Charles S. Peirce
Potter, Vincent G.

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The reissuing of Charles S. Peirce: On Norms and Ideals makes available once again one of the finest studies of the thought of this challenging American philosopher. Thirty years have elapsed since Father Potter’s volume was first published by the University of Massachusetts Press. Since that time Charles S. Peirce has become justly famous, a philosopher of international repute whose influence continues to grow. Scholars in diverse fields in countries all over the world find inspiration for their studies in his rich yet unfinished work. Peirce believed that working out a basic question in philosophy was not a task for merely one individual but would require the work of generations. Many today believe that the same holds true with respect to clarifying and developing the thought of Peirce himself. This study is an excellent contribution to that task.

Vincent Potter’s serious work on Peirce began during his graduate studies in philosophy at Yale University in the early 1960s. His teaching, research, and writing about Peirce were to continue for nearly thirty years, particularly during his distinguished career at Fordham University. This volume, which is essentially his doctoral dissertation of 1965, remains recognized for its admirable clarity, mature insight, and meticulous scholarship. While the secondary literature on Peirce has grown enormously during the past four decades, Father Potter’s careful and penetrating study still ranks among the best and is regularly cited by scholars, particularly those who work on topics related to Peirce’s perspective on the normative sciences.

Few problems in philosophy seem more pressing today or more difficult than the job of legitimating values and norms. Many reflec-

1 A recent example is Peirce and Value Theory, ed. Herman Parret (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1994). This volume contains twenty-four essays; seven deal with Peirce’s Ethics, and seventeen with aspects of his Esthetics.

tive persons want to overcome the skeptical suggestion that "values" are ultimately arbitrary, no matter how ancient their pedigree, that they are finally just imposed by human fiat without the claim or hope of a final sanction by critically informed experience rooted in reality. Indeed, at least since the time of William James, the charge that pragmatism has fatally relativized value claims has frequently been made. Moreover, there is widespread recognition of the problem presented by the plurality of perspectives, whether these be cultural, gender-based, ethnic, or other, more local versions. The search for a rich and compelling common perspective vivified by shared judgments about important values is a complex and difficult affair. Yet unless it can be shown that inquiry into reality can disclose some ultimate, universal, and compelling values and ideals, there seems to be no hope of escaping the morass of serious and, too frequently, tragic human conflict. The implicit premise of Peirce's distinctive doctrine of the normative sciences is that the objective reality of an ultimate ideal, and so of ultimate value(s), can be defended. Most provocatively, perhaps, Peirce held to this doctrine without compromising his lifelong commitment to fallibilism.

Many points which Father Potter discusses merit attention and invite fuller discussion, but this introduction will be limited to a few which, it is hoped, will provide a useful orientation toward his rich study. A superb expositor of Peirce's thought, Father Potter was a powerful and subtle thinker whose own philosophizing enabled him not only to discern certain ambiguities, inconsistencies, and some incompleteness in Peirce's work, but also to offer suggestions both to clarify difficulties and, wherever possible, defend Peirce. In addition, because of his own impressive grasp of the history of Western philosophy, Father Potter was able to put him in fruitful dialogue with classical figures such as Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, et al. Father Potter was deeply interested in what this great American thinker might have to teach or learn from his mighty predecessors.

As the title indicates, the focus of this work is the basic way in which Peirce understood the meaning and status of norms and ideals, topics belonging to what he called the normative sciences of Logic, Ethics, and Esthetics. What may surprise the reader, especially if this is a first serious encounter with Peirce's discussion of these disci-
plines, is the way in which his view about norms and ideals is closely integrated with other central ideas in his thought. Father Potter makes clear in his opening remarks that his book is indeed a study of Peirce’s pragmatism. In fact, it is useful to know that the title of his Yale dissertation was “Peirce’s Ontological Pragmatism.” This name clearly suggests the importance of placing Peirce’s pragmatism within the perspective of his metaphysical thought. But it does not indicate the central importance which the normative sciences came to have for Peirce. It is probably still true that too often Peirce is taught as the originator of Pragmatism without adequate attention being given to this larger perspective. Thus, the book’s title has a special import.

Father Potter was among those who believe that Peirce’s work, taken in its totality, achieves a significant systematic unity, yet is not without flaws and is certainly incomplete. Nevertheless, he discerns a “remarkably interwoven and interdependent” character among key Peircean doctrines, several of which are necessary for understanding Peirce’s views about norms and ideals. This is why he begins with a discussion of Peirce’s distinctive categories (Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness), notions “truly at the heart of all Peirce’s thought” (p. xxx), and then shows how the categories are related to the normative sciences. With this background in place, he then can consider how the normative disciplines are related to Peirce’s pragmatism. The middle chapters present Peirce’s metaphysical realism, with special attention to the doctrine of synechism and the reality of law, ideas central to his cosmology. All this provides an important context for the presentation of Peirce’s religious conception of evolution in the closing chapters.

Father Potter structures his study this way because Peirce’s view about man’s *sumnum bonum* or greatest good, the ultimate norm for all human conduct, is rooted deeply in his theistic interpretation of the evolutionary process. What Peirce eventually came to see was that Logic, Ethics, and Esthetics have their foundation in the living character of the cosmos. Making this clear is a major achievement of Father Potter’s sympathetic but critical study. Readers may be surprised to discover that “Peirce’s appreciation of the connection between logic, practices, and esthetics came out of his cosmological
studies” (p. 71). Ultimately, this was Peirce’s way of both cutting through the commonly asserted dualism of fact and value and defending his view about the objectivity of values. This connection between cosmology and the normative sciences is integral to the deeper unity which Peirce sought to bring forth in his thought, and it likely accounts for the fact that the first of his 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism was “Pragmatism: The Normative Sciences” (5.14–5.40). Peirce was intent to show how pragmatism was inextricably linked with Logic, Ethics, and Esthetics. Indeed, wrote Peirce, here one gets “upon the trail of the secret of pragmatism” (5.130).

Peirce stressed that pragmatism, as a logical doctrine or method for determining the meaning of concepts, pointed directly to the importance of Ethics. Here is how he put it in that first Harvard lecture of 1903: “For if, as pragmatism teaches us, what we think is to be interpreted in terms of what we are prepared to do, then surely logic, or the doctrine of what we ought to think, must be an application of the doctrine of what we deliberately choose to do, which is Ethics” (5.35). Logic, then, is a special case of ethical action, because Logic deals with the inferences and arguments which we are prepared to approve and, as he notes later, “such self-approval supposes self-control” (5.130). The deliberate approval of any voluntary act is a moral approval. Ethics, as a normative science, studies those ends which we are deliberately prepared to adopt. This sometimes led Peirce to regard Ethics as the normative science par excellence, because an end is relevant to a voluntary act in such a fundamental way. Nevertheless, he concluded that Ethics needs help from a more basic science whose job is to discern what is ultimately admirable in itself. This science he called Esthetics.

Before probing the nature and the hierarchical relation among the normative sciences, the reader should note that it is not Father Potter’s task, nor was it Peirce’s intention, to discuss any but the most general sort of norms or ideals. Thus, there is no extended treatment...
in this book of particular human problems or disputes and, accord-
ingly, no attempt to articulate particular rules for resolving them.
Peirce’s contribution has to do with prior issues such as the nature
and number of normative disciplines, their relation to one another,
and whether one can speak plausibly of an ultimate universal ideal, a
*summum bonum* relevant to human affairs. His focus is on the theory
of such matters.

Let us note, also, something which initially may puzzle or frus-
trate readers but is basic for understanding what is distinctive about
Peirce’s entire approach to the normative sciences: namely, his un-
usual claim that the normative sciences are disciplines whose pur-
pose is purely *theoretical*. Indeed, as Father Potter notes (p. 26),
quoting Peirce, they are “‘the very most purely theoretical of purely
theoretical sciences’” (1.282). This is a view which sharply limits their
task. A normative science studies what ought to be (1.281) and estab-
ishes norms or rules for reaching certain ends. For Peirce this means
that it is not the business of logic, for example, to teach one *how* to
think, nor of ethics to teach one *how* to act. The theoretical knowl-
edge one seeks from a normative science helps one understand cer-
tain kinds of conditions. Stated generally, normative sciences are
about the laws of conformity of things to ends. The practical sciences,
which have to do with “reasoning and investigation, of the conduct
of life, and of the production of works of art” (5.125), are linked to
Logic, Ethics, and Esthetics but “are not integrant parts of these
sciences” (5.125). As theoretical, the normative sciences analyze,
clarify, and define basic notions and principles (1.575). Thus, the task
of Ethics as a normative science is not to work on particular moral
conflicts but, rather, to develop and to justify the conceptions of
‘right’ and ‘wrong.’ As Father Potter writes, “Ethics . . . is not con-
cerned directly with pronouncing this course of action right and that
wrong, but with determining what makes right right and wrong
wrong. It has to do with norms or ideals in terms of which these
categories have meaning” (p. 32). Action presupposes having ends,

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3 Not everyone has been pleased with Peirce’s conception of the normative
sciences, particularly this separation of the theoretical from the practical. See, for
example, John Stuhr’s recent essay, “Rendering the World More Reasonable,” in
and the conformity of our actions to them is what makes an action right. Having knowledge of these ends and what counts as conformity is what Peirce regarded as theoretical. It makes it possible to judge rightly in particular cases about rightness and wrongness, but such judging is not part of the “science” of Ethics for Peirce. That task belongs to what Peirce considered practical or applied ethics.

Moreover, as indicated above, Peirce came to see that the theoretical knowledge sought by Ethics presupposes something still more basic: namely, a doctrine which “... undertakes to define precisely what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal” (5.36). That doctrine is Esthetics. “Its problem is to determine by analysis what it is that one ought deliberately to admire per se in itself regardless of what it may lead to and regardless of its bearings upon human conduct” (5.36). This striking claim puts one on notice that the notion of the admirable or “the fine” is not synonymous with beauty. Beauty must subserve the admirable. Esthetics, therefore, is not defined by Peirce in terms of ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ because, as Father Potter aptly puts it, “the beautiful and the ugly are categories within esthetics. It is precisely these categories which esthetics must establish and justify” (pp. 32–33). For example, the task of esthetics as a theoretical discipline is not to decide whether the cathedral of Chartres is beautiful but to determine “what makes the beautiful beautiful, and the ugly ugly” (p. 33). One needs knowledge of the relevant criteria by means of which one can define and justify using ‘beauty’ as a category. Factors such as proportion, contrast, harmony, integrity, etc., presumably would be relevant. Aspects such as depth or intensity also could be relevant to other objects and situations. Esthetics is the science whereby one extends and deepens one’s understanding of all that is involved.

The intimate relation between ethics and esthetics is one of Peirce’s most valuable insights. His claim was unequivocal: “But we cannot get any clue to the secret of Ethics . . . until we have first made up our formula for what it is that we are prepared to admire. I do not care what doctrine of ethics be embraced, it will always be so” (5.36). Ethics depends upon Esthetics, because the latter determines “what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal” (5.36). Such an ideal is “an absolute aim . . . , what would be pursued under all
possible circumstances . . ." and " . . . capable of being pursued in an
indefinitely prolonged course of action" (5.134–5.135). Father Potter
carefully explains how Peirce struggled to reach his mature concep-
tion of esthetics as the supreme normative science which studies the
admirable as such, the ideal of ideals, the *summum bonum*. But
Peirce did not fully grasp the meaning of this ideal until he had
worked out his philosophical cosmology and developed his evolution-
ary metaphysics. In fact, it seems evident that any such ideal will
have to be comprehensive yet vague, one which gives meaning to
and justifies all the more particular ends we pursue but the demands
of which require endless discovery. This is why Father Potter re-
marked that "The *summum bonum* ought not to be thought of as
simply another member in a series of goods, not even the last mem-
ber" (p. 33, note 6). Peirce came to refer to this ideal as the advance
of concrete reasonableness (1.615).

So stated, there is a beguiling simplicity to Peirce’s position.
Until one locates it within his “ontological pragmatism,” as Father
Potter termed it, one cannot appreciate adequately how Peirce’s un-
derstanding of human rationality is a function of a metaphysical doc-
trine which sees Reason as primordial and always operative in the
cosmos. The human search for and fidelity to ideals is but a part,
albeit crucial, of what Peirce meant by the embodiment of Reason.
One can hardly overstress that for Peirce this incarnation has a cos-
mic dimension. Father Potter indicates this in his own Preface: “In a
proper conception of the evolutionary process, Peirce believed, was
to be found the *summum bonum*, the ultimate norm for man’s think-
ing and action” (p. xxx). Again, near the end of the book we find this
cryptic conclusion: “Evolution is Reason progressively manifesting
itself” (p. 201). The intervening chapters are largely devoted to ex-
plaining the elements which form the close alliance between Peirce’s
normative theory and his philosophical cosmology. Indeed, one notes
that Peirce’s conclusion is itself a thoroughly esthetic judgment.
“Peirce came to acknowledge the embodiment of Reason as the *sum-
mum bonum* through a contemplation of the universe’s structure. The
interplay of the modes of being bringing about the cosmos’s develop-
ment struck him as something admirable in itself” (p. 203, note 13).
The reader, of course, will do well to spend time studying the wealth
of exposition and discussion in Part II and III. But the basic ideas whereby Peirce linked the normative sciences with an evolutionary metaphysics deserve some brief treatment here because they help us appreciate the unified vision he struggled to articulate.

Central to this effort was his defense of metaphysical realism, a realism implied, he argued, by both common sense and scientific success. The key issue "was whether laws and general types are fig­ments of the mind or are real" (1.16). That laws and types were real was for Peirce an unavoidable conclusion of honest science. Scientists are looking for and finding laws of nature, articulating them mathematically as simply as possible, and using them as the basis for further experimentation and research. For Peirce, a pivotal question concerned the sort of reality which ought to be ascribed to law. Is a law a mere quality (a First), a singular event (a Second), or that which governs or mediates how qualities and events are going to be connected in the actual world (a Third)? Laws are Thirds. Their mode of being is that of governance or mediation. This fact underlies Peirce’s commitment to “scholastic realism” and explains why he thinks of law as a mode of living power. To say that we can predict with confidence what is going to happen when, for example, we drop a cube of sugar into hot water is to admit that future events (the dissolving of the sugar, its dispersion in the water, etc.) really will take on a certain character. If so, those events must be under the sway of law. All the regularities of nature are evidence of this.

But Peirce was not content to insist on the reality of law as a distinctive mode of being. He asked why there are laws of nature. "Law is par excellence the thing that wants a reason" (6.12), that is, what especially needs to be explained. At the center of Peirce’s philosophical cosmology is his answer: namely, the idea of a primordial habit-taking tendency gradually bringing about intelligible structures in an evolving universe. Furthermore, Peirce argued for the reality of another basic factor, ‘chance,’ an irreducible element of spontaneity or freedom which, he said, was needed to explain the obvious variety of forms which exist in Nature. These two factors operating conjointly are integral to Peirce’s powerful critique of the mechanistic and rigidly deterministic view of Nature, a critique given due attention by Father Potter. Peirce argues brilliantly that the laws
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of nature have gradually developed or grown up; that the vast and intricate pattern of multi-leveled and interconnected orders of the cosmos are a consequence of an evolutionary trajectory which combines uniformity, novelty, and complexity; a seminal habit-taking tendency, working in conjunction with a real spontaneity or chance, best accounts for the reality of our cosmos, with its vast regularities punctuated virtually everywhere by different degrees of irregularity.

Moreover, Peirce saw these same two factors irreducibly and prominently involved in the action of 'mind.' "The one primary and fundamental law of mental action consists in a tendency to generalization" (6.21). Unlike mechanical laws, Peirce’s laws are not absolutely rigid; despite their real sway, there is a certain degree of looseness, depending upon the particular situation or case. There is room for spontaneous developments. Sometimes quite novel forms emerge. Thus, life, simple awareness, complex animal and human consciousness, ideas, beliefs, self-control, etc., have emerged and gradually become more determinate.

These skeletal remarks are intended only to help explain that the *summum bonum*, the advance of concrete reasonableness, is not a process that begins with the human search for the good life. The whole evolutionary development of the inorganic and organic worlds is understood by Peirce as a living embodiment and expression of Reason. Father Potter cites a passage (8.136) which makes this particularly evident: "'The very being of law, general truth, reason,—call it what you will—consists in its expressing itself in a cosmos and in intellects which reflect it, and in doing this progressively; and that which makes progressive creation worth doing—so the researcher comes to feel—is precisely the reason, the law, the general truth for the sake of which it takes place'" (p. 119, note 8). Here one can see as well that Peirce’s metaphysical realism involves a doctrine which makes final causality central. The intelligibility of the world is to be accepted neither as an inexplicable fact nor as merely fortuitous (which comes to the same thing). Indeed, a prime virtue of Father Potter’s book is the way it entices the reader into a sustained consideration of whether evolution can be understood without final causation.

But the climax of Peirce’s philosophical cosmology is his meta-
physical claim that the cosmos reveals a process ultimately governed by an overriding principle which he did not hesitate to call "creative love." This view, entailing not only ultimate final causation but Peirce’s Christian theism, is likely to be problematic for some readers. As a matter of fidelity to Peirce’s work, Father Potter devotes the last two chapters to his evolutionary cosmology and explains why Peirce thought agapasm, the doctrine that makes creative love the central agency of evolution, was the only satisfactory view. What some may see as unsupported religious bias, Peirce defended as ontologically true. This is why he named St. John (who says “God is love”) the “ontological gospeller” (6.287). In his essay “Evolutionary Love” (6.287–6.317), one finds a striking formula: “The movement of love is circular, at one and the same impulse projecting creations into independence and drawing them into harmony. This seems complicated when stated so; but it is fully summed up in the formula we call the Golden Rule” (6.288).

Peirce’s metaphysical realism and his cosmological speculations come together in a striking way in his evolutionary ideal. From the perspective of normative theory, it is the connection of these with the idea of the summum bonum which furnishes a dramatic vision of how Peirce saw our ultimate situation as human beings informed by the living telos of reason.

So, then, the essence of Reason is such that its being never can have been completely perfected. It always must be in a state of incipiency, of growth. It is like the character of a man which consists in the ideas that he will conceive and in the efforts that he will make, and which only develops as the occasions actually arise. Yet in all his life no son of Adam has ever fully manifested what there was in him. . . . [T]he development of Reason requires as a part of it the occurrence of more individual events than ever can occur. . . . I do not see how one can have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood. The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness, so far as we can comprehend it [1.615].
This passage is at once provocative and, for some, perhaps problematic. Among the points that stand out is a clear emphasis on growth. Always "in a state of incipiency," the growth of Reason implies a kind of inexhaustible eschatology. Our participation is made possible by our power of self-control, our ability to modify our habits of thinking, conduct, and feeling. These are the domains of the normative sciences. In addition, one must recall that Peirce had an indubitable belief in the pedagogical power of experience; indeed, "Experience is our only teacher" (5.50). For him the life and progress of science was a continuing verification of this principle. But the method of experiment, observation, and discovery of explanatory principles was not restricted to the special sciences. This method is demanded by life itself if we are to determine the more detailed meaning of the *summum bonum*.

Many readers may endorse Peirce's view that a principle of creativity is at work in the cosmos and in us in a special way, and yet still harbor deep disagreements about what the specific development of Reason calls for. The plurality of real differences which divide not only cultures but also citizens within a given culture are not easily dissolved or reconciled, whether these be political, moral, religious, etc. Serious, indeed fatal, conflicts about the values of freedom, property, self-determination, communal traditions, etc., occur daily in many parts of the world. These often tragic results do not seem to be due merely to human weakness. Peirce was not naïve about the conflict, suffering, and human capacity for cruelty which plague human history. What is of particular interest, however, is whether his views offer reason to hope for an eventual consensus on what would constitute the fully rational or ideal life, a consensus about the greatest good.

To speak of the advance of concrete reasonableness as something admirable in itself is obviously vague, perhaps intentionally so. Determining particular norms and practices ingredient in the good life seems necessarily to be a process requiring the continuing cooperation of numberless individuals in actual communities over many generations. Peirce was fond of making this point with respect to the advance of scientific truth. But Peirce offered no comprehensive theory of community (unlike, for example, Josiah Royce in *The Problem*...
of Christianity); nor did he write any treatise in Ethics. More frustrating perhaps is the paucity of his work in Esthetics, the discipline he regarded as supreme among the normative sciences.

Peirce's original work, however, contains many provocative suggestions which others have taken as points of departure as they seek to develop a fuller normative theory. This is not the place to address all these, but some show particular promise. One issue, for example, has to do with whether Peirce offers any help for thinking about how consensus on moral matters might be possible. In other words, are there resources in his thought for avoiding the debilitating moral relativism that seems so common in contemporary thinking? It is well known that Peirce defined truth as that opinion which the competent unlimited community of inquirers would agree upon in the long run. Does this mean that every significant controversy or conflict would be resolved someday? After all, empirical matters of fact can be settled by the proper employment of the scientific method whereby opinions are shaped by the constraining power of experience. It is this power to constrain which makes experience our teacher. This is why every true empiricist takes experience seriously. In all the sciences, hypotheses are formed, experiments conducted, careful observations made, so that scientific theories can be gradually verified if the empirical data that would falsify them are never found. But many doubt whether anything like this can occur with respect to moral, esthetic, or religious beliefs, because these are said to be matters of value rather than fact and so incapable of any authentic objective grounding. At the basis of such a claim of course is the fact/value distinction, something Peirce's philosophical cosmology denies. If the cosmos is the expression of a living Reason, a creative love, then value is objective and authentic.

How one understands "experience" and its deliverances is surely

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4 It is at least interesting that seventeen of the twenty-four essays in the recent Parret volume are devoted to a wide range of topics arising from a consideration of remarks about esthetics made by Peirce. It is also notable that many authors apply ideas drawn from Peirce's extensive work in semiotics to their work in esthetic theory as it relates to the various arts.

5 Aspects of this problem are taken up in stimulating way by Cheryl Misak in her "A Peircean Account of Moral Judgments," which also appears in Peirce and Value Theory, ed. Parret, pp. 39–48.
important. Here the discussion becomes more subtle and interesting, because Peirce has a view which argues for a continuity between external and internal experience. 'Empirical' facts are normally those matters taken to be subject to the force or compulsion of external experience. But, for Peirce, the constraining power or force of experience also operates in the inner and more private world of individual consciousness, although not with the same degree of brute compulsion as in the 'outer' world of confrontations. For example, in his essay "Ideals of Conduct" (1.591–1.615), he presents a thorough description of the process whereby a person can exercise imagination, resolve, and determination to amend his own conduct, to make it exhibit ideals (e.g., patience, honesty, etc.) that are esteemed. It is a matter of common experience that people can train themselves to follow certain ideals. But what may be overlooked is the fact that these ideals must have a power to attract. How this works is not well understood, but there seems no denying that people do experience inwardly the efficacious power of ideals. Equally important, there is ample reason to acknowledge that we are affected by the perceived worth of concrete realities. The varieties of this experience are exceedingly great. It is often said that people become "more sensitive" as the result of cultivating their powers of observation and receptivity. One becomes more alive to what is being presented in experience. We may think of this kind of sensitivity as something that is more pronounced in "artists," but the native ability seems to belong to all of us and is basic to being rational.

Peirce's view is that the "value" of being(s), the kind of worth or importance which belongs to something, is capable of being apprehended and working its effect on the human agent. This is not to suggest that serious moral disputes are going to be easily resolved, or indeed that there may not be insoluble disputes. Many factors can mitigate against reaching consensus. But the real issue is whether Peirce offers a theory which makes intelligible the view that truth and falsity are possible with respect to normative claims. Here the answer is affirmative. No one needs to suppose that consensus on such matters comes easily; experience suggests quite the contrary. Particular features of the sumnum bonum may never be shared by all. Yet experience teaches us that the possibility of important conver-
gements on matters of deep concern is real, and without communal imperialism.

In addition, the great emphasis on cultivating “habits of feeling,” habits integral to human motivation and, thus, to human conduct, ought to be taken most seriously. In 1898, several years before he came to his conclusions about esthetics as the supreme normative science, Peirce was strongly defending the supreme importance of feeling. “It is the instincts, the sentiments, that make the substance of the soul. Cognition is only its surface, its locus of contact with what is external to it” (1.628). This may seem remarkable coming from someone who devoted himself so intensely to the intellectual rigors of mathematics, logic, several sciences, philosophy, semiotics, etc. But the remarks on feeling are a key part of his theory of human nature. Peirce was clearly convinced of “that department [of the soul] that is deep and sure—which is instinct” (1.647). Furthermore, and this is especially important here, “Instinct is capable of development and growth. . . . And just as reasoning springs from experience, so the development of sentiment arises from the soul’s Inward and Outward Experiences” (1.648). Here again one sees his broad notion of experience as both “inner and outer.” The development of appropriate “habits of feeling” is the outcome of one’s esthetic growth and the ground of moral conduct. Peirce’s depth psychology sees human affectivity functioning unconsciously in the human psyche. He knew that egoism, selfishness, the motivations of what he called the “greed philosophy,” were not ultimately intellectual problems, but affective or emotional deficiencies which could be overcome only by some process of conversion of one’s “heart.”

Peirce was clearly interested in the dynamic between intellectual cognition or reasoning and the more hidden structures of feeling which he associated with “the very core of one’s being” (1.648). The phrase “habit of feeling” is instructive and intriguing precisely because it combines (in Peircean language) Thirdness with Firstness, generality with qualitative immediacy. It clearly suggests a form of affective or emotional rationality which involves a form of knowing intimately connected with our exquisite capacity to feel. Value is somehow primarily felt and known. This is why he regarded Esthetics as the supreme normative science.
If Peirce is right, authentic human progress depends upon our capacity for and commitment to cultivating our affective life. This capacity to feel must be nourished if we are to actualize our full rational nature. The worth of something is integral to its reality and as such it resonates in the "depths" of our being, thus becoming habitual and enabling us to act in ways more appropriate or reasonable. The dynamic or dialectic between direct feeling, thought, and action is real, complex, and ongoing. For Peirce these experiences are ultimately revelatory of the mystery of the living cosmos. It is the human privilege to be able to catch a glimpse of this and, at least sometimes, to be moved profoundly to mediate the truth about this process through the continual development of our character and of all those cultural forms, including perhaps especially religion, which seem to have the mark of reason on them. That we have capacities to feel and can cultivate them is beyond dispute; that we ought to cultivate these capacities in order to actualize our rational nature is at the heart of Peirce’s understanding of what it means to live rationally, to pursue the *summum bonum*. Whether there is more than one defensible view of what living rationally means is not likely to be settled anytime soon. It is up to us to help create and discern the lessons of future experience. Father Potter has presented Peirce’s bold and inspiring answer in a way which leaves the reader with a feeling of hope and a debt of gratitude.

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