

Response to Jaime Nubiola

I want to say first of all that this paper by Professor Nubiola is testimony to a remarkable achievement in archival discovery and modern research methods. Some years ago, Professor Nubiola, aware of Peirce's travels in Europe, began a project of recovering everything he could find that would shed light on Peirce's contact with European thought and culture. He especially determined to collect all of Peirce's European correspondence and he became an expert detective in this endeavor; he has become the leading scholar on Peirce's European travels and correspondence. With the help of his Peirce Studies Group at the University of Navarra, he created a beautiful and truly rich web-based resource which, as he has shown, makes his exceptional collection available in its original form and in Spanish translation, with hundreds of helpful links to elaborate and enhance the texts. His Peirce Studies Group website is of exceptional value for all students and scholars of Peirce and is essential for Peirce research in the Spanish speaking world. It is a prime example of how the internet can be used to enable and promote research in ways unachievable by traditional means.

I believe Professor Nubiola has given an excellent sketch of Peirce's first visit to Europe and the impact it had on him (and of course he also gave some consideration to Peirce's time in London during his second trip). Peirce's European visits, the first an extended tour when he was 30 years old, certainly had a great effect on this young American from Cambridge, Massachusetts, probably especially on the course of his career in science; but what the correspondence reveals about his aesthetic sensibility and the impact of his travels on his aesthetic development is of particular interest. Still, I think it must be remembered that at 30 years of age Peirce was by no means innocent when it came to aesthetic appreciation and judgment. We know that, when he was only 16, he spent a year studying Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*, and much of his juvenile writing, when not devoted to science, was devoted to aesthetic questions. Also, many of the close friends of his family, and many of his own friends (William James, for example), were painters or poets or musicians, or aspired to those callings; and we must remember, too, that Peirce was well acquainted with people who had traveled widely. Nevertheless, I am convinced by the evidence of the letters Professor Nubiola quotes, that the richness and variety of Peirce's European encounters, many of which were deliberately focused on artistic or aesthetic subjects, did somewhat overwhelm the young Peirce, and doubtless had a lasting impact on his sense and appreciation of beauty. It may not be stretching the truth too far to say that Peirce's aesthetic sensibilities prior to his European travels were grounded more in intellectual considerations than in wide-ranging aesthetic experiences. Europe certainly changed that for Peirce. In his later life, Peirce and his second wife, Juliette, became attached to a rather Bohemian community in New York, a community of artists and actors, and it might be that Peirce's experiences in Europe helped him become more cosmopolitan and sympathetic to the Bohemian culture.

But if aesthetics was an area of special interest for Peirce from his teenage years on, with his European experiences adding much vivacity and depth to that interest, then, as Professor Nubiola asks, why did he not write more on this subject? I believe the main reason, as Professor Nubiola suggests, is that Peirce became so focused on scientific pursuits, including the study of logic, that he had little time to devote directly to the field of aesthetics. It is well to remember, however, that in his scientific work Peirce always gave special attention to the importance of the impressionistic aspects of

observation and he devoted much time to training his powers of sensibility. Also, he used his knowledge of logic and probabilities to determine how to use impressionistic data in a dependable scientific way. So we might say that Peirce turned his aesthetic interests to practical use. But, finally, it is good to remember that it was not until after Peirce resigned from his scientific career with the U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey that he was able to focus intently on his philosophical system building, and it was not until the end of the 1890's, when Peirce was nearing 60 years of age, that he came to see the centrality of aesthetics for the normative sciences and for philosophy. Until then, it seems that Peirce more or less equated aesthetics with art and not as a subject for theoretical study.

I believe it was astute of Professor Nubiola to abduce that Peirce's struggle in his correspondence to put his intense new feelings and the character of his new European experiences into words provided an important lesson in the qualitative and nonconceptual nature of firstness. Remembering that the correspondence for Peirce's first European trip alone ran intermittently for almost nine months, this lesson was not short-lived and it very likely played a definite role in teaching Peirce about the nature of firstness and probably, also, helped shape his views about the primacy of phenomenology within the philosophical sciences.

Two other things that Professor Nubiola said especially caught my attention. He asks what is beauty for Peirce and wonders how it can be recognized. Of course this is a subject for monographs and dissertations since the question of beauty was taken up by Peirce time and again throughout his whole lifetime even though he rarely treated it in an extended way. As early as 1857, when Peirce was 18 years old and in his second year at Harvard, he wrote a student essay on beauty, largely based on his reading of Schiller, and as late as October 1913, six months before his death, Peirce wrote that beauty, along with moral virtue and abstract truth, is what raises humanity above animality. In between these early and late writings, Peirce said many striking things about beauty, especially around the time of his 1903 Harvard and Lowell Institute lectures when he was settling on how the science of aesthetics really fits within his classification of the sciences and what role beauty plays in aesthetic experience. Certainly Peirce's encounters with beauty as a young man in Europe, and his efforts to convey that sense of beauty in his letters home, is an important chapter in the development of his conception of beauty. According to Professor Nubiola, during these years Peirce considered beauty to be "the only thing that we admire in itself and not in respect of something else" and that beauty is recognized by the impression it makes. So Peirce's rule for recognizing beauty is like his rule for recognizing greatness: "the way to judge of whether a man was great or not is to put aside all analysis, to contemplate attentively his life and works, and then to look into one's heart and estimate the impression one finds to have been made. This is the way in which one would decide whether a mountain were sublime or not." We must remember, though, as Professor Nubiola emphasized, what Peirce said about Michelangelo: "to appreciate Michael Angelo's statues requires more knowledge of the history of art than I have got." That shows that Peirce understood that what impresses us as beautiful will depend on our capacity for recognizing it as such. Also I must point out that in his later years Peirce struggled with the question of what was admirable in itself and came to reject the view that beauty was the appropriate ideal for what is admirable and that, instead, the ideal should be the development of reason, or the reasonable.

This late struggle of Peirce's over the proper role of beauty versus reason in aesthetics brings up the second point of interest that I want to briefly raise. Professor Nubiola says that for Peirce, "the artist is someone who in a surprising and almost magical way grasps feelings of qualities that by their very nature are isolated and hidden, and who then succeeds in making them in some sense reasonable." He goes on to say that "metaphorically Art may be said to colonize and to tame feelings. Beauty arises when harmony and equilibrium come into the picture, when a perfect adjustment is achieved between the feelings expressed and the form in which they are expressed, so that a "reasonable embodiment" occurs. I only want to raise the question of whether it is up to the artist to make feelings reasonable, or whether that might be better left to the psychologist or, perhaps, the psychoanalyst. And where is the reason in the "reasonable embodiment" that gives rise to beauty? It seems to me that reason is a matter of thirdness and the usual expression of reason is an argument. The specialists when it comes to reason are logicians. Feeling, on the other hand, is a matter of firstness, and probably the best expression of profound states of feeling is artistic, in one form or another. The specialist, when it comes to the artistic expression of feeling is the aesthete or the artist. I can understand why we might say that the artist has achieved an *effective* embodiment, or even, in an extended sense, a *true* embodiment, when a perfect adjustment is achieved between feeling and form, or we might want to say a *beautiful* embodiment, but it may be mixing categories too much to say that an artistic production is reasonable. However, Peirce's own late wrestling over whether the proper end for aesthetics is beauty or reason certainly opens this issue up for debate and calls for further study.

Finally I want to give my wholehearted agreement to Professor Nubiola's closing remark that the correspondence from Peirce's European trips, now available on his website, provides us with "a better understanding of one of the greatest American thinkers of all time." That is without doubt true. It is also true that we cannot understand the development of Peirce's thought without understanding his life, so, again, the ready availability of these personal letters is a real contribution to understanding how Peirce came to be the polymath he was. But it may not be true that understanding Peirce's life is essential for understanding his thought as he wanted it to be understood. He struggled with his philosophical texts to express his thoughts in a way that could be understood by the general intellectual public, or at least by the serious student of philosophy, regardless of whether they knew anything about him as a man. In that sense, I suppose Peirce failed in his purpose if we must learn more about his life to understand his thought. But maybe we all fail a little in this regard. Anyway, we know that Peirce, himself, was keen to learn more about the lives of the thinkers he admired because there is always something revealing in discovering how the ideas of great thinkers were nurtured in the experiences of their vital lives. We can thank Professor Nubiola for helping us to better understand Peirce the man.

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