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# Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics

## Some Consequences of Kant's Critiques in Peirce's Early Pragmatism

Vitaly Kiryushchenko

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- 1 The relationship between logic and ethics is one of the basic and most essential questions of classical philosophical analysis. Since the time of the Pythagoreans, the fundamental unity of the two – whether by means of vague intuition, an elaborate conceptual scheme, or even a carefully crafted lifestyle – has led philosophers to identify truth and virtue. In his critical philosophy Kant put this unity of truth and virtue to extensive and rigorous trial to determine what conditions, if any, allow us to intelligibly answer the question of how knowledge, or an obvious inner belief turns into a necessary motivation of the will, or, in other words, how belief can be interpreted as *both* an intelligible object *and* a source for action. In 1790 Kant gave his conclusive answer to this question in *Critique of Judgment*, which was an attempt to reconcile, in terms of aesthetics, a set of contradictions that arose between his 1st and 2nd *Critiques*, i.e. between his logical and ethical doctrines, to be discussed below.
- 2 Although throughout the development of his thought Peirce made several decisive moves away from the mainstream of Kant's first two *Critiques*, in his early years, Kant's critical philosophy was the object of his steady interest. Besides, in Peirce's case, Kantian influence was mediated and greatly diversified by intensive reading of Hegel and German Romantics, as well as by lessons in logic and mathematics from his father Benjamin Peirce (MS 310: 823; Colapietro 2006: 173-4, 196). This mediation greatly enriched Peirce's perception of Kantian critical approach – to such an extent that much later, in his 1902 application to Carnegie grant, Peirce avouched that “Kant's criticism was, so to say, my mother's milk in philosophy” (L 75). It is this beverage that made Peirce immune to the deficiencies of empiricist tradition (Short 2007: 66-7, 81-3), especially with respect to his doctrine of categories (Friedman 1996). Moreover, mature Peirce, although he was highly critical towards Kant, praised him for the fact that he based metaphysics on logic, as well as for a decisive emphasis he laid on the idea of architectonics (Nordmann 2006; Parker 1998: 2-59). Therefore, given the high complexity of Kantian themes in Peirce's writings, whatever interpretation one may feel inclined to, it is widely recognized that Peirce's pragmatism, both as a whole and in any particular stage of its development, may

certainly *not* be adequately understood either as a plain repudiation of Kant or simply as a version of Neo-Kantianism (Murphey 1968, Rosenthal 2002).

- 3 However, an analysis of major strands of Kantian influence on Peirce, as well as an exhaustive account of the relationship between logic, ethics and aesthetics in Peirce's pragmatism is beyond the purview of the present paper. Its principal aim is to display, against the highly complex background of this relationship, one curious way in which the very *composition* of Kant's principal arguments in 1st and 2nd *Critiques* is reflected in some of Peirce's early writings, and in his "On a New List of Categories" and "The Fixation of Belief" in particular. This compositional affinity deserves attention as it may serve two purposes. On the one hand, it shows how Kantian idea of architectonics revealed in the very structure of his critical arguments is visible already in Peirce's early texts; on the other hand, it helps to account for certain textual circumstances that accompanied Peirce's first decisive step out of the mainstream of Kantian critical philosophy.
- 4 As to the background in question, although the problem of the relationship between logic and ethics stands out significantly in Peirce's philosophy throughout all stages of its development, it is only in the end of the 1890's that Peirce first explicitly undertakes the task of systematically articulating his conception of ethics as a normative science. The case of aesthetics, which plays an important meditational role in Kant's 3rd *Critique*, is even more intricate. In a draft to his fifth Harvard lecture ("The Three Normative Sciences") delivered on 30 April 1903 in Sever Hall Peirce wrote:
 

[...] although the first year of my study of philosophy was devoted to this branch exclusively, yet I have since then so completely neglected it that I do not feel entitled to have any confident opinions about it. I'm inclined to think that there is such a normative science; but I feel by no means sure even of that. (EP2: 200)
- 5 Later on, in the period of time between the reformulation of his maxim in 1903 and the proof of pragmatism in 1907 MS 318, Peirce had proposed a developed, even if somewhat sketchy view on aesthetics built in the framework of his architectonics. Incorporating aesthetics and establishing its priority over logic and ethics, Peirce's architectonics finally connected his normative theory with his evolutionary metaphysics and doctrine of categories (Potter 1967: 3-71).
- 6 Thus, on the one hand, there is a considerable gap in Peirce's writings which in any way discuss or even simply touch the problem as stated by Kant, so that aesthetics and its role as a mediator between logic and ethics appears to be an apophasis for Peirce. On the other hand, it has been justly argued that on many occasions aesthetics can be considered as an unnamed undercurrent of Peirce's thought, that it is often implicitly referred to by Peirce as the science which is "concerned with relationships and processes by which relations between Appearances and Reality, between Cognition and Idea, between Icon and Symbol [...] grow and evolve with respect of social values represented" (Kevelson 1994: 218).
- 7 However, given Peirce's early interest in Kant, and with due regard for the crucial role the relationship between logic and ethics played in Kant's critical philosophy, Peirce could not have completely overlooked the solution Kant himself set forth in terms of aesthetic judgment in the 3rd *Critique*. Meanwhile, he never criticized this solution directly – with the exception of a few remarks on the fact that Kant and some other German thinkers "limit it <aesthetics> to *taste*, that is, to the action of the *Spieltrieb* from which deep and earnest emotion would seem to be excluded" (EP2: 378). In his 1906 "Basis of Pragmaticism in the Normative Sciences" Peirce defines aesthetics (or esthetics, as he

preferred to call it) as a theory aimed at describing the deliberate formation of “a *habit of feeling* which has grown up under the influence of a course of self-criticisms and of hetero-criticisms” (EP2: 378). It has been suggested that Peirce paid little attention to the 3rd *Critique* due to his “fixation on logic” (Kaag 2005: 517; Anderson 1995: 21). However, being integrated by Kant in one architectonic whole, none of Kant’s three critical arguments can be properly understood in isolation from two others, and it is very unlikely that Peirce, a careful and thorough thinker, was not aware of this. Therefore, while the suggestion is plausible, whether Peirce read *Critique of Judgment* carefully enough or was acquainted with its main ideas only through the Romantics, this lack of attention to aesthetics might also have some other reasons.

- 8 Of course, the very first formulation of the maxim of pragmatism in “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” appears to be a solution alternative to that of Kant: the meaning of a concept consists in nothing else but the sum total of conceivable practical results of actions one is prepared to undertake in case he believes that the concept would hold good in such and such particular circumstances. If so, belief really is consistently interpretable as both an intelligible object and something that can “truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires” (W3: 247) – without the necessity to appeal to the mediating power of aesthetic judgment. Knowledge, in this case, comes out to be grounded in social practices and cannot be epistemologically approached as a context-free synthesis of ideas.
- 9 But if the maxim is a solution, and if Peirce, an admirer of Kant by his own admission, successfully reformulates the Kantian problem without resort to any detailed analysis of the *Critique of Judgment*, it might be worth trying to trace some of Peirce’s early writings for a possible explanation. The reasons of this disregard may become somewhat clearer if we keep in mind the mediating role pure reflective judgment plays in Kant’s critical philosophy together with some points of intersection and compositional concordances between some of Peirce’s early writings and Kant’s first two *Critiques*, to be presented below.



- 10 For the sake of further analysis, a brief outline of three Kantian critical arguments is in order. The arguments may be presented as the next-to-last, prior to Hegel step towards the conclusion of the classical rationalist tradition. This step took the form of three *Critiques* conceived as consecutive systematic attempts at bridging rationalist and empiricist extremes in interpretation of three human faculties: the faculty of knowledge, the faculty of desire, and the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and pain (Deleuze 1984). When knowledge, desire and feeling fully depend on experience, they appear in their lower forms, i.e. judgments pertaining to them are defined as only *a posteriori* and presupposing neither universality nor necessity. On the rationalist side, then, this raises the principal question as to whether – and how – each of these faculties “is capable of a *higher form* [...] when it finds *in itself* the law of its own exercise” (Deleuze 1984: 4). In other words, the question is how knowledge, desire and feeling taken as the results of *a priori* syntheses may be independent of experience (may not be derived from experience), given that they are applicable *only* to the objects of experience. To answer this question, Kant further introduces the notions of understanding, reason and imagination which play different roles in analysis of the faculties. Depending on various interrelations between

these three within each of the faculties, Kant presents logical, ethical and aesthetical sides of his critical approach.

- 11 Unlike Descartes in his *Meditations*, a generic version of rationalist metaphysics, Kant treats knowledge not as an immediate and infallible translation of relations between things “out there” in the world into certain states of one’s soul, but as the result of category-constrained observation: understanding reduces the synthesis of perceptions to concepts that provide knowledge. Both thinking and existence presuppose unifying forms. The corresponding sections of the *Transcendental Aesthetics* and the *Transcendental Analytic* introduce two forms of representation: time and space as two forms of intuition, on the one hand, and categories of the understanding, on the other hand. It is the application of the two forms to one another that makes the process of knowledge possible. However, Kant adds another, third dimension to this dyadic relationship: the possibility of bringing the forms of representation together requires that there is something connecting categories, on the one hand, and phenomena, on the other, i.e. something that shares both the intellectual and the phenomenal nature. It appears, then, that understanding provides the unity of the manifold of experience in space and time by appealing to some third, intermediate structure. This intermediate structure Kant calls the “transcendental scheme,” which – and this is an extremely important point of the 1st *Critique* (in its 2nd edition) – is always a product of the imagination, or something that, in Peirce’s terms, we *conceive* to be such and such. It is neither a percept, nor a concept, but something that, for Kant, interprets one into the other, as it is “homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance, and which thus makes the application of the former to the latter possible” (KRV, B 177). It might be noteworthy, though, that Peirce refers to Kantian transcendental schematism in its 1st edition version, as “a determination of intuition by a concept through the reproductive imagination” (CP 5.531). John Kaag notes that in this definition “Kant offers us a moment of continuity that appears almost Peircean. It reflects an odd departure from the dualistic logic that grounds most of the Kantian corpus” (Kaag 2005: 520).
- 12 However, firstly, in Kant, the fact of the logical unity between the two remains a mystery and thus leaves a conceptual gap within the 1st *Critique*, the gap which is filled by the notion of the transcendental scheme. Kant simply postulates the synthesis of impressions and doesn’t ask *how* it is accomplished, i.e. what are the consecutive steps of this accomplishment:
- This schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover, and to have open to our gaze. (KRV, B 180)
- 13 Secondly, a parallel gap appears in the 2nd *Critique* as the ethical problem of discontinuity between rational understanding and practical manipulation. These two—the rational understanding and the practical manipulation—unambiguously refer to the categories of understanding and the forms of intuition, this time taken as forms of activity. The controversy between the 1st *Critique* and the 2nd *Critique* is known as the classical problem of the moral value of knowledge. This, in turn, forms the central point of Kant’s 3rd *Critique* – the problem of the mediating power of aesthetic judgment to somehow reconcile the opposing extremes. How is this reconciliation accomplished?

- 14 It is important to note that, for Kant, the intelligibility of morality (just like, in terms of the 1st *Critique*, the applicability of categories to phenomena) depends on a difference between the potential and the real. Kant lays special stress on the fact that the world of nature is only a possibility that becomes real *through human action*. Although, presumably, this Kantian thesis is one of the principal fermenting elements of Peirce's early pragmatism, for Kant it is only to the effect that there is a third gap, the one between the theoretical "Self of nature" and the practical "Self of freedom." This latter difference, according to Kant, is inherent to moral consciousness, which seeks to reconcile the two in the imaginative reinterpretation of the schematism of understanding in aesthetic judgment, i.e. aesthetic or *symbolic* experience of freedom (KU: §59). What does Kant understand by "symbol" and just how does it help to solve the problem?
- 15 On the one hand, Kant says, a rational agent may know how he ought to act, but goes no further – he doesn't know to what purpose he knows this, i.e. what the *practical meaning* of this knowledge is. The categorical imperative, i.e. the regulative principle that rules my desires and my conduct, gives the idea of freedom as a form for an outward action, while simultaneously expressing inward necessity. A practical agent, however, is able to think of his own maxims as practical moral laws only if these latter involve purely formal foundation of will: these laws are abstracted from all sorts of subject-matter of the will, in favor of their universal form. Therefore, in terms of ethics, freedom is not given to human consciousness "as it is," but only as a regulative principle, and its meaning is not accessible to any individual reasoning: the necessity of categorical imperative in Kant's transcendental philosophy remains inscrutable. One cannot come to the idea of freedom through experience either, since in experience he has only the law that can be applied to phenomena, the law for the functioning of nature.
- 16 Again, the key problem is that Kant does not explain how to proceed from belief to action – for the reason that knowledge of a law as such does not constitute any action-guiding competence, i.e. does not prevent a practical agent from behavior that may well contradict such knowledge. There is only one person, according to Kant, who can see this picture differently (or, better say, vice versa): it is a genius, i.e. someone who does not obey the scheme, but changes it, and, if necessary, creates it anew. However, in terms of the 3rd *Critique*, the law of aesthetic judgment cannot be interpreted by an individual consciousness: one cannot rationalize *why* this particular something appears beautiful to him. Meantime, although no one is able to live in an aesthetically deficient world, the changes one makes as aesthetic creature always conform to the law that one cannot formalize.
- 17 Accordingly, just like 1st and 2nd *Critiques* reveal two ways to represent belief – as an intelligible object and a source for action, respectively – 2nd and 3rd *Critiques* form two series of argument which do not exist separately and always refer to one another: aware of the categorical imperative, I cannot work it into a finite set of practical habits; and conversely, *not* aware of the law of aesthetic judgment, I always have an idea of how to rearrange my setting. In short, Kant offers an interpretation of the logically structured knowledge into the ethically sound conduct by a symbol – a form of possibility, or an aesthetic idea, serving as a means of the moral Self's self-objectifying. It is the power of aesthetic judgment, Kant says, that provides the possibility to correlate an object of freedom with an object of nature, thus rendering the world surrounding us a *symbol* of the moral, i.e. something that converts my "not understanding why" into symbolic experience of freedom.

- 18 Thus, it is *Critique of Judgment* that is undoubtedly the focal point of Kantian philosophy. It shows that the moral experience cannot be given as such without a medium, but can be rendered efficient (i.e. can be *conceived* as a rule which is able to guide conduct) by being symbolized in twofold logic-aesthetical form. On the one hand, ethical behavior is discrete; it cannot be immediately conceived as continuous experience (no one can consistently and continuously adjust his behavior to a formal rule). On the other hand, ethical behavior cannot acquire any particular practical meaning, but borrows from aesthetics the idea of the general law, which is to obey without asking any “why.”
- 19 So far we have witnessed the pervasive interdependence and symmetry of the steps taken by Kant in dealing with logical and ethical parts of his doctrine, that is, in his 1st and 2nd *Critiques*. Peirce, as will be shown, takes this symmetry into account, although only up to a certain point and with the proviso as to the role aesthetic experience plays in Kant’s critical philosophy.



- 20 Curiously enough, although Peirce came to clearly formulate the role of the three normative sciences only towards the end of his life, his scattered notes referring to different sections of Kant’s *Critiques* can be traced back as far as 1857 through 1859:

The essential of a thing – the character of it – is the unity of the manifold therein contained. *Id est*, the logical principle, from which as major premises the facts thereof can be deduced. What are called a *man’s* principles however are only certain beliefs of his that he may or may not carry out. They therefore do not compose his character, but the general expression of the facts – *the acts of his soul* – does. (MS 5: XXXVII)

It is impossible for a man to act contrary to his character. It is foolish for him to try to do it; he would be no better man for doing it since the character makes a man. The Very Law of the Growth of Character is contained in the character. (MS 5: XXXVI)

When a man begins to be hard pressed with his own passion and power, he sees the nonsense of guiding his conduct by any rule of God or man and the necessity there is of excogitating a manner of life of his own. (MS 5: LVII)

- 21 Although this exemplar succession of fragments from Peirce’s early diary, chosen out of many others, does not in any way represent thorough conceptual analysis, to a careful reader of Kant it may give a fairly good idea of Peirce’s early thoughts as inspired by his studying of Kant’s 1st and 2nd *Critiques* together with Schiller and other Romantics.
- 22 In particular, the first of these early fragments unambiguously refers to that section of the “Transcendental Analytic” where Kant explains his notion of the synthetical unity of the manifold in intuition. (The next paragraph of this same section discusses the set of basic conceptions of this synthetical unity, i.e. Kant’s “Table of the Categories” – the primary subject of Peirce’s “On a New List of Categories” eight years later.) Translated into Kantian language, this short note says that whereas the synthesis of the manifold in intuition (i.e. the application of categories to phenomena) is logically non-problematic, the application of beliefs to possible conduct isn’t. It also might be important to add that this Peirce’s early use of belief here differs from Bain’s famous definition as “that upon which a man is prepared to act” and instead refers to the Kantian notion of “pragmatic belief,” which a man “may or may not carry out,” depending not on any sort of method or

experimental results, but simply on the issues at stake. Kant's 1st *Critique* offers the following definition:

It often happens that someone propounds his views with such positive and uncompromising assurance that he seems to have entirely set aside all thought of possible error. A bet disconcerts him. Sometimes it turns out that he has a conviction which can be estimated at a value of one ducat, but not of ten. For he is very willing to venture one ducat, but when it is a question of ten he becomes aware, as he had not previously been, that it may very well be that he is in error. If, in a given case, we represent ourselves as staking the happiness of our whole life, the triumphant tone of our judgment is greatly abated; we become extremely diffident, and discover for the first time that our belief does not reach so far. Thus pragmatic belief always exists in some specific degree, which, according to differences in the interests at stake, may be large or may be small. (KRV, A 825/B 853)

- 23 The remaining two fragments quoted above clearly suggest that by that time Peirce had already made his acquaintance with the works of Schiller and other Romantics whose aesthetic theories sought to reinterpret Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Although, as it has been noted above, remarkably, no explicit references to it can be traced in any of Peirce's known writings, it is to be remembered that it was the Romantics who not only took the Kantian conception of aesthetic judgment to its limits, but also emphasized the role of a genius—a man, who, as 19-year-old Peirce writes somewhat grandiloquently, “begins to be hard pressed with his own passion and power” and finally “sees the nonsense of guiding his conduct by any rule of God or man” and “the necessity [...] of excogitating a manner of life of his own.” The main idea of Kant's 3rd *Critique*, to which Peirce presumably alludes in these as well as some other early diary notes, appeals to experience that is beyond the scope of both theoretical knowledge and practical decisions – two focal themes in Kant's first two *Critiques*. Kantian pure reflective judgment brings knowledge and moral conduct together, and in doing so, it relies neither on practical nor on theoretical pre-existent rules, but *creates them anew*. Due to the activity of the Kantian “productive imagination,” it neither prescribes any particular norms of conduct, nor provides any discursive knowledge, but, nevertheless, always takes the form of universally significant evaluation.
- 24 It is also remarkable that much later, after a long period during which Peirce wrote next to nothing on aesthetics, in his mature pragmatism aesthetic judgment changes its role substantially, but retains some of its important characteristics as described by Kant. Aesthetic judgments are warranted by the objectivity of ultimate ends and, as Hookway describes Peirce's position, “in endorsing them we speak with a universal voice and *demand* the agreement of all rational agents. Although our belief that others will share these standards is not simply the product of an empirical induction, our claim to be autonomous rational agents controlling our own deliberations stands or falls with our right to speak with a universal voice about the acceptability of ultimate ends” (Hookway 1985: 62; emphasis added). On the one hand, just like in Kant's case, aesthetics, as a science of admirable *per se*, plays in Peirce's architectonics the role of a keystone: it makes his architectonics complete. But, on the other hand, it cannot, as it is, provide any justification or guarantee for a choice of an end. Peirce, therefore, unlike Kant, holds that the universal validity of such end remains only a matter of rational hope. Thus, Peirce agrees with Kant on the role of aesthetics, but not on the way it can be shown that the ends it provides are objectively valid. According to Peirce, the proper goal, in the case of aesthetics, is “to understand how standards adopted *without justification* can have

objective validity, to explain how we can reasonably hold that the standards we adopt without justification are not psychologically determined but hold for all rational agents” (Hookway 1985: 59). According to Kant, aesthetic judgment *is justified* as a universally valid because it is the only possible symbolic link between an object of freedom and an object of nature. However, both for Peirce and for Kant aesthetic judgment presupposes a necessary connection between the pleasure I experience and the object which causes it – in spite of the fact that the “ought” which this aesthetic necessity involves is not based on any particular rule.<sup>1</sup>

- 25 Back again to Peirce’s early years, from 1857 to 1859 he wrote four short Schiller-inspired papers: “The Sense of Beauty never furthered the Performance of a Single Act of Duty,” “Raphael and Michelangelo compared as men,” “Analysis of Genius,” and “The Axioms of Intuition after Kant” (W1: 1857-66, 10-6, 31-6). These papers, although much different in terms of style and intention, implicitly ask one and the same question: If a genius, unlike an ordinary man, is the one who, in Kantian terms, has the aesthetic-based power to see a given *totality of understanding* as a *law of Reason*, what are the results of this power with respect to morality?
- 26 In trying to answer this puzzling question, Peirce gradually diverts from the strictly Kantian way. In his late recollections Peirce himself more or less precisely defined the timeframe of this diversion: he noted that during the years that passed between 1857, when he first met Chauncey Wright, and 1871, when the first meetings of the Metaphysical Club presumably were held in Cambridge, his “Kantism got whittled down to small dimensions. It was little more than a wire, – an *iron wire*, however” (MS 317). Shortly before the end of this period of time, in 1870 Peirce attended at least some of Wright’s lectures on the psychology of Alexander Bain at Harvard. It is in these lectures, among other things, Wright gave an account of Bain’s famous definition of belief – which was later in Peirce’s writings to take the place of the purely Kantian notion of pragmatic belief, the extended definition of which is quoted above. This may be read to mean that it is at some time toward the end of this period (i.e. during the few years prior to the founding of the Metaphysical Club) that Peirce’s views finally shifted away from the mainstream of Kantian thought – while preserving its principal framework and the acute attention Kant paid to the paradoxes of the practical Reason and intricate relationship between three normative sciences.



- 27 Peirce’s earliest noticeable breakaway from Kant’s *logic* is clearly shown in the comparison between the following well-known paragraphs from Kant’s “Transcendental Analytic” and Peirce’s “New List of Categories,” which are important for our further analysis:

(Kant): For the empirical consciousness which accompanies different representations is in itself diverse and without relation to the identity of the subject. That relation comes about, not simply through my accompanying each representation with consciousness, but only in so far as I *conjoin* one representation with another, and am conscious of the synthesis of them. Only in so far, therefore, as I can unite a manifold of given representations in *one consciousness*, is it possible for me to represent to my self the *identity of the consciousness* in [i.e. throughout] *these representations*. In other words, the *analytic* unity of apperception is possible only under the presupposition of a certain *synthetic* unity. The thought that the

representations given in intuition one and all *belong to me*, is therefore equivalent to the thought that I unite them in one self-consciousness, or can at least so unite them; and although this thought is not itself the consciousness of the *synthesis* of the representations, it presupposes the possibility of that synthesis. In other words, only in so far as I can grasp the manifold of the representations in one consciousness, do I call them one and all *mine*. For otherwise I should have as many-coloured and diverse a self as I have representations of which I am conscious to myself. (KRV, B133; emphasis added)

(Peirce): If we had but one impression, it would not require to be reduced to unity, and would therefore not need to be thought of as referred to an interpretant, and the conception of reference to an interpretant would not arise. But since there is a manifold of impressions, we have a feeling of complication or confusion, which leads us to differentiate this impression from that, and then, having been differentiated, they require to be brought to unity. Now they are not brought to unity until we conceive them together as *being ours*, that is, until we refer them to a conception as their interpretant. Thus, the reference to an interpretant arises upon the holding together of diverse impressions, and therefore it does not join a conception to the substance, as the other two references do, but unites directly the manifold of the substance itself. It is, therefore, the last conception in order in passing from being to substance. (W2: 1867-1871, 54; emphasis added)

- 28 As these passages indicate, for Kant, self-consciousness implies the notion “I think” that must accompany all other notions for them to be comprehensible. In contrast, the Peircean pattern of interpreting, unlike self-consciousness, unites all other notions in a general idea in that it correlates them to something else in such a way as to give rise to the notion of representation: I represent something the correlation of which to something else is the only guarantee of its comprehensiveness. The continuous act of correlation necessarily refers any given expression to its future conceived interpretations. Peirce’s “interpretant” grasps a multitude of impressions in an immediately perceived totality. It is a general term that, in bringing a multitude of experience to unity, doesn’t add any other concept to it, and, at the same time, makes the flow of experience continuous. While Kantian conceptual synthesis is simply postulated, in Peirce’s “New List” it acquires cognitive value only as a result of the process of interpretation.
- 29 In displaying his notion of interpretant, Peirce presumably refers to the 2nd chapter of “The Analytics of Concepts” (and to §24 “The Application of the Categories to Objects of the Senses in General” in particular), and “The Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding” (Chapter I of the “Analytic of Principles”), where special emphasis is put on the spontaneous, or “productive” role of the imagination. Reinterpreting these sections, Peirce makes the possibility of knowledge dependent on the synthesis of impressions taken as a process explicable in its principle details. The synthesis is described not as an “art concealed in the depths of the human soul,” but as a continuous act of correlation which necessarily addresses any given expression to its possible interpretation. It acquires cognitive value through a set of modes of reference – quality, relation and representation, and their corresponding kinds of signification: likenesses, indices and general signs, or symbols. These forms of mediating reference constitute consecutive steps to cover a logical distance between the multitude of impressions and a concept. And the last mediating reference embodied in an interpretant “does not join a conception to the substance, as the other two references do, but unites directly the manifold of the substance itself” (W2, 54). The interpretant simply allows us to grasp the impressions as *ours*, thus replacing Kantian synthesis of apperception in self-

consciousness with the idea of an intersubjective synthesis of meaning (Apel 1980, Ch. III.).<sup>2</sup>

- 30 Thus, in his “On a New List of Categories” Peirce at first asks the Hegelian question of *how the synthesis is accomplished*. Like Hegel, Peirce interprets Kantian synthesis not as a pure self-positing (*Selbst-Bestimmung*), but as a process of interpretation, or continuous development. Logic, for him, can rely upon neither radical skepticism (Cartesian thought-experiment) nor some established epistemology (Kant’s transcendental deduction of categories), because logic’s principal problem lays not so much in clarifying the character or modes of being, but rather in semiotically approached functional features of its representation. In fact, for Peirce, being *is* representing.
- 31 Admittedly, describing Peirce’s early analysis of Kant as strictly Hegelian is, of course, problematic. Peirce’s attitude towards Hegel was in many ways contradictory, and oscillated between severe criticism and general acceptance. For example, on the one hand, in “A Guess at the Riddle,” Peirce writes: “My whole method will be found to be in profound contrast with that of Hegel; I reject his philosophy *in toto*” (W6: 1886-90, 179). On the other hand, in an unnamed manuscript written in the same year, we read:
- Hegel, while regarding scientific men with disdain, has for his chief topic the importance of continuity, which was the very idea the mathematicians and physicists had been chiefly engaged in following out for three centuries. This made Hegel’s work less correct and excellent in itself than it might have been; and at the same time hid its true mode of affinity with the scientific thought into which the life of the race had been chiefly laid up. [...] My philosophy resuscitates Hegel, though in a strange costume. (CP 1.41-42)
- 32 And again, in one of his letters to Edward Holden Peirce writes about possible advantages of his evolutionist metaphysics for “philosophers *and* Hegelians (sic)” (L 200, CSP-EH, 20.08.86). However, in spite of this, by the time of “New List,” in 1867, Peirce and Hegel, regarding this particular Kantian problem, are *en rapport* in the main: whereas Kant considers the unity of being and substance as an analytical fact, both Peirce’s “New List” and Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* treat it as some sort of “logical adventure” in which the result is not guaranteed from the start at all. Moreover, in both cases this unity understood as a process inevitably refers to some regulative idea (Hegel’s “spiritual community” and Peirce’s community of researchers). And the synthesis may be accomplished only provided it is addressed to this idea at every step.



- 33 In 1877-78 Peirce published his second series of articles, known as “Illustrations of the Logic of Science” this time in Appleton’s *Popular Science Monthly*. The first two of them, “The Fixation of Belief” and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” are commonly taken to be based upon a nameless paper read by Peirce before the Metaphysical Club in November 1872, just about the time Peirce’s Kantism “got whittled down to small dimensions” (MS 317). Moreover, “The Fixation of Belief,” apart from the fact that it includes preliminary notes to what in the next article of the series would appear as the maxim of pragmatism, is also very remarkable on account of its composition. Namely, as in the case of the Kantian transition from the 1st Critique to the 2nd, it presents the argument that seems to give consistent pragmatic reinterpretation of all the logical steps made by Peirce in his “New List” ten years earlier.

- 34 Peirce's "New List" rests on the assumption that there's a logical space, or, rather, logically significant distance between being and substance, i.e., the conceptual space to be filled in order to make sense of the question "what is [...] this?" This *logically* significant distance is covered by a set of consecutive media – quality, relation, and representation – that are needed to get the process of interpretation started. To summarize the discussed above, an interpretant, the last general term in the sequence, performs several crucial interconnected functions: (1) it makes us conceive the impressions together as *being ours* and, thereby (2) allows us to grasp the multitude of impressions in a totality of a concept. Further, (3) it addresses a given expression to its further interpretation, thus (4) justifying the continuity of interpretation. Finally, unlike the preceding two, (5) it does not add any concept to the multitude of impressions, but unites the manifold directly. Thus, the notion of interpretant embodied Peirce's early semiotic intuitions, namely, his first elaborate juxtaposition of the notions of continuity and generality, along with the idea of any expression addressed to *future* interpretations conceived as *ours*. These early intuitions inspired by Kantian table of categories proved to be of crucial importance in the developments of Peirce's theory which followed immediately after his "New List." In particular, the intricate and extremely rich conceptual amalgam brought forth by Peirce in his notion of interpretant already contained the germ of his regulative idea of a community of inquirers, the regulative future *us* which any interpretation guided by the right method is inevitably aimed at – the idea which was introduced by Peirce in his 1868 paper "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" a year after Peirce presented his "New List" to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (see also Apel 1980, ch. III).
- 35 Back to Peirce's "Illustrations," it is our abduction that "The Fixation of Belief," the first paper in the series, may be understood in a manner similar to that of "New List," namely, as resting on the assumption that there is a *practically* significant distance between "believing something" and "believing something that *would be true* in the long run." This practical distance can only be passed by *fixing* our belief in one way or another. So, like in the case of Kantian "pragmatic belief," the difference has degrees. The role of consecutive media here is played by four different methods, those of tenacity, authority, *a priori*, and practical science that are needed to make this distance epistemologically irrelevant.
- 36 Now there's no direct indication to such a distinction in the text of the paper. Moreover, in the very beginning of "The Fixation of Belief," before setting about to describe the methods Peirce makes an important stipulation, namely, that fixing beliefs does *not* presuppose any epistemologically legitimate difference between "believing something" and "believing something *is true*":

The irritation of doubt is the only immediate motive for the struggle to attain belief. It is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject every belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result. But it will only do so by creating a doubt in the place of that belief. With the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion. We may fancy that this is not enough for us, and that we seek, not merely an opinion, but a true opinion. But put this fancy to the test, and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be true or false. [...] The most that can be maintained is, that we seek for a belief that we shall think to be true. But we think each one of our beliefs to be true, and, indeed, it is mere tautology to say so. (W3: 1872-78, 247-8)

37 Meanwhile, in spite of the pronounced tautology, by the end of the paper Peirce characterizes the scientific method as “the only one of the four methods which presents any *distinction of a right and a wrong way*” (W3: 1872-78, 254; emphasis added). Thus, on the one hand, it seems redundant to assert the truth of one’s belief as far as it successfully guides his actions so as to satisfy his desires. And as far as there are different sorts of social practices that yield appropriate methods of reaching firm beliefs, one may choose the method which would bring the satisfaction. On the other hand, the method of science, unlike the other three, is able to present a “distinction of a right and a wrong way.” There must be, then, a solid criterion which makes the method of science more preferable in this respect. The criterion is this:

To satisfy our doubts, therefore, it is necessary that a method should be found by which our beliefs may be determined by nothing human, but by some *external permanency* – by something upon which our thinking has no effect. [...] Our external permanency would not be external, in our sense, if it was restricted in its influence to one individual. It must be something which affects, or might affect, every man. And, though these affections are necessarily as various as are individual conditions, yet the method must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same. (W3: 1872-78, 253).

38 It has been admitted that Peirce’s use of the word “external” in this passage is ambiguous: Peirce refers to “real things whose characters are entirely independent of our opinions about them” (W3: 1872-78, 254), but at first does not give any clear arguments as to whether those things shall be considered as anything different from Kantian-like things-in-themselves (Short 2007: 46-8). Moreover, Peirce’s notion of external permanency as “something upon which our thinking has no effect” may be read as a terminological allusion to the concept of “something permanent” (*etwas Beharrliches*) which occurs in the end of Kant’s “Analytic of Principles.” Kant needs it for the refutation of Descartes’ problematic idealism according to which the reality of things outside me is ultimately indemonstrable, the only ultimately irrevocable claim being that “I am.” Kant uses this concept to show that, as far as there’s nothing permanent in self-perception (I always think of myself as a subject, while I can experience myself only as an immanent object) the very *continuity* of experience, as well as my inner experience as such are necessarily bound up with the existence of some sort of external permanency (KRV, B 275-276).

39 What does “external” mean in this case? The meaning of the word is clarified later in “How to Make our Ideas Clear,” the next paper in the series:

Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a foreordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. [...] The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. (W3: 1872-78, 273)

40 Thus, the truth of a belief now receives a special definition which is absent in the case of the other methods. Namely, it is now defined as the ultimate agreement of “all who investigate.” Moreover, in the case of scientific method, Peirce lays special stress on the fixation as a result of a progressive *process* carried out by some *force* outside individual minds.

41 Further, right after the quoted passage Peirce explains how the idea of such force is to be brought into compliance with his earlier “formal” definition of reality as independent from what is ultimately thought of about it:

[...] reality is independent, not necessarily of thought in general, but only of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it; and [...] though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or any man thinks. [...] Our perversity and that of others may indefinitely postpone the settlement of opinion [...] Yet even that would not change the nature of the belief, which alone could be the result of investigation carried sufficiently far [...]. (W3: 1872-78, 273)

- 42 In “New List,” although all three categories are necessary steps in the process of deduction, the true connection between the continuity of thought and generality of a concept is revealed only in the reference to an interpretant. Likewise, in “The Fixation of Belief,” each method of fixing beliefs is a necessary step in understanding the advantages of scientific inquiry. It is only the reference to the scientific method that shows the way to formation of general opinions we are fated to obtain in the long run – provided our investigation according to this method is carried sufficiently far. While in the first three methods the truth of a belief does not involve the ultimate agreement of “all who investigate,” and the dependence of things beliefs *are about* on what the beliefs *are* is taken uncritically, it is only the proper use of the fourth method of fixing beliefs that makes this dependence to be a matter of fact, thus representing truth and reality as coordinate concepts – with their practical synthesis gradually achieved in the process of inquiry. So, what we allegedly have here is a *practical* synthesis analogous to the *logical* one displayed in the “New List.” Now let us turn to the structural concordance between “On a New List of Categories” and “The Fixation of Belief” in some further detail.
- 43 The method of tenacity is applied when a man holds a self-satisfied opinion so that “the pleasure he derives from his calm faith overbalances any inconveniencies resulting from its deceptive character” (W3: 1872-78, 249). At this first step any belief is nothing more than a quality in itself. For, like a self-satisfied and self-contained opinion held by an individual, a quality, which Peirce himself compared with the Kantian “manifold in intuition,” or, with reservations, with Hegelian “sense-certainty” (Stern 2005: 67) is,
- [...] an instance of that kind of consciousness which involves no analysis, comparison or any process whatsoever, nor consists in whole or in part of any act by which one stretch of consciousness is distinguished from another, which has its own positive quality which consists in nothing else, and which is of itself all that it is, however it may have been brought about; so that if this feeling is present during a lapse of time, it is wholly and equally present at every moment of that time. To reduce this description to a simple definition, I will say that by a feeling I mean an instance of that sort of element of consciousness which is all that it is positively, in itself, regardless of anything else. (CP1.306)
- 44 Tenacity, intellectual inelasticity is a feature of any individual mind as far as it is considered as it is in itself “regardless of anything else” and presupposing no distinction or comparison; it amounts to an immediate experience of a self-satisfactory *feeling* of assurance, a kind of Hegelian *die sinnliche Gewissheit*, a naïve and immediate unity of subject and object, an abstraction of “here and now.”
- 45 The second method represents an opinion enforced by certain authority, be it an individual or some sort of institution. Here belief is in the form of action-reaction or, in Hegelian terms, “negative unity,” and is therefore of relational character:
- This conception, that another man’s thought or sentiment may be equivalent to one’s own, is a distinctly new step, and a highly important one. It arises from an impulse too strong in man to be suppressed, without danger of destroying the

human species. Unless we make ourselves hermits, we shall necessarily influence each other's opinions. (W3: 1872-78, 250)

- 46 So it appears that the collision between the social and a blind tenacity in following some belief gives rise to a first objectified form of rationality for an individual – an idea of a law as a general expression for a set of opinions held by a certain social group “here and now.” Here opinion cannot be considered in itself anymore and is confronted by another opinion with which it enters in a certain *relation*. The immediacy of tenacity is replaced by a direct experience of the other.
- 47 However, sooner or later in any given society, Peirce says, “some individuals will be found who [...] possess a *wider sort of social feeling*” (W3: 1872-78, 252; emphasis added). This wider social feeling allows them to see most of such laws as historical accidents, products of mere social design or public opinion manipulation. They propose the new *a priori* method which excludes the possibility for a belief to depend on the idiosyncratic whim of an individual or a law-like power of society: it predetermines the choice of opinion bringing it, as philosophers of *a priori* themselves believe, into harmony with *natural causes*.
- 48 Indeed, every man, according to Peirce, is a truth-seeker by nature – simply because, even in the absence of clearly stated reasons, at every moment of his life he cannot help making a choice. And in doing so, he inevitably changes the natural balance of probabilities. Science in its pragmatist understanding, as the source of the next and final method in the list, is nothing other than an extension of this natural disposition, or a more logically complex and sophisticated expression of it. Naturally, anybody may accept false premises and come to false conclusions. Science does not offer a way to get rid of this problem in any given “here and now,” but merely offers a mode of action, a method which ascribes practical meaning to our natural inclination towards making right decisions.
- 49 The method of science is seen by Peirce as a correction of the *a priori* method by applying it to experience, so they together may be taken to form the third and last step in the process. In the use of scientific method reality is no longer determined by individual will, social contract, or *a priori* rules. Moreover, compared with the other three this method has one feature that is peculiar to it. It is such that any decision made on the basis of its logic is immediately connected with an ethical choice. For Peirce, it is by following this method that logic reveals itself as the ethics of intellect, and ethics as the logic of conduct.
- 50 Thus, in Peirce's “New List,” the interpretant brings the multitude of impressions to unity because, unlike quality and relation, it does not add any new concept to the multitude, but simply allows us to grasp the impressions as *ours*. Likewise, the method of science is a final step in coordinating “believing something” with “believing something that *would be true* in the long run” because, unlike other methods, it makes an opinion independent of any considerations that rely upon personal advantages or disadvantages of holding it. Otherwise, a person who, in using the scientific method, confesses that there is such a thing as truth, which is distinguished from falsehood simply by this, that if acted on it should, on full consideration, carry us to the point we aim at and not astray, and then, though convinced of this, dares not know the truth and seeks to avoid it, is in a sorry state of mind indeed (W3: 1872-78, 257).

- 51 An interpretant unites my diverse impressions not by joining any other concept to the diversity, but by appealing to its further interpretation by another interpretant. Likewise, in Peirce's maxim certain conceivable practical results of actions and perceptions are united into a concept, where "the test of whether I am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method" (W3: 1872-78, 255).
- 52 Peirce thus deliberately preserves the structure of Kantian argumentation which shows structural unity of logical and practical problems, while filling the aforementioned gaps in Kant's theory. From 1867, the year of "On a New List of Categories," to 1877, the year of "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce makes an important move similar to that which Kant made from the 1st *Critique* to the 2nd.
- 53 In making this conclusion, we by no means wish to suggest that "The Fixation of Belief" contains any sort of ethical doctrine. On the contrary, in concluding paragraphs of it Peirce concedes that the first three methods of fixing beliefs have their merits and advantages and he is careful enough not to claim unquestionable ethical superiority of scientific method over them: *practical* consequences are not necessarily *moral* ones (W3: 1872-78, 255-7). However, it is perfectly justifiable to say that it is this paper that displays Peirce's decisive move from questions of logical representation to those of practical agency. And it is quite remarkable that this move was marked by the compositional symmetry between Peirce's solutions in the two papers in question, which symmetry has its analogy in Kant's critical arguments.
- 54 If the foregoing analysis is correct, it offers a plausible answer to the question of why the early Peirce, an admirer of Kant, reformulates Kant's view on the relationship between logic and ethics without any reference to aesthetic judgment. Kant represents the logical and the ethical sides of his architectonics as a static self-positing. In case of pure reason, the schematism of the understanding is described as "an art concealed in the depths of the human soul"; in case of practical reason, there's a problem of how, taken as a general faculty, it gives determinate answers as to what to do in concrete situations, if all it can offer is the universal law grounded in the purely formal foundation of will. As a result, the gap between the theoretical and the practical is bridged by aesthetic judgment. Peirce reinterprets Kantian syntheses as processes of continuous development, which makes it possible for the theoretical and the practical to be consistently interpreted into one another without the resort to aesthetic mediation. He incorporates aesthetics only much later, in order to provide a missing link between his normative theory, his evolutionary metaphysics, and his doctrine of categories. Thus, it appears that Peirce ignored aesthetics at the early period of his career when Kantian influence on his thought was very strong. And vice versa, he finally acknowledged the role of aesthetics and laid the decisive emphasis on the Kantian idea of architectonics, with the problem of normativity as its starting point, at the time when, as he himself claims, he was as far from Kant as he possibly could.
- 55 As it has already been mentioned above, Peirce's move from logical representation to practical agency happened during the few years prior to the founding of the Metaphysical Club in Cambridge and shortly after Peirce attended Wright's lectures on the psychology of Alexander Bain at Harvard, during which Wright gave an account of Bain's famous definition of belief. Max H. Fisch specifies this Peirce's move, starting from Peirce's 1868 *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* series, as a transition from "the pre-Bain theory" to "the post-Bain theory":

It is evident that Peirce was already acquainted with Bain's theory of belief in 1868 [...] but he neither develops nor applies it, and there is no trace of pragmatism. On the other hand, the most conspicuous doctrine of the pre-Bain theory, that all thought is in signs, is not asserted in the post-Bain theory; but it is assumed throughout. [...] There is, however, a crucial difference between the two theories at this point. According to the pre-Bain theory, every thought interprets a previous thought and is interpreted by a subsequent thought; that is, every sign translates another and is in turn translated by still another. According to the post-Bain theory, the cognitive process has context, direction and purpose. Thought arises in one set of circumstances and terminates in another. It starts from a doubt and ends in a belief, the essence of which is a habit or rule of action. In the pre-Bain theory, thought is identified with cognition; in the post-Bain theory, it is identified with inquiry. In place of the continuity and ubiquity of the cognitive process, we have the analysis of the cyclic belief-doubt-inquiry-belief continuum which is Peirce's restatement of Bain's doctrine of belief, and it is out of this analysis that the pragmatic maxim is drawn. (Fisch 1986: 97-8)

- 56 According to Fisch, these differences and similarities raise the question of whether Peirce himself drew any clear distinction between the two theories and how exactly the transition took place, given that:

In the course in logic which Peirce taught at the John Hopkins University in the years immediately following the publication of his *Popular Science Monthly* series, he began with the topic, "The Psychological and Metaphysical facts upon which the possibility of Logic rests," and the texts for this topic were the three *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* articles developing his pre-Bain theory of cognition, and the first two of the *Popular Science Monthly* articles developing his post-Bain theory. (Fisch 1986: 100)

- 57 As to the second part of the question (how exactly the transition took place), again, if the foregoing analysis is correct, Peirce chose a sophisticated compositional decision, which provided a continuous link between the theoretical and the practical, leaving aesthetics, as the third, meditational element out of the picture. Of course, he also might well realize that the binary character is revealed in aesthetic judgment itself. The intriguing fact is that this was, although in a vague and undeveloped form, already anticipated by Peirce at the time he read Schiller's *Aesthetische Briefe* in 1857:

Now it will be observed that beauty gives the mind no particular direction or tendency – hence it can have no result either for the intellect or the will, and can help us to perform no single duty. On the other hand, it places the mind in a state of "infinite determinableness" so that it can turn in any direction and is in perfect freedom; hence, beauty is in the highest degree fruitful with respect to knowledge and morality. (W1: 1857-66, 11-2)

- 58 However, although later on Peirce carefully remastered the role aesthetic judgment played in Kant's theory and incorporated it in his own architectonics, his pragmatism in its first formulation provided the means for an important shift. It played a major part in deconstructing the classical picture of relations between three normative sciences and introduced a significant change into Kantian aesthetics-based symbolism.

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## NOTES

1. This might explain why Peirce eventually granted aesthetics the status of a normative science, despite the fact that his view on justifiability of aesthetic judgments appears to be somewhat weaker than Kant's.
2. The analysis of Peirce's idea of interpretant, which plays crucial role in his theory of signs throughout all stages of its development, has a longstanding history in Peirce studies, and of course there are numerous other interpretations of it: for example, the general account of it (Short 2007, Lator 1997); its examination in relation to the notions of causation (Hulswit 2002), subjectivity (Colapietro 1989), information (De Tienne 2005), translation (Liszka 1990, Savan 1988), etc. It is also important to remember that, as Peirce gradually moved away from the mainstream of Kant's *Critiques*, he made numerous modifications to the idea of interpretant, which cannot be taken into account here. As the present paper deals only with the earliest version of it, which was a direct result of Peirce's reinterpretation of the Kantian table of categories, the approach most pertinent to our purposes is the one represented in Apel 1980.

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