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## Relation of normative sciences and the predisposition to act in Peirce's philosophy

*A relação das ciências normativas e a predisposição para agir na filosofia de Peirce*

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**Abstract:** The article aims to show that Peirce, after realizing the appropriation that James and others made of Pragmatism, taking it far from an ideal of justice and keeping it in the service of a “nauseating utility”, whose principle was that only individual utility, including spiritual well-being, would be the ultimate goal of all practice, he sought a philosophy that would keep logic and science united in a realistic manner with laws that could be metaphysically real. In this way, he perceived the necessity to transcend the hypothetical considerations incorporated into the sense of the pragmatic maxim, attempting to distance it from nominalist risk. In this process, he took into account two new normative sciences, esthetics and ethics, in addition to logic, so that Pragmatism, in intelligent criticism, would investigate whether an admirable end of a subject could be pursued in an indefinite and prolonged course of action, without grounding it solely on individual utility, thus replacing the ideal of justice for the renamed Pragmatism, the Pragmaticism.

**Keywords:** Criticism. Ideal of justice. Normative sciences. Pragmatism. Synechism.

**Resumo:** *O artigo objetiva mostrar que Peirce, após constatar a apropriação que James e outros fizeram do Pragmatismo, levando-o para longe de um ideal de justiça e mantendo-o a serviço de uma “nauseante utilidade”, cujo princípio de que somente a utilidade individual, incluindo o bem-estar espiritual, seria a meta final de toda prática, buscou uma filosofia que mantivesse a lógica e a ciência unidas a um modo realista e com leis que pudessem ser metafisicamente reais. Percebeu, dessa forma, a necessidade de transcender as considerações hipotéticas incorporadas ao sentido da máxima pragmática, afastando-a do risco nominalista. Nesse processo, teve em consideração duas novas ciências normativas, a estética e a ética, além da lógica, para que o Pragmaticismo em criticismo inteligente, investigasse se um fim admirável de um sujeito era passível de ser perseguido em um indefinido e prolongado curso da ação, e não atentando somente à utilidade individual, resgatando o ideal de justiça para o renomeado Pragmatismo, o Pragmaticismo.*

**Palavras-chaves:** *Ciências normativas. Criticismo. Ideal de justiça. Pragmaticismo. Sinequismo.*

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### 1 Introduction

According to Apel (1995, p. 86), Peirce, in rejecting the Kantian distinction of phenomena and noumena, assumed that natural laws could not be valid only in a world of appearances, for such a world could be conceived of only by presupposing the worst, with a nominalist metaphysical of one world behind another world, which had already been discredited by Kant. Still according to Apel, for Peirce, these laws should, as a principle, be metaphysically real, no matter how provisional or conventional their fixations may be in our knowledge of them.

The true, reality, which, with Kant, was in the phenomenon when in conformity with the ends of the concept, constituted in a transcendental way by the universal subject of knowledge, in Peirce, in a non-transcendental manner, the state of truth ceased to be part of phenomenology, and otherness, as a reaction, later called the category of secondness, appeared as a form of index for the logical formulation or description. Consequently, the criticism of the meaning allowed Peirce to see the real possibility of a universe filled with “concrete reasonableness”.

Now, still according to Apel (1995, p. 86), Peirce bearing in mind to give a normative foundation to this vision, which required him to relocate the logic of inquiry in a context of normative sciences. Apel stated that he would have been “finally forced” to transcend hypothetical considerations, incorporated into the sense of pragmatic maxim. However, it should be emphasized, not denied by Apel, that Peirce has always intended to integrate philosophy, logic, and science when abandoning another world behind our practical world, meaning to compose a philosophy that was scientific. This is a realistic philosophy that aimed not only for the external world to shape language, rather than the opposite as in nominalism, but also aimed to achieve the ideal of a philosophy that would provide the means for the creation and maintenance of a world where freedom and thought would flourish together and be minimally justified, already incorporated into a fallibilistic epistemology resulting from an indeterministic ontology.

Indeed, at the time, the early 20th century, the question that remained for pragmatism and, especially for Peirce, was how, according to Apel (1995, p. 87), a normative logician could see the meaning of his science not residing solely in a “nauseating utility” for subjective practical purposes, but as rationalization of the universe as a study of *the summum bonum* and, whether it could be reached, directed by new beliefs, a new framework for Pragmatism.

In effect, also observed by Apel, James recognized only individual utility, including spiritual well-being, as the final goal of all praxis. And, Dewey, consistent instrumentalist, had consciously sought to avoid the question of the final goal by always striving to conceive the intelligent mediation of means and ends, in terms of the human needs addressed particularly, binding social situation as the origin of creative valuation.

Peirce remained himself in the position of origin of the idea of the consensus of the unlimited community of inquirers and, for this, he moved away from Kant's universal subject philosophy and from Pragmatism as a method for individual purposes. As Santaella says:

In 1901, he (Peirce) realized, as far as James did, the importance of ends or ideals in philosophy. But unlike the latter, by refusing that the purpose of pragmatism was only to serve the individual purpose, which always end up deteriorating into individualistic ends, emphasizing the role of self-control in logical thinking, Peirce postulated that ethics is the foundation of logic. A year later, he would postulate that ethics, in turn, is grounded in esthetics. (Santaella, 1994, p. 119).

In sum, the search for a purpose for Pragmatism, as he understood it, led Peirce to take into account two new normative sciences in addition to logic, which he had paid little attention to: Ethics and Esthetics. With this new approach forming its realism, which did not dispense with its cosmology, in long reflection on the nature of thought, which will be better explained ahead in this work, Peirce (CP, 8.257) asserts that “This then leads to synechism, which is keystone of the arch”.

## 2 The role of cohesion of normative sciences in Peirce's philosophy

Peirce, by introduction normative sciences to consolidate concrete reasonableness and real thirdness, moved away from the alarm of eventual nominalism that would be contained in the essays of *the Illustrations of the Logic of Science series* (EP 1:109), that is, *The Fixation of Belief* and *How to Make*

*Our Clear Ideas* (EP 1:124), and its use in analytical philosophy studies. Indeed, about this last essay, Peirce, in *Parts of Carnegie Application*, 32, after admitting that he would need more accurate definitions to eliminate the misapplications of his essay,<sup>1</sup> states that: “Moreover, my paper of 1878 was imperfect in tacitly leaving it to appear that the maxim of pragmatism led do the last stage of clearness. I wish now to show that this is not the case and to find a series of Categories of clearness” (NEM 4:30).

Now, entering the specific study of normative sciences, we highlight the publication, by James Jakób Liszka (2021), of remarkable book on the theme of normative sciences, which practically inventoried Peirce’s studies and mentions on the issue.

Esthetics, introduced by Peirce in 1902, although it is coming last in its scientific philosophy, does so with a relevant role because, as Peirce states: “These three normative sciences correspond to my three categories, which in their psychological aspect, appear as Feeling, Reaction, Thought” (CP, 8.256).

Such assertion authorizes us to anticipate what Peirce will affirm in the essay *The Three Normative Sciences (Lecture V)*, from *the Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism series*, that Esthetics corresponds to the phenomenological category of firstness, ethics to secondness and logic to thirdness. Thus, Esthetics lays the foundation for amalgamating feeling, in its spontaneity, and reason in its procedure, that is, freedom and thought.

With the new role given to Esthetics, it follows that we must analyze differences in meaning when using this word, as Baumgarten, in the 18th century, one of the introducers of how we know it nowadays in the history of art. According to Liszka (2021, p. 11), Alexander Baumgarten defines Esthetics as the “ability to judge perfections and imperfections sensibly” and, also mentioning George Santayana’s work, states that, as “Peirce’s Esthetic studies what makes ends admirable, then it is not too far off the mark from these thinkers”.

However, it seems to me that judging it, as indicated by Baumgarten, unfolds in the field of subjectivity, while, for Peirce, normative sciences do not judge perfection or imperfection, good or evil, but rather, theoretically, what makes something admirable in a way of studying what should be, and, being so, it presents itself as capable of being included, ultimately and finally, within the *continuum* of ideas through self-control of consciousness. On the other hand, as we will explain ahead, the full admirable, similar to the perfect, would-be reasonable reasonableness.

An explicit philosophy of art would not fit within Peirce’s writings, as pointed out by Ibri (2020, p. 79), nor would it function as what Langer (1953) calls the “aesthetic attitude”, by which artists and art lovers would be selecting sensory data from the real world and contemplating them as pure qualitative experiences, in a kind of taxonomy.

It was in the aforementioned essay, *The Three Normative Sciences*,<sup>2</sup> dated April 30, 1903, that Peirce reviewed the classification of sciences, including normative sciences – especially ethics, which definitively departs from morality. They study the ought-to-be, and therefore purely theoretical and, although so, are not exclusively of a deductive character, because the normative sciences promote a peculiar appreciation, since they relate the conformity of phenomena to ends, which are not immanent within the *phenomena* (CP, 5.126). Thus, although resting on phenomenology, but as already mentioned, not in the way of appearing, they are studying how we can act on the *phenomena* and how they can act on us.

In this flow, by retraining the reflection on the ought to be, the normative is connected to the deliberate conduct and “excludes, from its field, both uncontrolled compulsion and rigid determinism” (Santaella, 1994, p. 120). According to philosophical tradition, then, it would be up to ethics to discover the supreme good, treading a path supported by logic and bringing the greatest possible admirable from Esthetics, without escaping from the practical world of the phenomenological categories of experience.

1 In our opinion, today by analytical philosophy.

2 EP 2:196; CP, 5.120-150 with the name of *Three Kinds of Goodness*.

In the essay *Ideals of Conduct* (CP, 1.591-615), from 1903, Peirce clarifies the issue of the admirable as supreme good, how the inherent admirable in itself, without ulterior reason. In a better articulation of the normative sciences Esthetics and Ethics, spreading the question of the possible ends to be chosen by ethics, Peirce clarifies the question of the admirable in a great extent. He asserts:

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. Under this conception, the ideal of conduct will be to execute our little function in the operation of creation by giving a hand toward rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is “up to us” to do so. In logic, it will be observed that knowledge is reasonableness; and the ideal of reasoning will be to follow such methods as must develop knowledge more speedily. (CP, 1.615).

In this complex process of relations between reasonableness (knowledge) and plausibility, the inference that indicates the action by which we are deliberately prepared to adopt is linked, until then, to the admirable Esthetic ideal, disregarding any ulterior reason. Therefore, Peirce states that, in this way, the problem of ethics is to ascertain what end is possible (CP, 5.134). And that the validity of Pragmatism itself depends on whether it can say if an aim could be indefinitely maintained in the prolonged course of action. Peirce states: “In order to understand pragmatism, therefore, well enough to subject it to intelligent criticism, it is incumbent upon us to inquire what an ultimate aim, capable of being pursued in an indefinitely prolonged course of action, can be” (CP, 5.135).

### 3 Final considerations

We began with Apel's reflection on Peirce's perception that our laws of knowledge must be metaphysically real, and that the critique of meaning allows the possibility of being in a universe of concrete reasonableness, which could not happen without the logic of inquiry being embedded in a context of normative sciences, as studied here. Now the question remains, left to ethics, about which end is possible and, in addition to, how it could remain as action all time long (Liszka, 2021, p. 2).

Liszka, in one of his lessons, teaches us that, in opposition<sup>3</sup> to Reid's, there is also in Peirce a commonsense ethics, but critical, because it is guided by fallibilism, and in careful and genuine classification of habits of conduct, evolved from prejudices and cultural conventions (CP, 5.438 *apud* Liszka, 2021).

Ethics, in the evaluation of possible ends, must distinguish those that have no opposition from others involved. Peirce, after discussing and dismissing absurd beliefs without plausibility, approaches what, for him, happens in the world of common sense of a so-called normal person.

Peirce, subtly, includes the figure of the other in our conduct and, if the beliefs agree with others, they can be excluded from the evaluations of the possible ends, thus practically excluding almost all those from our everyday life. he states:

But a normal person, able to take care of his affairs, will be found to have certain beliefs similar to those of all other such person which he can never overcome, and which indeed, he can only under peculiar circumstances really try to doubt. Such for instance are beliefs that he has as certain descriptions of images before his mind, although his beliefs involving these descriptions have no resemblance whatever to the images themselves. Now there is no sense in finding fault with what is entirely

3 Scottish philosopher, one of the forerunners of the named Ethics of Tradition.

beyond control. And there is nothing to be done with these beliefs, but to find whether they accord with of others, and whether they can be abolished. (NEM 4:195).

After this long quote from Peirce, in which one observes the reinforcement of the concept of self-control of consciousness, we return to his own words, with which, after citing the normative sciences, he states:

The true nature of Pragmatism cannot be understood without them. It does not, as I seem to have thought at first, take Reaction as “be-all”, but it takes the “end-all” as the “be-all”, and the End is something that gives its sanction for action. It is of third category. Only one must take a nominalist view of Thought as if it were something that a man had in his consciousness. Consciousness may mean one of the three categories. But if it is to mean Thought, it’s more without us than within. It is we that are in it, rather than it in any of us. (CP, 8.256).

This is, for Peirce, the conception of the nature of thought. And he concludes with the following: “This then leads to the synechism, which is the keystone of the arch” (CP, 8.257). In our understanding, in Peirce’s cosmology, the synechism is the locus of the final interpretant (EP 2:496),<sup>4</sup> whose description is equivalent to the thought grasped here, being able to remain on in the *continuum*, if, the End that sanctioned the action can sustain it in the light of the community of inquiries, that is, of others, in a different process from the ends practiced in the light of common sense, as mentioned here.

The predisposition to action, in order to occur, is subordinated to the sanction of the End, as action by itself, does not represent the ultimate purpose that can depart from mere individualism. For the occurrence of synechism, also surrounded by the ubiquity of the categories of experience, the common experience must be open to every human being, at any time and hour, in short, as Ibri asserts, exposed to public visitation.

I emphasized that Peirce, as seen, constructing a philosophy unrelated to traditional metaphysics, especially religious ones, advanced in the idea that there would be no ideal more satisfactory than the development of reason, to be understood as the encounter of logic with the general, unlike scholars who attribute to his philosophy a subordination to religion. On the contrary, throughout his philosophy, believing that there is no true witness to the nature of things, one could not speak of a supreme good, true, and eternal, for any individual soul, which leads man to dispose of his “inner realism” and bow to a logical existence to the detriment of individuals opinions. Such approach implies, as mentioned in the text, a Supreme Good, which, as being supreme, would not require any ulterior reason, or, in other words, any justification, other than reasonable reasonableness.

Also, as explained, this conception is linked with the text *The Three Normative Sciences*, dated April 30, 1903, also known as *The Three Kind of Goodness*, in which he states that the three normative, theoretic sciences of “ought to be”, correspond to his three categories of experience, which, in their psychological aspect, appear as feeling, reaction and thought. According to Peirce, as seem, the true nature of Pragmatism cannot be understood without them, giving, as proven, that logic must be founded on ethics, which, likewise, is founded on esthetics. And, by this interaction, Peirce constituted a new role to the finality, linked to the third category, replacing the previous view in which he valued the reaction, as existence, as the second category of experience.

In another way, it can be said that esthetics, which emerges as the first, permeates the secondness, the ethical, and culminates as an inferential element, in which the predisposition to action is contained. As already explained, normative sciences are not able to distinguish good from evil and form an amalgam

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4 Letter to William James- 26 February 1909: “[...] which *Would* finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached.”

with the categories of experience in the constitution of an end. Thus, with the introduction of the normative sciences process in his philosophy, Peirce can also review what he considered the nature of thought and envision the realism of concrete thirdness of his philosophy.

The very predisposition to action, sanctioned by its end, is translated inferentially, and, through it, it indicates to others whether the one end can or should be refuted by those involved, as it already indicates the practical consequences of the potential action to be performed.

If, eventually, it is contested by others, and plausibility and reasonableness of the refutation are evaluated, then, there is the possibility, or obligation, for the individual promotes the self-correction of his end.

In this manner, the logical interpretant, containing the ethical goodness, indicates the anticipated action, sanctioned by the constituted end, which should also be sanctioned by the otherness of intersubjectivity to belong to cosmological category of synechism, as an action that can be remained all time long. This capture in Peirce's philosophy, allowed Apel and Habermas, in different ways, but originating from this philosophy, the development of moral normativity as an Ethics of Discourse.

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