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Giovanni Maddalena*

Creative Gestures: A Pragmatist View

Introduction

The creative process is immensely important for any inquiry. From a scientific perspective it has to do with the path of discovery, in the point in which we formulate a new hypothesis. In every sort of art creativity really covers almost the entire body of content. But in our everyday experience, as Dewey pointed out (Dewey 1934) creativity is what describes our best acts in social relationships, in education, and in jobs of every kind.

Classic pragmatism can be interesting in order to face the topic of creativity neither in a naïve nor in a reductive way. The naïve way simply excludes creativity from the rational realm, as in Plato's *Ion*, where creativity is identified with God's gift and, as such, is incomprehensible for human intellect. The reductive conception pigeon-holes creativity into the aesthetic realm where, as in the first Wittgenstein, it keeps its high normative function but – at the same time – its nonsensical status for rational processes.

Classic pragmatists had a profound understanding of the unity and the rationality of experience so that it can furnish a better explanation of what creativity is. For pragmatists, experience includes and, thus, overcomes any dichotomy: thoughts and actions, facts and values, mind and body, private and public, individual and society, physics and metaphysics. With different nuances, all classic pragmatists thought that experience contains all those items at the same time because they are part of a deeper relationship or continuity. As is well known, with different perspectives that range from Peirce's mathematical studies to James' psychological insights and Mead's sociological approach, they also understood this continuity to be evolutionarily determined.

In order to represent a real way of reasoning within this continuous path, classic pragmatists forged rational tools. Peirce's abduction and Dewey's logic of inquiry are perhaps a couple of the most important and most useful methods of reasoning that they pointed out. They show pragmatists' attempt to work out a different rational paradigm that would respect the continuity of experience. In this way, they avoid any abstract distinction or division and allow for a more ampliative way of thinking. In particular, even if Peirce did not achieve a final definition of it, abduction is the way of reasoning that mostly explains what creativity is[1]: a passage from consequent to antecedent motivated by a surprising initial phenomenon.

However, there is a crucial aspect that I think classic pragmatists did not realize completely, neither in general nor in particular, as far as creativity is concerned. Their methods and approaches indicate the possibility of a "synthetic" view of knowledge. Synthesis is the rational procedure by which we can think a predicate, and more generally a concept, that is not altogether included in the subject (cf. Kant 1996: A7; B11). Here I will understand syn-

* Università del Molise [maddalena@unimol.it]

[1] D. Anderson (1987) pointed out the relationship between abduction and creativity. Even if our accounts of abduction do not coincide exactly, his application to the main elements of abduction to creativity is profound, insightful, and completely agreeable upon also from the point of view that will be defended in this paper. As for my view of abduction see Maddalena 2005 and 2009.

thesis starting from the characteristics pointed out by Robert Hanna in his studies about Kant: 1) a judgment is synthetic when it advances beyond the intension of a concept and establishes a novel connection with another concept; 2) this connection is made possible by something 'altogether different' from a conceptual content; 3) the negation of a synthetic judgment does not have to be a logical contradiction necessarily; 4) synthetic judgments amplify the intensional structure whereas comprehension is narrowed (Hanna 2001: 191). Hanna identifies 'something altogether different from conceptual content' with the content of Kant's intuition, and this latter as marked mainly by individuality and not conceptuality (Hanna indicates it also as priority to thought).[2] If we set aside the Kantian notion of "intuition", obviously foreign to pragmatists, we can still consider synthesis as marked by this use of non-conceptual singulars or individuals.[3]

On the one hand, this kind of reasoning and knowledge is the one we need to explain creativity. On the other hand, synthesis is the method of the living unity of knowledge that Dewey was advocating and that pragmatists proposed from the pragmatic maxim onward. Pragmatists were looking for this synthetic method even when they were formalizing logic, as Peirce's existential graphs show, since they require such a great deal of drawing and observing of singular graphs. However, pragmatists provided good analyses of synthetic methods (Peirce's abduction and Existential Graphs, and Dewey's logic of inquiry are good examples), but they never found or proposed a completely and radically synthetic tool of reasoning that supplemented their analyses. A completely synthetic tool should be a completely embodied way of reasoning in our everyday way of thinking.

I find the same need for a different definition and use of synthetic judgment in two of the most important pragmatist aesthetics of the last decades: Margolis' (1999) and Shusterman's (1992). They both foster Dewey's aesthetics towards a more synthetic pattern. Margolis used his notion of artwork as "embodied artcraft culturally emergent" and wanted it to be a description of the work of art. He is not talking of creativity as such but the topic is really very close to it, based on the rejection of both analytic studies (from Moore to Danto) and hermeneutics. The first one is essentialist, intuitionist, and eventually nihilist, the second one is too lousy and does not allow for any disciplined naturalism.

Margolis' reconstruction of aesthetics vindicates pragmatism as far as it holds at once a stiff historicist relativism and an altogether strong naturalism. Margolis accuses both old essentialist views and Danto's not to respect the fact that our perceptions, our embodied sensations, are already culturally informed so that we cannot simply search for refuge either in some sort of Platonism or in an analytic dissolution of our object or work of art.

The trouble with Margolis' account is that as much as this cultural embodied emergentism is proclaimed, there is no technical defense of the knowing power of perceptions, which should be the keystone of his naturalist and relativist account. It is more a manifesto than an argument. At the end we find a paradox: the works of art (and so the case with any knowledge) are "natural entities" of a "not-natural kind". Curiously enough, Margolis' defense of cultural emergentism relies on naturalism and intentionality at the same time, but

[2] Hanna points out three other characteristics:—immediateness, dependency on objects, and relation to sensibility—that are less relevant to the present paper.

[3] Hintikka 1980 and Shin (1997; 2002) have shown how much Peirce is close to an account of Kant's syntheticity similar to Hanna's. Hintikka understands the use of singular terms or individuality as the main characteristic of syntheticity in both authors. As much as Shin's account differs from Hintikka's on the extension of Peirce's theorematic reasoning, intended as representative of syntheticity, both authors accept individuality as the keystone of the arch of synthetic reasoning.

without a clear definition of the latter (that would require technique), the former becomes dubious.

Shusterman attempts to deepen Dewey's aesthetical insight broadening Dewey's notion of experience to new fields, more democratic forms of art, everyday performances that cast a light upon our aesthetic way of living. Again, Shusterman attacks ancient and new forms of essentialism and elitist views of art. Contrary to Margolis, he identifies the main tool of his aesthetics in a keen use of the body.

Shusterman is right in looking for a description of art that will take into account everyday aesthetical experience, and in following and increasing Dewey's attention to the corporeal dimension of our aesthetical satisfaction. Without entering in the details of how reasoning works – and sometimes without awareness of some of the pragmatists', in particular Peirce's, achievements in defining interpretation/understanding/perception – Shusterman hints towards a full employment of corporeal characteristics within our reasoning. Again, the trouble is that Shusterman does not technically explain how our body creates knowledge.

Summing up, Margolis stresses the emergency of cultural aspects in corporeal expressions and artcrafts, while Shusterman underlines the corporeal base of any cultural expression and artcraft. To me, they both point out decisive aspects of art and of knowledge in general (and creativity in particular), and they both do not find a sufficient explanation of the way in which these aspects should be put at work. Relying on Peirce's semiotics, I will propose a completely synthetic tool that will involve cultural emergency and corporeal expression (1) and I will state some conditions of creativity that this tool brings out into the open (2).

I. From Existential Graphs to "complete gestures"

In this first paragraph I want to propose a completely synthetic tool for acquiring knowledge, and I will apply this tool referring it to creativity particularly. Without entering into details, I would just hint to the fact that this proposal stems from a deep study of some semiotic characteristics of Peirce's Existential Graphs (EG).

EG are Peirce's way to represent our reasoning through changes. Now, if we reflect upon EG, we will see three different layers of Peirce's research. 1) EG are a "synthetic" project because they want to represent not just deductively valid reasoning but ampliative (non-deductive, i.e. inductive or abductive) reasoning as well; 2) Most uses of EG that Peirce describes are 'analytic', i.e., they cover deductively valid reasoning that symbolic logic explores in logic of propositions, first order, and modalities; 3) Another layer is Peirce's semiotic description of both the sheet of assertion and the line of identity. This third layer is the most interesting for this paper because it shows the way in which diagrams can synthesize two different concepts.

Commenting on the semiotic characteristics of different parts of EG, Peirce indicates the semiotic characteristics that any synthetic tool should have.

It is worth noticing preliminary that EG respect all features of that mathematical continuity which is the deep root of experience as change and time.[4] Our reasoning has to move within this changing pattern synthetizing – that is acquiring – new elements. This "acquisition" amounts to recognizing identity through changes, where identity – as Peirce explains

[4] Zalamea lists transitivity, plasticity, reflexivity, and generality as the four characteristics of Peirce's conception of continuity (Zalamea 2001).

– has to be seen not as A=A but as A=B of which A=A is only a degenerate (less interesting) case (NEM4: 325). In other words, "acquisition" coincides with recognizing that there is a connection between two points or individuals on the same evolutionary or changing continuum. The case of diachronic identity is possibly the paradigmatic case of this synthesis and it clarifies any other case. However, creativity broadly understood is always implied in the acquisition or recognition of identity A=B. Something (the surprising phenomenon which Peirce was talking about) is explained, understood, expressed, represented through something else, which had been considered as foreign to that matter until this creative moment.

Is not this a perennial characteristic of every kind of sign? Sure enough, in a certain degree any semiosis is "creative". On the one hand, this is clear from the "New List of Categories" on: there is always a degree of interpretation in any semiotic process so that a certain original synthetic process or creativity is at work. From this perspective there is a coincidence among synthesis, semiotic process, and creativity. On the other hand, when we speak of "creativity" we usually think of a restricted sense of the word, namely of a particular performance of this semiotic pattern. I hope the rest of the paper will explain exactly what this performance is.

The semiotic nature of EG – which at their turn are a specific analytic use of signs - gives us the opportunity to look at this synthetic process from a perspective that Peirce himself and classic pragmatists did not take into account remaining in a general analytic pattern.

In Existential Graphs we find a tool for recognizing an identity through changes: the line of identity or, rather, (ter)-identity.[5] The line of identity is an iconic quantifier, but, as far as we are concerned, it displays the semiotic characteristics we are looking for. According to Peirce, the line of identity is a "perfect sign" because it is an "equal blending of icons, indices and symbols" (CP 4.448). Icons are those kinds of signs that represent the object by similarity, while indices represent it by brute connection, and symbols by interpretation. Now, the line of identity mixes up these characteristics almost equally so that it can be read in an interpretative pattern (symbol), it can link two actual points, namely two different moments of the same object (index), and it can read them as identity insofar as their forms are similar to one another (icon).

Now, this is a semiotic analysis, but what is the actual functioning of this tool outside the deductive logic of EG? Which is the synthetic embodiment of our synthetic tool? What does correspond to this "perfect sign" in our everyday synthetic way of reasoning? I will call "complete or perfect gesture" the action that involves this equal blending of semiotic characteristics.

An action can be only a reaction. But every action that bears a meaning – as the pragmatic rule says – is a "gesture" (from *gero*= to bear, to carry on). However, when this action works deliberately and effectively in a synthetic way (acquiring something new, singular and not drawn from any other concept) it must bear those semiotic characteristics in "equal" proportion. The creative act is a "complete gesture".

What does it mean? It means that this action has elements of originality insofar as it reads the forms of the experience from which it stems (i.e. an iconic level); it has an actual effectiveness (index), so it is an action that involves other physical objects or actions; it has a scope (symbol), a final destination which is the ideal end that the single realization has to confirm and that will verify the goodness or the plausibility of the act itself.

[5] The line of teridentity is a conjunction of two lines of identity that have in common the starting point and part of the line, but have different ends. The end that does not about to an actual point is called a "loose end".

Examples of complete gestures are liturgies in every religion, public and private rites (every social gathering has its own rites) public and private actions that establish an identity, and, of course, artistic performances and hypothesizing experiments. If you think of forms of "baptism" in any religion or ceremonies as incoronations, oaths, and funeral services, then you can have a good image of what a "complete gesture" is in religion and public rites. More difficult to establish is a good example for private "complete gestures" because the privacy itself prevents some sharing of them. However, I will give one public private "complete gesture" which is to be understood in an educational way. Some Italian mountaineers keep this old habit: if a young person makes a stone roll during a hike for inattention, he/she has to carry on the stone for some meters in order to remember how dangerous his/her inattention could have been and could be to other people. It is a private "complete gesture" created to link the person, the stone, and the educational purpose in an original way.

The first time an experiment is settled it is clearly a "complete gesture". If you think of Rutheford's gold foil experiment, you can see that the invention of an experiment links in an original way physical atoms and the golden device in order to determine the structure of atoms.

Writing a play is a "complete gesture" that links imagination to some forms of experience, the actual mechanism of the plot, the end or the purpose of the story (no purposefulness is a purpose).

Does the completion of gestures holds only for the first time they are performed? As we will see in the next part of this paper, if a repetition performs the same blending of the three kinds of signs, it will become creative in its turn.

Now is every "complete gesture" creative? Or is any creation a "complete gesture"? I think that the implication works in both directions. If something is a "complete gesture", it will be creative , namely originally synthetic; if something is creative, it has to be a complete gesture, namely it will have this particular "equal" blending of semiotic characteristics. It remains thus a difference between any degree of syntheticity (creativity broadly understood) and complete syntheticity (creativity strictly understood) as there is a difference between any "gesture" and "complete gesture". This difference is due to the "equality" of the blending of signs.

Before explaining what "equal" blending means, let us sum up the different levels in which the original synthesis A=B can be understood.

Table 1.

Vague (not completely determined) synthesis	Incomplete gestures	A=B	Semiosis	Creativity broadly understood
Analytic pattern	Line of (ter)identity (equal blending of kinds of signs)	A=B	Specific semiosis (Existential graphs)	Evidence

Completely synthetic pattern	Complete gestures (equal blending of kinds of signs)	A=B	Specific semiosis	Creativity strictly understood

What does "equal" blending mean? We can understand this odd sort of definition in a negative way. We know that when iconic reading of forms is weak there is no variation, and thus no novelty or passion; when indices are weak there are mere repetitions; finally, when symbols are weak acts become incomprehensible. There are many samples, but just for the sake of making it clear we can think of those philosophical poems, some very serious author's movie, some too conceptual visual art where the absence of any novelty of forms and feelings only stirs up our boredom. If the symbolical level works with forms and feelings but without the indexical level, in any copy or repetition formality prevails: the B-movies, the too technical repetition of any kind of art. But this indexical component explains also the powerful enthusiasm to attend live events. From soccer games to musical performances, there is an indexical difference in "being there". Finally, without symbolical level, we have simply incomprehensible, detached events. Some "too absurd" plays would certainly illustrate the point.

The analysis could be long but here I am not interested in it, especially because I want only to point out the rationality of "complete gestures". This also involves any kind of creative process, notwithstanding our exemplification with artistic events. Hypothetical processes, everyday gestures when deliberately meaningful (above all in those meaningful parts of our lives as work, death, love, social life) fall under the same synthetic pattern whose elements are furnished by Peirce's semiotic, but whose blending is our synthetic way to work with them.

As it has been correctly observed by Liszka, there is usually a distinction among discovery, invention and artistic creativity.[6] However, if this is true in an analytic pattern, it is less true in a vague synthetic pattern, and much less in a completely synthetic pattern: synthesis precedes any analysis because it is the pattern in which experience develops. Let us think to Kepler's emblematic discovery: it is full of creative thinking made of diagrams, calculus, background aesthetical convictions, and the purpose to better understand the human and divine image of the universe.

Inventions like smartphones require a previous original synthetic thought that unite purpose of communication, electronic devices, the idea of integrating different functions previously provided by different tools. From a synthetic perspective inventions and discoveries do not differ from artistic creativity.

The point here is to understand the inversion of the paradigm: first we reason synthetically, which is always a creative form of reasoning (as we will see later also repetitions can be creative under certain conditions). Only afterward we can track distinctions in an analytic way. The distinction among discovery, invention and artistic creativity is not our way of experiencing and moving through experience reasonably. It comes later as a supplement of a reasoning that we already have developed.

Does the tool of "complete gesture" respond to the needs brought into the open by Margolis and Shusterman? I think so. The "complete gesture" accounts for intentionality in a

[6] Liszka commented a first draft of this paper at the XIV Confrence on Pragmatism in São Paulo, Brasil, 5-8 November 2012.

pragmatist technical way: intentionality as understood by Margolis requires psychological and ethical elements, but it is mainly an interaction among representations. Semiotics, introduced by Peirce but pointed out as crucial also by Dewey, is the technical key to understand the reasoning, which is going on within perceptions and sensations. Besides, as Shusterman advocated, the "complete gesture" involves the corporeal dimension thanks to its indexical part. Finally, it gives a more accurate tool to evaluate works of art without surrendering to both elitism and lack of distinctions. In the same way, it weakens the difference between scientific and humanist creativity: a good scientific hypothesis and a good artistic creation can be both judged as "complete gestures" according to the balance of their semiotic "blending".

II. Conditions of creativity

The creative synthetic blending of semiotic elements has some necessary conditions that I will try to spell out. I do not want to exhaust all conditions here, but I start listing those surely implied in any artistic creative pattern, even though I think they apply to all kinds of "complete gestures". At macro-level the first issue to face is the author-receiver dynamic. Further conditions should be elaborated in studies that have to be pursued and fostered.

Sub-creators

The first condition is what, stealing the term from J.R.R. Tolkien, I will call "sub-creation" (Tolkien 1965: 37). Any gesture – and, again, a fortiori any "complete gesture" – requires an author who puts it into existence. Most thinkers during the twentieth century denied the presence of the author as such (think of new criticism, deconstructionism, Barthes, Foucault, the second Wittgenstein, Rorty). On the one hand, the denial came from the breaking up proper of analytic judgment. You do not need an author if your "object" of thought is already there – "ready-made" as Dewey used to say – and you have to break it up in order to understand it better. On the other hand, hermeneutic tradition obviously overtakes this point of view but it does not need authorship either: universal interpretation makes the distinctions of roles fade away.

Both traditions of thought underline some very important aspect of our aesthetic and creative experience. Analytics shows that there are cognitive mechanisms and patterns at work in this experience, and that these mechanisms and patterns are much richer and deeper than our intentions. Hermeneutics reveals that there is a profound co-belonging of any participant to the event of creative and aesthetic experience. Authors, texts, forms of expression, meaning, interpreter, effects of interpretation share the same common ground which can be named as cultural tradition or, in a very special sense that Gadamer pointed out, "truth".

"Complete gesture" is a tool that involves both insights: it furnishes a cognitive account based on semiotics, and explains why co-belonging is experienced. As we have seen, the synthesis of recognizing an identity through changes requires "complete gestures", and "complete gestures" are not simply at random creatures. Whereas facts can be there by chance, complete gestures cannot be such if someone does not "mean" them[7].

[7] The completely synthetic pattern includes also what Cavell sees as a third way – neither descriptive not normative – to learn the world and the language together accounting for meaning and reasonableness implicit in our assertion (Cavell 1969).

"Complete gestures" are an equal blending of signs, and blending requires an author. The author can be also the actor in some gestures, but there is no gesture without the function of the author.

What is the power of the author? He can "sub-create" the complete gesture. What is a "sub-creation"? Recalling Scotus' and Peirce's distinction between reality and existence, we can say that the author can "give reality" but not existence, or rather not every kind of existence. We have seen that in any creative process like artistic gestures of creation, mathematical hypotheses, and scientific discoveries, the blending of signs implies always a possible idea becoming existent and even necessary. But what kind of reality do we create? Of course we are not speaking of any creation *ex nihilo*. We re-shape in a new way a long path of concept, ideas, and materials. In a pragmatist way we could say that we re-shape "experience" broadly understood. The nature and limits of this re-shaping will emerge talking a little bit more of modalities in the way in which Peirce himself treated them. However, we should also keep in sight that there really is something new that emerges in the re-shaping itself. This stemming of re-shaping out of experience is to be taken into account also from an ontological perspective so that there is some deep sense in which we use the expression "to give reality". I will not work this point out in this paper because it will have too broad ontological implications. Here I will stick to the epistemological/ontological connection that the topic of creativity raises, postponing the ontological issue to another paper.

As for creativity, there is no problem either in thinking of these realities that we create as possibilities or as necessary habits. According to Peirce, possibility is the realm in which the principle of contradiction does not hold so that anything might work, even though there are criteria of limitation. Our creative gestures generally hold any possible and plausible blending of our signs.

Necessity is the realm in which the principle of excluded third does not hold so that something which is beyond the alternative either A or not A can work. Certainly, this statement applies to *de dicto* necessities, but it means that there is some reality which goes beyond any existent thing we can affirm or deny at this moment.[8] All ideas have this kind of reality. So our "complete gestures" do. An invented character of a play or of a novel, or a certain kind of drawing, or even a scientific theory becomes necessary, namely far away from any affirmation or negation by any person. "Real" in this case means something that does not depend on what is affirmable or deniable at this moment by a person or a certain amount or even a majority of people. Melville's Captain Ahab, Pollock's "Autumn" (but also Kepler's ellipses and even numbers) are realities in this sense. We created them but they became independent of what we can think of them.

Existence is a more difficult issue. Can we give existence? If the term "create" is understood as "creation of matter ex nihilo" we cannot. We can give a different form (and feeling) to matter, we can choose to use existent forms and feelings in a new way, namely we can change the law of interpretation under which our existent material will be understood. Let us think of an everyday object put in a museum as art work: we change its interpretation by putting it in a different place. But we cannot give existence to matter of any kind.

Certainly, in a sense we can put into existence some forms and feelings, but this only means that we can arrange existent matter in a certain way. We cannot create the physical body of Captain Ahab but we can put his form into the ink of our pen, writing him down forever. Writing is a kind of gesture that has its indexical part in the act of putting the ink (also the virtual one) on a sheet. So the indexical part of our gesture has to deal with exist-

[8] Cf. Lane 1997.

ence, but only in this derived form. We cannot give a corporeal existence to Captain Ahab. We can write his shape or re-shape his presence as we do disguising or acting as Captain Ahab. But they are existences only within a certain pattern of symbolic interpretation. The same happens with other kinds of creative ideas. We call them inventions but also for cars, phones, rockets, electronic devices, etc., we always re-shape existent matter according to different possibilities, and we cannot completely create or destroy existence. Therefore, authors are only sub-creators, since the original creator can give whichever kind of reality, while we are limited to two of them: possibilities and necessities. We are the lords of two realms, but we can only use existence in a derivative way.

Assent

"Complete gestures" imply awareness. We are aware of the complete gestures we are performing, and a big part of the distinction between incomplete and complete gesture depends on awareness. As we know, completion of gesture is given by the equal blending of semiotic elements, and author's awareness puts any element into gestures and decides its proportion. So that we can learn a gesture by repetition but it becomes "ours" and it describes our personal identity only when it involves awareness. Author's endorsement makes our habitual gestures more or less significant, more or less close to "completion". And as we have already seen, "author" is a term that defines whoever is knowingly endorsing the gesture.

But how can we understand awareness sticking to a philosophical externalist method? We can list the problem of endorsment as the issue of assent. What is assent? Here again we would better rely on Peirce's account. According to my previous studies assent has a psychological, semiotic, ethical nature. Setting aside the psychological part in which I am no expert, I will focus on the semiotic aspect in this paragraph and on the normative level in the next one.

What is assent or acceptance from a purely semiotic point of view?

Here again Peirce's insight can be useful. The semiotic aspect of "assent" coincides with the interpretant.

> Assent occurs when an interpretant gets expressed following the appeal made to it by a sign for the sake of an object. The object caused a question to be formulated, and, if it was expressed so as not to fall on deaf ears, at some point an answer or the beginning of one might get heard. When an interpretant lets itself be determined by a sign in the same respect in which that sign was determined by the object, the emergence of that interpretant indicates that the sign that appealed to it was assented to. A conclusion is an interpretant that assents to the argument offered in the premises. (De Tienne 2009)

What does it mean to be an interpretant? The Interpretant is the outcome of the sign in a determination of the interpreter's mind (including all non-human minds). But Peirce was not satisfied with a simple definition and split up different kinds of interpretants, identifying the Immediate Interpretant with a "sense of comprehending the meaning of a sign", the Dynamic Interpretant with "a sense of effort", and the final or logical Intepretant with a "habit of action" (EP2: 409).

Even though Peirce understands the first Interpretant as "apprehension" (EP2: 410), it is the Dynamic Interpretant which can actualize the possibility of that "apprehension" either validating the representation or denying it (Peirce 1977: 111).

From a semiotic point of view, then, assent is part of the work of the Interpretant, and it is the condition through which our "complete gesture" becomes operatively meaningful. We have to endorse the representations through our acceptance and through our actual validation, that is our "yes" to the blending of representation that is about to happen.

This is a very important point of our creative process, and it is indeed the point of union between author and interpreter. The dynamic interpretant that implies assent happens for both of them and it is a semiotic operation that both have synthetically to perform. Once again, this semiotic description vindicates Dewey's insight about the breadth of aesthetic experience and its radical refusal of any subject/object partition (Dewey 1934: 54).

So we can explain the infinite possibility of repetition of artistic gestures which are never exactly the same. And we can also give account of the real activity that spectators perform. The spectator intervenes because his "yes" is required exactly like the author's, and the same holds for any kind of "complete (meaningful) gesture". In love, religion, education, science, work, as in any other part of our lives "complete gestures" require assent and assent is a responsibility that is up to both author and interpreter. In the moment of assent they find their unity.

When we realize that creativity becomes effective only through assent, we feel like diminished; our participation seems to amount to a small thing. But it illustrates the realist version of what Peirce was saying about being "in thought" and not, vice versa, owning our thought (EP1: 42). Our creative complete gestures present always only a small difference from contexts, habits, and gestures that precede it. Creation is never 'out of the blue', and consists mainly in accepting what reality permits. Certainly, as we are going to see in the next paragraph, creative acceptance involves also in any case a re-formulation of aesthetic horizon. But for now it is important to fix that our creation is a personal endorsement of the reality we belong to.

Notwithstanding its poverty, this explanation accounts already for two important features of our creative experience. On the one hand, this explains why there is no creativity without the assumption of a tradition[9]; on the other hand, it accounts also for the springing of creativity strictly understood from specific occasions. Creative gestures stem always from circumstances that can appear trivial to many but significant to the person who accepts them knowingly as a chance for a meaning or as a "responsibility". It is not a case that "responsibility" comes from "respondeo" that means "to answer". Creativity is our answer to the appeal of reality.

Normative Appeal

"Responsibility" means that assent involves also an ethical dimension. As we have seen, having to answer 'yes' or 'no' is part of the semiotic process. Signs require our participation, and any participation without our 'yes' is a dissent, or a formal repetition, or the heavy burden of an unexpressive routine. The "responsibility" we are talking here is at a gnoseological level.[10] We have to judge whether the blending, which is somehow proposed to us (whether we are authors or interpreters), is bad or good, or, with another Peircean expression, whether or not it is a "plausible" one (EP2: 441).

What does "plausible" mean? We say that a hypothesis might be possible but it is not plausible, or that a character in a novel or in a movie is not verisimilar, namely it is not plausible. Sometimes we can even translate plausible as "reasonable" (EP2: 218). In any

[9] Cf. T.S. Eliot 1922.
[10] Cf. EP2: 253-255.

case, plausible means that is of course possible – the idea belongs to the realm of possibilities – but it is not convenient to realize it. There are many reasons for this inconvenience: one of them can be the economic one, but more generally, the inconvenience is that the proposal does not correspond to the range of possibilities that can become effective.

Certainly, we can be wrong in this judgment, and we usually rely only on the range of possibilities we have already accepted. A 'creative' person is the one who expands this range. Florence citizens, back in the XIV century, built the church of Santa Maria Novella without a dome. They thought of it but they did not have technical instruments to get it done. However, they thought that if it had been plausible, someone would have found the adapt instrument. And they were right.

The ethical statement is thus what Peirce would have called a secondness, something that has to deal with the effective world. Logically, we can say 'yes' or 'no' to a certain representation, but we need a broader judgment for understanding whether that particular "complete gesture" is worth, and it is a judgment that involves the relationship of that gesture into the realm of existence. Ethics enters our assent about representation telling whether we can do it.

Even more important, as Peirce himself underlined, our judgment on plausibility must appeal to something which is the origin of good and bad. Is that reasoning or that blending of representations good according to what kind of criterion? As we know, we can find the criterion in the esthetic realm (EP2: 253). Here good and bad can be seen in the light of what is "admirable". This is the profound teleological understanding of aesthetic values that Peirce brought into his analysis and that we can find in our synthetic turn based on complete gestures. Our creative blending has a judge, which is the admirable ideal we want to convey and in which our complete gestures, like our analytic reasoning, have to fit in.

There is an admirable order of reality to which our creations are cooperating. The artist as the educator as anyone involved in a work knows that our "complete gestures" are worth only if they fit this admirable order. In what would this admirable order consist? According to Peirce "concrete reasonableness" is the admirable order that our reasoning pursues (CP 5.3). It is not easy task to understand what "concrete reasonableness" is, but we can understand it as that order of any sort of reality that "complete gestures" help to grow according to its own law of interpretation and involving any particular in its development. Therefore, there are as many orders as activities we are committed to. In Peirce's terms we would say that there are different continua, or rather different aspects of the evolving continuum of reality.

But obviously activities are connected to one another so that they form a "perfect" continuum, that is, reality as such. Our "complete gestures" are following the admirable ideal as much as they help any particular to achieve the meaning of its own continuum of tradition and purpose. But the real aim of any "complete gesture" is to push any particular to fit and help growing reality as such, that is, what our tradition calls "truth", understood pragmatistically in a very teleological-oriented way.

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