Abstract
Departing from Anderson's (2016) suggestion that there are three communities in Peirce's thought corresponding to his three normative sciences of logic, ethics, and esthetics, I argue that these communities partake in a relationship of dependence similar to that found among the normative sciences. In this way, just as logic relies on ethics which relies on esthetics, so too would a logical community of inquirers rely on an ethical community of love, which would rely on an esthetic community of artists. A community could conduct inquiry together only if it pursued the same goal; and it could pursue the same goal only if it first imaginatively construed it. Any logical or ethical community requires a shared imaginative repertoire of ideal ends.

Keywords: Charles S. Peirce, Esthetics, Community, Imagination, Normative Sciences.

Peirce is not often seen as a philosopher of art or esthetics.[1] He himself confesses to being a "perfect ignoramus" on the subject (EP 2:189, 1903).[2] Yet some commentators—Ivo Ibri (2009) and Nicholas Guardiano (2017)—have argued that Peirce's entire philosophy is ultimately grounded in esthetics. Another reader—Douglas Anderson (2016)—has speculated about a "missing community of firstness," or of artists, in Peirce's thought. The present paper contributes to this discussion by both combining and extending these interpretations. My contention is that Peirce provides us with clues for identifying *three* communities corresponding to his three normative sciences: a community of inquirers for the

Peirce's Imaginative Community: On the Esthetic Grounds of Inquiry

BERNARDO ANDRADE

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science of logic, a community of love for the science of ethics, and a community of artists for the science of esthetics. Moreover, these communities bear a relation of *dependence* among themselves, akin to that found among the normative sciences. In this way, just as logic depends on ethics which depends on esthetics, so too would a community of inquirers depend on a community of love, which in turn would depend on a community of artists. These communities are conceptually but not numerically distinct: every community of inquirers logically presupposes—and so must simultaneously be—an esthetic community. The upshot of this argument is that Peirce's normative philosophy is grounded, not simply in the *science* of esthetics, but in an esthetic *community*—what I call an 'imaginative community.'

To advance this thesis, I proceed in four steps. I begin by locating esthetics within Peirce's division of the normative sciences (§1). Here I also explain the sense in which logic can be said to depend on ethics, and ethics in turn on esthetics. The pivotal role played by esthetics in Peirce's normative philosophy raises the question of what qualifies as esthetic goodness (§2). This discussion ends in the discovery that the criteria for esthetic goodness can only be defined *in community*. This leads me to consider three communities in Peirce's thought (§3), and finally to argue that these communities partake in a relation of dependence among themselves, thereby asserting the primacy of esthetics (§4).

1. The Place of Esthetics in the Normative Sciences

Peirce's attempts to locate esthetics within his classification of the sciences proceed somewhat tentatively—mostly because, as he himself confesses, he is "lamentably ignorant" of the subject (CP 2.120, 1902). As such, his account is marked by twists and turns, going through several iterations before acquiring a more definite shape around the time of his Harvard Lectures of 1903. My goal in what follows is to explain the place of esthetics in Peirce's division of the sciences, first by looking at the historical development of his thought, and then by engaging in a more systematic analysis.

Peirce often recalls his own path of thinking and shows the evolution of his thought. He mentions in 1903 that, as early as 1883, he had come to realize that logic was a normative science, in the sense that it studies how we *ought to think* and, therefore, is dependent upon ethics, which concerns what we *ought to do* (EP 2:189, 1903). Logic refers to a specific *kind* of self-controlled action—that is, action directed to some end or purpose (truth, in this case)—and self-control was, for him, an ethical matter (Kent 1987:111). But during that time, Peirce had not given much thought to esthetics. For him, esthetics meant only the study of beauty, and beauty was a matter of taste; and since *de gustibus non est disputandum*, there could not be an esthetic goodness or badness

(EP 2:189, 1903). It was only later that Peirce changed his mind: if self-controlled action was directed to ends, then esthetics would be concerned with the study of those ends, and it would complete his system of the normative sciences. Thus, in a letter to William James from 1902, Peirce summarizes the relation between these sciences:

> I had not really got to the bottom of it or seen the unity of the whole thing. It was not until [later] that I obtained the proof that logic must be founded on ethics, of which it is a higher development. Even then, I was for some time so stupid as not to see that ethics rests in the same manner on a foundation of esthetics—by which, it is needless to say, I don't mean milk and water and sugar. (CP 8.255)

This passage indicates that Peirce's concern with ethics and esthetics developed from a deep preoccupation with the preconditions of logic as a science. This is clear in drafts of his unfinished *magnum opus* on the subject, *The Minute Logic*, which included a chapter on ethics and was supposed to include (according to Peirce) another chapter on esthetics (CP 2.197, 1902; see Liszka, 2017:206–207). But how are these three normative sciences—logic, ethics, and esthetics—related in these texts from 1902?

In drafts of the second chapter of *The Minute Logic*, Peirce inquires into the *ground* of logic. He asks two key questions: what *validates* the principles of reasoning on which logic is based, and *why* study logic? (CP 2.147, 2.123). By answering one question, he simultaneously answers another: valid reasoning is that which, if also *sound*, tends to lead to the attainment of truth and to the avoidance of error—and that is why people study logic (CP 2.125). We find here a hypothetical imperative: *If* we want to attain truth and avoid error, *then* we must study logic and follow certain principles of reasoning. However, because this is only a hypothetical imperative, it leaves open the question *why* we should seek truth in the first place. Peirce thinks that ethics can answer that question, since it determines what is good to do, and in this case, why it is good to seek truth (CP 2.198). The problem is that ethics too relies on yet another crucial question: what makes any end—truth included—worthy of pursuit in the first place? (CP 2.199). Peirce thinks that esthetics, as the science of ideal ends, can address this concern.

This enchainment of questions leads Peirce to the foundations of logic. If logical reasoning makes one more likely to attain true claims, why pursue truth? If pursuing truth is a good thing to do, then why pursue goodness? James Liszka (2017:208) identifies two traditional approaches to this question: love and duty. On the first approach (followed by Plato and Schiller), we should pursue the good because it is *lovable*, desirable, and attractive. On the second approach (followed by

Aquinas and Kant), the good is pursued because of a duty or a *command* to do good. The second approach requires no other discipline beyond ethics to get a response; but Peirce chooses the path of love, which requires *feeling* in addition to thought and action. Logic is thus grounded in a feeling of the admirable: we pursue logic because it leads to truth; truth because it is good; and goodness because it is an admirable end.

Esthetics is thus concerned with admirable ends. But to properly understand its place within Peirce's division of the sciences, we must turn to his Harvard Lectures of 1903. In his mature classification of the sciences, the normative sciences constitute the second of three divisions of philosophy—the first being *phenomenology* and the third *metaphysics* (EP 2:196–197). Phenomenology consists in the attentive observation of the immediate qualitative character of experience; it considers phenomena 'in themselves'—or, as Peirce calls it, in their *firstness* (EP 2:197). Metaphysics, on the other hand, attends to the regularity, or the laws, governing the interaction among different phenomena—what Peirce calls *thirdness* (ibid.). In between these two domains we find the normative sciences, which focus on the dyadic relation of phenomena to ends, thereby looking at phenomena in their *secondness* (ibid.). This is where we find the very notion of normativity, where a certain class of phenomena can be evaluated by reference to an end. So, for instance, I can make an *evaluative* judgment of a musical performance (rather than a descriptive one) only if I have something *more* than just access to the phenomenon itself; namely, I need access to the end-goal or ideal to which the phenomenon aspires. What makes a science normative, then, is that it "studies the dyadic relation of phenomena to ends and so enables one to form a basis for judging true and false [in logic], good and bad [in ethics], and beautiful and ugly [in esthetics]" (Potter 1967:19). Normativity thus has to do with end-directedness; it is only in reference to ends that we acquire an evaluative standard.

Moreover, each of the normative sciences concerns a distinct end: the true, the good, and the admirable. If normative sciences in general are those which study the "conformity of things to ends," then "esthetics considers those things whose ends are to embody qualities of *feeling*, ethics those things whose ends lie in *action*, and logic those things whose end is to *represent* something" (EP 2:200, emphases added). Each of these specific ends corresponds to one of the three phenomenological categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. A simple *first* would be an end of feeling, a "purely subjective end" (CP 1.590, c.1903); a simple *second*, in turn, would be an end of conduct, something "purely objective" which lies outside the subject (ibid.); and a simple *third*, finally, would be an end that has a law-like nature, such as a representation, principle or idea (ibid.). So, if the normative sciences *in general* study the relation between things and ends in its secondness,

then esthetics studies the secondness of this relation *in its firstness*, ethics *in its secondness*, and logic in *its thirdness*. Each of them considers a different kind of end.

Beyond having distinct ends, each normative science bears a relation of dependence on the preceding one: the end of logic (truth) is certified through ethics (which chooses it as an end to pursue); and the end of ethics is certified through esthetics (which determines the ends that are worthy of pursuit). As Kelly Parker states, "each science considers a kind of end that is a narrower aspect of its predecessor's focus" (2003:30). Logical goodness and badness, Peirce says, is "nothing but a particular application of the more general distinction of Moral Goodness and Badness, or Righteousness and Wickedness" (EP 2:188). And if the distinction between good and bad logic is a special case of that between good and bad morals, then "by the same token the distinction of Good and Bad Morals is a special case of the distinction [of] Esthetic Goodness and Badness" (EP 2:189). For Peirce, then, logical truth is a species of righteousness in morality, which is, in turn, a species of the admirable in esthetics.

But how *exactly* do we determine what is admirable? As Peirce says in the first of his Harvard Lectures, "we cannot get any clue to the secret of Ethics," let alone to that of Logic, "until we have first made up our formula for what it is that we are prepared to admire" (EP 2:142). The problem, however, is that esthetics constitutes a shadowy realm of feeling wherein the "dualism which is so much marked in the True and False, logic's object of study, and in the Useful and Pernicious of the confessional of practics [i.e., ethics], is softened almost to obliteration" (EP 2:379, 1906). We have as yet no clue about the criteria for determining esthetic goodness. After engaging in this investigation (§2), we will see that such criteria can only be determined *collectively* (§3), which suggests that the community of inquirers is logically—but not chronologically—dependent upon a more basic *esthetic* community (§4).

2. The Criteria for Esthetic Goodness

What state of things, then, is admirable? Peirce tentatively answers that "an object, to be esthetically good, must have a multitude of parts so related to one another as to impart a positive simple immediate quality to their totality," whatever that quality may be (EP 2:201, 1903). If we apply this definition to the totality of what exists—to the universe at large—then the esthetically good will turn out to consist "in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which [are] *destined*, which is what we strive to express in calling them *reasonable*" (EP 2:343, 1905). Peirce is here describing a certain quality of *feeling* evoked by an ever-increasing reasonableness or harmony in the universe. The highest conceivable ideal would consist

in a feeling that accompanies the constant increase of reasonableness in the world of experience (Potter 1967:64; Parker 2003:32).

Peirce says that he cannot see how anyone could "have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood" (EP 2:255, 1903). This development of Reason in the world must make the very order of things become law-like, since "[a]ctive law is efficient reasonableness" (EP 2:197, 1903) and reasonableness is "the idea of law" (CP 7.687, 1903). As Peirce says, "reasonableness consists in association, assimilation, generalization, [that is,] the bringing of items together into an organic whole."[3] The ideal of esthetic goodness would thus consist in that *feeling* which accompanies a certain developmental process whereby previously disparate things enter into systematic, harmonious relation.

If esthetic goodness consists in a certain systematic relation among parts of a whole, or in an order of elements that produces a simple quality of feeling, then Peirce's own system of thought—as expressed in his classification of the sciences—would itself embody esthetic goodness. Each science has its particular domain of phenomena and produces certain laws; each of them has its place within a hierarchical order wherein the higher sciences inform the lower ones and create a harmonious and systematic unity. This is in part why Ibri suggests that Peirce's philosophy has a *poetic* ground: its theoretical edifice "is enhanced by its logical *beauty* [or *admirableness*]. The beauty of the logical character is enhanced by its theoretical harmony in which various doctrines intertwine" (2009:274). Peirce's thinking makes explicit its own end-goal: the feeling of an ever-evolving reasonableness in the world.

Notice, however, that a multitude of parts can be related in any number of ways, such that there is no part-whole relation that is either good or bad in a pre-determined way. Thus, Peirce qualifies his account of esthetic goodness by saying that *any* order of parts in a whole is esthetically good, "no matter what the particular quality of the total may be" (EP 2:201, 1903). It does not matter whether this totality nauseates us, scares us, or disturbs us; it would still be esthetically good. Esthetic qualities can vary in "intensity," but no degree of intensity will amount to "positive esthetic badness"; in other words, there may be countless varieties of esthetic quality, but no "purely esthetic grade of excellence" (EP 2:201–202).

This remark appears highly puzzling at first. In fact, it risks making esthetics useless for evaluating *anything*, let alone for serving as the basis for the sciences of ethics and logic. If there is nothing that is esthetically bad, then there is "no such thing as esthetic goodness" but only "various esthetic qualities, that is, simple qualities of totalities" (EP 2:201). Precisely what had made esthetics normative and evaluative—its ability to discriminate between the admirable and the non-admirable—seems to have gone away. But just as logic needs to sort out true claims from

false ones, so too would esthetics need to tell apart admirable totalities from non-admirable ones. This raises the question: how can Peirce's elimination of 'positive esthetic badness' be made to reconcile with the *normativity* of esthetics? Can esthetics still ground Peirce's normative philosophy if it lacks any 'grade of excellence'?[4]

The solution lies in Peirce's own pragmatic method. There is no pre-determined conception of esthetic goodness *from the start*, but with experimentation and the trying-out of hypotheses, a *community* will eventually converge on the ideals that qualify as admirable. Esthetic ideals cannot remain disconnected from human activity and inquiry, and therefore Peirce cannot determine—individually and ahead of time—the 'esthetic grade of excellence.' The pragmatic maxim says that the meaning of a concept is clarified through its conceivable practical effects, just as a scientific hypothesis is prepared for testing through an elucidation of its possible observable outcomes. Similarly, the identification of an admirable ideal is determined through its practical effects, that is, by carrying it out in concrete life.

In fact, Peirce claims just as much in the first of his 1903 Lowell Lectures. There, one of the criteria he provides for identifying esthetic goodness is to "consider what the general effect would be of thoroughly carrying out our ideals. [In a similar way, we find that] certain ways of reasoning recommend themselves because if persistently carried out they must lead to the truth. The parallelism, you perceive, is almost exact" (EP 2:251). Peirce is here arguing that, just as certain ways of reasoning (logical rules) cannot emerge *before* experimentation (but only *after* it), and just as experimentation is never a purely *individual* affair (but always a *collective* one), so too would admirable ends be defined experimentally and collectively.[5] We find here a parallelism between the method for identifying logical goodness and the method for identifying esthetic goodness, and just as the former requires an entire community for its identification, so would the latter. It is this last point about a community of esthetic inquiry—left undeveloped by Peirce and his readers—that I want to articulate in what follows (§3–4).

3. Peirce's Three Communities

I have emphasized that for Peirce, the proof of admirableness of an ideal is the effect of its implementation in the laboratory of life. This implementation, moreover, is conducted by an entire *community* of inquirers, and it is precisely the convergence of their beliefs which produces the consensus on what qualifies as admirable. What is admirable is thus *not* a matter of individual taste but a collective judgment which results from inquiry. It is precisely this future-directedness which makes it impossible for Peirce—or for anyone—to determine ahead of time what counts as esthetically good. Our esthetic ideals necessarily evolve and improve through continuous experimentation with candidate-ideals.

What is crucial, in this picture, is to secure the preconditions for identifying our esthetic ideals by constituting a community with good methodology and good means of self-correction. This means that esthetic ideals are grounded in, or dependent on, a kind of community, and since esthetic ideals serve as the basis for ethics and logic, this esthetic community appears to take center stage within Peirce's normative thought. Just as logic depends on ethics, and ethics on esthetics, so too would the logical community of inquirers depend on an esthetic community of artists. It is only by collectively furnishing esthetic ideals that we can collectively furnish logical ones. We find here—I contend—a relation of dependence, not only among Peirce's normative *sciences*, or among the *ends* of those sciences, but also among their respective *communities*. The community of inquirers depends upon an artistic one.

The notion of an artistic community seems very far from Peirce's sphere of concern. The same could not be said about his well-known community of inquirers (corresponding to the science of logic) and about his lesser-known community of love (corresponding to the science of ethics). And yet, there is room in his texts to consider what Anderson calls a "missing community of Firstness" corresponding to the science of esthetics (2016:181). Anderson offers important clues about this missing community, but he does not go so far as to explain how it relates to the other two communities in Peirce's architectonic; more specifically, he does not make clear how this community partakes in a relation of dependence with the other two communities in a way that mirrors, or is analogous to, the relation of dependence found among the normative sciences. So, after describing these three communities—that of inquirers (§3.1), of love (§3.2), and of artists (§3.3)—I will explain their relation of dependence (§4).

3.1 The Community of Inquirers, or of Thirdness

Peirce says that the end of inquiry—truth—cannot be achieved by a single individual, or even by a limited or finite group of individuals, but instead requires an indefinite community engaging in inquiry unto the ages of ages. For Peirce, logical inquiry demands three things: "interest in an indefinite community, recognition of the possibility of this interest being made supreme, and hope in the unlimited continuance of intellectual activity, as indispensable requirements of logic" (W 3:285, 1878). This reliance on an indefinite community is premised on human finitude and fallibility: we cannot live long enough to complete the process of inquiry, and we inevitably run the risk of getting things wrong along the way.

Contrary to Descartes, then, who grounds truth in the apodicticity of the solitary ego, Peirce claims that "[w]e individually cannot

reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers" (W 2:212, 1868). Truth is impossible for the solipsistic self; it is never available *from the start* but emerges only as an ideal or goal—as an eventual point of convergence for a community given infinite time. The very nature of truth, therefore, commits the truth-seeker—the inquirer—to a community of inquiry as necessary for accomplishing such a task.

3.2 The Community of Love, or of Secondness

While Peirce's community of inquirers is relatively well-known, most commentators do not emphasize that Peirce described and defended a *second* type of community by way of his discussion of religiosity—a community directed at ethics and at the ideal of the good life. In his essay "Evolutionary Love," Peirce distinguishes the Gospel of Greed from the Gospel of Love (W 8:189, 1892). I take 'gospel' to mean in this context a certain system of ideals guiding an ethical community. In this way, the Gospel of Greed furnishes a type of perverted ethical ideal for logical inquiry and human intelligence. Its focus on individualism forbids any collective pursuit of ethical goodness, which in turn annuls the possibility of a logical community of inquirers: "Intelligence in the service of greed ensures the justest prices, the fairest contracts, the most enlightened conduct of all the dealings between men, and leads to … food in plenty and perfect comfort. Food for whom? Why, for the greedy master of intelligence" (W 8:186).

Peirce is clear about the problems with an ethical community guided by the Gospel of Greed. Any individualist pursuit of goodness cannot possibly furnish an adequate end-goal for logical inquiry, insofar as it misunderstands the very nature of truth, which is a good that *cannot* be attained individually but only collectively. Thus, Peirce says that "[h]e who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is … illogical in all his inferences, collectively. Logic is rooted in a social principle." Since logic aims at truth, which is a collective good, he concludes: "To be logical men should not be selfish" (W 3:284, 1878).

In contrast to this Gospel of Greed, according to which "every individual[is] striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbor under foot," the Gospel of Love—which is also the "Gospel of Christ"—states that "progress comes from every individual merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbors" (W 8:189, 1892). Peirce does not give specific details about the ideals which will orient this ethical community, except to say that this community is committed to a collective participation in the process of specifying and identifying ethical ideals. So, with the community of love we will see "social, political, religious common sense modifying itself insensibly in the course of generations, [and] ideas of rights of man acquiring new meaning"

(W 6:388, 1890). Just as truth evolves over time through inquiry, so would the practice of justice—our social habits—grow historically. But given our finitude and fallibility, this ongoing growth could not be the work of a single individual (ibid.).

Inherent in the Gospel of Love, then, is the effort to create and sustain an ethical community. This is important because communities are not *already* given; they are not fixed facts about nature. As John Stuhr says, "the existence of community is precarious, fragile, local, and rare" (1994:13). It may come to an end; nothing about it is metaphysically necessary. The maintenance of community depends on an always-renewed commitment to a shared participation in the process of identifying ethical ideals. This, in turn, requires that members "*imaginatively share inclusive ideals* and concern for the self-realization of one another" (ibid.). This preoccupation with a shared imaginative repertoire of ideals leads us to our *third* community, still more fundamental than the former two. We turn to the community of artists.

3.3 The Community of Artists, or of Firstness

We can find hints of a community of firstness in Peirce's remarks on a division between three types of persons: artists, actors, and inquirers. Peirce is here applying his phenomenological categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness to the classification of personality types. Around 1896, he writes:

> [W]e remark three classes of men. The first consists of those for whom the chief thing is the qualities of feelings. These men create art. The second consists of the practical men, who carry on the business of the world.… The third class consists of men to whom nothing seems great but reason.… For men of the first class, nature is a picture; for men of the second class, it is an opportunity; for men of the third class, it is a cosmos, so admirable, that to penetrate to its ways seems to them the only thing that makes life worth living. (CP 1.43)

The first thing to note about this passage is that Peirce is describing *ideal* types. In the actual world, we are all categorically mixed—each person shares in all three types, albeit to different degrees. To say that someone is an artist is to say that they privilege feeling, or firstness; but every artist must also necessarily act and think. As Peirce says, "whenever a man feels, he is thinking of *something*" (W 2:229, 1868). What is distinctive about artists is *not* that they feel more than they act and think; rather, it is that even in their acting and thinking they are centered around a certain attention and receptivity to feelings. So, for instance, artists will need self-controlled action in order to give expression to their feelings (say, in the writing of a poem), and they will need discursivity in order

to reflect on their poem and evaluate whether their feelings were genuinely expressed. Moreover, even their seemingly 'immediate' feelings are already laden with an entire history of discursive thinking and self-controlled action (in the form of education and training, for instance). This means that 'pure firstness' is impossible in actual life. Every immediacy of feeling is always already mediated by action and thought.

What is important in Peirce's description of the artist is that it provides us clues for thinking of a possible community of artists. Just as the artist focuses on receptivity to feelings—or firstness—so would the entire community of artists. We could say that this receptivity manifests the firstness of the community of firstness. But as I have said above, this community must also have a firstness-centered secondness and thirdness. These would consist in the community's ability to give verbal and conceptual expression to certain qualities of feelings; it would consist in their ability to 'represent' or 'give a sign' to feelings. Such 'represented feelings' would serve as the esthetic ideals—or conceptions of the admirable—that inspire ethical action and, ultimately, ground the logical pursuit of truth.

This continuous attempt to give expression to impressions—or to capture firstness within the mode of thirdness—has been called "artistic abduction" (Anderson 2016:187). "Abduction" was Peirce's name for the act of hypothesizing, that is, of intelligently guessing at plausible solutions to problems, given one's background knowledge. Abduction is a *creative* mode of thinking: it introduces *new* hypotheses for testing, rather than limiting us to a single *certain* solution (through deduction) or to a *probable* one (through inference). Artists thus engage in their own species of abduction: they propose various alternatives for how to express or represent a quality of feeling—how to express the *admirable*.

The process of artistic abduction requires, on the one hand, that artists live in what Peirce calls "the poetic mood," where "the present appears as it is present" (EP 2:149–150, 1903). This is only possible through a focus on firstness. But on the other hand, artistic abduction equally requires a capacity to engage in thirdness—that is, to give discursive expression to a quality of feeling that is admirable *per se*. In doing so, artists need what Peirce once called a "hallucinatory imagination" (EP 2:192, 1903). In other words, they need to imagine possibilities not previously given in their own traditions and conventions; they need to think beyond the confines of their cultural or historical context. The specific kind of hypothesizing typical of artistic abduction, then, is one that actively engages the Peircean faculty of the imagination.

In describing artistic abduction, I find it helpful to engage in a comparison with Kant. Richard Kenneth Atkins (2008) has already argued for several points of contact between Peirce and Kant; here, I simply want to offer a helpful way of understanding artistic abduction through a Kantian lens. In the *Critique of Judgment* (CJ), Kant distinguishes

determining from reflecting judgments. In the first instance, one is already in possession of a concept and simply needs to subsume a particular sensorial manifold under it; in the second case, however, one has a sensorial intuition but no pre-given concept under which to subsume it. As a result, one needs to *create* a concept on the basis of a sensorial given (CJ 20:211–212).

Now, Kant calls the creation of these concepts a technique or an art: "The reflecting power of judgment proceeds with given appearances not schematically, but *technically*, not as it were merely mechanically … but *artistically*" (CJ 20:214). To treat given appearances *schematically* means, for Kant, that the imagination is preparing the givens of sensibility to be categorized under our pre-determined concepts of the understanding. The imagination is, in this case, operating in a rule-governed way; it is merely 'at the service of the understanding.' But Kant is interested in an artistic or technical judgment ('technical' in the sense of *techne*), where the imagination is *free* from its servitude to the understanding and can now 'play' with it. The imagination can thus engage in free lawfulness, or in what Kant calls "lawfulness without law" (CJ 5:241). Artistic abduction, then, resembles Kant's reflecting judgments insofar as it creatively articulates novel concepts that give expression to simple qualities of feeling—to the admirable *per se*—but without abiding by any pre-determined or rule-governed behavior.

Peirce explicitly invokes the concept of 'play' when discussing this creative exercise of one's powers, or this freedom from law-abidingness. "There is a certain agreeable occupation of mind," he says, which he infers "is not as commonly practiced as it deserves to be." This occupation "is Pure Play. Now, Play, we all know, is a lively exercise of one's powers. Pure Play has no rules, except this very law of liberty. It bloweth where it listeth" (EP 2:436, 1908). Peirce here describes an experience marked by freedom, in which the mind is creatively or imaginatively coming up with *new* concept-hypotheses to describe a simple feeling. He even provides a poetic description of this abductive moment of free play, when you "sit down and listen to the voice of nature until you catch a tune." He continues: "The invention of the right hypothesis requires genius," a capacity to create something *new* (CN 2:222, 1899).

We have seen that the community of firstness will engage in artistic imagining and abduction, which requires both receptivity to feelings and the ability to express feelings by way of one's thinking. What we have not seen is why, exactly, artistic abduction requires an entire *community* of artists, rather than a few isolated personalities. The answer lies again in Peirce's notion of finitude and fallibility. In searching for worthy ideals, artists will need to experiment with different candidate-ideals; they will need to "consider what the general effect would be of thoroughly carrying out [those] ideals" (EP 2:251, 1903). Such an emphasis on experimentation and hypothesis-testing immediately leads

us to the notion of a community. For indeed, every isolated experiment is by nature susceptible to being corrected by a future experiment conducted by someone else. A real commitment to experimentation necessarily includes a certain belongingness to an open-ended, indefinite community of experimenters.

In this way, in attempting to give a sign to a simple quality of feeling, artists are always prone to being corrected by other artists—either because they got things wrong or, in the best scenario, because they achieved a correct (albeit incomplete) take on a certain feeling. So, for instance, Fyodor Dostoevsky has neither the complete nor the final word on the feeling of *guilt* after writing *Crime and Punishment*. His description of Raskolnikov's bad conscience—the character's psychic frenzy and remorseful self-destruction—does not exhaust what can be said about the basic feeling that accompanies the murder of an innocent person. Such a feeling of guilt can be expressed differently by different authors, until the esthetic community can reach a more solidified conception of it over time.

The notion of an entire community engaging in artistic abduction—coming up with candidate-expressions for basic qualities of feeling—raises a question about *consensus*. How reasonable would it be to expect convergence in esthetic matters, even with infinite inquiry? We need a way of determining which expressions are more accurate or warranted than others—lest we fall prey to extreme relativism or subjectivism. Scientific method has the merit of making truth and falsity independent of the inquirer's preferences and tastes. But is the same true for art? The extent to which we find convergence in matters of experimental science surely seems unmatched by convergence in esthetic reflection, and if anything, this fact—we can call it a surprising fact for Peircean inquiry—merits explanation.

Two responses are in order here. First, we can think of qualities of feeling as containing what Carl Hausman (2012) calls esthetic cores—centers of constraint that inform the work of interpretation. These cores are felt as resistances to what we can discursively think about a certain feeling; they can take the form of a feedback—a lucky backfire which may lead to a continued development of the work of interpretation. Hausman (2012:260–261) provides the example of a poet who considers a word or phrase but then says, "No, that's not it at all," and of Mozart, who reportedly protested that he could not add to or subtract even one note from his finished compositions. The crucial point here is that the decision not to add or subtract anything from the work comes *not* from the artist's caprice but from the objective demands of the feeling to be expressed. The notion of an artistic consensus would thus presuppose a core set of constraints that limit the meaning of any given feeling. This, in turn, would provide a basis for judging our efforts to capture this feeling through artistic expressions.

Secondly, I would contend that there is in fact a greater consensus in esthetic matters than is normally granted. Our ideals of the admirable do not diverge as wildly as one would expect. Part of my thesis consists precisely in showing—as we shall see in the next section—that if they diverged in such a manner, no cohesive community of inquirers would be possible. What is required is *not* that esthetic disputes be regarded as settled forever; rather, what is required is simply a rejection of the claim that any expression of a given firstness is as good as any other. So, for instance, we know that the feeling which accompanies our perception of, say, honesty in scientific research is better represented by a researcher who decides to advance an unpopular hypothesis out of genuine conviction than by one who simply conforms to the majority position out of professional pressure. A consensus could in fact be reached that the former case is more *admirable* than the latter; and this esthetic agreement would ground an ethical choice for honesty which, in turn, would allow for a collective pursuit of truth at the level of the community of inquirers. Any community with a shared value-system—such as scientists who monitor their practices according to standards of honesty, originality, and transparency—must have already converged on similar conceptions of these admirable qualities: honesty, originality, and transparency. We can already see, then, the pivotal role played by an esthetic community in Peirce's architectonic; what we must now explain in greater detail is how, for Peirce, an imaginative community is *logically implied* by the two other communities in his thought (§4).

4. The Imaginative Community as Ground of Normativity

To see how one community logically presupposes another in Peirce's thought, it is helpful to return, with new eyes, to the relation of logical dependence among Peirce's three normative sciences.

Peirce has made it clear that logical rules are only conditionally necessary: *if* we want to attain truth and avoid error, we must follow them. The decision to pursue truth, moreover, is an ethical one: we *choose* a certain ideal to pursue. But this ideal, in turn, must be *worthy* of pursuit, and esthetics identifies worthy ideals (see §1). This relation of dependence, which we have covered extensively, can be seen in another way: esthetics, ethics, and logic correspond, respectively, to the realms of *possibility*, *feasibility*, and *necessity*. Esthetics investigates ideals which are merely *worthy* of pursuit, regardless of their actual existence or even of their achievability. Ethics, in turn, is concerned with ideals which one could indeed pursue, concretely. After all, we only *ought* to pursue those ideals which *can* be achieved.[6] And logic, at last, provides us with laws which are *necessary*—not absolutely, but only for the purposes of achieving the goal chosen by ethics and identified by esthetics. Logic thus has to do with hypothetical necessity; but we can only be hypothetically necessitated to do something that is also feasible, and something could

only ever be feasible if it were also possible. Hence, we find that hypothetical necessity presupposes feasibility which presupposes possibility. Esthetics, then, as a normative science that investigates the relation of things to ends, considers these ends only within the realm of *possibility*.

The suggestion that esthetics deals with possibility is not entirely new. Ibri has also indicated that firstness houses "freedom and unconditionality" and that it characterizes the "absolute freedom of the mind, free from the constraints of existence" (2009:283). This means that, whereas logic seeks a univocal or necessary relation with its object, poetry is associated "with the universe of possibilities" (ibid.). Peirce explicitly claims that the logical character of the first category is possibility: "Firstness is the mode of being which consists in its subject's being positively such as it is regardless of aught else. That can only be a possibility" (CP 1.25, 1903). Peirce's system can thus be viewed, in Ibri's words, as a "vector that originates from formless spontaneity to the form of thirdness, as a passage from the continuum of possibility to quasi-necessity" (2016:605). Esthetics, then, as the normative science of firstness, investigates the relation between things and *ideal* ends (or *possible* ends); ethics studies the relation of things to *actual* ends (or *achievable* ends); and logic investigates a hypothetically *necessary* relation between things and the ends chosen by ethics and identified by esthetics—i.e., truth.

We know, however, that truth is not the achievement of a solitary individual. Rather, given our finitude and fallibility, truth could only mean the eventual point of convergence of an entire *community* of inquirers. But this community could only ever converge on a correct opinion—and on the hypothetically necessary laws that pave the way to it—if it first shared the same 'gospel,' to use Peirce's term in "Evolutionary Love." In other words, inquirers could only constitute a community if they pursued an ethical goal in common—in this case, truth. Inquirers must pursue the same things (truth) and avoid the same things (falsehood). Truth is untenable if it is not pursued in community. But this truth-seeking community, in turn, is impossible if its members pursue disparate goals—say, money from pharmaceutical groups, which perverts medical research; or political interest, which distorts sociological analysis; or professional fame, which leads philosophical works to last just as long as the trends of the day. Inquiry can be pursued *in common* only if its members are all in pursuit of the same goal—which means that a community of inquirers logically presupposes an ethical community.[7]

Now, an ethical community could aim at the same end-goal only if it shared an imaginative repertoire in common. As stated before, feasibility requires possibility, and just as we cannot pursue the impossible, we also cannot pursue the inconceivable. An ideal that has not been conceived will never be pursued. The first step towards self-controlled

action, that is, action oriented towards an ideal, is that we first imaginatively conceive or construe that ideal. To collectively pursue a common ideal, inquirers must first collectively conceive it. In this sense, inquirers must belong to a community of firstness—a community that is receptive to feelings and that attempts to give expression (in thirdness) to the admirable *per se* (as firstness). This attempt will itself require an entire community advancing candidate-expressions for candidate-ideals of the admirable. But most importantly, these competing expressions of the admirable will integrate a common repertoire of ideals—an imaginative horizon—which will provide the basis for ethical decisions. Given the constantly evolving nature of this common repertoire of ideals, the 'gospel' guiding the ethical community will necessarily change over time. But regardless of the *content* of our ideals, the crucial point is that a collective decision about the goal to be pursued can be made only if members also share a conception or a vision of their goal.

I call this esthetic community and its repertoire of ideals 'imaginative' in reference to the Aristotelian faculty of imagination (*phantasia*). In *De Anima* III.3, Aristotle associates this faculty with visual imagery, that is, the ability to form mental images (*phantasmata*) or to see 'with the mind's eye.' Such images function as a bridge between pure sensation (*aisthesis*) and discursive thinking (*dianoia*); for without this imaginative mediation, we would be stuck with the brute immediacy of sensations, on the one hand, or with the rootlessness of pure thought, on the other (*De An.* III.3, 427b14–15). Simple qualities of feeling can thus orient action (in secondness) and be reflected upon (in thirdness) precisely because the imagination turns them into mental images which guide action and thought. As Benedetto Croce once stated, "If man were not an imaginative spirit, he would not be a logical spirit" (1917:3).[8]

These mental images must constitute a collective possession—a repertoire—for the esthetic community: without conceiving an admirable end in common, the community will not be able to pursue it in common. Its mental image of, say, honesty in scientific research, or of truth as something independent of the inquirer's preferences, must be shared. We can see that such a repertoire of images is *in fact* shared when members pursue a common goal; for just as they could not search for a key if they did not know what it looked like, they also could not pursue goals that they had not first conceived. Such is the pragmatic meaning of an imaginative community: its conceivable sensible effects consist in the sheer existence of shared principles which control action (in ethics) and thought (in logic). Peirce tells us that pragmatism is an "application of an older logical rule, 'By their fruits ye shall know them'" (EP 2:401, 1907). Collective action and thought are the fruits of a shared repertoire of ideal ends.

Esthetics, ethics, and logic, then, correspond to three distinct stages of communal articulation rather than three distinct communities. A

community that considers ideals in their sheer worthiness, only as *possibilities*, is led to pursue them as *feasible*, and then to think of means which, if followed, lead to the desired results. These two subsequent stages of communal activity are dependent on the first, that is, on a collective construal of worthy ideals. We thus find that the asymmetric dependence of the normative sciences on one another implies that their corresponding communities also asymmetrically depend on one another. The reason for this is simple. Just as each science focuses on an end which is a narrower aspect of its predecessor's end, and just as each end (admirableness in esthetics, goodness in ethics, and truth in logic) cannot be conceived, pursued, or attained without *community*, it follows that each of these communal activities (collective construal of ideals, collective pursuit of goodness, and collective development of reasonableness) constitutes narrower aspects of the preceding levels of communal activity. A communal pursuit of truth logically presupposes a communal construal of ideals.

This also explains why the communities cannot be *numerically* distinct but only *conceptually* so. A community can articulate itself ethically only if it has first articulated itself esthetically; that is, it can collectively pursue goodness only if it has first collectively conceived it. But one can ask, at this point, whether there cannot be a certain division of labor between communities. Could not the identification of admirable ideals be done by a *separate* group of artists? Could *they* not resolve the question of what is a worthy end, admirable *per se*, so that a separate community of love, or of inquirers, could simply 'receive the results' from this esthetic investigation? This way, we would have three numerically distinct communities, each dependent on the 'results' of the former—but each of them numerically separate.

I do not think that this is possible. The community of inquirers must *also* be esthetic, no matter what. It cannot deprive itself of this esthetic function. This is because the formulation of ideal ends is an ongoing process. There is esthetic inquiry at the outset, to be sure, when the ideal is first formulated; but there is also a continuous re-evaluation of the ideal's worthiness throughout. Recall that for Peirce, there is no predetermined "esthetic grade of excellence" (EP 2:202, 1903). The criteria for esthetic goodness are determined only through experimentation and testing (§2). This means that the criteria are always subject to change based on the results of inquiry. The community of inquirers, then, cannot merely 'receive' esthetic ideals from the outside, as it were, but must imaginatively reshape them from within. It must constantly apply the results of inquiry to the task of re-conceiving the worthiness of its ideals.[9]

A consequence of this picture is that we can now reconcile the primacy of esthetics, and of its corresponding community, with Peirce's anti-foundationalism. For even if the esthetic community is logically presupposed by the community of inquirers, the latter can still *correct*

the former. Communities must continuously reshape their ideals in a manner consistent with the results of ongoing experimental inquiry. The community of artists is thus, in a sense, always in deferral to the results coming from the community of inquirers. This means that the esthetic community cannot *ground* the normative sciences in a straight-forward or one-directional way; it is not a *fundamentum inconcussum* à la Descartes. Thomas Olshewsky says that if Peirce's talk about grounds "is foundational in some sense, then it must be in a different, anti-Cartesian sense" (1993:405). The esthetic community of artists indeed serves as the ground of Peirce's normative thought, but it is a ground open to correction, constantly put to the test.

Conclusion

We have seen that there is a relation of logical dependence among Peirce's three communities, a relation which is analogous to that found among the three normative sciences. A logical community of inquirers can converge on a certain opinion only if its members pursue the same goal. If they pursue disparate goals, then the laws of logic—which are only *hypothetically necessary* and thus dependent on a previously chosen goal—will not hold universally for the entire community. But this very pursuit of a common goal depends, in turn, on a shared conception of the *admirable*. Without first agreeing on the admirableness of an ideal—on its worthiness—members will never choose to pursue it. This requires that members share a certain *feeling* of the admirable *per se*, which is not an immediate achievement but a mediated process involving continuous experimentation with candidate-ideals. To agree on the same opinion through inquiry, we must first agree on the goal that we pursue, which requires that we agree on the worthiness of that goal. This last agreement presupposes a shared imaginative repertoire among all members of a community: a collective participation in the task of identifying and expressing ideals. This gives rise to an imaginative community of firstness as the *ground* of Peirce's normative enterprise.

We can thus conclude that there is *nothing* in our ethical lives, or in our logical reasoning, which was not first in our imagination—in our universe of possibilities. This can serve a diagnostic function. For we often block the way of inquiry by excluding certain inquirers and weaken ethical communities by disregarding the collective good. The problem here might not be logical or ethical *per se*; it might lie deeper. It might pertain to an impoverished imaginative community. We have not really conceived a goal *in common*. To conceive things together, in the playful manner proper to artists and poets, is the first step to orienting our ethical and rational lives. And these can flourish only if pursued together.[10]

Emory University
bernardo.portilho.andrade@emory.edu

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NOTES

1 I follow Peirce's spelling—"esthetics" rather than "aesthetics"—to grant internal consistency to this paper; my usage is the same as that found in passages and quotations from Peirce's own works.

2 References to "EP" are to *The Essential Peirce*, cited by volume and page number; references to "CP" are to the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, cited by volume and paragraph number; references to "W" are to *Writings of Charles S. Peirce*, cited by volume and page number; and references to "CN" are to Peirce's *Contributions to the Nation*, cited by volume and page number.

3 Jaime Nubiola (2009:133) provides the following reference for this citation: Charles Sanders Peirce, "Review of Clark University 1889–1899. Decennial Celebration," *Science* XI, 20 April 1900, p.621.

4 Peirce seems to have recognized his mistake in thinking that there cannot be a distinction between esthetic goodness and badness. In "The Basis of Pragmaticism" (1906), he writes, as if scolding himself, that "it would be the height of stupidity to say that esthetics knows no good and bad" (EP 2:379).

5 Peirce makes it clear that the ideal of esthetic goodness is "not definable in advance," but can only be determined "in the long run" (CP 1.589, III.3, c.1903). Beverly Kent sees here a refusal to accept that the esthetic ideal be a static result: "By admitting process, Peirce is no longer limited to a self-satisfied ideal. He can now adopt an end that will always anticipate an improvement in its results" (1976:270). Rather than accepting a pre-formed notion of the ideal of esthetic goodness, Peirce is stressing that such an ideal will be developed through an ongoing process (see Aydin 2009:431; Liszka 2021:202).

6 Regarding the association between ethics and *feasible* ends, Peirce seems to endorse this view when he lays out a kind of 'consistency test' for any ethical end-goal. He suggests that the ends nominated by esthetics are merely possible and must still pass a test of their *realizability* or achievability in concrete life. "An aim," he says, "which *cannot* be adopted and consistently pursued is a bad aim" (EP 2:202, 1903).

7 I am attempting to establish here an *order of priority* between the logical community of inquirers and the ethical community of love, and it is precisely this order which appears to get confused in recent scholarship on Peirce's normative thought. James Liszka, for instance, claims that "the community of inquiry can serve as a model for an ethical community generally" (2021:134), since "a com-

munity that abides by the basic norms of inquiry is more likely to light upon what is good and right than one that abjures these tenets" (ibid.:165). While I do not wish to deny this claim, I want to say that a more precise formulation would be to *invert* it: an ethical community following a 'Gospel of Love' is precisely the *foundation*, or condition of possibility, of the community of inquirers. It is the decision to pursue ethical goals in common that allows the community of inquirers to be constituted in the first place. Liszka seems to reverse this order. Yet, Liszka is indeed right to say that, once the logical community is established on the grounds of a commonly shared 'gospel,' their inquiry is capable of shedding light upon—or indeed correcting—the ethical principles of this shared gospel.

8 In associating Peirce's 'imaginative community' with the Aristotelian faculty of the imagination, I am disagreeing with Thomas Alexander and Sara Barrena, who neatly distinguish Peirce's account of the imagination from Aristotle's. For them, Aristotle sees the imagination as "merely an extension of the passive capacity of sensation, subsumable under pre-established rational categorial structures" (Alexander 1990:341; quoted at Barrena 2013:3). They view Aristotelian imagination as purely passive. I have tried to make clear, on the contrary, that *phantasia* for Aristotle is both passive *and* active: it lies midway between pure sensation (*aisthesis*) and discursive thinking (*dianoia*), midway between the sheer passivity of sensations and the spontaneity of pure thought. Just as with Kant (see §3.3), *phantasia* for Aristotle is not *simply* 'at the service of the understanding.' That is why we can appropriately connect it to Peirce.

9 I am describing here a *bi-directional* relationship between Peirce's three communities. This is analogous to a claim made by Helmut Pape regarding the normative sciences: the relation between logical self-control and esthetic or moral self-control is a two-way street. On the one hand, esthetic values and moral principles "internally regulate the semiotic structure of the cognitive processes themselves" and can function as a *post factum* evaluation of an argument or line of thought (2012:160–161). But on the other hand, logical self-control "triggers the development of moral reflection and the grasp of moral issues in the light of relevant factual conditions of action." That is, logical self-control "contributes to our ability to form and decide externally about [our] moral standards, values, and norms" (ibid.:164). We find here a two-way relation: esthetics founds logic, but logic also 'informs' esthetics retroactively. I am extending this insight to Peirce's three communities, or his three levels of communal articulation.