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Kant and Peirce on Pragmatic Maxims¹

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1. Introduction

Charles S. Peirce stated that the word *pragmatism* is derived from Kant's use of the term *pragmatisch*. But while Peirce famously claimed that he learned philosophy from Kant, especially in the 1870s—the decade where Peirce's first expressions of his logical doctrine of pragmatism reached print, although without that name—Peirce is adamant in his criticism and opposition of transcendental philosophy and the *a priori* method. For this reason, despite both earlier and more recent attempts at explaining Peirce's choice, it is somewhat unclear why Peirce insisted on naming his logical doctrine after a Kantian term.

I will argue that Kant clearly prefigured Peirce's pragmatism in his claim that there is a connection between *theoretical judgments* and *practical imperatives* (or principles of conduct). Kant held that all theoretical judgments are expressible as—indeed identical in content with—practical imperatives. He may be the first to have made this claim. Peirce's maxim of pragmatism turns this theoretical judgment into a practical maxim of its own right, exhorting us to trace the “meaning” of words and thoughts by considering their impact on self-controlled conduct. Accordingly, it turns out that the name *pragmatic maxim*—often used interchangeably with the *maxim of pragmatism* in the literature on Peirce and pragmatism—is something of a misnomer: any maxim of conduct which is based on a theoretical judgment is, following this terminology, a pragmatic maxim. However,

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as I will then show in some detail, using Kant's own terminology, such maxims should rather be called *technical*.

I will next turn to the question of whether the reverse is the case, in Kant's or Peirce's opinion: whether there are practical imperatives that are not *pragmatic* in this sense. Are there practical imperatives which are not "translatable" into a theoretical judgment? Kant's view on this score appears as clear as day: he argues that *moral laws* are just such judgments. However, I will go on to propose—from an admittedly unorthodox perspective—that things may not be quite as simple. Namely, Kant argues that belief in the three postulates of practical reason is prerequisite for true moral conduct, or conduct in accordance with the moral law. This contention has often puzzled Kant scholars: can't we follow the moral law without, say, belief in God and the afterlife? Kant's view, however, would be readily explained if the three postulates combined would be the expression of the moral law in *theoretical* key.

Peirce does not maintain that there are imperatives which are not equivalent to some theoretical judgment. However, I will suggest—albeit briefly—that there is a further type of judgment which falls outside of the scope of the "pragmatic": *aesthetic judgments*. Unlike theoretical and pragmatic judgments, aesthetic judgments do not recommend means to be taken to (actual or assumed) ends. Rather, these judgments can be taken to suggest new purposes without reference to any already existing purposes. While the details of this view are beyond the scope of this paper, Peirce's debts to Kant here are deeper than it initially appears and merit further study.

2. Peirce's pragmatism

As is familiar, Peirce never referred to his logical doctrine by the name of pragmatism in print until James used that term in his 1898 address which initiated the pragmatist tradition. However, according to both Peirce and James, the term itself is from Peirce. In its early 1878 formulation, Peirce's pragmatism is presented as a method and a maxim for the clarification of the meaning of terms and sentences, and further as a device to detect claims devoid of meaning. Any meaningful sentence, if believed by a speaker, would result in action under some conceivable circumstances. If the conceivable conduct resulting from the acceptance of two sentences in no way differs, their meaning is the same. In order to clarify the mean-

ings of words and sentences, we are to consider their conceivable effects in conduct.

The maxim of pragmatism was later incorporated in Peirce's broader semiotic account of the operation and interpretation of signs. A sign is not necessarily an idea or thought, but anything that could elicit an interpretant—another thought, an action, or a feeling—that interprets the sign as a sign of its object. Pragmatism pertains to *logical* interpretants, which are mostly *thoughts* (as opposed to feelings and actions) interpreting a sign. However, as long as further interpretants of logical interpretants are themselves thoughts (or words, such as in a translation), there is no obvious way of telling whether two thoughts indeed mean the same. For this reason, Peirce suggested that we must ultimately step outside of thinking and language, and anchor meaning in conduct. In Peirce's view, the *ultimate* logical interpretants are (not thoughts but) habits of action, and the "meaning" of signs which admit to logical interpretants can be clarified by considering the habits their acceptance would entail. Accordingly, pragmatism can be formulated—as Peirce sometimes does—as an account of the connection of theoretical and practical judgments, the principle that the meaning of a *theoretical* judgment is a *practical maxim*:

Pragmatism is the principle that every theoretical judgment expressible in a sentence in the indicative mood is a confused form of thought whose only meaning, if it has any, lies in its tendency to enforce a corresponding practical maxim expressible as a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood. CP 5.18, 1903

This passage deserves a couple of qualifications. Firstly, by "meaning" Peirce is here referring to the ultimate logical interpretant, not to everything that could be counted as the meaning or content of a theoretical judgment. (His intention is not to deny that, say, the *meaning* of the German sentence "Schnee ist weiss" is "snow is white" in English.) Secondly, Peirce's wording should not be understood to imply that the meaning of a theoretical judgment is a practical maxim which is expressible in a *single* sentence. A single theoretical judgment may enforce innumerable practical imperatives depending on the circumstances and aims at hand. The meaning of a theoretical judgment is, rather, a set of such practical imperatives. As we will soon see, Peirce considered the relevant imperatives to be those of purposeful conduct, such conduct that (by definition) has an aim.

A consequential shift in Peirce's pragmatism concerns the connection between conduct and sensation. In his early 1878 view, pragmatism en-

tailed the “proto-positivist” idea that all differences in conduct are (or are grounded in) differing expectations of future sensations. Habits, Peirce argued in “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”, make us act based on stimuli which are “derived from perception”, and conversely the purpose of that action is to “produce some sensible result” (Peirce 1992, 131). Thus “our action has exclusive reference to what affects the senses, our habit has the same bearing as our action, our belief the same as our habit, our conception the same as our belief; [...]” (ibid.). Here, habits and ensuing action are understood as both occasioned by sensations and as directed at sensible results. However, in many of Peirce’s later formulations of pragmatism, this connection between conduct and sensation is far less rigid. In many—but not all—of his later writings, Peirce emphasises that the practical consequences that the maxim of pragmatism exhorts us to trace are the effects on deliberate *conduct* and do not concern “sensible effects”. Indeed, Peirce at points attempts to exclude such effects from among the practical consequences under consideration:

The method prescribed in the maxim is to trace out in the imagination the conceivable practical consequences,—that is, the consequences for deliberate, self-controlled conduct,—of the affirmation or denial of the concept; and the assertion of the maxim is that herein lies the whole of the purport of the word, the *entire* concept. The sedulous exclusion from this statement of all reference to sensation is specially to be remarked.

CP 8.191 , c. 1904

Admittedly, Peirce’s “sedulousness” is not quite consistent. For example, in a passage written around the same time, he describes pragmatism as the logical doctrine which maintains that the meaning of any thought or word “consists in what it can contribute to an expectation about future experience, and nothing more” (MS 462:42, 1903). Although the reference here is to experience and not (more narrowly) to sensation, it seems Peirce was wavering somewhat on the nature of the connection of habits and expectations concerning experience. In any case, the *primary* “practical consequences” which Peirce’s maxim urges us to trace—at least in its mature version—are consequences in deliberate conduct.

3. Kant's pragmatism

Peirce states that the word *pragmatism* is derived from Kant’s use of the term *pragmatisch*. Commenting on William James’s proposal to call his

view “practicalism”, Peirce explicates the grounds for his preference for “pragmatism”:

[...] for one who had learned philosophy out of Kant [...], *praktisch* and *pragmatisch* were as far apart as the two poles, the former belonging in a region of thought where no mind of the experimentalist type can ever make sure of solid ground under his feet, the latter expressing relation to some definite human purpose. CP 5.412

Peirce’s claim is that the “pragmatic”, in Kant, remains within the scope of experimental inquiry, whereas the “practical” exceeds that sphere. Commenting on this passage, Marcus Willaschek (2015) suggests that Peirce overstates his case. Willaschek proposes that Kant’s pragmatic and practical laws are to be understood as two kinds of practical imperatives, and are not quite as far apart as Peirce’s language suggests. However, here Peirce appears to be alluding to a passage in the Canon of the *Critique of Pure Reason* which is, to be fair, a good bit more complicated. It is worth quoting in full:

Everything is practical that is possible through freedom. But if the conditions for the exercise of our free choice are empirical, then in that case reason can have none but a regulative use, and can only serve to produce the unity of empirical laws, as, e. g., in the doctrine of prudence the unification of all ends that are given to us by our inclinations into the single end of **happiness** and the harmony of the means for attaining that end constitute the entire business of reason, which can therefore provide none but **pragmatic** laws of free conduct for reaching the ends recommended to us by the senses, and therefore can provide no pure laws that are determined completely *a priori*. Pure practical laws, on the contrary, whose end is given by reason completely *a priori*, and which do not command under empirical conditions but absolutely, would be products of pure reason. Of this sort, however, are the moral laws; thus these alone belong to the practical use of reason and permit a canon. Kant 1998, A 800/B 828²

Referring to this passage, Willaschek argues that both *pure* practical laws and pragmatic imperatives appear to belong under the genus of “practical” imperatives: as Kant maintains, they are both laws of free choice (*Willkühr*). However, it should be noted that Kant seems to be wavering between two notions of the practical. At the beginning of the passage, “practical” appears to refer to any imperative (maxim or law of conduct); by its end, Kant is limiting the issue of *practical reason* to its pure, *a priori*

² Citations of Kant’s works refer to the Akademie edition page numbers.

products. In addition, the “unity of empirical laws”—which must be an example of the regulative use of *theoretical* reason—is listed as the very basis of reason’s pragmatic issue. If pragmatic imperatives include the products of *theoretical* reason, the idea suggests itself that, for Kant, practical *reason* is strictly speaking limited to the issuing of moral laws.

Indeed, this turns out to be Kant’s intent. In the passage just quoted, Kant distinguishes between pragmatic and pure practical laws (of conduct). However, in the second *Critique*, Kant explicates what appears to be the same distinction as that between *maxims* and *laws* (Kant 2002a, 21–2). Kant’s usage of the term *law* is here limited to the issue of practical reason, the moral law which operates with “objective necessity” due to its *a priori* ground. Other practical principles or imperatives are called *maxims*, and they are based on *empirical* cognition. The issue is not merely terminological. Kant’s distinction between theoretical judgements and practical imperatives does not fall neatly in line with his distinction of the two aspects of reason as their respective products. That is, there are practical imperatives which are not the products of practical reason. They belong, rather, to the theoretical use of reason (or to the domain of understanding). This fact is perhaps most explicit in the First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant writes:

[...] while practical propositions certainly differ from theoretical ones, which contain the possibility of things and their determination, in the way in which they are presented, they do not on that account differ in their content, except only those which consider freedom under laws. All the rest are nothing more than the theory of that which belongs to the nature of things, only applied to the way in which they can be generated by us in accordance with a principle, i. e., their possibility is represented through a voluntary action [...].

Kant 2000, 196

Many things could be said about this passage; however, at least this much is clear: an exhaustive connection between theoretical and practical propositions is precisely Kant’s intent. With the exception of moral propositions (or practical *laws*), Kant maintains that the difference between practical and theoretical propositions is not one of content but of presentation. The properly *practical* maxims are moral laws, and *practical* philosophy pertains to the *a priori* moral law. In turn, *pragmatic* use of reason is *theoretical* reason under a different guise.³

³ It is unclear if Peirce ever studied Kant’s third *Critique*. In addition, the First Introduction—Kant’s lengthy draft introduction to the third *Critique*—was printed in edi-

This is where pragmatism's debt to Kant is at its most evident. Kant's notion of the connection between theoretical judgments and practical imperatives is precisely the contention which drives pragmatism, further developed by Peirce into a principled test of the meaning (and meaningfulness) of theoretical judgments. Here pragmatism is perfectly Kantian in its central claim. To wit, Peirce took Kant's contention concerning the connection between theoretical and practical judgments and turned *that* theoretical judgment into a *pragmatic* maxim of logic. It follows that the label "the pragmatic maxim" often used of Peirce's maxim of pragmatism is somewhat misleading. Peirce's maxim is a pragmatic one—but one among many. Or this is how it would be, were it not for one more terminological twist.

4. Practical and technical

In the Canon of the first *Critique*, Kant had distinguished—in a rather complicated fashion—between pure practical imperatives (later called moral laws), which are based on practical reason, and pragmatic maxims, which were described as founded on the empirical "doctrine of prudence". But it turns out that these are not the only two main types of imperatives. In the *Groundwork*, Kant further distinguishes between *technical* and *pragmatic* imperatives (Kant 2002 b, 414–7). While technical imperatives concern the attainment of this or that possible end, pragmatic imperatives assume the end of happiness. The "doctrine of prudence" referred to in the first *Critique* is here given a more precise statement as the doctrine of the attainment of happiness. Again, the relevant passage deserves quoting at some length:

[imperatives] are either *rules* of skill, or *counsels* of prudence or *commands* (laws) of morality. For only law carries with it the concept of an *unconditional* and objective, hence universally valid *necessity*, and

tions of that volume only in the early 1900s; however, almost the same is said in Kant's briefer introduction, which was included in the set of Kant's collected works which Peirce purchased in the 1860s. For example: "All technically practical rules (i. e., those of art and skill in general, as well as those of prudence, as a skill in influencing human beings and their will), so far as their principles rest on concepts, must be counted only as corollaries of theoretical philosophy" (2000, 172). In case Peirce wasn't familiar with these passages, he appears to have picked up this theme in Kant from the first *Critique* which, as we know, he studied extensively. In addition to the first *Critique*, we know that Peirce had studied Kant's *Prolegomena*. However, in 1865, he had purchased a major edition of Kant's works, the *Sämmtliche Werke*, edited by Rosenkranz and Schubert (Leipzig, Leopold Voss 1838–42), 12 vols. in 13. I'm indebted to Cornelis de Waal for this information.

commands are laws that must be obeyed, i. e., followed even against inclination. The *giving of counsel* contains necessity, to be sure, but can be valid merely under a subjective, pleasing condition, whether this or that human being counts this or that toward his happiness; the categorical imperative, by contrast, is not limited by any condition, and as absolutely, though practically necessary, can be called quite authentically a command. One could also call the first imperative *technical* (belonging to art), the second *pragmatic* (to welfare), the third *moral* (belonging to free conduct in general, i. e., to morals).

Kant 2002 b, 416–7

The distinction between technical and pragmatic imperatives is founded on Kant's contention that happiness is a subjectively necessary end, which can thus be presumed to be an actual goal of any agent. Technical imperatives, in turn, concern the attainment of some contingent end, presumed by or explicated in the imperative.

Kant further argues that technical imperatives are analytic by invoking his doctrine which is often called the principle of hypothetical imperatives: "whoever wills the end, also wills (necessarily in accord with reason) the sole means to it in his control" (Kant 2002 b, 417–8). Pragmatic imperatives or rules of prudence would also be analytic, "and entirely coincide with" technical imperatives, "if only it were so easy to provide a determinate concept of happiness" (ibid., 417). Happiness, however, remains hopelessly indeterminable: one "can never say, determinately and in a way that is harmonious with himself, what he really wishes and wills" (ibid., 418). As is evident, Kant here connects happiness with the satisfaction of one's wishes and desires. Indeed, happiness, in his view, admits of a simple definition: it is "the state of a rational being in the world for whom in the whole of his existence *everything proceeds according to his wish and will*; [...]" (Kant 2002 a, 124).

These distinctions point towards a crucial difference between Kant's pragmatic imperatives and the kind of practical maxims which Peirce proposes we use to elucidate the meaning of theoretical judgments. Kant's pragmatic imperatives do not express a relation to a *definite* human purpose, as the purpose of happiness is deemed hopelessly indeterminable. By contrast, as we saw, the practical maxims Peirce has in mind must have a "relation to some definite human purpose". Peirce's pragmatism is concerned with *technical* (rather than pragmatic) imperatives, in Kant's sense.

Of course, one might well doubt whether Kant's notion of pragmatic imperative, as opposed to a technical one, merits its own label. For one

thing, it is a nice question to ask whether we have any examples of pragmatic imperatives: if happiness cannot be determined, are there any general rules of “prudence” to be given? Kant’s answer could be sought from lectures on *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. While even these lectures contain little by way of simple precepts for happiness, they supply considerations of various aspects of human nature and their implications within that pursuit. Indeed, Kant appears to devote these lectures to broad lessons in life to his young students; perhaps this merits the “pragmatic” label.

But, even more pressingly, Kant’s contention that the pursuit of happiness is a “natural necessity” is dubious. It apparently rests on a fallacy which Peirce often sets out to refute. Namely, even if our desires supply us with our various ends of action, it does not follow that we further desire the satisfaction of all our desires.⁴ Such a “natural necessity” would require a *further* desire to gratify all one’s desires—something that we cannot quite impute on all agents. Indeed, Peirce argues that happiness, understood as some form of (maximal) gratification of one’s desires, cannot be consistently adopted as one’s ultimate purpose at all (cf. Peirce 1998, 200–2). Happiness (understood as an optimal satisfaction of desires) is not only not a (subjectively) necessary end of deliberate action—in Peirce’s view, it is not even a possible end. From Peirce’s perspective, then, there is no meaningful category of *pragmatic* imperatives, in Kant’s sense. Perhaps this helps to explain why Peirce was nevertheless content with Kant’s term, although—to be consistent with Kant’s distinctions—pragmatism could have been labelled “technicalism”.

5. The purely practical

Kant’s contention, taken up by Peirce, is that every theoretical judgment is, by way of content, equivalent to a practical maxim, given a purpose of conduct. But does the opposite hold? Can any practical imperative be viewed as an expression of some theoretical judgment? In Kant’s case, the answer seems clear, at least at first blush. There is at least one practical imperative, namely the moral law, which does not entail any theoretical statement. This, we might think, is what makes the moral law a *purely* practical imperative: it is not “translatable” into theoretical judgments. Perhaps in-

⁴ For example: “[I]t is so far from being true that every desire necessarily desires its own gratification, that, on the contrary, it is impossible that a desire should desire its own gratification” (1998, 245).

stances of the moral law are expressible as practical propositions which are not imperatives in the sense that they are not in imperative form. For example, “it’s wrong to lie” is in indicative form. However, this expression will inevitably include normative vocabulary which cannot further be translated (or reduced) into non-normative terms. This is, of course, the usual distinction between the descriptive and the normative, or “is” and “ought”.

There is, however, an interesting possibility in the offing. Kant famously maintained that following the categorical imperative necessarily presupposes belief in the three theoretical-seeming claims which Kant calls the postulates of practical reason, the existence of God, afterlife, and the greatest good, or *summum bonum* (e.g., Kant A 810–1/B 838–9). This contention has puzzled Kant’s commentators. Is it really so that one cannot act morally without believing in God, for example? But from the pragmatist point of view, this necessity would be readily explained if we were to interpret the three postulates as the *theoretical* expressions of the moral law. Conversely, taken together, the three postulates of practical reason would find a practical expression in the moral law. Even in this reconstruction, we would be able to account for the reasons why, in Kant’s view, the moral law remains *purely* practical. Kant emphatically denies that the postulates of practical reason could receive empirical support: they belong to the realm which transcends the limits of understanding. In this manner, the moral law would remain pure in that its theoretical expressions cannot be defended—either empirically or *a priori*—while the law itself is *a priori*.⁵

Obviously, this is an unorthodox suggestion, and wasn’t Kant’s own position. Instead, even in the First Introduction, which otherwise includes his perhaps most explicit pragmatist views, Kant attempts to show how the connection between the moral law and the postulates of practical reason is not akin to the connection exhibited by a pragmatic (or technical) maxim and a theoretical judgment. He maintains that there are practical judgments “which directly exhibit the determination of an action as necessary merely through the representation of its form” (Kant 2000, 199). These are judgments of *moral law*. Kant immediately continues, however,

⁵ A further complication is brought about by the fact that the moral law is not the only binding law of reason, for Kant. At least the so-called principle of hypothetical imperatives, already quoted above, seems to belong to the same level of generality. This principle is, moreover, stated by Kant by way of a theoretical judgment. Indeed, it would sound strange to put this principle by way of an imperative.

that while these judgments “ground the concept of an object of the will (the highest good) on these very principles, still this belongs only indirectly, as a consequence, to the practical precept (which is henceforth called moral)” (ibid.). Kant’s view appears to be that moral conduct is conduct in accordance with the moral law, and the purpose of conduct in accordance with the moral law has the *summum bonum* as its purpose. Unlike with the other imperatives, this purpose is due to the determination of the will in accordance with the law; it is not due to an antecedently accepted end. However, this quite obviously returns us back to the initial puzzlement. If willing or action in accordance with the moral law does not require a purpose—but, perhaps, implicates the highest good *as if* it were its purpose—why would belief in the highest good, and the other moral postulates, be prerequisite to action in accordance with that law? It may be that Kant’s account would benefit from the pragmatist reinterpretation just provided.

What of Peirce? Are there any practical imperatives which are *not* equivalent in content with some theoretical judgment? Peirce’s critical stance towards Kant’s (purely) practical imperatives suggests that he would not be willing to admit imperatives other than the “pragmatic” (in Peirce’s sense). As we saw, however, his most explicit criticism of the purely practical was explicitly motivated by “experimentalism”, that is, the notion that every imperative should be subjected to an empirical inquiry and revision, and, as already pointed out, Peirce’s later expressions of the maxim of pragmatism, the connection between practical consequences in conduct and anticipation of future sensations, is loosened, even severed. This might be taken to imply that there might be meaningful judgments which cannot be subjected to empirical revision. But this, I think, would be a mistake. Peirce seems to allow for meaningful judgments which do not anticipate certain sensations, even with various other assumptions in place; at the very least, he does not deny this possibility. But this does not imply that any meaningful claim need not be subjected to revision in light of experience, broadly understood. At the very least, there are no “pure practical” judgments in Kant’s sense of an *a priori* moral law. However, as I will now turn to argue, there is a type of judgment that stands apart from the pragmatic and the theoretical: aesthetic judgment.

6. Pragmatism and aesthetic judgments

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant introduces a third type of judgment in addition to theoretical judgments and practical imperatives: aesthetic judgments (Kant 2000, 205–10).⁶ Aesthetic judgments are distinguished from theoretical judgments in that they do not involve the subsumption of the object under a concept which would pertain to its empirical features. In this sense, for example, beauty is not a theoretical concept. While Kant does not stop to argue for this view at length, one way of understanding his position is to see his pragmatism at work. Kant argues that aesthetic judgments are *disinterested*: they are not based on the object appearing agreeable or good, in the sense that it would be suited to serve the agent's desires or purposes. An aesthetic judgment, then, does not suggest a practical imperative, and thus cannot be equivalent to a theoretical judgment. On the contrary, the objects of aesthetic judgments appear purposive without serving some purpose on part of the judging agent.

But aesthetic judgments are not (pure) practical judgments either. As opposed to moral judgments, such judgments do not involve or suggest practical precepts. In judging a flower to be beautiful, we do not judge it to be good in the moral sense. Moreover, in Kant's view, aesthetic judgments are not objectively necessary. Rather, these judgments are funded by a feeling that is elicited in the judging agent. Nevertheless, Kant argues that aesthetic judgments are subjectively universal: they aspire to be valid for all judging agents (Kant 2000, 213–8). In making an aesthetic judgment, we assume that others ought to make the same judgment. Kant grounds this demand for universal agreement, and how it can be met, in the purposiveness exhibited by the object of the aesthetic judgment. This purposiveness Kant attributes to the interplay between imagination and understanding, an interplay that we can expect to occur in any agent capable of judging in the first place. Thus an aesthetic judgment is neither theoretical (equivalent to technical/pragmatic) nor purely practical (or moral).

While it is not clear whether Kant's views here may have influenced Peirce, it is aesthetics and aesthetic judgment that, in Peirce's late philosophy, begins to occupy an increasingly central role. Indeed, as I will now argue, it appears that precisely aesthetic judgments are the only "non-pragmatic" judgments, from Peirce's point of view. Moreover, it seems

⁶ Here I will be concerned with aesthetic judgments in a narrow sense, excluding what Kant calls judgments of the agreeable.

clear that Peirce's view has at least some debts to Kant: the role that aesthetic judgments play is, as we will see, intimately connected with the notion of purpose.

During the first years of the 1900s, Peirce took an interest in issues of normativity, suggesting a set of normative sciences—esthetics, ethics and logic—as the part of philosophy occupied by inquiry into questions of right and wrong. Logic, Peirce's central interest, was rendered as the science of the rules of inference which are revised against a purpose: it “not only lays down rules which ought to be, but need not be followed; but it is the analysis of the conditions of attainment of something of which purpose is an essential ingredient” (CP 1.575). Pragmatism, as a maxim of logic, was framed as a device within this pursuit. As inference is just a form of deliberate action, logic needs backing from a broader account of the rules we may adopt in conduct. This is the main question of the normative science of ethics. And as that inquiry, in turn, requires a view of the ultimate ideals or purposes of conduct, normative science rests on (what Peirce calls) *esthetics*: the study of what is admirable in itself.

It is within these discussions of normative science that Peirce ultimately appropriates some features of Kant's account of aesthetic judgments into his view of the role of esthetics in normative inquiry. Two such features are especially salient. Firstly, as in Kant's view, Peirce takes aesthetic judgments to be grounded in feelings. Peirce enlists feelings (as opposed to observations) as the basis for the development of purposes of deliberate conduct (Peirce 1998, 412; cf. Rydenfelt 2017). Secondly, Peirce's view of aesthetic judgments involves a version of Kant's “purposiveness without a purpose”. Aesthetic judgments do not recommend courses of action based on more or less definite ends deliberately adopted. Such judgments do not depend on a pre-existing purpose, actual, assumed or imaginary. Rather, aesthetic judgments, in Peirce's view, suggest novel purposes, whatever the initial interests of the judging agent: they pertain to what is admirable without hindsight to any aims or ends we might have (e. g., Peirce 1998, 200–2). It is aesthetic judgments, then, that turn out to play the role of “non-pragmatic” judgments.

This fact helps us explain one of the most curious features of Peirce's view of the three normative sciences. In a famous passage from 1906, Peirce suggested that ethics “should be the theory of the conformity of action to an ideal” (Peirce 1998, 377). That is, ethics was not to be understood as the science of the ideal(s) of conduct—the role which Peirce went on to reserve to *esthetics*. Instead, Peirce suggested renaming ethics “an-

tethics” or “practics”, as “ethics” would suggest that the science “involves more than the theory of such conformity; namely, it involves the theory of the ideal itself” (ibid.). Practics, to be clear, should not be understood as the inquiry of how to best attain our ideals. Rather, ethics (as practics) is the science of the consideration and *review* of conduct, both its means and its ends, against our ideals. Ethical judgments, then, are already *pragmatic*: they suggest revisions of our patterns of conduct in light of pre-existing purposes.⁷ Here they diverge from aesthetic judgments, which do not presuppose pre-existing purposes.⁸

Peirce’s view on aesthetic judgment, then, retains at least important traces of Kant’s position. There are, of course, sundry differences. Most centrally, unlike Kant, Peirce does not argue that aesthetic judgments and the (apparent) purposiveness of objects aesthetically judged depend on the interplay of our faculties of cognition—faculties which Kant thinks we may assume any agent to possess. However, in arguing that esthetics is a normative *science*, Peirce clearly maintains that aesthetic judgments can have a claim to universal (or intersubjective) validity. The grounds of such validity, then, must be (broadly speaking) *empirical*. Esthetics, for Peirce, is an empirical science of the revision and criticism of our habits of feeling (cf. Peirce 1998, 377–8). Feelings—understood as emotional interpretants—can be more or less appropriate responses to various signs with respect to different goals, including cognitive purposes (cf. Rydenfelt 2015).⁹

7. Conclusion

Peirce acknowledges that he learned philosophy from Kant; however, pragmatism’s debts to Kant may run somewhat deeper than commonly understood. In Kant’s view, with the exception of the moral law, practical precepts and theoretical judgments do not differ in content but in expression. This very contention motivates Peirce’s pragmatism. Indeed, I have

⁷ Even here, however, the boundary between the two sciences is not rigid. Ethical inquiry may lead to aesthetic judgments, suggesting new purposes to be adopted.

⁸ There’s a nice question which cannot be addressed here. Namely, aesthetic judgments—I am arguing—do not presuppose purposes in the sense that they do not offer practical precepts as means to some pre-existing, actual or imaginary ends. But the *formation* of such judgments—spontaneous as it may be—does imply some purpose; in Peirce’s semiotic view, any formation of interpretants (including judgments) does. What is this purpose? The answer, I suppose, will be complicated.

⁹ I have argued for this point at some length, drawing from Peirce’s account of emotional interpretants, especially as developed by T. L. Short (2015) (Rydenfelt 2015).

argued that Peirce turns this theoretical judgment (concerning the connection between theoretical judgments and practical precepts) into a practical precept by way of his maxim of pragmatism. The differences between Kant's and Peirce's views are, however, notable. Kant distinguishes between *pragmatic* and *technical* imperatives, with the former pertaining to the indeterminate but subjectively necessary end of happiness, the latter to some antecedently presupposed, contingent purpose. Peirce's *pragmatic* maxims thus coincide with Kant's *technical* imperatives; in general, Peirce would be highly critical of Kant's view that happiness is a subjectively necessary end.

In addition to technical and pragmatic imperatives, Kant distinguishes the *a priori* moral law, which he appears to think has no equivalent theoretical judgment. But while this is by no means an orthodox Kantian view, I've argued that the *postulates of practical reason* could be viewed as the *theoretical* expressions of that law. Although Peirce does not propose that there are such "purely practical" judgments, a third type of judgment, aesthetic judgment, appears to play the role of a non-pragmatic judgment in his late philosophy. Aesthetic judgments are neither theoretical nor pragmatic: they do not suggest a course of action to be taken, given an antecedent purpose. Rather, if anything, aesthetic judgments suggest new purposes to be adopted. Although the extent of Peirce's study of Kant's third *Critique* is unclear, here especially Peirce appears to retain the key Kantian idea of aesthetic judgments indicating a "purposiveness without a purpose". Both maintain that aesthetic judgments can aspire to intersubjective validity. However, while in Kant's view such validity crucially depends on an interplay of our shared faculties, Peirce ascribes such intersubjectivity to our shared experience, ultimately due to the nature of the aesthetically judged objects themselves. These differences and commonalities would merit further investigation which would shed light especially on Peirce's account of aesthetic judgments and their role in (normative) inquiry.

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