

## Aesthetic Experience in the Semiotics of Charles S. Peirce

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**Abstract:** My paper takes into account one of the ideas that analytic aesthetics puts forth. Namely, that it defines itself as the study, not of art, but of the language in which we discuss about art. The outcome of this perspective is, among other study directions, the continuity between art and everyday activities, which led to taking high art out of its isolation. Given that, as Mikel Dufrenne noted, in continental phenomenology the art-object is understood as a cognitive object, in analytic philosophy, and more specifically in pragmatism, art has had its context and its connections with human activities and technology restored. According to the laws of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce has considered art to be of central importance to understanding the human condition, even though he did not have an explicit theory of aesthetics. Despite the idea that Peirce is not generally considered an aesthetician – at least in a manner corresponding to traditional categories of aesthetics –, I want to outline that we can talk about Peirce’s contribution to aesthetics. My assumption is that we can find in his semiotics a theory of aesthetic experience, developed as a part of a general theory of knowledge.

**Keywords:** Peirce, aesthetic experience, aesthetics, sign, semiotics

### (A)ESTHETICS<sup>1</sup> IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF SCIENCE

Peirce’s philosophy marks a turning point in the history of philosophy in the transition from modern to contemporary thinking, being considered the founder of pragmatism, the philosophy according to which our theories must be connected to our experience and practice. His philosophical inquiry confirms the fact that American philosophy, especially pragmatism, which is the first original manifestation of American philosophy, has not developed independently of the European one, or through a deliberative ignorance of it, even though

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<sup>1</sup> I will drop the spelling that Peirce uses, except his quotes, namely “esthetics” without the initial ‘a’, and keep the current version of the term.

the relationship between the two great traditions were, at least from the beginning, ambiguous, difficult, or even impossible. It is true however, that Peirce confronted the European philosophical tradition, mainly Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, with his own perspective, which is the result of a unique and specific experience. Between 1867, when Peirce proposed his new list of categories, and then, around the year 1878 when he advanced his pragmatic maxima, and finally the period in which he corresponded with Victoria, Lady Welby (1904 – 1911), he changed his perspective towards philosophy. So, he left the Western dualistic way of thinking as promoted from Aristotle to Kant, in favor of a triadic and anti-inductive way of reasoning. The outcome of this encounter with Continental philosophy is pragmatism, which therefore appears as a response to an entire tradition and not just to a singular philosophy. Nevertheless, despite the fact that Peirce emerges as one of the most original, rigorous and versatile thinkers, his work remains marked by a series of uncertainties<sup>2</sup>.

At a quick glance of Peirce's philosophy, the first impression is that he wrote very few things concerning the subject of aesthetics, so that we are entitled to say that he did not have an explicit aesthetic theory. In his classification of sciences<sup>3</sup>, Peirce refers to Aristotle's distinction between theoretical pure science and normative science. More specifically, he differentiates between the sciences of discovery and

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<sup>2</sup>The knowledge of Peirce's philosophy is today characterized by the absence of a complete edition of his work and the increasing bibliographical references do not, however, provide such an edition. Nevertheless, we have some crucial editions to evaluate his philosophy, namely *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* in 8 volumes: Vols. 1-6 edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 1931-1935 Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, and Vols. 7-8 edited by Arthur W. Burks, 1958, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Likewise, a critical edition of a selection of his work is underway: *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, 1982-2010, in 8 volumes: Vol. 1 (1857–1866) edited by Max Fisch et al., 1982; Vol. 2 (1867–1871) edited by Edward C. Moore et al., 1984; Vols. 3–5 (1872–1878, 1879–1884, 1884–1886) edited by Christian J. W. Kloesel et al., 1986, 1986, 1993; Vol.6 (1887–1890) edited by the Peirce Edition Project, 1999. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press; Vol. 8 edited by the Peirce Edition Project, 2010. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

<sup>3</sup> See on this matter "Philosophy and the sciences: a classification". In *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Selected and edited with an introduction by Justus Buchler. New York: Dover Publications, INC, 1955, 60-73.

review, which are theoretical, and the practical sciences (see *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* 1958 [CP], CP 1.181, CP 1.239<sup>4</sup>).

Yet, his architectonic<sup>5</sup> ordering of the sciences is not a definite one, as T. L. Short (2007, 62) has shown, and it “is not given to us once and for all but grows out of discoveries actually made, in which are spawned new questions, new techniques, new specialties, and new connections among existing sciences”. Peirce claims that the theoretical sciences are the normative ones, which studies “what ought to be” i.e. ideals, (CP 1.281), so that they are concerned with establishing general truths and are not guides to conduct. The order within the normative sciences is aesthetics, ethics, and logic, and they are the very most purely theoretical of purely theoretical sciences, even though they have often been mistaken for practical sciences. Here is Peirce’s assertion regarding the classification of normative sciences:

*Esthetics* is the science of ideals, or of that which is objectively admirable without any ulterior reason. I am not well acquainted with this science; but it ought to respond on phenomenology. Ethics, or the science of the right and wrong, must appeal to *Esthetics* for aid in determining the *summum bonum*. It is the theory of self-controlled or deliberate conduct. Logic is the theory of self-controlled, or deliberate, thought; and as such it must appeal to ethics for its principles. (CP 1.191)

Consequently, these three doctrines are those that distinguish good and bad, in the sense that logic is interested in representation of truth, ethics in regard to efforts of will, and aesthetics in objects considered simply in their presentation. This also explains the relationship between aesthetics and phenomenology, which involves a certain overlap or identification of the two, since aesthetics considers objects simply in their presentation, and phenomenology is concerned with seeing what presents itself. This means that the central task of phenomenology is to examine the experiences and to make “the ultimate analysis of all experiences the first task to which philosophy

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<sup>4</sup> Peirce’s writings are cited as follows: for *Collected Papers*, citations refer to paragraph *x* of volume *y* (CP *y.x*), (W *y:x*) page *x* from the volume *y* of the chronological editions of *Writings*.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of *architectonic* refers to Kant’s philosophy, where he talks about a ‘single supreme and inner end’. However, Peirce’s understanding of architectonic requires a different idea of final causation, because he believes that the end is not known *a priori* and can only emerge in time. See, for instance, “The Architecture of Theories” in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, op.cit.

has to apply itself” (CP 1.280). In this inquiry, we can notice an interesting process of regression where the relationship between aesthetics and phenomenology can be analyzed in order to better understand the *phenomenon* (or *phaneron* as Peirce puts it) or what is presented at any time to the mind in any way. As for aesthetics, Peirce states that it divides ideally possible states of things into what can be admirable and what is not, and it “undertakes to define precisely what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal” (CP 5.36). All three normative sciences analyze forms of voluntary, self-controlled conduct which pursue an ideal or end, such that, they set out rules to be followed if our aims are to be achieved.

### THE PRIMACY OF AESTHETICS

As we have seen, Peirce makes the strong claim that logic is dependent on ethics, and ethics is dependent on aesthetics, but that does not mean that he believe that logic is based on morality, and that ethics is based on the art. I agree with Cheryl Misak (2004), when she says that when Peirce states that aesthetics is concerned with what can be admirable in unconditional way, this is not, of course, the traditional way of thinking about aesthetics. Hence, aesthetics is not, for him, only the theory of beauty, on the contrary, the definition has been handicapped it, because one is not able to discover its true meaning. If we examine beauty (*kalos* in Greek philosophy) we come to the main question: what is the one quality that is, in its immediate presence, *kalos*? And the answer is that: “*Esthetics*, therefore, although I have terribly neglected it, appears to be possibly the first indispensable propedeutic to logic, and the logic of esthetics to be a distinct part of the science of logic that ought not to be omitted” (CP 2.199). However, as Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen claims, we must not forget that when Peirce wrote “logic”, he almost invariably meant semeiotics, which is the doctrine of the necessary principles of signs. This doctrine is divided into three parts *grammar*, *logic*, and *speculative rhetoric* and it “suffice to cover vast aspects of human inquiry, and is applicable to virtually any discipline, branch of knowledge, nook, cranny, or specialty of scientific inquiry” (Pietarinen 2006, 19).

In a letter to Victoria Welby, Peirce explains how he came to the conclusion that “logic must be founded upon ethics” (CP 8. 255). In the same letter he adds that ethics rest in the same manner on a foundation of aesthetics. To better understand Peirce’s statement, we have to remember that, in his view, the terms practical science and art

are synonyms (see CP. 2.198), and like Aristotle, he applies them to ethics and aesthetics. Consequently, for him, aesthetics is connected with fine art, ethics with the art of the conduct of life, and logic with the art of reasoning. The fundamental problem of ethics, as Peirce calls it, is not the necessary question, “what is right?”, but rather the question:

What I am prepared deliberately to accept as the statement of what I want to do, what am I to aim at, what am I after? To what is the force of my will to be directed? Now logic is a study of the means of attaining the end of thought. It cannot solve the problem until it clearly knows what that end is. Life can have but one end. It is Ethics which defines that end. It is, therefore, impossible to be thoroughly and rationally logical except upon an ethical basis. (CP 2.198)

We can understand from this quote that the categories of right and wrong cannot be established previous to a teleological reflection upon the life of practice. In that sense, in an excellent comparison between Peirce and Aristotle, the initiator of the division of Being into Transcendentals, Deledalle (2000, 160) notes that for Peirce, if the object of logic is Truth, that of ethics Goodness, and that of aesthetics Beauty, then the scientific hierarchy of the categories goes as follows: Beauty, Goodness and Truth. But the purpose of the normative sciences is not only to operate distinctions between the good and bad or to produce quantitative scales of goodness and badness – aesthetics in the domain of feelings or presentation, ethics in the domain of action and effort, and logic in the domain of sign or representations.

Unlike phenomenology, which recognize the phenomenon as it appears, the inquiry of the normative sciences involves an explicit awareness of the contrast between the actual and the ideal, as it analyses practical experiences in view of purpose. In that regard, Peirce operates a distinction between a motive, that by which any action is preceded, and an ideal of conduct: “If conduct is to be thoroughly deliberate, the ideal must be a habit of feeling which has grown up under the influence of a course of self-criticisms and of hetero-criticisms; and the theory of deliberate formation of such habits of feelings is what ought to be meant by esthetics” (CP 1. 574). Since “the approval of a voluntary act is a moral approval. Ethics is the study of what ends of action we are deliberately prepared to adopt” (CP 5.130) it appears that logic refers to ethics. And since the logical reasoner exercises great self-control in his intellectual operations, as

Peirce claims, then “the logically good is simply a particular species of the morally good” (CP 5.130). Put another way, if ethics is concerned with what is good and wrong in a specific action, given certain ideal purposes, then aesthetics will analyze what it is that one ought deliberately to admire *per se* in itself, that is, what is attractive in itself. Given the hierarchical dependency of the three normative sciences, *i. e.* logic is dependent on ethics for its principles, while both depend on aesthetics to provide an account of what is admirable *per se*, and then aesthetics appears to be the *summum bonum*, which is the highest standard by which one can determine aims and ideals of action. As Mats Bergman (2009, 55) notes, this approach “sometimes brings Peirce uncomfortably close to an almost anti-pragmatistic Platonism”.

Finally, Peirce concludes that all signs or *representamens* must possess some degree of aesthetic goodness or expressiveness (CP 5.140), and that only propositions (seconds) and arguments (thirds) may possess moral goodness or veracity. It follows that “an inference must possess some degree of veracity” (CP 5.141). In reference to Peirce’s concept of “the esthetically good”, we have to remark a certain extension of it, because he states that, in the light of the doctrine of the categories, an object to be aesthetically good “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). If this is correct then “there is no such thing as positive esthetic badness; and since by goodness we chiefly in this discussion meant the absence of badness or faultlessness there would be no such thing as esthetic goodness. And there will be a various esthetic qualities...” (CP 5.132). Of course, this does not mean that Peirce thinks that no work-of-art can be greater than another. He only speaks about the purely responsive dimension of stimuli of works, and not about their artistic integrity.

Concerning the status of art, we can say that, even from a young age, Peirce had a good sense of the implications of art for the philosophic understanding of human condition. In a note from 1857 he contradicts Schiller who states that “the sense of beauty never furthered the performance of a single act of duty”<sup>6</sup> saying that beauty places the mind in a state of infinite determinedness so that it can turn in any direction and, as consequence, is in perfect freedom.

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<sup>6</sup> See Peirce’s article from 1857, “The Sense of Beauty Never Furthered the Performance of a Single Act of Duty”.

However, Peirce is agreeing with the German philosopher in saying that we can talk about a physical quality of an object which is bound to our perception. Then we have a logical quality which is related to our capacity of understanding. It follows then a moral quality which is related with our will, and finally, we have an aesthetic quality which is related to our different powers, without being a definite object for any single one of them. The same doctrine will be found in the following articles “Minute Logic” (1902) and “A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic” (1903). Hence, the idea that beauty is the highest degree fruitful with respect to knowledge and morality, and thus it cannot be separated from the good and the true.

#### EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN A SEMIOTICAL PERSPECTIVE

Before continuing with some remarks concerning aesthetics and aesthetic experience, and taking into account that the purpose of this paper is to show that aesthetic experience in Peirce’s semiotics can be regarded as a part of a theory of knowledge, I will now briefly recall the semiotic and hypothetical perspective on knowledge in his conception. The general idea is that Peirce rejects the understanding of conscience as a passive *receptaculum* and sees it on the line of tradition that goes up to St. Augustine, from the perspective of a two-directional interpretation of knowledge: (1) through its semiotic approach and (2) its approach as a Hypothetic inference. Beginning with the Harvard Lectures (1865) Peirce wrote extensively on deduction, induction, and what he called Hypothetic Inference, or simply Hypothesis which in the end was replaced with Abduction. His writings concerning logic, propose, as Isaac Levi argued, “an account of formal *unpsychologistic logic*, which unlike Frege’s later discussion, applies to inductive and hypothetic inferences as well as to deductive inferences” (Levi 2004, 258). It is important, however, to say that beginning with 1903, in his six lectures on pragmatism, Peirce proposed a new methodology in which he no longer divides inferences into analytic and synthetic inferences like in the Kantian tradition, but describes it as a dialectical process in which the order is as follows: abduction, deduction, and induction. He specifically said that: “Deduction proves that something *must be*: Induction shows that something *actually is* operative; Abduction merely suggests that something *may be*” (CP 5.171).

The process of inference is defined by Peirce as semiosis, and constitutes the proper object of semiotics. Semiosis is thus always understood as a triadic process by which a first determines a third to refer to a second to whom it refers. In this sense, Peirce proposes the concept of *phaneroscopy*, which represents for him the principle of the hierarchy of categories, and which marks a definitive simplification of Kant's twelve categories of metaphysics into just three categories: *firstness*, *secondness*, and *thirdness*. The critique of Kant's list of categories was first approached by Peirce in his article "A New List of Categories"<sup>7</sup>, which has often been awarded a central place in his philosophy. As a process, semiosis is actually an experience which everyone has at every moment of life, and thereby semiotics represents the theory of this experience; it is another name for logic "the quasi-necessary, or formal, theory of signs" (CP 2.227). Another term that Peirce uses for semiosis is sign-action, which leads him to use the concept of sign in action, and which is different from the sign-*representamen*, that constitutes the point of departure for semiotic inference.

Semiosis as a triadic sign is defined like this: "A *representamen* is a subject of a triadic relation to a second, called its *Object*, for a third, called its *Interpretant*, this triadic relation being such that the *Representamen* determines its *interpretant* to stand in the same triadic relation to the same object for some interpretant" (CP 1.541. See also on this matter CP 2.228). We can notice from this quote, that the process of interpretation occupies the center of Peirce's theory of signs. He basically holds that the sign-referent relation cannot by itself support a complete account of representation, in the sense that representation is a triadic endeavor: it involves a sign, an object, and an interpreter<sup>8</sup>. So, the sign keeps the place of something, that is to say its object, and is addressed to someone else, thus creating in the mind of the addressee an equivalent sign. The latter is what Peirce calls the interpretant of the first sign. It must be said, that for Peirce the sign never holds the place for the whole object. The reference of the sign is more like a carving, that is, the idea we have about the object, or what Peirce called the *ground* of the representamen. The interpretant is therefore a more developed sign of the first sign, or in other words, the

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<sup>7</sup> It appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, May 1867.

<sup>8</sup> Each aspect of this representation corresponds to one of the following elements: icons, indices, and symbols.



significance of the first sign is conferred precisely by the sign he has given to the addressee's mind.

The first and unquestionable mark proposed by Peirce is that the philosophical inquiry must determine "what really is true" (CP 2.84). In that sense, he argues that the process of knowledge is a semiotic one and it is tightly bound to the theories of knowledge and of mind. To put it briefly, Peirce's interpretative process places the concept of sign in a close connection with communal experience so that we can say that the sign functions as a sign only in purposive and pragmatic contexts. Therefore, philosophy, theoretical as it may be, is connected with experience and tangible reality. But this emphasis on experience does not suggest an empiricist or positivist approach to philosophy. This is mainly because Peirce is aware of the fact that the simple sense experiences or impressions do not exhaust the field of experience and in consequence, they don't offer a strong foundation for knowledge. In a broad understanding, experience is simply anything that can be said to be experienced, and it cannot be considered an initial condition for knowledge. Therefore, we can say that the process of knowledge begins by the affection of our sense organs by the objects of the surrounding world. However, knowledge is not attained at this level, as it constantly implies a hypothetical inference based on this affection and the signs produced by of our mind. Because of this, my assumption is that we find here a reinterpretation of knowledge from a semiotic perspective and from the point of view of hypothetical syllogism.

Another aspect that needs to be pointed out is the link that Peirce draws between experience and cognition, saying that "I analyze experience, which is the cognitive resultant of our past lives and find in it three elements. I call them Categories" (CP 2.84). Being conceived as a cognitive outcome, experience gains an extension of her domain, including the process of interpretation. Peirce argues in this sense that "Experience can only mean the total cognitive result of living, and includes interpretation quite as truly as it does the matter of sense. Even more truly, since this matter of sense is a hypothetical something which we never can seize as such, free from all interpretative working over" (CP 7.538). Such a perspective on experience approaches it to the category of *thirdness* in the sense that we have first some experiences, which seem to be simply given, and only then the interpretative character of experience appears as evident.

In this matter, Peirce is really a forerunner of John Dewey, because he states that the distinguishing characteristic of philosophy is that it turns its attention on experience, as it occurs in our daily lives: “In philosophy there is no special observational art, and there is no knowledge antecedently acquired in the light of which experience is to be interpreted. The interpretation itself is experience” (CP 7.527). Otherwise speaking, the experience of philosophy is everyday experience, accompanied by interpretation, which requires no other means of observation than natural cognitive capacities.

### AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AS A FORM OF KNOWLEDGE

Let us now return to Peirce’s conception of aesthetics, as basis for the other two normative sciences, because aesthetics, as the science of ideals and of conduct, plays an important role in the final version of Peirce’s pragmatism. Here, the earlier emphasis on “the fixation of belief” is oriented towards “the formation of habit”. In this matter, feelings are relevant as they represent the adequate basis for deliberate self-control. “If conduct is to be thoroughly deliberate, the ideal must be a habit of feeling which has grown up under the influence of a course of self-criticisms; and the theory of the deliberate formation of such habits of feelings is what ought to be meant by esthetics” (CP 1.574). Since feelings, as the basis and object of aesthetics, are linked together, in the sense that one feeling is signifying another feeling, the formation of a habit of feeling refers to the *Thirdness* issues. Even though we can’t talk about an aesthetic sign in Peirce’s semiotics (the concept will be used later by Charles Morris) the problem is reached by the fact that Peirce considers some qualities and emotions for further contemplation by the interpreter. So, what is “objectively admirable” depends upon the transformation of phenomenon into a sign.

Considering also what has been said in the previous sections, we can now sketch the process of aesthetics experience in the following steps: (1) we have, at first, an aesthetic object which constitutes an icon, and which will determine some qualities of feeling; (2) thus its aesthetic values depends upon its qualities; (3) the interpreter reacts to some feelings or emotions produced by the object; and (4) since a feeling is merely the material quality of a mental sign (see CP 5. 291), which means that there is no feeling which is not a representation, a predicate of something determined logically by the feeling that precede, we can assume that when these feelings are repeated, then we

have actually habits of feeling, as the basis of future response, case in which we might say that a sense of beauty can be outlined. It must be said that the interpreter or the subject mediates between these impressions on the object and a certain hypothesis about it, through the medium of attention. The latter is roused, as Peirce argues, when the same phenomenon presents itself repeatedly on different occasions.

For better understanding this process of aesthetic experience, we will discuss now extensively its sequences in connection with the concepts of *firstness*, *secondness*, and *thirdness*, finally showing that a form of reasoning is involved along the way.

This endeavor is not an easy one, because as many commentators have pointed out, some apparent contradictions, or even paradoxes can be found in Peirce's aesthetic ideas. Take for instance, the concept of 'representation', which in the context of aesthetic experience is in fact, 'presentation' of something, or the concept of *firstness* that represents at the same time, a quality and an ideal. My assumption is that, under the right circumstances, these contradictions are actually scattered. Consequently, Peirce's attempt to apply his categories in every area of his thought led him to distinguish between this "quality of feeling", as *firstness*, or in a phenomenological perspective, what is presented to conscience, from the feelings of pleasure or pain, with their implications of *secondness*, and with a link to *thirdness*. He wrote: "For in our opinion if there by any quality of feeling common to all pleasurable experiences or components of experience, and another quality of feeling common to all that is painful (...) then we hold the opinion that the one is the feeling of being attracted, the other that of being repelled, by the present state of experience" (CP 1.333). The feeling as quality is obtained through a process of abstraction. In this regard, Peirce introduces the concept of "sense of externality" which accompanies perception, and which can be found in all sensations, "meaning by sensation, the initiation of a state of feeling; - for by feeling I mean nothing but sensation *minus* the attribution of it to any particular subject" (CP 1. 332). Thus, we can say that objects are experienced in an aesthetic way "simply in their *presentation*" (CP 5.36). This also explains the relationship between the concept of *firstness* and aesthetic experience: "*Firstness* is what is present to the artist eye" (CP 5.44), and implies the idea that aesthetic experience is something prereflexive, noncognitive and does not involve any

ordinary thinking. As a consequence, what is presented to the mind in any way constitutes the quality of feeling.

Nevertheless, we should not identify feeling and emotion, difference that also Peirce himself does. This is because feelings belong to the domain of *aesthēsis* (impressions), whereas emotions are related to predication. In this sense, Peirce wrote that the problem of what the meaning of a concept is can be solved by the study of interpretants, or what he called “the proper significate effects of the sign”. The first such effect is the feeling produced by it: “There is almost always a feeling which we come to interpret as evidence that we comprehend the proper effect of the sign, although the foundation of truth in this is frequently very slight. This ‘emotional interpretant’, as I call it, may amount to much more than that feeling of recognition” (CP 5.475). Since emotions represent a predicate, or a hypothesis, their properties cannot be used within the significate effect of beauty. On the other hand, feelings as *aesthēsis*, are simply a quality of immediate consciousness, and they benefit from a degree of vividness. It follows that the vividness of a consciousness of the feeling “is independent of every component of the quality of that consciousness, and consequently is independent of the resultant of those components” (CP 1.309). We can conclude now that, as a feeling, the sense of beauty (*kalos*) represents a manifestation of *firstness*. Then, our impressions (*aesthēsis*) are unified by attention or our *power of abstraction*, and thus, “an emphasis is put upon one of the objective elements of consciousness. This emphasis is, therefore, not itself an object of immediate consciousness” (CP 5.295) but it affects our capacities of knowledge, and this is the reason why we can say that aesthetic experience represents a particular form of reasoning, or of knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

The conception of a trichotomy of normative sciences that we have presented in the beginning of our paper represents a late outcome of Peirce’s philosophy.

In his early classification of sciences, aesthetics is rarely mentioned and the structure of the three normative sciences, with aesthetics on top and logic at the bottom, is established, around the year 1902. By the year 1906, he seems to have formulated a workable conception of aesthetics. Even though Peirce considered himself more a logician, his first encounter with philosophy was mediated by aesthetics. Yet,

aesthetics and ethics have remained undeveloped as sciences, in Peirce's architectonic philosophy, and it is not surprising that he continues to express some doubts concerning the status of the two sciences.

As we have seen, he includes aesthetics and ethics among the normative sciences because the first is the science of the ideals or of that which is objectively admirable without any ulterior reason, that is, what is attractive in itself, and the second studies the conditions that may or may not belong to voluntary action in relation to its purpose.

We can find here the Greek philosophical tradition, according to which the sense of beauty only exist together with the sense of good and the sense of truth. The shifting of perspective that Peirce brings in an original way, is that he conceives these values as determining behavior. In that sense, beauty represents a value which is located in phenomenon, but in relation to an observer, it gives rise to admiration. In the same manner, the good is bound to the self-controlled or deliberative conduct, and the truth gives rise to the self-controlled or deliberative thought.

It was often said that Peirce's conception about aesthetics is so peculiar to the point that it may seem to have no correspondence with what has been conventionally considered to be aesthetics. But a closer look to his endeavor, no matter how singular its perspective may be, will show that we really can talk about his contribution to philosophical aesthetics, if one wants to take full advantage of his theory of signs. As we have seen, aesthetics is for him that science whose purpose is to determine what kind of relationship is created when a subject is bounded with an object in an aesthetic experience. The process of the aesthetic experience begins with an object that is perceived as an icon, and then we have some impressions (*aesthesis*) of it, which are the first degree of perception, and which produce some immediate effects. Then, through the medium of attention, the subject mediates between these *aesthesis* and a certain hypothesis about them. In the case of the sense of beauty, attention emphasizes "the harmony of our impressions". Since this emphasis, nevertheless, consists in some effect upon consciousness, then we can say that our knowledge is affected. At this point we are still at the level of feelings. One level higher is the level of perceptions, which are interpretations of sensations. And this process of inferences continues until a form of reasoning arises at the higher level. The consequence is that Peirce's

approach of aesthetic experience is a part of his general theory of knowledge.

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