GRAVITY AND ELECTIVE ATTRACTIONS: THE PROVENANCE OF PEIRCE’S CATEGORIES IN FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER.

David A. Dilworth
SUNY at Stony Brook

Methodological Prolegomena

Trends in the contemporary academy that either nationalize or professionalize philosophy in narrow-gauge scholastic—hide-bound cultural or technocratic trajectories—are nominalistic. They fall short of Peirce’s theory of inquiry with its emphasis on the inter-national character of heuristic-scientific discovery which he also conceived as inter-generational and indeed extending beyond the present geological age. This was crucial for Peirce not only with regard to the mathematical and special, but also to the philosophical, sciences. He practiced this methodology in building the carefully constructed “architecture” of his own system out of broad historical legacies and contemporary developments in philosophy.

Peirce did not participate in any contemporary scholasticism and never characterized himself as an “American” philosopher. Philosophical doctrine for him rather had what he called a secular or public status. Drawing on the mainstream of the Western tradition, his writings are conspicuous for their broader dialogic character while eschewing what he called accidentally deployed “one idea’d” (a priori temperamentalist) systems. Yes, he interacted with James, Royce, Paul Carus, and many other philosophical interlocutors in his own local environment. But in addition he actively engaged the gamut of ideas of the major classical authors,—such as Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Duns Scotus, Leibniz, Swedenborg—and he parsed leading ideas of the British philosophical tradition as well as of 19th century German Romanticism and Idealism—notably those of Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel. It remains a

1 As an instructive example, see the incisive critique of the nominalistic trajectory of Rorty’s texts in Ivo A. Ibri, “Neopragmatism Viewed by Pragmatism,” EJPAP, vol. 1 (2013), 181-192. See the bibliography for further notices of Ibri’s work in this regard.

2 I refer of course to the opening paragraphs of Peirce’s ‘Architecture of Theories’ (1891). It is of interest that this passage resonates with, if not drawn from, a precedent in Schelling: “The general foundation of it [Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason] is the thought: before one wishes to know something, it is necessary to submit our capacity for knowing itself to an examination. Just as a careful builder carefully ponders his resources before he erects a house, to see whether they are sufficient for both the firm foundation and the successful execution of the building, the philosopher must, before thinking of erecting a building of metaphysics, first be sure of the materials for it, whether he can obtain them, and, since these materials are drawn from a spiritual source in this case, this source must itself first be examined, in order to be certain whether it really contains or offers sufficient material for the intended building. Before we can hope to have knowledge—particularly of supersensuous objects—we must first examine whether we also have the capacity to know them.” [Schelling’s On the History of Modern Philosophy (1833-34 or 1836-37), p. 98.]

3 The Philosophical Writings of Peirce, ed. Justus Buchler, p. 72: “The universally and justly lauded parallel which Kant draws between a philosophical doctrine and a piece of architecture has excellencies which the beginner in philosophy might easily overlook; and not the least of these is its recognition of the cosmic character of philosophy. I use the word ‘cosmic’ because cosmicus is Kant’s own choice; but I must say I think secular or public would have approached nearer to the expression of his meaning. … To the cosmological or secular character of philosophy (to which, as closely connected, Kant with his unfailing discernment joins the circumstance that philosophy is a thing that has to grow by the fission of minute parts and not by accretion) is due the necessity of planning it out from the beginning.” (CP 1.176-78).

4 See the same opening paragraph of ‘The Architecture of Theories’: “[…] those one-idea’d philosophies are exceedingly interesting and instructive, and yet are quite unsound.” (Buchler, 315; CP 6. 7)
huge project to establish the provenance and convergence of the “big ticket” items of his architectonic system with the intellectual heritage he mastered to a considerable degree and, what is more, justly to evaluate Peirce’s place in the history of philosophy.

In this paper I exercise my will to learn from Peirce’s own methodology, which can be called synoptic after Kant (and Aristotle), or synechistic after his own appellation of the keystone of the arch of his “completely developed system.” My focus, necessarily limited here, will fall upon the synergistic provenance and convergence of Peirce’s categories in Friedrich von Schiller’s Aesthetic Letters. Schiller’s influence was in fact his “first” influence, one explicitly acknowledged by Peirce at the beginning of his career; and a force of intellectual gravity brought him back to Schiller as his system peaked in its later phase. In due course, while asserting his elective affinity with Schiller, Peirce succeeded in reconfiguring the post-Kantian developments of the systems of Schelling and Hegel. The full record reveals that Peirce thought his way through a labyrinth of theoretical options associated with aspects of Schiller’s aesthetics—which was already an implicit theory of trichotomic semeiosis articulated in a polemic against the dyadic “chopping with an axe” dyadic hermeneutic of Kant’s ethical theory of the pure moral will. Peirce also absorbed the difference phases of Schelling’s “objective idealism,” while carefully reconsidering his relation with Hegel, in producing his categorial Tritism which he regarded as “one of the births of time.”

Limiting our present focus to Schiller, we can observe undercurrents of Schiller’s provenance at the heart of Peirce’s mature categories:—1) the latter’s phenomenological category of Firstness—corresponding to Schiller’s sense of “pure appearance” in the play of the Spieltrieb (play-drive or play-instinct)—which resurfaces in Peirce’s semeiosis of abductive inference and in the tychastic component of his cosmological metaphysics; 2) in his legisignificant prioritizing of Esthetics as the “first” of the three Normative Sciences; and, 3) as special application of the above, in his ‘Neglected Argument for the Reality of God’ (1908) where Peirce features the concept of Pure Play as “Musement, which has no rules, except the very law of liberty” (6.458; EP2 436)). Peirce draws on Schiller’s concept of the Spieltrieb to re-affirm his thesis concerning the epistemic priority of abductive inference there, as well as explicitly again in ‘An Essay toward Improving Our Reasoning in Security and in Uberty’ (1913).

---

5 Peirce’s 1902 letter to Wm. James, CP vol. 8, ch. 5, 186 ff. Cf. the writer’s “Peirce’s Objective Idealism: A Reply to T. L. Short’s ‘What was Peirce’s Objective Idealism?,’ Cognitio: Revista de Filosofía, vol. 12, n. 1 (jan/jun 2010), 53-74.
6 Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen, 1795 (On the Aesthetic Education of Man), trans. Reginald Snell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004, originally Yale University Press, 1954). This classic in the philosophy of Aesthetics reformulated principles Schiller laid down in a previous work, Über Anmut und Würde, 1793 (On Grace and Dignity, trans. George Gregory, The Schiller Institute, Inc., 1992), which critiqued Kant’s way of prioritizing “Dignity” qua Respect for the pure moral law over “Grace” of character, i.e. what Schiller termed “the beauty of virtue of the beautiful soul.” The latter, Schiller contended, involves the holistic interplay of natural inclination and freedom. Kant replied in the next year, in the second edition of his Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone, 1794, reasserting his own position on the idea of pure moral duty absolutely countervailing natural inclination. Schiller’s subsequent Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man of 1795 reformulated his concept of Grace in terms of the Spieltrieb. For his part, Peirce championed Schiller’s position across the board grounded in his three categories, thus in his general theory of experience and inquiry and in the specialized relation of Esthetics to Ethics (theoretical Ant-ethics) and Logic in the Normative Sciences. As we will see, Kant’s moral theory was a species of dyadic, in contrast to the triadic, semeiologies of Schiller and Peirce.
7 Peirce came to claim that his Tritism, i.e. trichotomic categoriology, improved upon those of Aristotle Kant, and Hegel. If so, this should indeed be appreciated as one of the philosophical births of time as well as providing the documentation for the just assessment of his place in the history of philosophy.
8 EP2 434 ff. and 463 ff.
It should be added that Emerson looms as historical intermediary between Schiller’s *Aesthetic Letters* and Peirce. Emerson’s writings, themselves trans-Atlantic in inspiration, remarkably blended the available forms of 19th c. English and German Romanticism and Idealism in to a theory of nonanthropocentric connatural semiosis. In the following generation, Peirce explicitly acknowledged his elective affinity with Emerson in several of his writings. Emerson’s prose and poetry in fact absorbed and transformed much of Schiller and Schelling. Schelling’s own “protean” series of works were early on impacted by Schiller and his colleague Goethe, just as Schiller’s involved components of the critical transcendentalisms of Kant and Fichte; and of course it had deeper roots in a wider array of literary Romantics of the “Jena Circle” of his time.

Doctrinal passages in Peirce’s writing support this broader historical approach. To name just two here: there are important doctrinal concepts concerning the contemporary *Zeitgeist* (illustrative of Thirdness) in ‘Man’s Glassy Essence’ and ‘Evolutionary Love’ of the 1890s, as well as in his articulation of the dialogic character of the *cominterpretant* or *commens* in 1906. “Nominalism,” he wrote elsewhere, “is a deadly poison to any living thought.” These doctrinal concepts implicate his category of Thirdness as the general continuity of Mind and thus subtend his doctrine of cosmological evolution and the various applications of the Normative Sciences in his Pragmaticism and Semeiotics. And why shouldn’t such normative applications be different than other possible forms of life? For Peirce, our human quasi-minds are “representative” of other intelligent organisms, and indeed of the cosmogenesis as a whole. That is why we are not just wasting our time, but are working on real metaphysical laws of nature in their human relevance.

9 Cf. Bibliography for two recent articles by David A. Dilworth on Peirce’s elective affinities with Emerson appearing in *Cognitio* (2008) and (2009). These articles, focusing upon writings at the end of Emerson’s career, ‘Poetry and Imagination’ and ‘The Natural History of Intellect’ (1870), illustrate that all the big ticket items of Peirce’s objective idealism are prefigured in Emerson. In a future study the author will present the same thesis drawn from the beginning of Emerson’s career, namely from, his initial work *Nature* (1836) and other early essays, which already contain the essential lineaments of Peirce’s theory of connatural evolutionary semiosis.

10 Emerson read Thomas Carlyle’s *Life of Schiller* (published in 1825), and throughout his career he hewed close to Goethe’s and Schiller’s aesthetic ideals and priorities, blending them with those of Schelling. His friend Coleridge was another conduit of information concerning the currents of German Idealism. Schiller’s ideas also reached Emerson through his transcendentalist colleagues Theodore Parker, Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Freeman Clarke, John Sullivan Dwight, Margaret Fuller, Frederick Henry Hedge, and Charles Timothy Brooks, among others. Dwight contributed translations of Schiller and Goethe’s poem in George Ripley’s 14-volume *Specimens of Foreign Standard Literature*; Fuller translated and wrote critical studies of Goethe and Schiller; Hedge wrote on many of the German authors for the *Christian Examiner*; Brooks produced translations of two of Schiller’s poems for the April 1844 issue of the *Dial* (edited by Emerson and Fuller).


13 See alphabetical entries in Tiffany K., Wayne, *Critical Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2010. Needless to say, in the background of this paper there are the indefinitely factorable historical questions, including those of overlapping generations and careers: Schiller died in 1805, a year after Kant’s demise in 1804; Goethe died in 1832, Hegel in 1834, Schelling in 1854, Emerson in 1882, Wm. James in 1910, Peirce in 1916.


15 *NEM* 3.201. I am grateful to Professor Ivo Ibri for this reference and for his masterful critique of nominalistic trends in the contemporary academy in his “Neo-pragmatism Viewed by Pragmaticism: A Redescription,” *EJPAP*, vol. 1 (2013), 181-192.
The basis of Peirce’s “one law of mind” is that ideas tend to spread continuously, losing intensity but gaining in generality (6.104). In his own connatural semiosis ideas amplify, ramify, and blend. Specifically for our purposes here, Peirce’s Thirdness-category of evolutionary habit-formation translates, in one of many applications, into the semiotic interpretant of recombinant convergences in nature and human intelligence. The very idea as well as historically processive execution of the scientific method describe the phenomenon that different individuals, peoples, and cultures tend, and are destined, to come to the same objectively real discoveries and conclusions—just as different forms of life (such as wings, fins, eyes, lungs, stomachs) on the opposite ends of the Biosphere have evolutionarily arrived at the same general solutions. Peirce’s lines of phenomenological, metaphysical, and semiotic inquiry in fact blended with many affine variants in the history of philosophy. He appears to have ingested, digested, and transformed some of his leading ideas from Schiller, Schelling, and Emerson and then developed them in like-minded but different registers of articulation than his predecessors, though with the several lines of inquiry arriving at the same end points. Let us now illustrate this multi-leveled synergism with respect to “first” and “later” provenances and convergences with the thought of Friedrich von Schiller.

1. Schiller’s original text, Letters 1-11 and 24-27 as Provenance of Peirce’s First Categories of I, IT, and THOU.

Letters 1-11 and 24-27 comprised Schiller’s original Aesthetic Letters which now stands as a unique, first-tier classic in the annals of the philosophy of aesthetics. Letters 3-4 on the State have new matter. Schiller then penned Letters 12-23, elaborating at greater length the “two drives” (the sensuous-causal and the rational-moral) faculties associated with Kant’s first and second Critiques and Kant’s own reconfiguration of them in his third Critique. Reginald Snell’s Introduction argues that the text has two different but interlaced positions with respect to a third drive, the Spieltrieb,—namely, to borrow Dewey’s language, the faculty of Beauty as both instrumental and consummatory. In the first instance, the experience of Beauty has a “refreshing” effect. “Man must pass through the aesthetic condition, from the merely physical, in order to reach the rational or moral.” The experience of Beauty liberates the person from his immersion in physical reality, i.e., from the slavery of the animal appetites, opening up the possibility of intellectual and moral cultivation in a higher freedom of the spirit. In the second case, the experience of Beauty imports the ideal of a consummating completion of Humanity,

16 Friedrich (Johann Christoph) von Schiller (1759-1805) was a dramatist, poet, historian, and aesthetician who is regarded along with his for a time close colleague Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as one of the greatest literary figures of his time. His early dramas—such as Die Räuber (The Robbers, 1781) and Don Carlos (1787)— dealt with social and political oppression, and later ones, such as Maria Stuart (1801), The Bride of Messina (1803) and Wilhelm Tell (1804), addressed spiritual freedom liberated from the claims of the world and depicted man as participating in an eternal moral order. His histories of the revolt of the Netherlands (1788) and of the Thirty Years War (1791-93) led to a professorship at the University of Jena in 1790. His historiographical writings provided background material for his Wallenstein trilogy (1808), which was highly praised by Samuel Coleridge as “not unlike Shakespeare’s historical plays—a species by itself.” These works and his acclaimed poetry carried over into his treatises on aesthetics. Besides On Grace and Dignity (1793) and The Aesthetic Letters (1795) Schiller produced another critical treatise on aesthetics in On Naive and Sentimental Poetry (1795-96) and an essay On the Sublime (1801). His poetry and philosophical treatises reflect his encounter with the contemporary ideas of Goethe, Kant, and Fichte. Emerson read Thomas Carlyle’s Life of Schiller (published in 1825) and I presume Peirce did so too. Schiller’s poems and plays inspired the musical compositions and operas of Beethoven, Verdi, Donizetti, Rossini, and Tschaikovsky, among others. His “Ode to Joy” featured in the fourth movement of Beethoven’s Ninth can be appreciated as a miniature expression of his synergistic reflections on aesthetics and politics.


18 Ibid. 12.
in the sense of an ongoing, unending realization of the perfection of human nature that includes the sensuous, intellectual, and moral dimensions of life in various harmonious integrations. As we parse the nuances of these interlacing themes, we will be able to appreciate how Peirce, in due course, harvested some measure of his three phenomenological, normative, and metaphysical categories from his career-long reflections on Schiller’s Letters.19

In Letter 1 Schiller says he will follow Kant in the ethical sphere (concerning the autonomy of moral freedom); but in Letter 2 he qualifies that allegiance in the crucial form of arguing “against the times” that it is through Beauty that we arrive at “true freedom.” A freedom truer than the moral becomes the baseline heuristic concept of his text. He further articulates this trajectory in Letter 3, which postulates that the transition from the physical State of Nature (based on brute force, including the compromises of selfish drives underwriting Hobbes’s social contract) to a rational-moral society (the Kantian cosmopolitan dream in futuro), has to be mediated by a third component (Beauty). Accordingly Letter 4 envisions that the achievement of an ideal politics is incapable of realization by either of these opposite and opposing components or drives in isolation.

The French Revolution, Letter 5 goes on to say, did not usher in the new order. Its aftermath has been one of materialistic degeneracy in both the lower and upper strata of society. It has rather accelerated a modern fragmentation of powers, e.g. in the speculative/scientific and practical/business spheres, in contrast with which Schiller introduces an idealized paradigm of “natural wholeness” (Letter 6). Contemporary philosophy—Schiller charges—is complicit with these evils brought about by the modern state in fostering the culturally fractious empirical and analytical styles of the Enlightenment (Letters 7, 8). In passing here we should note that, in broad outline as well as in specific respects, Peirce,—also following Emerson—reprised this indictment of the degenerate “modern milieu and the more encompassing individualistic and nominalistic currents of modern materialistic humanism and scientism.20

Letter 8 returns to Schiller’s master theme that cultivation of the aesthetic sensibility underlyng the intellectual and the moral spheres of modernity is “the pressing need of the age.” Schiller follows this up with a portrait of the artistic genius—modeled after Goethe—whose expression of Beauty transcends time (Letter 9). But a genuine philosophy, he says, has the task of articulating the education of “pure humanity” by “the transcendental road” to achieve “a pure rational concept of Beauty” (Letter 10). The “pure rational concept of Beauty” performs the function of “correct[ing] and guid[ing] our judgment concerning every actual case; it must therefore be sought along the path of abstraction, be inferred simply from the possibility of a nature that is both sensuous and rational.”21


20 Herbert Marcuse’s Eros and Civilization (1955) consciously but belatedly reprises Schiller’s advocacy of overcoming modern alienation by remaking civilization through the liberating force of the aesthetic function (a new reality principle); other Marxist theorists have similarly bought into Schiller’s critique of abstract “reification” in the material sphere. The present paper restricts itself to the observation that Emerson and Peirce drew their criticism of alienated modernity from Schiller far in advance—up to a century in advance—of the Frankfurt School, while setting it in the political matrix of American democracy.

21 Ibid., 60.
As we shall explore further in due course, this passage can be read as adumbrating Emerson’s essay on “Beauty” (1860) as well as Peirce’s doctrine of Esthetics as the First of the Normative Sciences, though Peirce, for his part, came ultimately to question the traditional vocabulary of “Beauty” (kalos) in favor of a more general semeiotic concept of the *summum bonum* as the “Admirable per se.”

Letter 11 reworks this “transcendental road” by appealing to “two final concepts,” namely, Kant’s and Fichte’s pure and empirical egos,—*person* and *condition*, or the *self* and its *determinations*, respectively—for the task of “divinization of the human.” The concept of the *pure ego*, Schiller writes, postulates that “The person must be its own ground”; and accordingly, “we have in the first place [my emphasis] the idea of absolute being grounded in itself, that is to say of freedom.” Man receives this gift of “pure intelligence” qua “pure activity” from “the supreme Intelligence creating out of itself,” while the spatial and temporal conditions of his never changing ego constitute his manifested existence. “Only as he alters does he exist; only as he remains unalterable does he exist.”

In these formulations, *freedom* is associated with Fichte’s *Tathandlung*, the primary, foundational, irreducible Deed or Act (reminiscent of a famous line of Goethe’s *Faust*, Part I),

which Schiller here refers to as the permanent, substantial embodiment of humanity that persists through change, turning every “perception” into “experience.” What we can notice here is that Fichte’s *person* and *conditions* dyad, itself a variation on Kant’s noumenal and empirical self, reemerged in the I-world and IT-world categories of the young Peirce’s initial categorial formulations. Peirce’s third youthful category of the THOU-world translated the

---

22 In the final analysis Peirce overhauled the terminology of Schiller and Emerson, as well as of Kant and Hegel, among others by reconfiguring traditional approaches to *Aesthetics* via his sense of *Esthetics*. See Martin Lefebvre, *art. cit.*, for an astute discussion of how Peirce rejected the traditional concept of Beauty (kalos, etc.) as too narrow, thereby transforming the traditional types of “Aesthetics of the Beautiful” into his science of theoretical Esthetics in which “the Admirable per se” functions as the normative basis of Ethics and Logic, and thus arguably as the normative lure of his agapastic cosmology and critical semeiosis in his “universe perfused with signs.” Apart from the metaphysical, there is the semantic question. Consulting the *Colins Pocket Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Harper’s, 1997), we find the word admirable translates into such cognate terms as astonishing, choice, excellent, exquisite, fine, praiseworthy, rare, surprising, valuable, wonderful, and the word beauty into loveliness, grace, comeliness, elegance, exquisiteness, seemliness, symmetry. My impression is that Schiller would have had no problem with Peirce’s way of reconfiguring and fine-tuning the vocabulary, while still noting the overlap of significant Platonic respects both authors explicitly and implicitly shared in common. And it should be noted that Emerson’s writing are replete with usages of Beauty and its cognates that split the difference between Platonic Beauty and the Admirable per se in Peirce’s sense. Peirce’s MS 310 features a cosmological sense, in thematizing all three compresent categories of his Tritism in its “dream” scenario of “a Reasonableness that Creates”: “[…] it must be a dream of extreme variety and must seem to embrace an eventful history extending through millions of years. It shall be a drama in which numberless living caprices shall jostle and work themselves out in larger and stronger harmonies and antagonisms, and ultimately execute intelligent reasonabilities of existence more and more intellectually stupendous and bring forth new designs still more admirable and prolific.” And if the fairy should ask one what the denouement should be, I should reply, “Let my intelligence in the dream develop powers infinitely beyond what I can now conceive and let me at last find that boundless reason utterly helpless to comprehend the glories of the thoughts that are to become materialized in the future, and that will be denouement enough for me. I may then return to the total unanalyzed impression of it. I have described it. Now let me experience it.” Peirce goes on to say: “My taste must doubtless be excessively crude, because I have no esthetic education; but as I am at present advised the aesthetic Quality appears to me to be the total unanalyzable impression of a reasonableness that has expressed itself in a creation. It is a pure Feeling but a feeling that is the impress of a Reasonableness that Creates. It is the Firstness that truly belongs to a Thirdness in its achievement of Secondness. As a matter of opinion, I believe that that Glory shines out in everything like the Sun and that any esthetic odiousness is merely our Unfeelingness resulting from obscurations due to our own moral and intellectual aberrations.”

23 Ibid., 62.

24 Goethe, *Faust* Part One, Line 1238, “In Amfang war die Tat.”
Spieltrieb concept of the Aesthetic Letters (1795)\textsuperscript{25}, but Schiller in fact prefigured this doctrine in his On Grace and Dignity of 1793, which centers on the inter-translating concepts of “the beauty of play,” “sympathetic play,” “grace as the beauty of play,” and “the character of the beautiful soul.”\textsuperscript{26} Following Schiller, the young Peirce formulated the polarity of the rational and sensuous drives in the terms of the I-world and the IT-world, while completing the Spieltrieb paradigm with the synthesizing function of the THOU-world,—agapastic harbinger of Peirce’s Thirdness, evolutionary love, and connatural semeiotic ideals, as in his later concept of the commens.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25}“[…] [W]e are absolutely correct, to restrict beauty, objectively, to mere natural conditions, and to explain it as a mere effect of the world of sense. […] [W]e are also correct to place beauty subjectively into the intelligible world. Beauty is, therefore, to be viewed as citizen of both worlds, belonging to the one by birth, to the other by adoption; she receives her existence in sensuous nature, and attains to the right of citizenship in the world of reason. […] [T]aste, as the faculty of judgment of beauty, steps into the middle between mind and sense, and connects these two natures, each scornful of the other, in happy concord: as it teaches matter respect for reason, it also teaches that which is rational its sympathy for sensuousness; as it ennobles perceptions into ideas, it transforms the world of sense in a certain way into a realm of freedom.” (G&D 346) “Either the person represses the demands of his sensuous nature to conduct himself in accord with the higher demands of his reasonable nature; or he reverses this relationship, and subordinates the reasonable part of his being to the sensuous part, and thus merely follows the thrust with which the necessity of nature drives him on, just like other phenomena; or the impulses of natural necessity place themselves in harmony with the laws of reason, and the person is at one with himself.” (G&D 361)

\textsuperscript{26}“Nature provided beauty of form, the soul bequeaths beauty of play. And now we also know what we are to understand by charm and grace. Grace is beauty of frame under the influence of freedom, the beauty of those phenomena upon which the person decides. Architectonic beauty does honor to the Author of nature, charm and grace honor him who possesses them. The one is talent, the latter a personal merit. (G&D 350) “A lively mind obtains influence over all bodily movements, and ultimately succeeds, indirectly, in changing even the fixed forms of nature, which are unreachable by the will, through the power of sympathetic play. With such a person, everything becomes a feature of his character […]” (G&D 357) “A lively mind obtains influence over all bodily movements, and ultimately succeeds, indirectly, in changing even the fixed forms of nature, which are unreachable by the will, through the power of sympathetic play. With such a person, everything becomes a feature of his character […]” (G&D 360) “We call it a beautiful soul, when moral sentiment has assured itself of all emotions of a person ultimately to that degree, that it may abandon the guidance of the will to emotions, and never run the danger of being in contradiction with its own decisions. Hence, in a beautiful soul individual deeds are not properly moral, rather, the entire character is. Hence, in a beautiful soul individual deeds are not properly moral, rather, the entire character is. […] It is thus in a beautiful soul, that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination harmonize, and grace is its epiphany.” (G&D 368)

\textsuperscript{27}In his “The Sense of Beauty never furthered the Performance of a single Act of Duty” (MS 12, 1857), the teen-age Peirce, taking the title of his essay verbatim out of Schiller’s Letters, develops the concepts of Person (autonomous source of form, pure ideas, laws) and Condition (sensuous impulse, manifold realities, cases), as reconciled by a third Play-impulse productive of their harmonious integration; this Play-Impulse of Beauty is the condition of a complete humanity, and of perfect freedom. Again exactly following Schiller, Peirce goes on to say that Beauty gives the mind no particular direction or tendency, ergo no result for intellect or will, and “performs no single duty”; rather it “places the mind in a state of ‘infinite determinableness’ […] comparable to refreshing sleep, although sleep is a passive source of refreshment, whereas Beauty is an active one.” Contemporaneously in MS 21 of 1857 Peirce penned ‘Raphael and Michel Angelo compared as Men,’ in which he distinguished

1. The Intellect etc. or that which says I.
2. The Heart “ Thou.
3. The Sense “ It.

Peirce added: “These three compose the inner nature and include everything.” In tandem with these Schillerian formulations, in MS 20 of the same year of 1857, “A Scientific Book of Synonyms,” Peirce distinguished the actual (which qualifies what is done in reference to previous acts) and real (what simply exists as object of thought, or as an object of contemplation). And again, he distinguished between “An actual fact and a real sentiment,” or “To be” and to “exist.” [Which reverses the order.] The young Peirce’s distinction here between the actual and the real internally resonated in his contemporary “The Sense of Beauty never furthered the Performance for a single Act of Duty.” (W, 1, pp. 10-19) Though Peirce sometimes loosely interchanges the words reality and actuality in his later writings, the distinction remained crucial in the development of his mature
In sum at this juncture, the evidence is that Peirce began his monumental career-long task of re-conceptualizing Kant’s Table of Categories under the heuristic guidance of Schiller’s Letters. His thought naturally blossomed over time. The initial TUISM of his first re-conceptualization of Kant took the form of the synthetic power of REPRESENTATION in the “New List of Categories” of 1867, and then, as he completed the structural integration of his system as a whole in a new vocabulary beginning with “A Guess at the Riddle” of 1887-88, of the synthetic power of THIRDNESS.  

Now Schiller inscribed the “aesthetic divinization of Man” as normative obligation of his Fichtean-based analysis. “Although an infinite being, a divinity, cannot become,” he continues, “we must surely call divine a tendency which has for its infinite task the proper characteristic of divinity.”—in other words, “absolute realization of capacity (actuality of all that is possible) and absolute unity of manifestation (necessity of all that is actual).” “Beyond question,” he says, “Man carries the potentiality for divinity within himself; [and] the path to divinity, if we may call a path what never reaches its goal, is open to him in his senses.” In due course Peirce took over, via Schelling and contra Hegel, this heuristic of asymptotic open-ended potentiality of melioristic semiosis in futuro. Peirce subsumed this uberosis trajectory in many phases of his writings with respect to the “developmental teleology” of the universe in what he called the finiosity of nature and experience.  

Now, as indicated above, Letters 24-27 comprised the original sequence after Letters 1-11. Letter 24 postulates that there have been three separate “moments or stages of man”—individually considered and for the human race—in a sequence of the physical, the aesthetic, and the moral. This is a reappearance of the instrumental function of the Beautiful, which, grounded in the spontaneity of the aesthetic consciousness, shakes off the power of physical nature, enabling a person and a society to control it in the moral condition. Here Schiller replays his Fichtean conditions of human experience—of the transcendental I-world and the sensual, physical IT-world—in reverse order. He first describes the condition of “crude nature,”—barbarian and slave nature,—from which man never entirely escapes. From there, secondly, he passes on to the condition of a “degenerate form of reason” that introduces ideas over matter in care and fear, producing the imperfect imperatives of worldly or eternal happiness—fantastical desires for an infinite perpetuation of being and well-being in the dimension of animal strivings for the absolute. In this corrupted form of rationality, even Kant’s moral law is only a negative check on self-love; its concepts of right and wrong are statutes ordained by a fearsome divine will, not things valid in themselves and to all eternity. Here the sensuous impulse to live still dominates over the formal impulse. Thus in the first categories—real in differing senses of generality of possibility (Firstness) and of thought (Thirdness), respectively, and actual for existential acts, events, and brute facts. This distinction resurfaces for example in the “three universes” of his “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God” of 1908.

28 Cf. Max Fisch, Etienne DeTienne.

29 Ibid., 64-65 (my emphasis on the inexhaustibility of Schiller’s Final Interpretant; Schiller’s sense of sensuousness, which is here intended to reject the Kantian dichotomy of noumenal and phenomenal, is further elaborated by Peirce’s trichotomic semiotic as the sense of qualisigns.).

30 In this regard it will be important to trace the priority of judgments of the beauty of Nature before Art in Goethe, Kant, and Emerson. Hegel produced the more limiting direction in associating Beauty with the Fine Arts, a direction which arguably opened the door to the modern (post-modern) psychologistic aesthetics of cultural relativism. On the developmental teleology of the ethical individual, see the still classic work of Vincent Colapietro (ref.)
condition he is a non-rational, in the second a “rational,” animal; but, Schiller concludes, “he should be neither of these, he should be a human being.”

Letter 25 builds further on this theme. In the first stage of sensuous slavery, man is simply immersed in the IT-world, such that there is no world yet for him. (In such an IT-world we seem to have a precedent for the concept of “reification” in the sense elaborated by Marx, Lukacs, and a contemporary generation of neo-Marxist critical theorists.) This one-sided materialistic reduction is balanced, however, with Schiller’s Kantian and Fichtean recourse to the binary conjugation of matter and form. “Contemplation (reflection) is Man’s first free relation to the universe which surrounds him.” Man’s formal nature frees his objects from desire and thus secures them from passion. However, he adds that what is true in man’s legislative (intellectual and moral) nature is even more evident in moments of aesthetic calm where timeless forms, images of the infinite, are immediately reflected upon the transient foundation of empirical consciousness. “Zeus who triumphs over the laws of time brings the reign of Saturn to an end.” Man becomes superior to every terror of Nature so long as he knows how to give form to it, and to turn it into his object. With noble dignity he rises up against his deities. “The divine monster of the Oriental [...] dwindles in the Grecian fantasy into the friendly outlines of humanity; the empire of the Titans falls, and infinite force is mastered by infinite form.”

And here Schiller’s Spieltrieb bids to move beyond the purview of Fichte’s subjective idealism. It is not true to human nature, he insists, to pass directly from “mere life” to “pure shape” or “pure object.” Beauty performs the mediating work of free contemplation but without leaving the world of sense—as happens in the case of cognition of abstract truth or right. In our pleasure in the Beautiful, no succession between activity and passivity can be distinguished; it is only because reflection is so intermingled with feeling that we believe ourselves to perceive form immediately. Moreover, Beauty is both an object for us, and at the same time a state of our personality—form and at the same time our human life. This aesthetic form of consciousness is the only experience in which form and matter are truly interpenetrative. The “analytical philosopher”—as in Kant’s and Fichte’s prescriptions for the moral consciousness—works with the false assumption of the incompatibility of thought and sensation. “But with the enjoyment of Beauty, or aesthetic unity, there occurs a real union and interchange of matter with form, and of passivity with activity, [such that] by this very occurrence the compatibility of both natures is proved, the practicability of the infinite in finiteness, and consequently the possibility of a sublime humanity.”

The existential and theoretical issues, then, involve of the task of making our way from ordinary life to aesthetic life. The sense of Beauty involves not only the normative possibility of a sublime humanity; it is simultaneously the order of revelation of affinity between physical nature and the symbolic systems of the human mind—and here Schiller also adumbrates the theme of the connatural affinity of unconscious and conscious mindedness that was to undergo a conspicuous development in Schelling, Emerson, and Peirce.

In passing, we can note that Letter 26 is a particular good background for Emerson’s Transcendentalism. Since the aesthetic disposition “first” gives rise to freedom and cannot itself arise from freedom,—Schiller insists,—it must be a “gift of Nature” and “consequently can have no moral origin.” The germ of Beauty develops “not where Man hides himself

---

31 Ibid., 119. These formulations, pointedly in his polemic against Kant’s dyadic hermeneutic of moral duty, Schiller already formulated in his first work of critical aesthetics, On Nature and Grace (1793).
32 Ibid., 119-23.
33 Schiller’s rhetorical flourishes here also trace back to Fichte’s influence and extend forward to Emerson’s ‘Fate’ and ‘Power’ essays in The Conduct of Life (1860).
34 Ibid., 123.
trogloidyte-fashion in caves or moves nomadically in great plural hordes,” but only “communicating with himself and the whole human race in that joyful state and in that blessed zone where activity alone leads to enjoyment and enjoyment alone to activity […] where imagination eternally escapes from reality and yet never goes astray from the simplicity of Nature—here alone will sense and spirit, receptive and creative power develop in the happy equilibrium which is the soul of Beauty and the condition of humanity.”

And indeed in this same context Schiller formulates distinctions of qualitative immediacy, existential otherness, and open-ended cultural Bildung that are a provenance of the young Peirce’s I-IT-THOU triad and of the mature Peirce’s categorial Tritism of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Historically, Schiller observes, in the transition from the savage to humanity, in all races that have escaped from the slavery of the animal state, civilized progress has engendered “a delight in appearance, a disposition toward ornament and play.” Extreme stupidity and extreme intelligence both seek the “real” [read: the actual, or Secondness in Peircean parlance] and are wholly insensible to “mere appearance.”36 “Indifference towards reality [id est, “actuality”] and interest in appearance are a real enlargement of humanity and a decisive step towards culture.” They “reveal to us a force which sets itself in motion of its own accord, independently of any outward material, and possesses sufficient energy to repel the pressures of matter.”

Here Schiller also refers to the “noble senses” of eye and ear, as contributing to aesthetic freedom and the play-impulse, which issues forth in the “imitative creative impulse” that transforms Nature into “mere appearances.”37 Aesthetic experience, Schiller insists, is man’s territory on which he forges “new” relationships in Nature. He exercises this right of sovereignty in “the art of appearance within the world of appearance,” the “unsubstantial kingdom of the imagination.” The poet, Schiller observes, steps outside his proper boundaries when he attributes existence to his ideal. “It requires a further, and much higher, degree of liberal culture to perceive in the living only pure appearance, than to dispense with life in the appearance.” (The influence of his compatriot and colleague, Goethe, is also present in these formulations.)

Letter 2738 completes this line of thought concerning “pure appearance.” “To strive after absolute appearance demands greater capacity for abstraction, more freedom of the heart, more vigor of will than Man needs if he confines himself to reality [read: Peirce’s sense of actuality], and he must have already put the latter behind him if he wishes to arrive at [aesthetic] appearance.”39 A total revolution is needed in the whole mode of perception. “When therefore we discover traces of a disinterested free appreciation, of pure appearance, we can infer some such revolution of his nature and the real beginning in him of humanity.”40

Man needs such a “superfluity in the material, an aesthetic supplement, in order to extend his enjoyment beyond every need.”41 “The animal works when deprivation is the mainspring of its activity, and it plays when the fullness of its strength is this mainspring, when superabundant life is its own stimulus to activity.”42 Nature itself makes her way through the sanction of superfluity of physical play, to aesthetic play, in its free movement which is itself both end and means. Man’s imagination is like that; it simply delights in its absolute and

36 Cf. fn. 20 above.
37 It could be quibbled that this doctrine of the “noble senses,” which recurs in Schelling and Schopenhauer, still carries a “German” psychologistic nuance that Peirce rejected in his semiotically expanded sense of the ubiquity of qualsigns incapable of hierarchization in “esthetic enjoyment.”
38 Ibid., 131-40.
39 Ibid., 131. See the passage in Peirce where he argues that clarity in the Firstness of phenomenological perception is an acquired capacity. [ref.]
40 Ibid., 132.
41 Loc. cit.
42 Ibid., 133.
unfettered power in its physical image-making; but it finally achieves the capacity for “free form, the leap to aesthetic play” in its physical image-making. Such a freer play-impulse “finally breaks completely away from the fetters of exigency, and Beauty for her own sake becomes the object of its endeavor.”

Here again Schiller prioritizes the beauty of Nature over Art. Calling upon his poetic powers and the themes of his later literary accomplishments, in this concluding Letter 27 Schiller writes persuasively—and a precedent to analogous flourishes of Emerson—in describing an “aesthetic supplement” to material nature in the grades of organic life. A “gleam of freedom,” he says, shines over the darkness of animal existence, a sign of its liberation from the bare necessities of life. The lion roars in purposeless display, exuberantly enjoying its sway when not gnawed by hunger. The insects swarm with joyous life in the sunbeam; the song-birds warble their melodious tribute to the spring dawn, and convene in raucous councils as the autumn leaves fall. The trees put forth innumerable buds in lavish, celebratory profusions well beyond the possibility of their individual survival rate. “So Nature gives us even in her material realm a prelude to the infinite, and even here partly removes the chains which she casts away entirely in the realm of form.” (133). We feel our “consanguinity” (in Emerson’s term) with organic nature in our human life, sharing a metaphysical DNA, as it were, with our vegetable and animal environments. From this connatural superfluity of physical play, Schiller goes on to say, we mount to aesthetic play, where the imagination soars to the lofty freedom of the Beautiful above the designs of every purposed end.

Returning then to the original theme of Letters 3-6, Schiller concludes that Beauty can alone confer on Man a true social character. Taste alone brings harmony into society, because it establishes it in the individual. All other forms of perception, sensuous or intellectual, divide a man; only the perception of the Beautiful makes something whole in him, because both his natures must accord with it. And thus it is only in the Beautiful that we enjoy life at the same time as individuals and as the human race, that is, as representatives of the race. “Beauty alone makes all the world happy, and every being forgets its limitations as long as it experiences her enchantment.” “No pre-eminence, no rival dominion is tolerated as far as taste rules and the realm of the Beautiful extends.” herefore “In the aesthetic realm is achieved the idea of equality which the visionary would fain see realized in actuality also.”

But can the “State of Beauty in Appearance” really exist, and where is it to be found? Schiller concludes Letter 27 on a note reminiscent of Socrates in the Republic: As a need, in every finely tuned soul, as an achievement, only in a few select circles. He also mentions

---

43 It can be argued that Schiller’s point here resurfaces in one of Peirce’s career-ending essays, ‘An Essay toward Improving Our Reasoning in Security and Uberty’ (EP2 462 ff.) where he advances the concept of uberty (“gravid with new birth”) that “puts a smile upon Beauty, upon moral virtue, and upon abstract truth”—“the three things that alone raise Humanity above Animality” (465). We note that Peirce here uses the word Beauty in this triad of normative human values!

44 In a variety of other contexts Schiller the poet and playwright expatiates cogently on this theme in depicting the aesthetic sublimations, the generous interplay of refined affections, involved in the romantic relations between the human sexes. “Desire extends and exalts itself into love as mankind arises in its object, and the base advantage over sense is disdained for the sake of a nobler victory over the will.” Beauty therefore resolves the conflict of natures in its simplest and purest example, in the eternal interplay of the opposite sexes; and she aims to accomplish the same in the intricate totality of society, in the moral world after the pattern of the free union which she contrives between masculine strength and feminine gentleness. As in the chivalric code, beyond the dynamically sensual state of rights (curbing nature with nature) and even the universal ethical imperative of duty (subjecting the individual to the general will) is the aesthetic state of cultivated society. “To grant freedom by means of freedom is the fundamental law of this kingdom.”


46 See the title of Emerson’s Representative Men (1860).
“the pure Church.” In practice, however, we find it “only in a few select circles where it is not the spiritless imitation of foreign manners but people’s own lovely nature that governs conduct, where mankind passes through the most complex situations with eager simplicity and tranquil innocence, and has no need whether to encroach upon another’s freedom in order to assert his own, or to display gracefulness at the cost of dignity.”

2. The Second Sequence: Letters 12-23: Schiller’s Anticipation of Peirce’s Priority of Esthetic Normativity

Schiller developed his Letters 12-23 after completing the original set 1-11 and 24-27. In this new set he continued Fichtean themes transposed to a philosophy of aesthetic consciousness while at the same time amplifying his basic assertion as to the ideal of the Beautiful as the telos of human perfection. This is the sense of the “Beautiful” that Peirce critically transformed into the “Admireable per se” of “concrete reasonableness” as the summum bonum in his semeiotic “universe perfused with signs.” A clear precedent to Schelling, Emerson, and Peirce, Schiller’s account in effect prioritized the revelation of the Beautiful in experience as the “first” normative ideal subtending the moral and logical trajectories of experience. Though indebted to Fichte, Schiller, in concert with his colleague Goethe, had here already broken through Kant’s dichotomy of phenomenon and noumenon with regard to the lived experience of poiesis in nature and art. Peirce followed suit, while—in a nutshell—translating “Aesthetics” into his preferred interpretant of “Esthetics” to meet the exigencies of his vastly wider theoretical register.

As our heuristic guide here, let us again imagine how Peirce, to the end of his career, “remembered” and drew again from this pool of thought—namely, his “first” philosophical reading of Schiller’s Letters. As one of many possible citations, the following one from his 1903 essays, ‘The Maxim of Pragmatism,’ will serve our purpose:

There is a preference which depends upon the significance of impulses, whatever that may mean. It supposes that there is some ideal-state of things, which regardless of how it should be brought about and independently of any ulterior reason whatsoever, is held to be good or fine. In short, ethics must rest upon doctrine which without at all

47 Cf. the ending of Peirce’s ‘Man’s Glassy Essence’ where he mentions religious groups as embodying an agapastic esprit du corp.
48 Ibid., 140. Among other references, this passage can be read as provenance of Emerson’s ethics, politics, and the general content of his The Conduct of Life (1860).
49 I refer back to a preliminary point concerning Peirce’s self-conscious claim to have developed “a completely developed system” (Letter to Wm. James, 1904). His “Schelling-fashioned” system of objective idealism consisted of an empiricist-orientated metaphysics—aligned with Schelling’s “progressive empiricism” qua “metaphysical empiricism” as expounded in the latter’s “Positive Philosophy,” itself a polemic against Kant’s and Hegel’s Negative, (regressive a priori) Philosophies. Peirce’s metaphysics postulates a worldview that is necessarily creative (“ecstatic”) and immanently evolutionary, an “asymptotic hyperbolic” worldview framed in terms of irreducible, trivalent, compresent principles of actualization (Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness), across the fields of logic, mathematics, phenomenology, semiotic, speculative cosmology, and the special sciences. His semeiological Tritism deliberately employed the term “interpretant” to get away from cognitive associations with existent minds, psychological acts, events, entities, rather, postulating an indefinitely proliferating semeiotic as well as cosmological and theological process. In such an inherently “vague” register of maximally comprehensive generality, Peirce marked Kant’s transcendental idealism as nominalistic for its “critical” focus upon individual minds and unknowable things in themselves. Fichte’s subjective idealism was in the same case. For his part, Schiller shared the available theoretical frameworks of Kant and Fichte, while also drawing on the resources of Goethe and the young Schelling. Schiller’s superlative accomplishments as a dramatist, poet, and historian preceded and naturally fed his treatises on philosophical Aesthetics—featuring his central concepts of “grace” and “the beauty of play” in registers of traditional philosophical description. Still, Peirce, with transparent grace, came to acknowledge symmetries of their thought in important respects and incorporated them into his architectonic.
considering what our conduct is to be, divides ideally possible states of things into two classes, those that would be admirable and those that would be unadmirable, and undertakes to define precisely what it is that constitutes the admirableness of an ideal. 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. I call that inquiry Esthetics, because it is generally said that the three normative sciences are logic, ethics, and esthetics, being the three doctrines that distinguish [the] good and bad, Logic in regard to representations of truth, Ethics in regard to efforts of will, and Esthetics, in objects considered simply in their presentation. Now that third normative science can I think be no other than that which I have described. It [Esthetics] is evidently the basic normative science upon which as a foundation the doctrine of ethics must be reared to be surmounted in its turn by the doctrine of logic.50

Such a passage arguably reveals the resurfacing undercurrent of Schiller’s aesthetics in Peirce’s mature philosophical text. How much this is by explicit recall and how much by unconscious gestation is impossible to tell. But as we delve further into their textual interface we shall appreciate how Schiller’s Letter 12-23 provides an unmistakable provenance for Peirce’s doctrine of the apriority of esthetic normativity, despite his apparent modesty and confessed wavering on the subject of Esthetics in certain other contexts. 51

Schiller’s Letter 12, in elaborating upon the two contrary impulses, the sensuous and the rational, once again reduces the “single form of existence” of sensuous experience to a state of material reification characterized by a condition of “absence-of-self.” The “sense impulse” of the IT-world would indeed be that in which “the whole phenomenon of mankind is rooted” in abstraction and apart from the contrary “formal impulse” of the constituting I-

50EP2 143.
51See EP2 190 (1903) where Peirce says that “[...] ignorant as I am of Art, I have a fair share of capacity for esthetic enjoyment,” and goes on to inscribe his perhaps most crucial articulation of esthetic enjoyment as comprised of the Firstness of Thirdness—that is, a “Quality of Feeling,” as a “sort of intellectual sympathy,” “a reasonable Feeling.” In MS 310 of 1903 and elsewhere, Peirce also modestly disclaims personal esthetic sensitivity, and he even confesses to have “wavered” on the possibility of establishing Esthetics as a science normatively prior to Ethics and Logic. He says he began considering Ethics as a normative science only around 1887; but then referring to Schiller’s Letters, the subject to which he devoted his first philosophic studies “exclusively,” he says he had since then “so completely neglected it that I do not feel entitled to have any confident opinions about it.” In his determination that Esthetics is the first of the normative sciences, he concludes by saying that the supposition is governed by his three phenomenological-cum-metaphysical categories. (EP2 189, 200, 201) And yet, Peirce’s hermeneutical act is circular here, in that—as we have seen—his three categories trace back, however unconsciously, to his “first” categorial classifications of the personal pronouns (I, IT, and THOU) based on Schiller’s Letters. To this we should add that the modestly disclaiming Peirce, if only by virtue of sharing the standards of taste of his own social milieu, must have possessed a considerable degree of aesthetic sensitivity. His friendship with the Hudson River School artist Albert Bierstadt can be cited in this regard, as well as his spending time with his wife in NYC artistic circles. His capacity for aesthetic revelaments comes out especially in the beautiful passage leading up to his ‘Neglected Argument for the Reality of God’—“Enter your skiff of Musement, push off into the lake of thought, and leave the breath of heaven to swell your sail. With your eyes open, awake to what is about or within you, and open conversation with yourself; for such is all meditation. It is, however, not a conversation in words alone, but is illustrated, like a lecture, with diagrams and with experiments.” The overall context here is that “Play, the law of liberty,” functions as the heuristic for scientific observation and analysis, involving “higher weapons of the arsenal of thought” that are “not playthings but edge-tools.” (CP 6.461; EP2 437) His description of the “smiling and civilized-looking” vista of the fag-end of the Blue Ridge Mountains by “the picturesque Delaware River” in Milford, Pennsylvania can be thought to have a Bierstadt flavor (EP2 469). His splendidly articulated “dream” of the concretely Admirable in MS 310 is another instance, (This footnote courtesy of Nicholas Guardiano, Philosophy Department, SIU.)
world characterized by its rational legislative functions, intellectual and moral, with their autonomous trajectories aiming at truth and right.\footnote{The latter trajectories of the formal impulse raise mankind to a “unit of idea[s] embracing the whole realm of phenomena.” By this operation of transcendental intelligence “we are no longer [immersed] in time, but time, with its complete and infinite succession, is in us. We are no longer individuals but species; the judgment of all spirits is expressed by our own, the choice of all hearts is represented by our action.” (Ibid., p.67) But this is still a function of Kant’s dichtomy of phenomenon and noumenon at the heart of his system (and which Kant, in 1794, defended against Schiller’s position that “Grace lies in the freedom of willful movements, dignity in mastery over unwillful movements. [...] Dignity is more required and manifest in suffering (pathos), grace more in ethos[...]” (G&D 377). As we have see “Grace” in G&D became the Spieltrieb in the Aesthetic Letters.}

Letter 13 further develops this opposition of the sensuous and formal drives in terms of Fichte’s concept of \textit{Wechselwirkung}, or “reciprocal action,”—itself a variation on Kant’s dictum of the conjunctive form-matter relation, but which Kant himself articulated in the dyadic form of irreconcilable tension between moral autonomy and sensuous heteronomy.\footnote{I am prompted to inure here whether Peirce, at the later date of remembering Schiller, ever actually \textit{reread} the Aesthetic Letters and/or the German’s earlier treatise, \textit{On Grace and Dignity}. I have no information on this either way, but such reading(s) would have provided ballast against his self-confessed wavering on the priority of Esthetics over Ethics, via the clearcut argument Schiller advances against Kant’s draconian imposition of moral rules over sensuous inclination. Schiller exposes Kant’s moral theory as a function of the I-world in \textit{resistance} to the It-world—in effect falling under Peirce’s category of Secondness. As he wrote in G&D, “[in Kant’s philosophy], inclination is a very ribald companion of moral sentiment, and pleasure, a regrettable supplement to moral principles.” (364) “So long as the moral mind still applies force, natural impulse must still have power to set against it. [...] In Kantian moral philosophy, the idea of duty is present with a severity which frightens all the Graces away. [Kant articulated] [...] the strict and harsh opposition of the two principles working on the will of a person. [...] (365) He became a Draco of his time” [in condemning the decline of morals in his day]. (366) Peirce conceived of theoretical, not practical, Ethics (Ant-ethics) as the science of self-control through self-criticisms and heterocritisms under the guidance of the principle of contemplative admiration \textit{per se}. This converges, though of course in Peirce’s own theoretical register, with Schiller’s personified concept of “the beautiful soul”: “We call it a beautiful soul, when moral sentiment has assured itself of all emotions of a person ultimately to that degree, that it may abandon the guidance of the will to emotions, and never run the danger of being in contradiction with its own decisions. Hence, in a beautiful soul individual deeds are not properly moral, rather, the entire character is. (368) And again: “It is thus in a beautiful soul, that sensuousness and reason, duty and inclination harmonize, and grace is its epiphany.” (G&D 368) Schiller’s text, in this personified though not cosmollogically evolutionary sense, also introduces an agapastic tone: in distinguishing love from Kantian respect for the moral law, he writes, “[...] love: an emotion which is inseparable from grace and beauty [...] Love alone [...] is a free emotion, for her pure source flows from the seat of freedom, from our divine nature. [...] [It] is absolutely grand in itself, which finds itself imitated in grace and dignity, and satisfied in sensuousness; it is the Legislator himself, the God in us, who plays with his own image in the world of sense. [...] The pure mind can only love, not respect; sense can only respect, but not love” (G&D 381-82)}

While the sensuous drive aims at mutability and the rational drive at immutability, Schiller’s key point is that \textit{aesthetic culture} can do \textit{equal justice} to both. \textit{Culture}’s role on the one hand must provide the (sensuous) receptive faculty with the most multitudinous contacts with the real world, maximizing \textit{feeling} to its fullest extent, while on the other hand securing for the rational faculty the fullest independence from the sensuously receptive, thereby maximizing \textit{its} legislative activity to the fullest extent. Man becomes a non-entity in the failure of either case; in the former case he sinks down into material reification, in the second into mere abstract formalism. \textit{Aesthetic culture} restricts one-sided hegemony of either impulse in isolation, and thus functions as the principle of \textit{moderation}. (This \textit{moderate}ing function of culture is also very Goethean.)\footnote{Cf. Emerson’s portrait of “Goethe: Or, The Writer” in \textit{Representative Men}, in \textit{Emerson: Essays and Lectures}, The Library of America edition, 746-61.}

Schiller’s Letter 14 then links culture’s moderating function with the “idea of humanity,” itself “something infinite” to which man can approximate ever nearer in the course of time, but without ever reaching it. The rare cases of revelation of the “perfect
balancing” of the sensuous and rational impulses involve a “complete intuition of his humanity, and the object which afforded him this vision would serve him as a symbol of his accomplished destiny, and consequently [...] as a representation of the Infinite.” Once again, this destinate realization of aesthetic intuition draws its force from a new impulse—“the play impulse”—which combines the sensuous and rational impulses in a higher dimension, one which “achieves the extinction of time in time and the reconciliation of becoming with absolute being”—in other words, a reconciliation “of variation with identity.” (This is another parallel if not precedent for both Schelling’s and Emerson’s “twin laws” of identity and metamorphosis.55 And I am suggesting that the transformative metaphorics, so to speak, of the stream of connatural interpretants inscribed in Peirce’s more advanced critical semiotics can be described as a monistic theory of symbolic metamorphosis in the same vein.)

This doctrine led Schiller to develop, in the ensuing Letter 15, his concept of the object of the Spieltrieb (play-impulse) as a “living shape”—or “living form,” that is, experience of the objectively Beautiful, which he says is not co-extensive with all living phenomena nor merely confined to that realm. (This is another provenance for Peirce’s pragmaticism of “living thought.”) This alone, Schiller writes, fulfills our ideal concept of Humanity as the ongoing unity of sensuous passivity and of active freedom.56

Speaking personally, I have found it useful here to think of the variations on the symbolism of “Helen” that Goethe inscribed in Faust, Parts I and II.57 Symbolic visions of the most beautiful woman of Greek mythology, culminating in the saving graces of the Eternal-Feminine at the end of Faust Part Two, function as Romantic-Classical lures of the striving (Streben) and development (Entstehen) of Faust’s soul. Schiller, whose own career was for a time closely intertwined with Goethe’s, co-authors, as it were, this central heuristic of Faust in arguing that Beauty functions as the ideal of the imaginative impulse ideally informing the high-end spiritual (poetical, i.e. poiesis) components in all experience.58 Pointedly, Schiller says, it is witnessed in the Greek Olympics, but not in the Roman amphitheatre; such an aesthetic normativity is also seen in the Olympians gods and the Juno Ludovici.59 Once again, we can extrapolate from such contexts as these as precedents to Peirce’s normative, axiagastic ideal of the “admirable per se” as “concrete reasonableness”—which is “a pure Feeling but a feeling that is the impress of a Reasonableness that Creates. It is the Firstness that truly belongs to a Thirdness in its achievement of Secondness.” Schiller’s classic treatises on aesthetic sensibility at the basis of poiesis in fact add rich color to Peirce’s theoretical architectonics. Beauty, says Schiller, dictates to mankind the “twofold law” of absolute formality and concrete realization—which is again the twin laws of identity and metamorphosis that implicate Peirce’s “esthetic” considerations of a “first” normative

---

55 Emerson’s “twin laws” of identity and metamorphosis are inscribed in ‘The Sphinx,’ ‘The World-Soul,’ and other poems, and are central themes of ‘The Method of Nature’ (1839), ‘Circles’ (1841), ‘Nature’ and ‘Nominalist and Realist’ (1844), to mention only four of his essays here.

56 In a famous statement here Schiller says that Man “only plays with Beauty” (is not serious in this modality); and he “is wholly himself only when he plays.” Reason sets up this ideal of Humanity, which is exclusively neither mere life nor mere form: “Man is only serious with the agreeable, the good, the perfect; but with Beauty he plays.” (Ibid., 79-80).

57 [Ref.]

58 Faust, Part II, 12104 ff.: “All that must disappear / Is but a parable; / What lay beyond us, here / All is made visible; / Here deeds have understood / Words they were darkened by; / Eternal Womanhood / Draws us on high.”

59 Ibid., 80-81. “It was according to this ideal of human beauty that the art of antiquity was framed, and one recognizes it in the divine form of Niobe, in Belvederean Apollo, in the Winged Genius of Borghese, and in the Muse of the Berberini Palace.” (G&D 381)
principle of human rationality and indeed of cosmic semeiosis and the finious nature of "evolutionary love."60

Schiller himself achieved a huge generalization of this doctrine in Letter 16, in effect constituting the idea of Beauty as qualitatively first in its omnimodal potency subtending its instrumental and constituting its providential roles. As we have seen, as a principle of ideal equilibrium the play-drive functions as the balancing measure of the reciprocal action (Wechselwirkung) of the sensuous and formal drives. Thus in practice there is always an oscillation in the reciprocal action of what Schiller describes as "energizing" and "melting" Beauty—(energizing the languid, and restoring harmony to the tense, forms of aesthetic consciousness). Beauty in ideal form of practice resolves both these opposing modes, absorbing them in the unity of the ideal Man. In either case such a "pure conception of humanity" is the harmonizing lure of holistic human conduct. Beauty in its omnimodal generality transports us into an "intermediate region" between sensuous passivity and intellectual or moral freedom; it mediates by sublation (Aufhebung) in a higher unity of the two sides.61 And Schiller says this concept of Beauty as the normative ideal of humanity "will lead us through the whole labyrinth of aesthetics" (88). (In net effect, Schiller has here already pushed beyond Fichte and toward the naturalistic-idealistic reflections of the young Schelling.)

Letter 19 further elaborates upon this complex confluence of post-Kantian concepts that seems to have left an unforgettable, though for years an unconscious, impression on Peirce. Beauty is a means of leading Man from matter to form, from perception to principles, from a limited to an absolute existence. But again, the mind itself is neither matter nor form, neither sensuousness nor reason (94). The will operates as the authority over these two conflicting necessities, giving rise to freedom. The will functions here in the sense of Kant’s "supersensible substrate" of noumenal freedom (articulated in the third Critique). Necessities outside ourselves determine our (Fichtean sense of) condition, that is, our existence in time, while necessities inside us inform of our intellectual and moral determinations to counterbalance the sense of external resistance. An aesthetic “free will to play,” so to speak, integrates these two conflicting energies in its concrete revelations of the Beautiful as the ideal of our humanity. The “middling disposition” of the play-drive functions as such a principle of harmonization as well as imaginative lure in the asymptotic universe. Peirce reformulated this sense of sublation of outer and inner components of consciousness—and attendant problematic of the coincident determinisms and indeterminisms of life—first in his I-IIT-THOU Tuism and later in the terms of his master-concept of synechism and its attendant articulation of the trichotomic process of semeiosis.62

60 In an even fuller analysis, we can speculate that Schelling’s Freiheitschrift of 1809), which postulated concepts of Becoming, Purposiveness, and Love in the Divine Personality, formed another background for Peirce’s sense of cosmic semeiosis and evolutionary love. Schelling transmuted these concepts into his later “progressive empiricism,” i.e. “metaphysical empiricism,” expounded in his Berlin Lectures of 1842. Cf. F. W. J. Schelling: The Grounding of the Positive Philosophy: the Berlin Lectures, trans. Bruce Matthews. 171 ff.
61 Ibid., 88-89 Schiller refers here to Goethe; and according to Reginald Snell, this passage could be the original precedent for Hegel’s concept of Aufhebung. But I am rather inclined to interpret Schiller’s “middling” or “intermediate region” of aesthetic play as a variation on Aristotelian method of conjugating matter and form; Kant employed the same “synoptic” (not “dialectical”) method that resolves material subject matters and their formal principles into their essential features in his three Critiques. The same methodic operator reappears in Peirce who rejects Hegel’s “pragmatoidal,” i.e. anancastic form of dialectical logic. (Cf. EP2 143 among many other references.)
62 “But dualism in its broadest legitimate meaning as the philosophy which performs its analyses with an axe, leaving, as the ultimate elements, unrelated chunks of being, is this most hostile to synechism. In particular, the synechist will not admit that physical and psychical phenomena are entirely distinct,—whether as belonging to
Now, according to Schiller, *Freedom* is an operation of sensuous *Nature* (in the widest sense of the term, as in Goethe’s reprisal of Spinoza) and not a work of a merely individual Man; but it arises only when Man is *complete*, that is, when both his sensuous and rational impulses have achieved mediation in a more concrete synthesis of the Play-drive. It is lacking as long as he is incomplete; it must be restored by the Play-impulse which gives him back his completeness. Historically and in the individual, says Schiller, the sense-impulses operate earlier than the rational; and in this *priority* of the sense-impulses, together with their transformability into an aesthetically free disposition, we find the key to the whole history of human freedom.\(^{63}\)

Letter 21 further elaborates Schiller’s point that esthetic determinacy occupies priority in the normative disposition of fulfilled humanity (individually and historically). Beauty, he says, is a “second Creator.” (Cf. Peirce’s aforcited “Reason that Creates.”) Its omni-modal potentiality for the co-permeation of the sensuous and formal drives functions as “an infinite inner abundance”; its ideal freedom of determination is a “filled infinity,” promoting transports of spirit indifferent in relation to knowledge and merely individual mental tasks. Once again, as quoted *verbatim* by the 16-year old Peirce, Beauty gives “no merely individual result, realizes no individual purpose, and helps us perform no individual duty.” Rather, Beauty restores to a person his or her capacity to participate in Nature’s own ecstatic freedom of expression—which is “the highest gift of all, the gift of Humanity itself.” In actual practice, man loses this capacity with every definite (Fichtean) *condition* into which he sinks, and therefore needs to achieve the epitome of restoring his *naturally free disposition* by means of the *aesthetic life of the spirit*.\(^{64}\)

Letter 22 further articulates Schiller’s argument that the *aesthetic disposition*, while it can be regarded in one sense as a *cipher* (confining our attention to individual and definite operations), yet in another respect is “a condition of the *highest reality*” (103), as “the absence of all limits and the sum total of the powers which are jointly engaged within it.” This *disposition toward Beauty* removes all limitation; is not caught up in the sequences of causes and effects; is oriented toward wholeness in itself, combining in itself the conditions of origin and of continued existence. Thus while the normal run of sensuous perceptions make us further impressionable in the order of sensuous perception, and that of concepts strengthens our resistances and hardens them proportionately, though depriving us of greater spontaneity, in the experience of Beauty we are at such a moment “masters in equal degree of our passive and active powers, and shall turn with equal facility to seriousness or to play, to rest or to movement, to compliance or to resistance, to abstract thinking or to beholding.” (This *disposition to Beauty*, also articulated by Goethe, became a front and center theme in Emerson’s writings.)

different categories of substance, or as entirely separate sides of one shield,—but will insist that all phenomena are of one character, though some are more mental and spontaneous, others more material and regular. Still, all alike present that mixture of freedom and constraint, which allows them to be, nay, makes them to be teleological, or purposive” (*Immortality in the Light of Synechism,* 1893, EP2, 2). Here Peirce taps not only into Schiller’s sense of the play-drive, but also into Schelling’s sense of the artistic genius whose creative urge unites conscious and non-conscious forces in his personality and in society—Schelling’s formulations themselves tracing back to variations of the themes in Kant, Goethe, and Schiller.

\(^{63}\)Ergo, Schiller writes, “there is an education for health, for the understanding, for morality, and for taste (for Beauty). This last has as its aim the cultivation of the whole of our sensuous and intellectual powers in the fullest possible harmony. This does not mean that the aesthetic condition operates independently of the physical, intellectual, and moral laws, but is again omnimodally free of any specific determinations by them in its domain of contemplative pleasure.”

\(^{64}\)In passing we might consider how this captures the spirit of “Zen” and its many historical exemplifications in the Zen arts transposed to the aesthetic-religious life. Conversely, it is very different from the “life of the spirit” as a dis-illusioned world-transcending aesthetic liberation articulated by Schopenhauer and Santayana.
Letter 23 completes this disquisition on connatural esthetic normativity. The transition from the passive condition of perceiving to the active one of intellection and willing involves passage through an “intermediate condition” of aesthetic freedom. Even though this intermediate condition decides nothing in respect of our judgment or our opinions, Schiller goes on to say, “There is no other way to make the sensuous man rational than by first making him aesthetic.” Beauty in both instances is merely the capacity, but determines nothing absolutely concerning the actual use of this capacity. The sensuous man is determined (physically) from the outside; the intellectual man from the inside. But the source of the latter’s real spontaneity and freedom lies in the symmetry of his aesthetic nature. Or again, his “aesthetic temper”—read: Peirce’s “feeling”—provides the basis for the spontaneity of reason in its active ennoblement of the sensuous—read: Peirce’s doctrine of abductive inference—and hence Schiller’s political concept of the primacy of aesthetic culture as the basis of the condition of universal moral validity. “In the realm of truth and morality sensation must have nothing to determine; but in the sphere of happiness form may exist and the play impulse may govern.”

Mutatis mutandis, these formulations are all precedents to Peirce’s sense of Esthetics as the theoretical science of the Admirable, of a Creative Reasonableness.

3. Brief recapitulation

Peirce wrote that Schiller’s Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man contained his earliest articulation of these three categories “in disguise.” Later he wrote that his three Normative Sciences were grounded in his Trinitism. If we parse this in schematic form, we can see that the “IT” of his initial categories corresponded to Schiller’s realm of the sensuous drive—that is, the realm of reification in objective material being. The “I” of his initial categories corresponded to the (Kantian, and Fichtean) freedom and spontaneity of the intellectual and moral life—which Peirce transformed into the incipient Firstness or freshness of qualitative feeling while relegating the existential condition of the I-object polarity of transcendental epistemological and moral consciousness to the subject-object binary of Secondness. The mediating, dialogic THOU of Peirce’s youthful categorical speculation was his earliest formulation of his theory of communicating Mind in the universe. It symmetrized with Schiller’s sense of the aesthetically liberating disposition in its harmonizing function of the play-drive, combining the conflicting tendencies of the sensuous and formal drives in the realized embodiments of graceful character and, in the long run, of concrete reasonableness.

As reformulated by Peirce after 1889, the THOU becomes the dialogic metaphoric in THE UNIVERSE Perfused With Signs—in the phenomenological sense of Thirdness in Representation; in the metaphysical senses of “the One Law of Mind” and of “Evolutionary Love”; in the critical semiotic sense of the ongoing communities of natural and human interpretants; as well as in providing the direction for what Peirce articulated as the logical space of the first of the Normative Sciences, namely Esthetics, the science of the Admirable per se. As a corollary of that, Peirce came to articulate the future conditional nature of meaning in his Pragmatism, and conceived of aesthetic experience in art as a “Firstness of Thirdness” within his overall objective idealism of empirical-metaphysical discovery. In the final phases of his career Peirce, again explicitly citing Schiller, prioritized the instinctual play of abductive inference, Musement, and Uberty (reasonings “gravid with new birth”).

65 Ibid., 112: “He […] must play at being at war with matter within the boundaries of matter, so that he may be relieved from fighting against this dreadful foe upon the sacred soil of freedom; he must learn to desire more nobly, that he may not be compelled to will sublimely,” with respect to “everything around it, even what is lifeless”—[as the tradition of objective idealism in Schelling, Emerson, and Peirce proceeded to articulate in metaphysical and poetical formulations.]
All these things considered, Schiller’s *Letters* exerted, in the words of Nathan Houser, an “indelible impression” upon Peirce.\(^{66}\) Their fundamental insights converged in essential respects. Peirce absorbed and translated Schiller’s aesthetic philosophy into a more broader and multivariate architectonic, one which in the final analysis bids fair to have achieved one of the most comprehensive and richly suggestive metaphysical systems of Being in the history of philosophy.\(^{67}\)

---407---

\(^{66}\) EP2, 527, fn. 6.
\(^{67}\) Of Mere Being

*The palm at the end of the mind,*  
*Beyond the last thought, rises*  
*In the bronze décor,*

*A gold-feathered bird*  
*Sings in the palm, without a human meaning.*  
*Without human feeling, a foreign song.*

*You know then that it is not the reason*  
*That makes us happy or unhappy.*  
*The birds sings. Its feathers shine.*

*The palm stands on the edge of space.*  
*The wind moves slowly in the branches,*  
*The bird’s fire-fangled feathers dangle down.*  
  Wallace Stevens (OP 141)