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THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PEIRCE'S AESTHETICS*

Abstract: In this paper, I will focus on Peirce's views on aesthetics and some of its anthropological implications. Though Peirce never developed a systematic account of aesthetics, he was aware of its importance for ethics and logic (C.P. 8.225–8.256). The paper addresses Peirce's notion in C.P. 5.314–315, that a “man is the thought”, from the view of his aesthetics. My intention is to show that Peirce's views on the “qualities of feeling” and on aesthetic experience in general may have interesting philosophic-anthropological implications.

Keywords: aesthetics, Peirce, philosophical anthropology, qualities of feeling, values.

1. Peirce's attitude towards aesthetics

1.1. Introduction

Discussing the nature of our conduct, Aristotle makes the following remark in *The Nicomachean Ethics*:

“Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and choice, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends; some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them. [...] If, then, there is some end of the things we do, which we desire for its own sake [...] clearly this must be the good and the chief good. Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence on life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right? If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art.” (Aristotle, 2009, pp. 3–4; 1094a1–25).

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Aristotle recognizes a hierarchy of the ends of purposeful activities. Given the hierarchy, he assumes the existence of a highest good, or one worth pursuing for its own sake. The quoted passage does not fully reflect the main topic of this paper, but I find some parts of it interesting and relevant.

Peirce also recognizes the teleology of our conduct (cf. C.P. 6.155–6, 434; 7.570). He discusses the relationship between the “logically good”, “morally good” and “esthetically good”, or the ends we can ascribe to the phenomena of our experience (C.P. 5.120–150; cf. 1.191ff). He also employs the concept of teleology when discussing the nature of *personality* (cf. C.P. 6.155). However, Peirce’s concept of teleology differs from the Aristotelian concept of natural, innate teleology (cf. Aristotle, 2018, pp. 21ff; 193a30ff; Shields, 2023). It also differs from Kant’s views, because it is not reduced to how we tend to observe phenomena (cf. Kant, 2007, p. 21ff).¹

Peirce’s view on the teleology of human conduct is related to his understanding of *aesthetic experience*. How we form ideals we pursue is related to it (cf. C.P. 6.155–6, 434; 7.570). That is why ethics must rely on aesthetics, to determine the nature of the *summum bonum* (C.P. 1.191). This does not mean that the task of aesthetics is to definitively determine and disclose positive information on the content of the highest end.² What Peirce probably meant is that it should reflect on our tendency, due to the teleological structure of our actions, to posit something *as* the *summum bonum*. Irrespective of the content of an ideal, we act *as if* something is the highest good.³ In that regard, we may assume, ethics should see aesthetics as an ally⁴ in determining the correct mechanisms of our conduct.

The task of this paper is to assess the anthropological implications of Peirce’s aesthetics. What are the implications of Peirce’s understanding of

1 More on Aristotle’s and Kant’s understanding of teleology, see (Petrović, 2016). Peirce uses the expression *developmental teleology*, contrasting it to the understanding of teleology as a mere realization of a predetermined purpose. Cf. C.P. 6.156.

2 Such content is hardly known positively. Cf. C.P. 5.433: “[T]he pragmatist does not make the *summum bonum* to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be *destined*, which is what we strive to express in calling them *reasonable*”.

3 This does not mean that Peirce’s views on *summum bonum* are relativistic. This observation refers to the fact that it is not uncommon for people to act upon some belief without having a clear understanding of it. People form a belief and act *as if* something is true, even though that need not be the case.

4 More specifically, in C.P. 1.191, Peirce says: “Ethics, or the science of right and wrong, must appeal to Esthetics for aid in determining the *summum bonum*”. It seems that “esthetics” alone does not *decide* an ideal, the highest good, since there are only aesthetic goods, and no aesthetic “grades of excellence” (C.P. 5.132). There is no aesthetic “goodness” and “badness” (*ibid*).

aesthetic experience, for his views on personality? The presented task may invoke some confusion. Namely, it is questionable whether there is such a thing as “Peirce’s aesthetics”, let alone its “anthropological implications”. I believe, however, that it is possible to discuss the topic and that we can even compare Peirce’s views with, for example, those of Plato, regarding the question of the importance of aesthetic education. Before that, however, we have to pay attention to some other important moments.

I intend to address Peirce’s attitude towards aesthetics. The other point I would like to address is Peirce’s view on the *beautiful*. How does Peirce understand the beauty, and how does he relate it to our *acting* and *thinking*? Furthermore, how can we understand his view of beauty as a *quality*? Thematization of these moments may provide us with an interesting background to contrast some of Peirce’s aesthetic and anthropological notions.

For example, the view that *man is the thought* (cf. C.P. 5.314–315) presents itself in a slightly different light, given the background. The view must also include that which constitutes the thought or that which precedes it.⁵ This relationship has been illustrated by Peirce’s theory of categories and various notions on aesthetic experience.

1.2. Peirce’s aesthetics

Peirce never developed a systematic account on aesthetics (*esthetics*). In his writings, we notice some occasional reflections, or what Herman Parret recognizes as “fragments on aesthetic experience” (Parret, 1994, p. 179ff). However, these fragments provide us with an interesting interpretative framework that can help us understand Peirce’s views.

Peirce studied aesthetics in his youth, and then only after a long period of neglecting it, later in his life, recognized its importance (Atkinson, 1982, pp. 1–3; Potter, 1997, p. 52ff). He confesses that he was not well acquainted with it (C.P. 1.191). He was, in his own words, “lamentably ignorant of it” (C.P. 2.120), since he had “terribly neglected it” (C.P. 2.199). As a logician, he was more interested in other topics (C.P. 2.197).

These statements, however, do not fully reflect Peirce’s views. His early encounter with philosophy is marked by his studies of aesthetics⁶ (cf. C.P. 2.197; Atkinson, 1982, pp. 1–3; Parret, 1994, p. 179; Potter, 1997, p. 52ff). Also, he was critical of the general understanding of it, suggesting a different approach (cf. C.P. 2.199ff). Concerning his views, and the subject

5 Similarly, Damir Smiljanić tackles the topic of the relationship between the pathic and the cognitive aspects of ourselves. See (Smiljanić, 2020).

6 As early as in 1855, Peirce read Schiller’s *Aesthetic Letters*, and started studying Kant. See (Peirce, 1982, pp. 1–3).

of his criticism, we might say that he was, in a way, addressing philosophical topics as an “aestheticist”.

This does not mean that he observed everything through the lens of aesthetics, especially not in a traditional sense, which he was critical of. His aesthetics is firmly related to his metaphysics and the theory of categories. Its subject ought to be Firstness and the qualities of feeling (cf. C.P. 8.255–256). Peirce was, however, mindful of the importance of this category and its different instances.

He also shows sensitivity for the arts and aesthetic qualities related to them. In some cases, Peirce was approaching philosophical problems not only as an aestheticist, but an artist, or at least as someone capable of grasping what an artistic appreciation, creativity, spontaneity and inspiration may be.⁷ Aside of being interested in the question of “poetic mood”, he was, in a way, *employing* it. Let us look at an example that Peirce provides us with. In C.P. 5.44, he says:

Go out under the blue dome of heaven and look at what is present as it appears to the artist's eye. The poetic mood approaches the state in which the present appears as it is present. Is poetry so abstract and colorless?

In Peirce's view, the quoted passage addresses some of the inadequacies of Hegelian metaphysics, foremost the idea of *immediacy* as *the pure being* (cf. Hegel, 1977, p. 58ff). It is important to notice that the “artist's eye” is not merely a metaphor. Peirce views the ability to observe and *experience* things as an artist as an indispensable element of philosophical thinking, or, more specifically, an integral part of phenomenological methodology. A passage (C.P. 5.42) slightly before the above-quoted, sheds some additional light in this regard:

When the ground is covered by snow on which the sun shines brightly except where shadows fall, if you ask any ordinary man what its color appears to be, he will tell you white, pure white, whiter in the sunlight, a little greyish in the shadow. But that is not what is before his eyes that he is describing; it is his theory of what *ought* to be seen. The artist will tell him that the shadows are not grey but a dull blue and that the snow in the sunshine is of a rich yellow. That artist's observational power is what is most wanted in the study of phenomenology.

7 Cf. C.P. 5.112: “I have gone through a systematic course of training in recognizing my feelings. I have worked with intensity for so many hours a day every day for long years to train myself to this; and it is a training which I would recommend to all of you. The artist has such a training; but most of his effort goes to reproducing in one form or another what he sees or hears, which is in every art a very complicated trade; while I have striven simply to see what it is that I see”.

To understand this remark, we have to bear in mind Peirce's understanding of sense perception. Namely, sense perception is *abductive*, that is, it involves cognition (cf. C.P. 7.630; Anđelković, 2006; Trajkovski, 2015, p. 146ff). It is why any ordinary person is inclined to report what *should be* seen, but only a trained artist tends to step back and acknowledge *what is present as it is present*.

The appraisal of the observational powers of an artist does not imply that artists are natural-born philosophers, or that art is in any way superior to philosophy, like German romanticists claimed (cf. Frank, 2008, pp. 19–20, 53ff; Gorodeisky, 2016). The quoted passage tells us not that artists are generally more capable of addressing philosophical problems, but that a philosopher must not be oblivious of the element of reality that the “poetic mood” is directly attached to: the immediate, the present presentness, the present as it is present, or the First (cf. C.P. 1.356–1.357, 547; 5.44).

The quoted passages should not be interpreted as claiming that artists are closer to apprehending the “essence of things”, or having some advantage in their “conceptual determination”, compared to any other man. Sense perception supposes a semiotic tridimensional relationship, the mediation of signs. The underlying mechanisms of perceiving things by an artist, and anyone else, are just the same. Peirce probably gives an example with an artist to point out that there are different *habits* in observing things. An artist, we may assume from the given examples, is aware that there are elements usually overlooked, that are nonetheless present. They are overlooked *because* we, so to speak, predefine what it is that we (should) observe.

The implications for phaneroscopy are that it demands a similar kind of attention (“observational power”), or noticing of all the elements that can be related to an observed phenomenon, irrespective of its ontological status, the elements that usually can be overlooked because we *assume how we should* observe the phenomenon.⁸ Phenomenological observation, and the “artist’s observational power”, cannot be thus identified with the Cartesian idea of “immediacy”, or “immediate knowledge”.

Peirce’s observations can help us define a conceptual framework for understanding his possible attitude towards aesthetics. When we pay closer attention, we notice at least two opposing approaches. On the one hand, Peirce says that he is not familiar with aesthetics, but on the other hand, he points out what it *ought to be*.

Why has Peirce developed a sentiment towards something he is not being completely familiar with? We also notice that Peirce “takes the word

8 For example, to differentiate phenomena as those that belong to our imagination, or those that belong to the outside world, between mental or corporeal, etc. Phaneroscopy intentionally distances itself from such differentiations.

of others that there is such a science" (C.P. 2.120). When discussing aesthetic matters, he questions the very existence of aesthetics.

If we try to unite different statements to clarify Peirce's possible stance, we face three mutually opposing points:

- Peirce is not well acquainted with aesthetics (cf. C.P. 2.120);
- Peirce is not satisfied with what aesthetics of his day presents itself to be (cf. C.P. 1.574; 2.199);
- Peirce only takes the "word of others" that such science exists (cf. C.P. 2.120).

These three points are in fundamental disagreement. They form, to use Rescher's expression, a sort of *aporetic cluster* (cf. Rescher, 1987, p. 288ff). However, an aporetic situation is avoided if the points are seen as dialectical correlates, or different instances of an understanding of aesthetics that has yet to be clarified. In this regard, the second statement, that expresses Peirce's sentiment of what aesthetics should be, seems most helpful.

Peirce was clear about not having developed a systematic account of aesthetics. From his point of view, however, it is questionable whether *anyone* had. What went under the name of aesthetics clearly did not meet his demands. Maybe Peirce was unacquainted with it because of its questionable existence?

We may assume that Peirce's attitude towards aesthetics stems from his philosophical convictions regarding its true nature. There is more to this topic, but to continue it would first be necessary to address the question of beauty. After that, we will get back to Peirce's views on aesthetics as the basic normative science. So, what is *beautiful* according to Peirce?

2. The quality of beauty

2.1. Beautiful, unbeautiful and καλός

In Peirce's view, the beautiful is the object of admiration. It is more similar to Kant's concept of *the sublime*, given that it is not confined within the concept of a *form* (cf. Kant, 2007, p. 75ff; Parret, 1994, pp. 182–183). The idea of an aesthetic quality is related to the phenomenological concept of Firstness. The First is to be understood as twofold: it is the first, like a quality of feeling which, as Peirce says, *colors our personality* (C.P. 6.155), and it is the last, like *an ideal* to pursue (cf. Parret, 1994, pp. 179–180). We may think of it as something that determines our teleological

matrix of conduct. The element of firstness is something that, in a way, determines us. Our appreciations of things, our setting goals and achieving them, seem to expose some of that determination (cf. C.P. 1.574).

Peirce was critical towards the traditional views of beauty as form and harmony. In fact, he was critical of the term *beauty* as such, and its interpretations as the primary subject-matter of aesthetics (C.P. 2.199). Similarly to Plotinus, Peirce argued that harmony and symmetry are only conditions for beauty to appear, and not something identical to it (cf. Parret, 1994, p. 182ff).⁹ Aesthetics, he argued, is *crippled* by the very understanding of it being the science of the beautiful (C.P. 2.199). The concept is only a *product of aesthetics*, whose primary subject-matter should be something else (ibid).

Describing something as beautiful is one of the ways we may admire something. But to admire something is to appreciate it for what it is, without “any ulterior reason” (C.P. 1.191). In other words, aesthetics studies that which is admirable and desirable in itself, as it is, without any other ground of justification.¹⁰ And such conduct is not reduced to appreciating fine arts or natural beauty alone. Instead, Peirce notices a connection between admiring something and experiencing *aesthetic qualities*, or certain *qualities of feeling*. He understands *ideal* as a *habit of feeling* (C.P. 1.574).

His understanding of beauty, thus, was not formal, cognitivist or representational, but axiological (Parret, 1994, pp. 182–183; Smith, 1972, p. 22ff). The way we evaluate something is determined by our aesthetic experience (cf. C.P. 1.574). However, the adjective “axiological” does not imply *moral axiology*. There is no aesthetically “good” and “bad” (C.P. 5.127). Aesthetics recognizes all of its phenomena as *aesthetic values* or *qualities*, so even something appalling may appear “delicious” in its “perfection” (C.P. 5.127).

There are only *qualities*, and individual instances that embody them. So, in a way, we can talk about the aesthetic qualities of something being “ugly” (C.P. 2.199); being repelled by or attracted to something is related to how different qualities are embodied. To equate “good” and “beautiful”, that is, “evil” and “ugly”, is a moral evaluation of aesthetic qualities (C.P. 5.127).

9 On Plotinus' concept of beauty see (Plotinus, 2018, pp. 91–103; I.6.1.25ff; Miles, 1999, pp. 37–42; A. Smith, 2016, p. 15ff).

10 We may look at Peirce's account on aesthetic experience as sharing similar tendencies and motives with the philosophical debates on what constitutes and motivates moral action, characteristic for post-Kantian German philosophers, and motivated by Kant's ethical thought. More on these debates cf. (Milisavljević, 2006, p. 19ff).

It seems that Peirce radicalizes Kant's notion of the beautiful as that which is independent of its explanatory potentials and moral values (cf. Kant, 2007, p. 42ff). The quality of being beautiful is, as Kant would say, "independent of all interest" (Kant, 2007, p. 36ff). But noticing and experiencing beauty, and different embodiments of different aesthetic qualities is not solely a matter of recognizing their form, or "purposiveness without purpose" (cf. Kant, 2007, p. 57ff).¹¹ There is no experience of an aesthetic quality without an emotional interpretant – without being attracted to or repelled by it (cf. C.P. 5.475; Hocutt, 1962, p. 158).

Aesthetics only studies what makes beautiful as it is, and what makes ugly as it is. It does not choose between them as morally preferable. It discusses the relationship between qualities, our relationship towards them, and in that way it establishes what is that which is admirable in itself, what makes it that way, approximating the nature of the *summum bonum* (cf. C.P. 2.199; Potter, 1997, pp. 33–35).

To Peirce, beauty is a *quality*. As such, it is not defined in terms of quantity, forms or representation and is irreducible to the multiplicity of parts. Parret opposes Peirce's views to the classical theories of beauty, like Plato's, and presents his views as "truly contemporary and *avant-garde*", that is, "non-classical, non-cognitivist and non-representational" (Parret, 1994, p. 182).

Beauty is something admirable and is not confined to symmetry and form. But *unbeautiful* is an important aesthetical category, too, because aesthetics is interested in *all* aesthetic goods or qualities. Philosophers have failed to acknowledge the unbeautiful, omitting the most important question of aesthetics: "What is the one quality that is, in its immediate presence, καλός?" (C.P. 2.199).

The term "καλός" is *closer* to what Peirce understands as the subject-matter of aesthetics, dismissing the term "beautiful" as a term that fails to

11 We can observe some interesting similarities and differences between Peirce and Kant. Like Kant, Peirce detaches beauty from any other interest that may belong to other spheres, be it moral or theoretical. Unlike Kant, though, to Peirce, the experience of beauty is not limited to a form of things that is related to the structure of our reasoning. Though systematicity and coordination are part of being beautiful, beauty is not only that. It is an aesthetic quality conveyed by a form, and is an object of admiration. Interestingly, at this point Peirce again stands closer to Kant, than, for example, Hegel, for whom the only subject matter of aesthetics, and the only things that can be labeled as beautiful – are the *works of art* (Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, 1988, pp. 1–3). Unlike Hegel, Peirce and Kant would agree that works of nature too are legitimate objects of aesthetic appreciation. Though Peirce shares some similarities with Kant, their fundamental philosophical stances differ. Peirce's critical stance towards the idea of transcendental philosophy and method, and thus *the idea of a transcendental subject* is what marks a crucial point of divergence between the two philosophers. In addition to that, to Peirce, aesthetics is not only interested in beauty, but all aesthetic qualities, even the qualities of the *unbeautiful*.

acknowledge it (cf. C.P. 2.199ff). Though *καλός* may be closer, it does not completely convey it. Peirce prefers “*καλός*” because of its implications for his understanding of an aesthetic quality and that which is admirable in itself.

Καλός conveys some of its important aspects, like unity, purposefulness, and enjoyability. These are the things that make an end admirable: it is purposeful, it is good, and thus lovable (cf. Liszka, 2021, p. 12ff). Since, in Peirce's view, ethics relies on aesthetics in determining the nature of *summum bonum*, that which is in itself admirable and good is not morally determined as such. That is why aesthetic goodness is not defined on the base of moral goodness, but the other way around.

Aesthetics should define what makes an end admirable, and ethics should choose between ends as morally good or bad, that is, to propose goals a man may reasonably choose in different circumstances (cf. Potter, 1997, p. 34). It seems that the understanding of “good” is ontological rather than ethical. It is “good” in terms of making something existent, not because of possessing certain moral qualities. If it acts as an ideal, it is something good, *an end*.

What aesthetics should be is not the theory of fine arts, but of that which is *admirable in itself* (cf. Liszka, 2018, p. 207ff). That which is admirable in itself “without any ulterior reason” is what Peirce calls an *ideal* (cf. C.P. 1.191). An ideal, however, is what we, so to speak, *mimic* in our conduct.

2.2. Aesthetic education: Plato and Peirce

At this point, I would like to shed some light on the difference between Plato and Peirce, to further clarify Peirce's stance on aesthetics. We may argue that both philosophers would agree on the importance of aesthetic education. Plato tackles this problem in *The Republic*, noticing that correct aesthetic education is necessary for any further moral and intellectual improvement (Plato, 1997, pp. 1032–1040; 394e–403c).¹²

Plato criticizes famous poets regarding the way they portray gods and their characteristics (Plato, 1997, pp. 1005–1016ff, 1018–1030; 365eff, 377dff, 379d–383c, 386a–392c). In book II of *The Republic*, Glaucon presents an example of the influence of the poets on people's views. While telling the story of Gyges, Glaucon (Plato, 1997, pp. 1001; 360b–c) presents an image of a powerful man, introducing an interesting observation:

Now, no one, it seems, would be so incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice or stay away from other people's property, when he could take whatever he wanted from the marketplace with impunity, go into people's houses and have sex with anyone he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished, and do all the other things that would make him *like a god* among humans.¹³

12 More on Plato's views on myths and education see (Deretić, 2014, pp. 233–266).

13 Italics are mine.

The observation “like a god” is important, because it reflects the people’s concept of that which is divine. Aside from the problem of the blasphemous depictions of gods, another issue is the practical consequences that these depictions may produce, if accepted. If people see gods not only as supernatural and powerful beings, but also as role-models, then people might start to mimic the behavior of characters so depicted. This blasphemy reflects on people’s values. This is just one example of why Plato considered censorship of art necessary.

Plato recognizes that, from an early age, works of art and artistic representations of reality have their fair share in shaping our values. It is why discussions concerning the questions of an ideal state and virtues must include thorough discussions of the role and place of arts and artists in the state. Just as early physical education is necessary for maintaining physical health and healthy habits, so is aesthetic education at an early age necessary to map the further shaping of one’s spirit (Plato, 1997, pp. 1032–1040; 394e–403c).

We could say that Peirce, to some extent, would have agreed with Plato in this regard (cf. C.P. 1.592; 2.199). Peirce recognizes that the logically good rests on the morally good, and the latter on the aesthetically good (cf. C.P. 5.131ff). From the point of view of Peirce’s aesthetics, however, we could say that the question of aesthetic education cannot be limited to matters related to taste and the influence of art. It is because an artistic preference is already a result of some *previous experiences*. According to Peirce, our aesthetic appreciations are shaped by a more fundamental experience.

Certainly, Peirce’s aesthetics would not be limited to a theory of art, its role in a society, and its influence on an individual (cf. C. M. Smith, 1972, pp. 21–29). That would be only a portion of what it might be dealing with. Our aesthetic being is not influenced only by art, but by the qualities of feeling present *in every phenomenon* of possible experience. Rightly addressed, the problem of aesthetic education reveals itself to be the question of how we form and pursue ideals and values that reflect both in ethical and logical conduct.

3. Aesthetics as a normative science

3.1. Feelings and personality

The concept of aesthetics can also be elucidated with the parallels Peirce draws between its subject and the psychological exemplifications of his phenomenological categories (cf. C.P. 8.225–8.256). In discussing the nature of normative sciences, Peirce says that aesthetics is to ethics, as ethics is to

logic, the three having their appropriate subject, namely the psychological exemplifications of phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, in the forms of *feelings*, *action*, and *thought* (ibid).

Peirce's understanding of what aesthetics should be is based on his account on *Firstness*, the concept he saw as a point of divergence with other philosophers; the concept presents his view on the role of the immediate as a part of reality, and experience (cf. C.P. 8.267ff; 8.327ff). He took a critical stance towards the idea of *the given*, and he makes a distinction between the given and *the immediate* (cf. Dewey, 1935, pp. 701–708). That which is immediate cannot be given in the form of an object. Furthermore, that which is immediate cannot be subjective, or objective, since any distinction and relation between subject and object is already a result of a mediation.¹⁴ That which is given has already been mediated by reflection.

However, the immediate, the monadic aspect of reality, presented by the concept of Firstness, is a necessary part of reality and experience, because without it no relation or mediation is possible. The concept of Firstness is one of the fruits of Peirce's attempts to mark the differences between his and, as he called it, the nominalistic metaphysics, which refers to the entire "modern spirit" (cf. C.P. 5.61; 8.267ff; 8.327ff). If feelings are exemplifications of Firstness, then a feeling is the first, or a ground on which the personality operates.

Peirce's claims that he is not well familiar with aesthetics may be interpreted as resting on his convictions on *what must be* its main subject. In this regard, phenomenology provides us with valuable insights. It suggests how we are to understand the relationship between feelings, or the qualities of feeling, to *acting* and *thinking*.

Acting and thinking have been accompanied by a certain quality of feeling (cf. Dewey, 1935, pp. 701–708). This does not mean that they can be *reduced to* feelings. Thought and action have their laws and regularities, but they are not only that. A man is not only acting and thinking, and if the First is exemplified in a quality of feeling, then feelings have an important role in Peirce's understanding of man. One particular passage (C.P. 1.574) sheds some interesting light in this regard:

It is true that the Germans, who invented the word,¹⁵ and have done the most toward developing the science, limit it to taste, that is, to the action of the *Spieltrieb*¹⁶ from which deep and earnest emotion would seem to be excluded. But

14 Cf. (Hocutt, 1962, p. 158): "In Peirce's terminology, *qualities* are objectively, what *feelings* are subjectively". Also cf. Dewey, 1935, pp. 701–708).

15 Namely, aesthetics.

16 Liszka (2021) draws attention to the importance of Friedrich Schiller's concepts of *lebende Gestalt* (a living shape) and of *Spieltrieb* (the play impulse, play drive). They

in the writer's opinion the theory is the same, whether it be a question of forming a taste in bonnets or of a preference between electrocution and decapitation, or between supporting one's family by agriculture or by highway robbery.

This passage aims to explain why the subject of aesthetics has to be broadened. Aesthetics should not be limited to the questions of taste and art, but to examine what values, desires, intentions, and convictions shape our existence and our intellectual efforts to conceptually articulate the world around us, too. The preferences in artistic taste are already *a result*, a judgment, the same as other activities and preferences a man may have. To react to a piece of art is *to already be disposed*, in a way, to do so.

Our fundamental relationship towards reality is aesthetic. If, however, the subject of aesthetics is related to phenomenology, Firstness and qualities of feeling, then it should study not only fine arts and our relationship to them, but that which makes such a relationship possible. As a person with certain dispositions, a man reacts to things in a certain way. It is not likely that two people can have identical aesthetic experiences. Although a piece of art, like a painting or a music composition, convey certain qualities/feelings, they are not encountered in the same way by different people.

We may assume a certain degree of similarity. However, personality is understood as a *teleological harmony in ideas* (C.P. 6.155–6), and it would be difficult to suppose the complete identity of the content of two teleological systems, especially regarding a possible course of action two people may take. We may follow the same ideal/end, but hardly in an identical way.

Regarding the concept of personality, Peirce pays attention to “the saying [...] that man is a bundle of habits” (C.P. 6. 228). In the passage where Peirce is discussing that view, he regards the “bundle” as of secondary importance for our understanding of the nature of personality. If we understand personality as a bundle alone, we would still be missing that which holds this bundle together. In Peirce's words: “[A] bundle of habits would not have the unity of self-consciousness. That unity must be given as a centre for the habits” (C.P. 6.228).

The “centre” that holds the multitude of elements that constitute a person, Peirce had previously mentioned in the same passage, as the “*quale*-consciousness” (cf. Ibid). It is that which makes the unity of con-

refer to the harmonious relationship between reason and feeling, which Peirce finds significant and interesting, especially regarding his view on *concrete reasonableness* (cf. Liszka, 2021, p. 12ff, 167, 205; C.P. 5.3). The concept of *Spieltrieb* is also important for Peirce's idea of *musement*, a free activity that lies not only in the base of artistic creativity, but scientific inquiry, too. From the view of Peirce's aesthetics, the concept outlines a relationship towards something, that is free of any other, heterogeneous purpose or motive. On the role of the concept of *musement* in Peirce's thought see (Cooke, 2018, p. 2ff).

sciousness possible.¹⁷ Peirce argues that the unity of consciousness cannot be understood as a logical, or psychological (physiological), but *metaphysical* (cf. C.P. 6.229):

The brain shows no central cell. The unity of consciousness is therefore not of physiological origin. It can only be metaphysical. So far as feelings have any continuity, it is the metaphysical nature of feeling to have a *unity*.

Unfortunately, we cannot analyze this passage thoroughly. To do so, we would have to at least pay attention to the concepts of *metaphysical*, *unity*, *consciousness*, *feeling*, and their relationship to each other. That is beyond the scope of this paper. What we may do, though, is notice that Peirce avoids using conceptual categories of psychology and physiology when discussing the nature of *personality*.

A unity of a self-conscious personality, or a teleological harmony of ideas, is understood as a *qualitative* unity. In that manner, Peirce also describes personality as a *living feeling* (C.P. 6.155). The view of personality in terms of teleological harmony in ideas reveals an interesting relationship between that and the concepts of “teleology” and “feeling” (cf. C.P. 6.156).

Personality, Peirce notices, is “a phenomenon which is remarkably prominent to our own consciousness” (C.P. 6.155). He is not interested, though, in discussing its neurophysiology, but the general idea (cf. Reynolds, 2002, 63ff). Generally speaking, personality is a “coordination or connection of ideas” (C.P. 6.155). However, that connection is “itself a general idea, and that general idea is a living feeling” (ibid). Ontologically and epistemologically, it is not a thing among other things, a finite object that can be completely defined, or “apprehended in an instant”. Rather:

It has to be lived in time: nor can any finite time embrace it in all its fullness. Yet in each infinitesimal interval it is present and living, though specially colored by the immediate feeling of that moment. (C.P. 6.155)

The notion of a feeling that colors personality is interesting. A person is not something that can be fully described in logical, psychological, or physiological terms. As a developmental teleological system, it is determined by the *qualities of feeling*.

The formation of an ideal, as that which we follow and which guides our activities, is tied to a feeling that colors personality. The ideal is what

17 Peirce (C.P. 6.226) contrasts this notion with Kant's understanding of the synthetic activities of intellect: “and the various synthetical unities which Kant attributes to the different operations of the mind, as well as the unity of logical consistency, or *specific* unity, and also the unity of the individual object, all these unities originate, not in the operations of the intellect, but in the *quale*-consciousness upon which the intellect operates”.

allows for our behavior to be described as goal-oriented. It is that which recommends itself as desirable, and it is deeply related to a quality of feeling. As we have already said, *the First* is to be understood as both a quality of feeling which *colors our personality* (C.P. 6.155), and as something that determines *an ideal* to pursue (cf. Parret, 1994, pp. 179–180).

It is hardly avoidable to consider the role of feelings when discussing our goal-oriented activities. Furthermore, the topic is hard to avoid regarding the issue of the *unity of personality*. That unity is *qualitative*; it is *indivisible* and *irreducible* to its parts. Approaching this issue from aesthetic point of view, we can notice some similarities to Peirce's understanding of the relationship between beauty and symmetry. Just as non-beautiful parts only make beauty to appear, but are not capable on their own to generate beauty and to be equated with it, so the aforementioned "bundle of habits" is only what a unity of personality *appears through*.

That unity has been determined by something pre-reflexive, and our habits and thinking, our complete teleological *modus operandi* may be deeply influenced by it. Following that notion, we may say that to further understand what a man is, is to understand the nature of the aesthetic appreciations.

A man is the thought (cf. C.P. 5.314–315), but a thought, as an instance of the Third, is impossible without the Second and the First. They are not identical, of course. But a philosophic-anthropological view on what a man is, must take into consideration all the categories. Pierce's view of man is determined by his phenomenology, and the understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience.

4. Concluding remarks

Peirce was neglecting aesthetics throughout his career, a fact he was well aware of. Yet, his relationship to it is more complex than that. His early encounter with philosophy was through studying Schiller's *Letters*, whose ideas made a lasting influence on Peirce's thought. However, Peirce developed original notions on aesthetic experience, and aesthetics, that rest largely on his phenomenology and the theory of categories, which is probably why he could not develop the notions the way he did earlier. The importance of aesthetics rests on the relevance of the concept of Firstness, given that it is supposed to study some of its exemplifications. That is why he contrasts his views with the traditional. The main flaw of traditional aesthetics is in not recognizing that its alleged subject-matter was secondary to something more important. Because of that, aesthetics limits itself to the matters of taste, fine arts and various notions of the beautiful.

According to Peirce, as a normative science, aesthetics should study various aesthetic qualities, suggesting how we ought to reflect on them. Since it pertains to that which is *admirable*, it pertains to that which we appreciate for its own sake. Consequently, it should outline what it is in a thing that we find cherishable, desirable, admirable, which is an issue that falls outside the scope of ethics and logic.

Aesthetics should observe the mechanics of forming and following an ideal. A man, as a teleological system, cannot do without having different ideals. An ideal is that which allows our behavior to be described as purposeful and goal-oriented. Aesthetics recognizes the close relationship between the concepts of the highest good, and aesthetical qualities and experiences. That is why an account on the teleological form of our conduct would require a theory like that. Ultimately, such a theory would provide a strong aid to a philosophic-anthropological account on what a man is.

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