects, i.e., if it is an *autarkic* or *self-sufficient end* (MS 433:12-13; CP 1.581, 1902).
3. To answer this question, Peirce considers that all conceptions of the general classes of objects that would be goods or ultimate ends should be reviewed (MS 434:27, 1902). In *Ethics*, he intends to enumerate and examine no less than twenty-eight different kinds of ultimate goods, but only reaches fifteen, all of them taken from Greek philosophy, partially reaching Plato. Among the ultimate goods mentioned are: common good, virtue, justice, beauty, the bond with God, harmony, the study of the order of nature, pleasure (MS 434:28-33, 1902). In the particular case of Plato, he analyzes nine of his writings and basically detects three ultimate goods: Wisdom, Beauty and Good (MS 434:33-234, 1902). Peirce points out that these three ultimate goods are combined and harmonized in *Philebus*, concluding with Plato, that the same *union* is the ultimate end sought.<sup>7</sup> Douglas Anderson states that, in 1902, Peirce introduces the Greek notion *kalos*, in the sense of what is admirable in itself:

The ideal of *kalosness*, in being its own reason for value, is close to the claim that what is good is merely the presentation of a reasonable feeling. In the following year Peirce drew the positions closer together: ‘I do not see how one can have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood [as the creatively evolving embodiment of possibilities]’ (1.615) (ANDERSON, 1987, p. 82).

7 “So at this rate, fled away from us is the faculty of the Good into the nature of the Beautiful. For wherever there is moderation and proportion, they become the Beautiful and Virtue in every case (64e). So, then, to Beauty, Proportion, and Truth we may ascribe the true goodness of the mixture as its one veritable cause (65a)” (MS 434:152-157, 1902).

4. Although the examination of the classes of object that could be ultimate goods is incomplete, it isn't difficult to establish which one meets, for Peirce, the formal characterization of the ultimate end. In this, once again, he positions himself next to Aristotle. Even though in Peirce there isn't an explanation in the vein of the famous Aristotelian argument of *érgon* (EN I 6-7, 1097b24-1098a18), for both authors, the proper and specific *function* of human beings consists in an *activity* of the soul with the intervention of the rational faculty—or, at least, not without it.<sup>8</sup> The development of this activity of the soul, which for him is clearly reasonableness, cannot be something exceptional or sporadic, but must happen throughout a lifetime, i.e., in a regular and repeated way.<sup>9</sup> Peirce defends a dynamic and evolutionary idea of the ultimate end: the growth and conquest of this reasonableness is the highest ideal cause to which one can aspire.<sup>10</sup>

It is like the *character* of a man which consists in the ideas that he will conceive and in the efforts that he will make, and which only develops as the occasions actually arise. Yet in all his life long no son of Adam has ever fully manifested what there was in him. [...] This development of Reason consists, you will observe, in embodiment, that is, in manifestation. [...] Under this conception, the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable (EP 2.255; CP 1.615, 1903).

The ultimate end which was being sought is the development of reasonableness as it is understood here. In fact, it is no coincidence that Peirce compares the development of Reason with the *character* of a human being, with her *êthos*, in the most classical sense of the term. The Greek word *êthos*, according to its first and oldest sense, means “abode, residence, place to inhabit.” It was used mostly in

- 
- 8 “It may be that reasonableness essentially requires an element of unreason, a brute force, on which and with which to accomplish itself; but in that case we hope that this unreason may turn out capable of becoming infused with reason” (CN 2.208, 1899). Cf. EN I 6, 1098a7-8.
- 9 “Almost everybody will now agree that the ultimate good lies in the evolutionary process in some way. If so, it is not in individual reactions in their segregation, but in something general or continuous. Synecism is founded on the notion that the coalescence, the becoming continuous, the becoming governed by laws, the becoming instinct with general ideas, are but phases of one and the same process of the growth of reasonableness” (CP 5.4, 1902) Cf. EN I 7, 1098a13-20.
- 10 “The only thing that is really desirable without a reason for being so, is to render ideas and things reasonable. One cannot well demand a reason for reasonableness itself.” (Peirce, “Review of *Clark University 1889-1899. Decennial Celebration*”, *Science* XI, 20 April 1900, p. 621). Peirce argues that in an era in which evolutionary ideas of progress and growth govern, “[...] how can we be expected to allow the assumption to pass that the admirable in itself is any stationary result?” (EP 2.254; CP 1.614, 1903).

poetry, with reference to animals, to refer to the places where they are raised and met. Then, it was applied to the “place” that a human being carries within herself, her inner abode. This is the most usual meaning of *êthos*, which means “character,” “way of being,” in the deepest sense of the word, as the essential disposition of a human being in her existence. The core of ethical life is to achieve that *inner abode* where human beings inhabit, to shape that *inner face* or *moral features* of the person (ARANGUREN, 1995, p. 21-22).

In that sense, if *êthos* is understood as the reasonableness *of* and *within* a human being, it is something continuous, dynamic and inexhaustible. It doesn't fully incarnate once and for all. Her *êthos* is manifesting in her ideas, actions and habits, in what the subject is doing of herself. People are constantly growing; their *êthos* is in a continuous evolutionary process of improvement. For Peirce, human beings, like the universe, are not something closed, but open. There will always be new things to know and love; there will always be possibilities for change; new paths will always be opened to reach their goals; they will always have the possibility of continuing to shape that moral face, of becoming the kind of people they want to be; they can always make themselves and their own lives a meaningful whole, which embodies reasonableness every day.

### 3 Abduction and moral action: how to live creatively

I would like to pay attention to this way of understanding the person's *êthos* and her moral life. It can be said that the history of philosophical ethics has been an attempt to elucidate the manner in which the human beings can achieve that “way of being,” with the purpose of reaching their fullness. Within the framework of that attempt, I am interested in presenting *abduction* as one of the elements with which Peirce's thought can contribute to this reflection. The aim is to analyze how abduction would function in the configuration of one's *êthos*.

It was said that “character” is the *moral features* or *way of being* acquired throughout existence. How does this appropriation happen? Through *habit*. Thus, *êthos* has the sense of *custom*, because it means the usual way of acting or behaving. *Êthos* is thus equivalent to the word *hêxis*, habit. In turn, it must be said that habits are born by repetition of equal acts. But, in addition, habits constitute the intrinsic principle of actions.<sup>11</sup> There seems to be a circle: *êthos*-habits-acts (ARANGUREN, 1995, p. 22). Thus, there are two senses of the usual meaning of *êthos*: the one that sees in this the *principle* of actions, and the one that conceives it as its *result*. *Êthos* is *both* the way of being or character printed on the soul by habit, the result of life lived; *as* the source or root, through habit, from which actions arise.

Now, since *êthos* is, at the same time, *result* and *principle* of self-controlled actions, it is necessary to differentiate two basic ways of acting. As stated earlier, in many familiar or everyday situations, we ground our decisions and actions simply on habitual knowledge or instinct, without the need for inquiry. We act quickly, without prior reflection (MASSECAR, 2014, p. 144). However, when in our life certain contexts of action are presented which are not familiar, but are atypical, surprising,

---

11 For the ways in which a habit can be established and become a principle of action, from a Peircean perspective, see MASSECAR, 2014, p. 142-145.

escape the usual or raise a motivational conflict or a moral dilemma, in those cases, certain reflection is necessary to find the means leading to the proposed purpose; investigative reasoning is necessary, which from an ethical perspective is known as *deliberation* or “deliberative syllogism.”<sup>12</sup>

Deliberation is—in my opinion—a class of *abduction*, since it is a conjecture or an operational hypothesis, probable and provisional, on the possible and convenient means to reach the end to which action tends; a hypothesis which, with the experience of past and from present, is about future and is experimentally proved by the action itself. Next, I will present five features that would make deliberation a class of abduction and, then, I will apply them to a specific case, so that my thesis and its basis in experience can be seen more clearly. Let's start with the features.

1. First, both in scientific research and in everyday life, certain facts that surprise us are presented. The surprise that they cause us, generates a state of doubt that breaks with the beliefs or habits held until that moment (CP 2.776, 1901; CP 6.469, 1908; CP 5.373-4, 1877). Whether it is a novel experience or an experience contrary to our expectations (CP 8.315, 1909), the point is that the strange fact and the doubt that it entails, impels us to elaborate a hypothesis that can account for it and allow us to leave that state of uncertainty. In the case of scientific research, this is typical of abduction (CP 5.171, 1903). In the case of moral action, this is typical of deliberation, as it is an operational hypothesis, a conjecture, about what should be done or the means to be used in a specific situation. Research on what is clear and certain is not required, as it is judged and decided immediately. There is only deliberation in the presence of what is indeterminate or doubtful—whether novel or anomalous—with the intention of leaving the state of uncertainty and achieving certain security or strength about what we have to do.
2. Deliberation is an inference, an argumentative or discursive knowledge. It is a class of abduction, since, as it consists in “[...] examining a mass of facts and in allowing these facts to suggest a theory” (CP 8.209, 1905), deliberation begins with the observation of certain facts, makes an inquiry that allows them to be interpreted and, based on this, suggests a plausible operational hypothesis (CP 6.469, 1908). It is a kind of rational research in which a certain mass of facts that are presented in a particular situation (*result*) are examined, according to certain universal principles (*rule*), to

---

12 When I talk about “deliberative syllogism,” I refer to the one analyzed by Aristotle in EN VI 13, 1144a31-33, i.e., to the deliberation processes, aimed, as such, to the investigation of the means conducive to given purposes, and this from the particular perspective that points to the origin of their moral quality. I do not mean, therefore, what is known, among Aristotle scholars, as the “practical syllogism,” which shows the way in which the production of the action takes place, in general, i.e., regardless of its moral quality (syllogism which Aristotle uses in texts such as *De motu animalium* 7, to understand the origin of both voluntary movement in animals and human actions).



discern what should be done (*case*). It is a reasoned inquiry and, therefore, a deliberative inquiry about the most convenient means, if there were several possible ones, to reach the end.

3. Deliberation is a kind of synthetic or ampliative reasoning, since what is said in the conclusion was not previously in the premises. It is an abductive inference because it extends the knowledge of the observed—this situation that arises—to the unobserved—how to solve it, what to do—so that it adds new knowledge (CP 2.636, 1878). The surprising, novel or anomalous, is only with respect to habitually associated predicates. Deliberation operates abductively, since, in order to account for what has been observed, our thought is based on already known predicates and associates those that ordinarily do not associate (NIÑO, 2001, p. 68).
4. Deliberation is an operational, plausible and conjectural hypothesis. The conclusion suggested by the premises is neither secure nor necessary, but provisional and revisable, since there could be another solution regarding the surprising fact, different from the one proposed in the conclusion (GÉNOVA, 1997, p. 40). First, because it deals with human acts, which are free and contingent and, therefore, are undetermined and probable. Second, because it considers future events, so it deliberates on *what can be*, on the action that does not yet exist, and must decide whether it will be carried out. Third, because there is a diversity and multiplicity of conditions and circumstances around the free act. Fourth, because there could be another more adequate means to reach the end, better than that found in deliberation. Therefore, this would be the most clearly fallibilistic characteristic of deliberation.
5. In addition, there is experimental verification of what was proposed in deliberation, analogous to abduction (CP 1.68, 1896). In the case of scientific hypotheses, verification or refutation is a function of induction itself, but it is the same hypothesis that guides investigation. In the case of deliberation, it is in the same free action actually carried out, where the suggested hypothesis will be verified or refuted, i.e., the adequacy of the means to the end. Verification is properly practical. Also here, the same deliberative hypothesis is the one that guides its verification, because it tells us what is to be achieved, what the path is and what the possible result would be. In both cases, therefore, the practical consequences constitute the definitive proof of the hypothesis (CP 5.566, 1901).

#### 4 The Danish case and the Holocaust

Once the features that would make deliberation a class of abduction have been presented, it's now time to apply them to a specific ethical case. To this end, I will

use a historic event of the twentieth century: the rescue of Danish Jews, during the German occupation, in World War II. It is not one of the most remembered or known events of that period, so little attention is usually paid to it. Last year was the 75th anniversary of that rescue. Since it is a historical fact, we already have what, in Peircean terms, is the *case*. The conclusion, then, will not be new. The idea, however, is to reconstruct what the *results* and the *rule* were that led to infer this particular *case*, and what the abductive process or the deliberation that led to it was like. In other words, the idea is to reconstruct how the people of Denmark, in the face of a mass of anomalous facts, of disruptive events, resorted to certain established beliefs, normative principles of action or stereotypes accepted by the community, to deliberate the means most appropriate to achieving the proposed end and to decide, thus, how to act in that particular situation.

**(A) Results.** To apply the theory to this particular case, let us begin with the facts taken as “the usual” and the anomalous event, which breaks with what had been lived up to that moment. This event, contrary to expectations, is the one that precisely raises a serious moral dilemma to the Danish people, a vital conflict, in whose resolution many of them literally put their lives at stake. From the point of view of abduction, we would be at the level of the *results*. These are, in very basic terms:

1. On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark. The Danes did not oppose resistance and were allowed to retain their independence in the management of their internal policy (parliament, courts of law) and, even King Christian X retained his throne and freedom.
2. For three years, the German authorities avoided addressing the “Jewish question” (*Die Judenfrage*) and implementing anti-Semitic measures in Denmark. However, in the spring of 1943 the situation deteriorated, for several reasons, and on August 29, 1943, the Danish Government was dissolved and martial law was established.
3. Until then, the Jewish population had been protected by the Danish government. But, once Germany gained absolute control of Denmark, the arrangements began for the immediate deportation of almost 8,000 Danish Jews and their families to the Nazi extermination camps. Hitler ordered that the arrest and deportation be carried out on the night of October 1 to 2, 1943, during the celebration of the Jewish New Year (*Rosh Hashbaná*), to ensure that all Jews were in their homes.

**(B) Rule.** Up to now, we have the facts and the surprising experience that breaks the usual situation. The question to consider, now, is what the beliefs, normative principles or stereotypes accepted by the community were, to which the Danes went to account for the fact, i.e., to resolve the situation that was presented to them. We are at the moment of selecting the most appropriate *rule*, of the reference point that, in deliberation, allows us to answer what has to be done, what is the most convenient means—if there were several possible ones—to achieve the end.

In his book *Perpetrators, victims, bystanders: the Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (1992), the historian, political scientist and Holocaust scholar, Raul Hilberg, points out that life under the Nazi regime reduced all human beings to one of those three categories. On *perpetrators*, he emphasizes the role of Adolf Hitler as “the supreme architect of the Jewish catastrophe” (HILBERG, 1992, p. 16), but also points out—even more emphatically—that the extraordinary magnitude of the extermination, required not only the few who actually killed, but also of the coordinated activity of thousands of functionaries, of an immense army of bureaucrats who otherwise administered the murders on such a scale. Each of them was necessary (HILBERG, 1992, p. 3-74).<sup>13</sup> On *victims*, people who suffered serious damage or died because of the perpetrators, Hilberg alleges a deep and culturally entrenched Jewish “passivity”, according to him, conditioned by ancient traditions of accommodation (HILBERG, 1992, p. 170-185).<sup>14</sup> On *bystanders*, he indicates those who did not participate in the machinery of the genocide nor were their victims, and whose main reaction was indifference. For most—among whom count other European nations, the Allies, neutral countries and churches—there was “a boring awareness” of the catastrophe and little else (HILBERG, 1992, p. 195-268).<sup>15</sup>

However, as photographer Judy Glickman Lauder states—who has told this story through a series of portraits in her book *Beyond the Shadows: The Holocaust and the Danish exception*—“[...] there were exceptions to Hilberg’s rule—small but important exceptions of people and communities that were neither perpetrators nor victims, and who refused to be bystanders” (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150). Therefore, to those three categories proposed by Hilberg, we could add a fourth, to which I will call that of the *actors*, those who were actively involved in the matter, took it into their own hands and did what they did—as the protagonists of this story claim.<sup>16</sup> Between being perpetrators, victims or bystanders, the Danes chose a rarely seen possibility. These *actors* extended the knowledge of the observed to the unobserved, associated what was not usually associated, expanding the horizon of

13 “The functionaries in all these hierarchies also accelerated and intensified their activities against the Jews. Sometimes they did so in Berlin, refining anti-Jewish decrees, or writing discriminatory contracts, or making agreements to deport successively various groups of Jewish victims. Sometimes they operated in the field, at the scene of death, as in the case of Order Police engaged in shootings, or railway men driving trains filled with Jews into camp enclosures. Whether they were in command or lowly placed, in an office or outdoors, they all did their part, when the time came, with all the efficiency they could muster.” (HILBERG, 1992, p. 27-28).

14 Even when groups of hundreds were standing in front of holes to be shot, the Jews did not resist: “The rhythm of compliant behavior, practiced over the centuries, was not about to break at the sight of a ditch” (HILBERG, 1992, p. 179).

15 “Even if one looked away, asked no questions, and refrained from talk in public, a dull awareness remained. [...] At the same time, the rudimentary assessments of mood by German official observers indicate a prevailing sense of indifference, even of apathy, toward all events that did not immediately touch one’s personal existence” (HILBERG, 1992, p. 195).

16 Glickman says that: “Many could not understand why I even wanted to make their portraits. ‘We did what we did,’ they said, like it was obvious. But, in fact, few others did” (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).

action. It can be said that they solved the anomalous and disruptive fact, not in the usual, known, proven and—many times—safe way, but that they did it in a really novel and creative way. What, in this case, meant saving almost 8,000 human lives. The Danes had the moral courage to really make a difference.

**(C) Case.** What, then, was the *case* that resulted from this deliberation? As I said, being a historic event, we already know it. However, now that we have reconstructed the *results* and the *rule*, the disruptive events and the normative principles of the actions of the people of Denmark, what remains is to present the complete case: what was the end that was intended; how it was decided to act in that particular situation; and what was the practical result, which constitutes—in conclusion—the verification or proof of what was proposed in the deliberation-abduction carried out.

The end that was decided to achieve was, in the face of the impending arrest and deportation of all the Jews of Denmark and their families to the Nazi extermination camps, to save their lives. Said so, this seems simple, but the *case* itself is made up of a rich network, which should be detailed (ROZETT, SPECTOR, 2013, p. 186-187):

1. The information about the raid that Germans would make in the celebration of the *Rosh Hashaná*, was transmitted clandestinely to the acting rabbi, Marcus Melchior. So, during the religious services on the morning of September 29, Danish Jews were alerted to Nazi plans for that Friday night, urging them to hide immediately and transmit the news to all their friends and family.
2. On the night between October 1 and 2, the German raid was carried out. Out of around 8,000 Jews in Denmark, the Germans found only about 200 in their homes. Some of them had heard the news, but refused to believe it. Others were not notified.<sup>17</sup>
3. The days that followed marked one of the most notable resistance stories of World War II. It was a grassroots movement, of people who took matters into their own hands. They were responsible for hiding the persecuted in farms, hospitals, private homes or wherever they could find a hiding place.
4. In the course of a few weeks, an underground network, which had the help of the non-Jewish population of Denmark, managed to get almost 8,000 people to be transferred on all types of boats—from fishing boats, to kayaks—to neutral Sweden, where they would be out of danger.

---

17 Most of the Danish Jews captured by the Germans were sent to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Eminent authorities in Denmark strongly protested the deportations and demanded that representatives of their country be allowed to visit the camp, with the intention of ensuring the greatest possible security for their citizens and preventing them from being transferred to extermination camps (ROZETT, SPECTOR, 2013, p. 186-187).

5. Glickman points out that this humanitarian commitment to ‘the other’ was at every level of Danish society, “[...] from the fishermen who rowed Jews to safety in Sweden under cover of darkness, to King Christian X, who visited Copenhagen’s Krystalgade synagogue in an act of solidarity, and who refused to be complicit with Nazi persecution of the Jews” (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).
6. Deaths of Danish Jews during the Holocaust were among the lowest in the occupied nations in Europe. This is the verification or proof of what is proposed in the deliberation-abduction performed. As Glickman says, “Denmark was the only Western Europe country occupied by Nazi Germany that was able to save its Jewish population” (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).

## 5 Conclusion

What I have tried to show is that reasonableness and abduction are two rich and suggestive notions, with which Peirce’s thought can contribute to ethical reflection. The first, as a way of guiding and organizing the life of human beings around an *êthos* incardinated in reasonableness. And, if human beings aspire to grow that reasonable *êthos* in all of its possibilities and wealth—to arrive, therefore, to its fullness—, that deployment must necessarily be carried out in a creative way. Hence the importance of the other Peircean notion, abduction, as a factor that can collaborate in the creative development of the ethical life of each human being, of that *êthos* or *moral features* that each one shapes for oneself, of what one really aspires to be.

Abduction makes people’s ethical life more creative, since it enriches the deliberative processes and creates new paths. The history of the rescue of Danish Jews during World War II shows us that, given what has already been given, in view of what seems to have only one possible solution, new paths can always be found, alternative solutions can always be found. It reminds us that, along with a habitual story of violence, there is another equally important story: a time when ordinary people put themselves at risk to help others. As photographer Judy Glickman Lauder points out:

Although the Danish story is small in regard to numbers— affecting a tiny fraction of those persecuted by the Nazis—it is huge in scope. It is a story that tells of a population who proved it possible to make a difference, and who refused to see a minority as ‘the other’ (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).

In short, abduction makes it possible for human beings to be creative in the search for what allows us to achieve the *êthos*, moral character or way of being that we look forward to ourselves. If we think about the *êthos* revealed in Danish story, we can see that “[...] while evil and fear took over most of Europe, the Danish people retained their humanity” (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).<sup>18</sup> There is, therefore,

---

18 As the writer, Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Elie Wiesel claimed, “In those times, one climbed to the summit of humanity by simply remaining human” (WIESEL, 1986, p.125).

true ethical creativity when we launch ourselves into our personal and community growth, embodying reasonableness; to explore the multiple possibilities that our existence presents to us; to discover opportunities where there are problems or conflicts; to invent new courses of action, when the roads seem to close before us. There is real creativity, in short, when we launch ourselves to incarnate in our lives the admirable ideal, the *summum bonum*, which we talked about at the beginning. Therein is, perhaps, the true power of Danish story, over which I make Glickman's words my own: "[...] the Danish people came to symbolize hope for me—a force of goodness in a world gone mad" (GLICKMAN, 2018, p. 150).

## References

- ANDERSON, Douglas. *Creativity and the philosophy of C. S. Peirce*. Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987.
- ARANGUREN, José L. *Ética*. Madrid: Alianza, 1995.
- ARISTÓTELES. *Ética a Nicómaco*. Edited by ARAUJO, M.; MARÍAS, J. Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2002.
- BARRENA, Sara. *La razón creativa. Crecimiento y finalidad del ser humano según C. S. Peirce*, Madrid: Rialp, 2007.
- BOERO, Hedy. *Charles S. Peirce: Claves para una ética pragmática*. Pamplona: Eunsa, 2014.
- COLAPIETRO, Vincent. *Peirce's approach to the self: a semiotic perspective on human subjectivity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- GÉNOVA, Gonzalo. *Charles S. Peirce: la lógica del descubrimiento*. Pamplona: Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico, 1997.
- GLICKMAN LAUDER, Judy. *Beyond the shadows: the Holocaust and the Danish exception*. New York: Aperture, 2018.
- HILBERG, Raul. *Perpetrators, victims, bystanders: the Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945*. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992.
- MASSECAR, Aaron. Peirce, Moral Cognitivism, and the Development of Character. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, v. 50, n. 1, p. 139-161, 2014.
- PEIRCE, Charles S. Review of *Clark University 1889-1899. Decennial Celebration. Science*, v. 11, n. 277, p. 620-622, April 20, 1900.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. v. 1-8. Edited by HARTSHORNE, C. WEISS, P. & BURKS, A. W. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1958. [Cited as CP followed by a number refers to volume, page and year].
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Charles S. Peirce Papers*. 32 microfilm reels of the manuscripts kept in the Houghton Library. Photographic Service. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Library, 1966. [Cited as MS followed by a number refers to manuscript, page and year].

\_\_\_\_\_. *Contributions to "The Nation"*. v. 1-4. KETNER, K. L. & COOK, J. E. (eds.). Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1975-1979. [Cited as CN followed by a number refers to volume, page and year].

\_\_\_\_\_. *The essential Peirce: selected philosophical writings*. v. 1-2. Edited by HOUSER, N. *et al.* (eds.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992-1998. [Cited as EP followed by a number refers to volume, page and year].

NIÑO, Douglas. Peirce, abducción y práctica médica. *Anuario Filosófico*, v. 34, n. 1, p. 57-74, 2001.

PFEIFER, David. *The summum bonum in the philosophy of C. S. Peirce*. Doctoral Dissertation. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1971.

WIESEL, Elie. Why were there so few? In: Edited by RITTNER, Carol; MYERS, Sondra. *The courage to care: rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*. New York: New York University Press, 1986.

ROZETT, Robert; SPECTOR, Shmuel (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*. London & New York: Routledge/Yad Vashem, 2013.

## Acknowledgments

This was presented at the VIII Jornadas "Peirce en Argentina", in which we both participated. That pleasant meeting, then, was the origin of this contribution. I am also indebted to Ignacio Redondo for polishing my English.