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# Semeiotic and the Problem of Panentheism for Christian Natural Theology

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By

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Approval Sheet

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**Abstract**

This dissertation considers the theological suitability of Charles S. Peirce's philosophy of signs (semeiotic) for use in theories respecting the great Christian tradition. As a case-study, this dissertation examines panentheism as a problem for a Christian approach to natural theology utilizing semeiotic, as proposed by Alister McGrath. Leading interpreters of Peirce's philosophy of religion, Michael Raposa and Robert Corrington, hold that Peirce's semeiotic entails a panentheist ontology. If that is the case, then a fully developed use of semeiotic by McGrath may inadvertently risk the coherence of his theory. The present study takes a systematic theology approach combined with an empirical method inspired by Peirce's distinct form of pragmatism. Chapter one introduces the problematic, the methodology, and the plan for the work of this dissertation. Chapter two defines three characteristic discrepancies that any authentic form of panentheism will have vis-à-vis a traditional Christian theology of the Creator-creature relation. Chapter three explores the relationship of Peirce's thought to panentheist ontology as defined in chapter two. It finds that Peirce's semeiotic is not inherently panentheist but that some of its aspects understandably lend themselves to panentheist perspectives in the thought of some interpreters of Peirce. Chapter four tests for the persistence of this relation of Peirce's semeiotic to panentheism by constructing a robustly semeiotic form of McGrath's theory (via Raposa's theosemiotic), identifying Robert Neville as an exemplar of such a Christian theosemiotic, and sampling Neville's work for evidence of panentheism. This dissertation concludes that Neville's prior ontological commitments, rather than semeiotic, are the primary factors in his positive relation to panentheism. Therefore, semeiotic appears to be susceptible to panentheist perspectives held by interpreters, but semeiotic itself does not seem to entail panentheism. Consequently, there is reason to expect that a robust semeiotic theory applied to the task of Christian natural

theology will not stumble over panentheism as long as it holds to a traditional Christian ontology. This result bears positive implications for the use of semeiotic in theological endeavors in many other forms of cultural engagement beyond the religion and science dialogue that situates McGrath's proposal.

For Brandy, Jacob, and Jordan

**Contents**

## Acknowledgments

The completion of a dissertation for a Ph.D. is the completion of a scholarly marathon. The completion of *this* dissertation marks the finish of something that feels more like an ultra-marathon. My journey began in 1995 with a conviction to study the theological aspects of the use of religious symbols. Such a beginning was specific enough to shape the journey that ensued, yet too vague to immediately suggest a clear location within academia. The journey has been as much about discerning that location as discovering a niche for an initial contribution to scholarship. The process has been an exercise in trusting Jesus' promise that "everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened," (Luke 11:10, NASB). Therefore, these "acknowledgements" of scholarly debt must begin with thanks to God.

Next to God, I owe an infinite debt of gratitude to my family, whose participation in my ultramarathon was unforeseen in 1995 but also inevitable. My wife and sons, to whom this work is dedicated, have already paid a price much greater than the funds required to complete this journey. My extended family have in other ways been dragged into the drama of my race. To them all I am grateful for their longsuffering support for this goal that I could not clearly describe until very recently. Thanks are especially due to my mother, Charlotte Bertram, and my late father, Dan Wheeler; and to my parents-in-law, William and Margaret Himes. Others to whom I am grateful have served as patient advisors as I struggled to name the field in which to pursue this calling. Gerald McDermott ushered me into the ballpark with his suggestion of theology of culture. Some student colleagues in doctoral seminars at Liberty pointed me to Peirce and semiotics.

Crossing this finish line would not have been possible without the guidance—and, above all, patience—of my dissertation advisor, Joshua Chatraw. Josh agreed to chair my dissertation

project before my research idea was formed. We shared common ground in an interest in cultural engagement, and I am grateful for his trust that the project would soon take shape. His scholarly counsel has been invaluable throughout. I am also grateful to the others on my dissertation committee, David Beck and Mark Allen. Their responses to my work have been both encouraging and challenging. Several friends from Liberty read early stages of the dissertation and provided helpful critique: Peter Morgan, Alistair McPherson, Ben Shaw, and "Mac" McIntyre.

Finally, I am forever grateful for the consistent encouragement I have received over the years in various ways from mentors at my *alma mater*, Lubbock Christian University. Charles Stephenson has been a positive influence in both ministry and scholarship since I began undergraduate studies in 1991. Stacy Patty, one of my first professors in biblical studies, continues to stand in my mind as an elder brother who, having gone ahead along the path, returns to help others. Stacy, thank you for encouraging me to "keep reading." Jesse Long has been a mentor as a professor in courses in preaching and biblical interpretation, and as a colleague in ministry. Jesse has also provided encouragement for my pursuit of this journey through his influence in various awards and designations I have received. Jesse, I hope that I have been faithful to what you have tried to fan into flame in my life. I hope that the journey so far, and that journey going forward, attains to your admonishment to be "lent to the Lord."

In that light, then, the completion of this dissertation is less a crossing of a finish line and more a passing over the threshold into further fruitful service in the Kingdom of God for the life of the world. May God grant that my service continues to honor the best hopes of these and others who have supported me, and, above all, to honor the Father in the name of the Son, Jesus.

## Illustrations

### Tables



### Figures

## Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| *PPR* | Michael L. Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989. |
| *OS* | Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Kindle. Citations include *OS* with kindle location. |
| *FT* | Alister E. McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. Citations include *FT* followed by page number. |
| *RI* | Alister E. McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology*. Malden, MA: Wiley, 2016. Citations include *RI* followed by page number. |
| CP | Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Edited by C. Hartshorne, P. Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1935, 1958. Citations include this abbreviation followed by volume and paragraph number. For example, volume one, paragraph 375 would be cited as CP 1.375. |
| EP | Charles S. Peirce, Nathan Houser, Christian J. W. Kloesel, and The Peirce Edition Project. *The Essential Peirce*. Two Vols. Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1992-1998. Citations include this abbreviation followed by volume and page number. For example, volume one, page 59 would be cited as EP1:59. |
| W | Charles S. Peirce, *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*. 7 Vols. Edited by Nathan Houser. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982-2010. Citations include volume and page number. For example, W2:243 indicates volume 2, page 243. |
| RLT | Charles Sanders Peirce, *Reasoning and the Logic of Things: The Cambridge Conferences Lectures of 1898*. Edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. Citations include RLT with the page number. |
| PPMRT | Charles S. Peirce, and Patricia A. Turrisi, *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking: The 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997. Citations include PPMRT with the page number. |
| SS | Charles S. Peirce, and Victoria Welby, *Semiotic and Significs: The Correspondence between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*. Elsah, IL: Arisbe Associates, 2001. Citations include SS followed by the page number. |
| MS | Charles S. Peirce, *The Charles S. Peirce Papers*. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Microfilm. Citations include MS followed by manuscript number, sometimes also including page number. For example, page three of MS 844 would be MS 844:3. |

## One: Introduction

Natural theology is experiencing a rebirth. Karl Barth effectively silenced theologians pursuing natural theology in the twentieth century.[1] It has been primarily scientists exploring a "new natural theology" within the religion and science field.[2] They are motivated at once by both the wonders of some natural phenomena and a desire to avoid a God-of-the-gaps appeal. Nor is this a "revival" of natural theology in its classical philosophical mode of working out various proofs of God's existence. Rather, the new natural theology argues for theism as the best explanation for "the way the world is."[3] John Polkinghorne has studied the phenomenon of this shift toward natural theology in religion and science circles and is among its chief proponents. in his estimation, "we are living in a third period of intense activity in natural theology."[4]

Several of the most important voices from the last one hundred years of contemporary theology contribute to this renaissance of natural theology: Teilhard de Chardin, John MacQuarrie, Jürgen Moltmann, T. F. Torrance, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Alister McGrath.[5] As a product of late twentieth and early twenty-first century culture, often the new natural theology is marked by core values of the day, including relationality/relativity and the incomplete process of

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[1] Cf., Andrew Moore, "Theological Critiques of Natural Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology*, ed. Russell Re Manning (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[2] John C. Polkinghorne, "Where is Natural Theology Today?," *Science and Christian Belief* 18, no. 2 (2006): 171; Peter Barrett, "The New Natural Theology: A Bridging and Integrating Mode of Inquiry," *Scriptura* 89 (2005): 495-99.

[3] Polkinghorne, "Natural Theology Today," 172.

[4] Ibid., 170-71. The other two periods culminated in Anselm and then in William Paley.

[5] Cf., Alister E. McGrath, *Science and Religion A New Introduction* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), cf., Part IV "Case Studies in Science and Religion"; Michael W. Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Panentheistic Turn in Modern Theology," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 3.

becoming.[6] Accordingly, some of the most prolific proponents of the new natural theology also lend their voices to panentheism as the best way forward in the dialogic relationship between theology and science; namely, Ian Barbour, John MacQuarrie, Jürgen Moltmann, Arthur Peacocke, and Philip Clayton.[7]

For those concerned to maintain traditional forms of Christian faith, panentheism presents a problem for natural theology, "new" or otherwise.[8] Through most of the twentieth century "panentheism" was synonymous with process theism in the Whiteheadian tradition of Charles Hartshorne. [9] Evangelical philosophers and theologians subjected process panentheism to rigorous critique.[10] Disciples of Hartshorne endeavored to improve upon his ideas.[11] Some more recent proponents of panentheism have shied away from Hartshorne's full-throated panentheism, wishing to benefit from its coherence with modern naturalistic science while also holding on to certain beliefs of classical theism that Hartshorne rejects.[12] However, it is doubtful that such a balance has yet been achieved. In a recent essay, evangelical theologian Roger Olson has engaged the present generation of panentheism. He grants that today's panentheism is not

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[6] John C. Polkinghorne, "Christianity and Science," in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (New York: Oxford Univ Press, 2006), 64-68.

[7] Brierley, "Naming," 3. The generic gloss for "panentheism" is that the world is in God, while God is more than the world. Normally, the "in" is understood in some sort of ontological sense. See chapter two of this dissertation and Appendix A.

[8] "Traditional" is used here in the sense of the great Christian tradition; on which, see below.

[9] E.g., Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, Il.: Open Court, 1967).

[10] E.g., W. David Beck, "Schubert Ogden on the Relationship between Theology and Philosophy" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1980); R.G. Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God: Biblical Faith and the Challenge of Process Theism* (Baker Book House, 1983); Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), 177-194.

[11] John B. Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology, Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965); David Ray Griffin, *Reenchantment Without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[12] Owen C. Thomas, "Problems in Panentheism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 654. Some identifying as panentheists wish to maintain classical theistic beliefs such as divine omniscience, creaturely contingency, and creation *ex nihilo*; ibid., 655.

necessarily subject to the devastating critiques applied to process panentheism. It is possible, argues Olson, that a Christian form of panentheism could balance tradition and science. Such a panentheism must guard Christian faith by maintaining God's strict ontological independence from the world that is God's creation.[13] As discussion later in this dissertation will show, maintaining a God-world ontological duality disqualifies a view's claim to panentheism in the estimation of some of its leading advocates. The problem of panentheism for the new natural theology, then, is that panentheism as such still must deny one of the defining tenets of a traditional Christian doctrine of God.

Into this fray, like twenty-first century prophets to a post-secular, but also post-Christian, culture, two voices have cried out to religion and science researchers, urging the new natural theology to maintain its traditional Christian moorings. [14] At the turn of this century, theologian Stanley Hauerwas delivered the Gifford Lectures. Hauerwas surveyed twentieth-century developments in natural theology. He argued for a twenty-first century practice of natural theology as a form of witness to the great tradition of the Christian faith.[15] At this same time, Alister McGrath was working out his three-volume contribution to religion and science, *A Scientific Theology*. In that work he drew inspiration from T. F. Torrance and Emil Brunner who advocated that Christian theology can be both faithful to tradition and scientifically coherent.[16] Rather than

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[13] Roger E. Olson, "A Postconservative Evangelical Response to Panentheism," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2013): 331-32, 336-37.

[14] On the cultural description "post-secular," cf., Jürgen Habermas, *An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-Secular Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), 18.

[15] Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: the Church's Witness and Natural Theology: Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of St. Andrews in 2001* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013).

[16] Alister E. McGrath, *A Scientific Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2001-2003). On the background figures T. F. Torrance and Emil Brunner, cf., also, Alister E. McGrath, *T. F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2006); Alister E. McGrath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2013).

a culmination of his work in natural theology, that series marked only the beginning of what has become years of work to cast a vision for a "renewal" of natural theology. More specifically, since 2008, McGrath has been working out a vision for a "Christian natural theology" that bears witness to the truth of Christian faith in the abductive (best explanation) manner of the new natural theology.[17]

In his recent book, *Re-Imagining Nature*, McGrath's epistemology of the Christian natural theology he envisions may inadvertently plant a seed leading to incoherence. Any natural theology must account for how it is that one expects natural phenomena to communicate information about God. He proposes that the sign theory (semeiotic) of nineteenth century philosopher and scientist Charles S. Peirce provides a crucial element Christian natural theology.[18] To McGrath, Peirce's sign theory explains how human minds make theological sense of natural objects and informs the strategic cultivation of a Christian perspective on the natural world.[19] Since Charles Hartshorne decades ago, Peirce scholars have held that Peirce's philosophy indicates a panentheist account of the God-world relation. For example, Michael Raposa, whose *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* provides the only monograph explicating Peirce's philosophy of religion, writes, "…Peirce, while definitely not a pantheist, might be properly labeled a panentheist, that is, one who views the world as being included in but not exhaustive of the divine reality."[20] It

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[17] Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology*, Kindle ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Alister E. McGrath, *A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009); Alister E. McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Alister E. McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2016).

[18] For an informative introduction to Charles Peirce, cf., Douglas R. Anderson and Charles S. Peirce, *Strands of System: the Philosophy of Charles Peirce, Purdue University Press Series in the History of Philosophy* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1995).

[19] McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature*, 69-73; 96-98.

[20] C.f., Michael L. Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 51; Michael L. Raposa, "The 'Never Ending Poem': Some Remarks on Dombrowski's Divine Beauty," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 31, no. 3 (2010): 220-21. For Hartshorne's view, cf., Charles

may be the case that Peirce's philosophy of signs entails the sort of panentheism that contradicts the Christian faith McGrath's project aims to uphold.

This dissertation engages the possibility of this problem of panentheism due to the influence of Peirce's thought upon McGrath's theory of Christian natural theology. It applies a pragmatic method of inquiry in combination with the theological values and structures of systematic Christian theology. It carefully defines "panentheism" and why it presents a problem for theology in the mainstream of the great Christian tradition. It also establishes the manner in which Peirce's sign theory relates to panentheism. Then this dissertation discovers the theological effects a full version of Peirce's sign theory would have if incorporated into Christian natural theology.[21] As a result, this study finds that a robust appropriation of Peirce's semeiotic would

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Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers speak of God* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2000; repr., 1953), 258-69. Cf., also, Robert S. Corrington, *Introduction to C. S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1993), 202-03; John W. Cooper, *Panentheism—The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 139; Leon J. Niemoczynski, "The Sacred Depths of Nature: An Ontology of the Possible in the Philosophy of Peirce and Heidegger" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2009), 112, 114. In a similar way, Donna Orange's own descriptions of Peirce's conception of God seem to indicate panentheism, though she did not use that term. She holds that for Peirce God is not simply identified with the "sum of all items in the universe…Rather, the divine is the tendency, manifested in natural processes, of growth toward reasonableness." But this immanence is balanced by the transcendence of Peirce's God as also the ideal of these processes. Cf. Donna M. Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God: A Developmental Study* (Lubbock, Tex., USA: Institute for Studies in Pragmaticism, 1984), 91-92. Cf. also Benjamin J. Chicka, "God the Created: Philosophy, Science, and Pragmatic Constructive Realism" (Ph.D. The Claremont Graduate University, 2017), 71. Others include John R Shook, "Panentheism and Peirce's God: Theology Guided by Philosophy and Cosmology," *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2016): 29; David Matthew Mills, "The Drama of Creation: Charles Sanders Peirce on the Universe as God's Work of Art" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 122; Charles Gerald Conway, "A study in the metaphysics of metaphorical theology: C. S. Peirce's conception of the 'continuum' as a model for the 'spiritual presence' of Paul Tillich" (Ph.D. diss., Graduate Theological Union, 2005), 179; Søren Brier, "Can Peircean Pragmaticism Help Theology to Understand the World?," *Chinese Semiotic Studies* 12, no. 3 (2016): 477. Cf. also, Søren Brier, "Pragmaticism, Science, and Theology or How to Answer the Riddle of the Sphinx?," *The American Journal of Semiotics* 34, no. 1-2 (2018): 142, 145-47, 150-56.

[21] Peirce scholarship increasingly recognizes the coherence of Peirce's philosophical theories as a system. Therefore, abstracting elements of Peirce's system for use in other systems may not be valid, depending on the compatibility of the other system with that of Peirce. Indeed, Peirce seems to have claimed as much regarding the use of his philosophy for theology. Regarding the use of his categories to argue for the divine Trinity, Peirce writes that the user must also accept the philosophical system within which the categories function as theorized. Cf., Roger A. Ward, *Peirce and Religion: Knowledge, Transformation, and the Reality of God*, *American Philosophy Series* (London; Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 32.

influence McGrath's project to share Peirce's relation to panentheism; that is, to share Peirce's bias toward—and thus a susceptibility to—a panentheist ontology.

## Review of Literature

A review of the relevant literature shows that some who address the question of the compatibility of Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics with a broadly Christian theology do not find apparent panentheist implications problematic. Philosopher Michael Raposa holds they do not contradict one another.[22] He writes that panentheism "neither undermines the doctrine of creation nor collapses the distinction between God and the universe," (*PPR* 51). Charles Conway writes in his theology dissertation that "panentheism does not preclude trinitarianism, if one properly conceives the work and 'place' of the Spirit."[23] Like Raposa, Conway presses beyond mere non-contradiction. He claims also that, at least in some respects, Peirce's philosophy is consistent with trinitarian theology. Conway's entire project focuses on the correlation of the Holy Spirit and the metaphysical continuum grounding all signs, in light of Paul Tillich's pneumatology.[24] So, in the

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[22] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 208; 220-21. Further, it seems valid to infer from Raposa that Peirce's panentheist system is consistent with classical theism. In his seminal monograph on Peirce, Raposa contends with Charles Hartshorne's claims that "elements" of classical theism in Peirce's thought "are inconsistent with elements in Peirce's system," (*PPR* 160-61n22). Elsewhere, Raposa holds that Peirce's version of the universe as a body of signs is, like the traditional view of "'the book of nature,'" "entirely consistent with the basic features of a classical theism." Cf., Michael L. Raposa, "In the Presence of the Universe: Peirce, Royce, and Theology as Theosemiotic," *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 2 (2010): 215.

While Raposa pays attention to classical theism, it should be noted, that "classical theism" is not necessarily identical to trinitarian Christian theism. This is not a critique of classical theism, but a contextual distinction. Classical theism pertains to philosophical theology rather than confessional approaches to theology such as McGrath's proposed Christian natural theology. Thomas Williams locates the nexus of classical theism in an affinity for adopting Platonic and/or Aristotelian philosophy of religion. Therefore, he names Jewish and Muslim theologies among those associated with classical theism. Thomas Williams, "Introduction to Classical Theism," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2013), 95. Therefore, the Christian tradition of the triune Godhead is not an aspect of classical theism as such.

[23] Conway, "Metaphorical Theology," 165.

[24] Cf., esp., Conway, "Metaphorical Theology," vii. 3, 116-18, 158, 165. Niemoczynski also finds a correlation of Peirce's theory of the semiotic ground with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; cf. Niemoczynski, "The Sacred Depths of Nature," 45-46.

cases of Raposa and Conway, one finds affirmations that Peirce's panentheism is consistent with some form of Christian theism.

Stronger than claims of not contradicting Christian theism, other writers hold that Peirce's philosophy of religion is consistent with certain elements of Christian theology, even "fruitful" for traditional forms of Christian thought.[25] Hermann Deuser has worked for decades to apply semeiotic to theology for the German Protestant community. For Deuser, Peirce's thought supplies an abundant spring of resources to correct persistent problems in theology.[26] For example, Deuser finds that Peirce's categories equip theologians with a semiotics of symbols that readily applies to the relations ascribed to the divine Trinity while avoiding subordinationism, modalism, and polytheism.[27] Another problem for which Deuser finds help from Peirce is with "das Zahlendilemma," the problem of number for the Trinity. Peirce's triadic metaphysics appears to be able to coherently negotiate the tension between the unity and trinity of the Godhead.[28] Additionally, Deuser appropriates Peirce's metaphysics and semeiotic to interpret the triune God as a symbol of the dynamic, creative processes of the natural world.[29] Deuser finds

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[25] Robinson and Southgate write of the "potential fruitfulness of [Peirce's] metaphysical framework," in Andrew Robinson and Christopher Southgate, "Semiotics As a Metaphysical Framework for Christian Theology," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 45, no. 3 (2010): 707. Similarly, Amos Yong writes that Peirce's triadic metaphysical categories yield "fruitful insights," especially regarding issues in Trinitarian theology, cf. Amos Yong, *Dialogical Spirit: Christian Reason and Theological Method in the Third Millennium* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: James Clarke & Co., 2015), 38.

[26] Hermann Deuser, *Gott: Geist und Natur: theologische Konsequenzen aus Charles S. Peirce' Religionsphilosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), vii. There he writes, „Grundbegriffe und Problemstellungen der Theologie durch Peirce' kategoriale Semiotik in uberzeugenderer Weise formuliert werden konnen; erst dann sind sie wirklich geeignet, als Losungspotentiale in Theorie und Praxis unserer Lebenswelt eingesetzt zu werden."

[27] Ibid., 109, 164. On Peirce's triadic categories and semeiotic as resources for theorizing the triunity of the Godhead, cf. also Yong, *Dialogical Spirit*, 38.

[28] Hermann Deuser, *Gottesinstinkt: semiotische Religionstheorie und Pragmatismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 54.

[29] E.g., Deuser writes that God is a fitting symbol of the tripartite nature of the human experience of reality, „Gerade das christliche, personale Symbol "Gott" vermag diese Dreiheit vollständig darzustellen, weil in ihr Erstheits – und Existenzrelation ebenso gelten wie die Vermittlung des Geistes," Deuser, *Gottesinsinkt*, 16. So, Deuser calls attention to ways that Peirce's categorial semiotic explains dynamic world processes that are also represented by the Trinitarian God as a metaphor of the world. Deuser, *Gott: Geist und Natur*, 166-67. Raposa and

those resources helpful also to describe the Father-Son relation, though, again, apparently as symbolic of dynamic forces in the world as related to things constituting that world.[30] However, Deuser does not raise the question of panentheism. Finally, Deuser finds Peirce helpful in resolving problems regarding the coherence of the doctrine of the Incarnation and regarding divine action in the sacraments of the church.[31]

Andrew Robinson, though not addressing the question of panentheism, grants a great degree of consistency between Peirce's metaphysics and Trinitarian theology.[32] For example, Robinson writes that the triadic metaphysical categories of Peirce's system describe a natural semiotic process that "models the 'perichoresis' of the Trinitarian persons." Therefore, he holds that Peirce's categories, and the dynamic of signs they inform, are "'vestiges of the Trinity in creation'."[33] In view of these and other parallels between Peirce's categories and the persons of the Trinity, Robinson argues for a Christian metaphysics informed by Peirce's categories and theory

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others also recognize the potential of Peirce's categorial metaphysics for explicating the God-world relation; cf. Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*, 51; Mills, "Drama of Creation," 113; Yong, *Dialogical Spirit*, 38. As discussed above, Raposa and Mills find Peirce to manifest a panentheist model of this relation. Yong, like Deuser, finds Peirce's semeiotic helpful to explicate Trinitarian doctrine, including God's "economic" relationship to the natural world, though neither comments specifically regarding panentheism.

[30] Deuser, *Gottesinstinkt*, 106-07.

[31] Hermann Deuser, *Religion: Kosmologie und Evolution: sieben religionsphilosophische Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 69-70; Deuser, *Gott: Geist und Natur*, 174-75.

[32] Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework," 694. One may infer indirect attention to the panentheist entailments of Peirce's system in Robinson's monograph. In one place he passingly mentions panentheism as among "the various alternatives to creation *ex nihilo*" put forth out of concern about an overemphasis on the contingency of creation leading to a Deistic sort of transcendence of God. The context is a discussion of Colin Gunton's contribution to trinitarian doctrine of creation and not particular concerns of panentheism implied by Peirce's theories. Andrew Robinson, *God and the World of Signs Trinity, Evolution, and the Metaphysical Semiotics of C. S. Peirce* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 253.

[33] Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 99, 1. Cf., also, Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework,"690, 693. On the parallel between triadic semiosis and Trinitarian perichoresis, cf. also Crystal Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth: A Christian Introduction to the Semiotics of Communication* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2012), 230. Robinson is not alone in recognizing the general correlation of the Trinitarian persons with Peirce's formulation of the triadic metaphysical categories. E.g., cf. also Gérard Deledalle, *Charles S. Peirce's Philosophy of Signs: Essays in Comparative Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 173; Shook, "Panentheism," 11n3; Brier, "Peircean Pragmaticism," 476.

of signs.[34] Consequently, Robinson finds Peirce helpful for resolving problems in Trinitarian theology. He writes, "I suggest a way of approaching, clarifying and developing Trinitarian thought in the light of Peirce's metaphysics and semiotics."[35] In particular, Robinson finds Peirce's categories and semeiotic fruitful for explicating the Trinity in such a way as to avoid polytheism ("tri-theism"), subordinationism, and modalism.[36] A related issue is how "to understand the dynamic mutual indwelling (perichoresis) of the three persons of the Trinity." Robinson again finds Peirce's semeiotic able to explain that problem coherently.[37] Peirce's metaphysical categories not only help with the basic structure and relations of the triune God. Robinson also finds Peirce's thought fruitful in explicating the question of begetting in the Godhead.[38] Another theological issue on which Peirce supplies helpful resources for Robinson is the doctrine of the Incarnation. In particular, Robinson draws upon Peirce's taxonomy of signs and their categorial dynamics to explicate the unity of the divine and human natures of Jesus.[39]

Pentecostal Christian theologian Amos Yong manifests the range of assessments of Peirce's value for theology surveyed here. Like Raposa and Conway, Yong finds Peirce's views not to contradict traditional theism. Though not addressing the question of panentheism, Yong

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[34] Cf., e.g., Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework," 707. What is summarized there is set forth in detail in Robinson's monograph; cf. Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 223.

[35] Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 9.

[36] Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework," 694-95.

[37] Ibid., 695. Crystal Downing, too, finds Peirce helpful to explicate "the coinherence of the Trinity"; cf. Downing, *Changing Signs of Truth*, 234.

[38] Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 80-81. Cf. also Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework," 694. On the related issue of the question of God's existence, Cyril Orji affirms Deledalle's positive assessment of the cogency of Peirce's categorial explication of the being of God as real, transcending the creaturely world of mere existence. Cf. Cyril Orji, *A Science-Theology Rapprochement: Pannenberg, Peirce, and Lonergan in Conversation* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), 112; Deledalle, *Philosophy of Signs*, 173. "Real" and "existent" as used by Orji reflects Peirce's use of these terms within Peirce's Scholastic Realism. On which, cf. chapter three below.

[39] Cf., e.g., Robinson and Southgate, "Metaphysical Framework," 699.

affirms that Peirce's philosophy is "compatible with, or at least not essentially opposed to, evangelical beliefs and sensibilities." Yong credits Peirce's vagueness for allowing "a place for the conservatism of tradition" within Peirce's widely relevant views.[40] Like Robinson and Deuser, Yong finds various correlations of Peirce's thought not only consistent with Christian theology but also fruitful for constructive and systematic work in theology. In one place, he observes, "because Peirce was not primarily a theologian, nor was he interested principally in theological reflection, his should not be mistaken for a theological trinitarianism. At the same time, the suggestiveness of Peirce's triadic epistemology and metaphysics for religious studies, theology, and theological method are far from exhausted."[41] Inspired by Donald Gelpi's work, Yong has produced a monograph on pneumatological theological method drawing expressly upon Peirce's triadic categories and semeiotic.[42] Additionally, Yong points to Peirce as a resource regarding the understanding of one's experience of God and the understanding of God as *person*.[43]

Alister McGrath and Cyril Orji, in different ways, hold Peirce as crucial to a faithful Christian theological engagement with science. As noted earlier, McGrath recently describes semeiotic as helpful for structuring a theory of Christian culture toward training the Christian community in viewing the world through the sign of the cross.[44] Historically, McGrath's engagement with Peirce's thought regards the value of Peirce's theory of abductive reasoning applied to

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[40] Yong, *Dialogical Spirit*, 20, 38, 41.

[41] Amos Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006; repr., Ashgate 2002), 91.

[42] Ibid., 95. Since the 1980s, Donald Gelpi, SJ, has developed and utilized a "foundational pneumatology" drawing significantly upon Peirce's core concepts regarding the triadic metaphysical categories. Cf., e.g., Donald L. Gelpi, *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Emergence* (University Press of America, 1987); Donald L. Gelpi, "The Authentication of Doctrines: Hints from C. S. Peirce," *Theological studies.* 60, no. 2 (1999): 276-93.

[43] Cf., Yong, *Dialogical Spirit*, 38.

[44] McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature*, 96.

Christian apologetics in the field of theology and science.[45] Orji holds Peirce's metaphysics as especially helpful in explaining "emergence systems" in nature according to the doctrine of continuing creation. Namely, Peirce's metaphysical principle of "evolutionary love" is seen to be helpful here.[46]

To summarize, among those writers engaging the value of Peirce for theology, some find him at least not in contradiction with traditional Christian thought—even when granting panentheism as an implication of his thought. Importantly, however, one of these, Raposa, is a philosopher considering classical theism rather than orthodox trinitarian theology of the mainstream tradition. The second, Conway, works as a theologian but limits the scope of his considerations to apparent correlations between Peirce's concept of metaphysical continuity and Paul Tillich's pneumatology. Conway holds this as sufficient to ward off panentheism as theologically problematic. Deuser, Robinson, and Yong are willing to take the slightly stronger position that Peirce's metaphysics and semeiotic are in fact consistent with Christian theology, and therefore theologically productive (though panentheism does not factor in their analyses). They base "consistency" on the fact of several apparent correlations between Peirce's views and, especially, the

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[45] This is an element in McGrath's very recent works; cf., McGrath, *Open Secret*, loc. 5760; McGrath, *A Fine-tuned Universe*, 42-45, 83-84; McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine*, 198-99; Alister E. McGrath, "The Rationality of Faith: How Does Christianity Make Sense of Things?," *Philosophia Christi* 18, no. 2 (2016): 401-02; McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature*, 178; Alister E. McGrath, *The Territories of Human Reason: Science and Theology in an Age of Multiple Rationalities* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 175-81. This theme appears only briefly in McGrath's scientific theology project prior to 2008; cf., Alister E. McGrath, *Reality*, vol. 2, *A Scientific Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 158.

Though not within the context of theology and science, Anette Ejsing, like McGrath, has recently focused attention on the theological usefulness of Peirce's theory of abduction. Specifically, Ejsing finds this element of Peirce's philosophy useful for constructing a theology of hope. She employs Peirce's thought to build upon helpful insights from Wolfhart Pannenberg. Anette Ejsing, *Theology of Anticipation: A Constructive Study of C. S. Peirce*, *Princeton Theological Monograph Series* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 8. Ben Quash also draws upon Peirce's theory of abduction, and applies it to a semeiotic pneumatology of history, drawing upon Peter Ochs, David Ford, and Dan Hardy; cf. Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (A&C Black, 2013), 215-21, 231-32.

[46] Orji, *Science-Theology Rapprochement*, 76.

doctrine of the Trinity. However, might they overstate the importance of these correlations? There is really no question that Peirce conscientiously appropriated the Trinitarian schema as he moved into the latter stages of his philosophical development. He observed that both his metaphysical categories and their application in his theory of signs agreed at some level with the traditional formulation of the relations of the Trinity.[47] The unresolved—indeed, not yet asked—question is whether Christian theology can appropriate a full-fledged, Peircean semeiotic without also corrupting in a panentheist manner the traditional metaphysics of Christian theology of creation.

## Method

These introductory considerations have observed two methods on the question of Peirce's theism and of whether Christian theism truly accords with Peirce's philosophical system. On the one hand, Michael Raposa works according to the discipline of philosophy of religion. According to philosophy of religion methodology, the primary concerns are to understand Peirce's thinking and to improve the coherence of his philosophical insights through corrections as needed. Such evaluations and corrections rest upon standards pertaining to philosophical reasoning.[48] On the other hand, Conway, Deuser, Robinson, and Yong employ constructive theology method, by which categories in systematic theology are adjusted for coherence with other spheres of knowledge.[49] Regarding Peirce and theology, their starting point is supplied by

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[47] Deledalle, *Philosophy of Signs*, 170, 173.

[48] On this basic methodology, cf., Paul Draper, ed. *Current Controversies in Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1-3. Of course, there are many variations on this theme, including the work of Christian philosophers, such as J. P. Moreland and William L. Craig, among many others.

[49] E.g., Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen writes that theology in a constructive mode seeks coherence both with "biblical tradition" and with knowledge according to "cultural, religious, sociological, and other resources," Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 18-19.

evident points of contact, such as a triadic semeiotic and the perichoresis of the Trinity. From there, theological questions are engaged drawing upon theoretical resources supplied by the correlated elements of Peirce's system. The resulting fruitfulness of Peirce's theory to explicate problematic Christian doctrines may be considered a pragmatic proof implicitly validating Peirce's thought for Christian theology. So, in this case, Peirce's philosophy is taken as given and applied to theological problems. On this method, Peirce's insights are validated theologically by their ability to supply cogent and coherent clarifications to long-standing debates in Christian theology. Both methods make valuable contributions to Peirce's legacy of truth-seeking inquiry. Both methods also have their respective ways of relativizing the truth claims of the great Christian tradition. Philosophy of religion brackets any claims to authority in religion that derive from special revelation.[50] Constructive theology opens the normative claims of Christian tradition to correction by non-Christian others.[51] What is needed is engagement with semeiotic and its philosophical context in Peirce's thought according to a third method, systematic theology (defined below).

This dissertation seeks to discover whether, and if so why, the appropriation of Peirce's semeiotic, according to its philosophical context in Peirce's thought, would incorporate panentheism into a traditional Christian theology of nature. Therefore, this project engages a systematic theological critique of Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics with special attention to elements contributing to its apparent panentheism. The approach taken here blends systematic theology with

[50] Draper, *Current Controversies*, 2, "Ideally, philosophy of religion does not treat sacred texts or tradition as normative, while theology does."

[51] Kärkkäinen, e.g., stands with Philip Clayton's view that "[t]heologians cannot simply presuppose the truth of the Chrisitian tradition but must be concerned in an ongoing way with the question of the truth of their central assertions," Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 17.

an empirical methodology informed by Peirce's pragmatism. These methodological concepts receive further clarification in remaining sections of this chapter.

**Systematic Theology**

"Systematic" indicates that the theologian endeavors to work carefully and in an orderly way. In that sense, then, the term *systematic* applies equally well to a broad array of theological methods. Indeed, it is surely the case that every theologian approaches the task systematically. In such a broad sense, then, the term communicates nothing distinctive; it is vaguer than the methods themselves, such as biblical, philosophical, and constructive.[52] The present inquiry employs "systematic theology" in the sense of that distinct method within the theological encyclopedia. Therefore, the term is used vis-à-vis biblical studies, biblical theology, historical theology, and practical theology.[53] Systematic theology in this sense draws upon resources provided by the first three to work out contemporary expressions of the spectrum of Christian doctrines (e.g., doctrines of Scripture, God, angels, man, sin, Christ, Holy Spirit, church, last things).[54] This basic

[52] Similarly, cf. John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, vol. 1, *A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987), 213. Frame also finds that "systematic" is too ambiguous to "make any positive use of the term," yet affirms the general definition of explicitly asking application questions to synthesize biblical teachings.

[53] Cf., e.g., John Frame's discussion of these disciplines as "traditional forms of theology," ibid., 206.

[54] On the reliance of systematic theology upon resources supplied by exegetical, biblical, and historical theology, cf., Millard J. Erickson, *Christian theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1998), 53; Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 212-13; Colin E. Gunton, "Historical and Systematic Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.

On the basic task of systematic theology as working out contemporary interpretations of Scripture, cf., esp., Erickson, *Systematic Theology*, 8. There he writes, "So we propose a more complete definition of theology*: the discipline that strives to give a coherent statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith, based primarily on the Scriptures, placed in the context of culture in general, worded in a contemporary idiom, and related to issues of life*," (original italics). Similarly, cf. Frame, *Knowledge of God*, 213. Also, Kevin Vanhoozer uses metaphors from the realm of theater to convey theology as an enterprise interpreting the Bible in a contemporary way. He writes, "The soft systematics advocated here seeks a fit between the church's present speech and action, on the one hand, and the canonically specified Christo-drama, on the other," Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 258n53.

task entails engagement with relevant truth-claims current in other fields of study, including, especially, philosophy, physical sciences, and social sciences.[55] While systematic theology informs the method used here, this project does not aim to attain to a complete systematic theology. Work is limited to one doctrine, creation, though other doctrines will factor as they are relevant to that one (e.g., incarnation). Systematic theological work on the doctrine of creation is further limited by the primary concern regarding panentheism motivating this inquiry. Therefore, this project does not attempt a systematic theology of creation per se. Rather, systematic theological method indicates the resources and logic for inquiry into the problem of panentheism associated with Peirce's semeiotic. Accordingly, the doctrine of creation, systematically situated, provides this dissertation's theological approach to Peirce's semeiotic as a theory explaining religious experience and knowledge. Traditional theological resources factor primarily in setting up the panentheism problematic (see chapter two).

**Traditional Christian Orthodoxy**

At various points, this introduction has referenced the concept of a mainstream Christian tradition. This needs to be defined further because there are various possible ways of doing so. Indeed, especially under Bultmann's influence, contemporary Christian theology is not in agreement on whether there is such a thing as a definable mainstream Christianity. Rather, it is held that the history of followers of Christ is one of "Christianities" rather than just one faith tradition.

The concept of traditional Christian orthodoxy for this inquiry follows the lead of Alister McGrath and Kevin Vanhoozer. Vanhoozer holds that theology should attain to a "Catholic-

[55] Cf., e.g., David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, *Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2003), 33; Stanley J. Grenz, "Articulating the Christian Belief-Mosaic," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 124.

Evangelical Orthodoxy," meaning that theology should have a *catholic* scope including "the whole people of God, spread out over space, across cultures, and through time"; also that this broad scope is *evangelical*, being oriented to the specific message of the gospel of Jesus Christ given in the Bible.[56] Vanhoozer defines "orthodoxy" as a "nonreductive" canonicity. The range of biblical possibilities is respected without trying to reduce orthodoxy to a single one of those. For example, a recent trend suggesting that narrative theology supplies the essence of Christian theology is a reductive effort contrary to the sort of catholic-evangelical orthodoxy Vanhoozer has in mind.[57] In other words, the approach taken here aims for consistency with what is sometimes called the great Christian tradition (GCT). Alister McGrath supplies a helpful definition of the concept of "the great tradition" for this project, as follows:

> The magisterial Reformation thus offers an approach to engaging with the "great tradition" that has immense potential for their evangelical progeny today. Theology is not simply about giving priority to the Bible; it is about valuing and engaging with those in the past who gave priority to the Bible, and valuing and interacting with the ideas they derived from that engagement. Quite simply, the mainline reformers believed the Bible had been honored, interpreted, and applied faithfully in the past and that they were under an obligation to take past reflections into account as they developed their own.[58]

Accordingly, the systematic theology in this project respects GCT in the broadly evangelical sense described by Vanhoozer and McGrath.

This is not to limit the project to any particular denominational system. Rather, it is to emphasize that the method followed here grants normative status to the Bible.[59] The Bible is the

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[56] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 27. Stanley Grenz also uses "catholic" in this sense, that present-day theologians must read the Bible "conscious that we are members of a community of faith that spans the centuries," Grenz, "Articulating," 126-27.

[57] Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 27.

[58] McGrath, "Engaging," 144.

[59] On priority granted to propositions given in the Bible as an essential characteristic of theology that is "evangelical," cf. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 26; Alister E. McGrath, "Engaging the Great Tradition: Evangelical Theology and the Role of Tradition," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids, Mich., Leicester, UK, and Vancouver, BC: Baker Books, Inter-Varsity Press, and Regent College Publishing, 2000), 139; John G. Stackhouse, "Evangelical Theology Should Be

primary source for systematic theology here, in that claims given through various literary means in the Bible (e.g., narrative, poetry, paraenesis) provide the starting point for theological work, such as on the doctrine of creation. The Bible is the primary source also in the sense that insights from other sources (such as tradition, experience, and contemporary culture) are to be read in its light.[60] This is in contrast to systematic theologies that grant tradition (e.g., Catholic theology) or experience (e.g., some Pentecostal theology) parallel status to the Bible as theological sources.[61]

Therefore, the topic of the doctrine of creation, this inquiry seeks the general tenets salient among those past Christian thinkers who seem to have aimed for a catholic-evangelical orthodoxy. No two authors write in precisely the same way, however, so there is no suggestion here of defining a GCT doctrine of creation with great specificity. Rather, the hope is to define general types of claims that are made in catholic-evangelical orthodox treatments of creation

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Evangelical," in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 41-42.

[60] The definitive role played by the Bible for Christian theology is a major theme of Kevin Vanhoozer's "canonical-linguistic theology," described in terms of a theater company creatively acting according to a given script; cf., esp., Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 16, 247-52. Similarly, Stanley Grenz writes, "The ultimate authority in the church is the Spirit speaking through Scripture…it always comes to its hearers within a specific historical-cultural context…This hermeneutical process occurs in part as contemporary 'knowledge'—the discoveries and insights of the various disciplines of human learning—informs our theological construction," Grenz, "Articulating," 127.

[61] Regarding the role of the Bible relative to the role of tradition in Catholic theology, this claim is not to imply that Catholics hold tradition as equal to the Bible in every respect as divine revelation. The Bible is distinguished as the ultimate authority regarding divine revelation, but Catholic theologians also hold that Church tradition supplies the authoritative—indeed, divinely revealed—means for interpreting the Bible faithfully. Describing neo-Scholastic theology, Avery Dulles writes, "revelation is contained in two sources, namely the Bible and apostolic tradition—both of which are to be esteemed, in the phrase of the Council of Trent, 'with the same sense of devotion and reverence.' Tradition is held to supplement and clarify the truths contained in the Bible," Avery Dulles, *Models of revelation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 45.

On the high degree of authority granted to experience by some Pentecostal theologians, cf., e.g., Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community*, vol. 28, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); Kenneth J. Archer, "Pentecostal Hermeneutics: Retrospect and Prospect," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4, no. 8 (1996): 65, 75; Sang Min Han, "Constructing a New Approach for Contemporary Pentecostal Theology: A Study of Ecstasy and Spiritual Presence as a Divine–Human Encounter" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 2011); Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community*, 208; Terry L. Cross, "The Divine-Human Encounter Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Experience," *Pneuma* 31, no. 1 (2009): 3-34; Paul W Lewis, "Towards a Pentecostal Epistemology: The Role of Experience in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *The Spirit & Church* 2, no. 1 (2000): 95-125.

theology. For example, there is an evident tradition holding to *creatio ex nihilo*. However, within that doctrinal category there are various possibilities for defining the constituent terms and for interpreting how this category relates to biblical texts. The Christian perspective to be defined in chapter two below is an evident tradition of thought, particular instances of which bear a general consistency, or a rough parity, with one another, and appear to be governed by a respect for the Bible as theologically normative.

**Pragmaticism**

Additionally, this project takes a *pragmatic* approach to the work of answering the question of a panentheist influence inherent in semeiotic as such. However, this is not according to the well-known pragmatism in the tradition of William James, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty. Rather, it is in the related yet distinctive sense of *pragmatism* that Peirce had in mind when he coined the term.[62] Chapter three below, discusses in some detail Peirce's pragmatic ideal, which he later renamed *pragmaticism*. It will suffice, for now, to note that a pragmatism in Peirce's sense as pragmaticism is a distinctive way to engage empirical inquiry. That is, the truth of things is evident in the habits and practices to which they would give rise in the event that their full truth was realized in some behavior. From an *a priori* point of view, pragmaticism holds that one's understanding of a concept—one's belief about what that concept means—is discovered by imagining what one thinks *would be* the case *if* one were to live consistently according to that

[62] Cf., CP 6.481, 482, 490, for an example Peirce's way of distancing himself from James and others whose divergence from Peirce's idea Peirce credits to a persistent nominalism in their thinking. For this reason, Peirce coined a new term, naming his pragmatism *pragmaticism*. So, the pragmatic approach engaged here is not subject to Geisler's critique of "pragmatism"; Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, chapter six, "Pragmatism."

The recent dissertation by Andrew Hollingsworth also explores the value of Peirce's pragmaticism for theological method. Whereas the present study remains close to Peirce's own views, Hollingsworth treats Peirce as interpreted in the works of Umberto Eco. Cf., Andrew Hollingsworth, "'Ecos' in the Labyrinth: Systematic Theology as Semiotic Phenomenon" (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

idea. Importantly, Peirce would not claim that what one imagines is the truth of that concept, only that what one imagines truly represents what one believes to be true about that concept. From an *a posteriori* point of view, pragmaticism holds that the truth of any matter is manifest to some degree in whatever habits of practice result from it, as the fruit of anything represents the truth of its roots.[63] Accordingly, the present inquiry tests its hypothesis by looking for evidence in experience that the practice of a robustly semeiotic Christian natural theology relates to a panentheist metaphysics in a manner parallel to Peirce's relation to panentheism.

Two strategies facilitate this pragmatic approach to a systematic theological engagement with semeiotic and panentheism. First, this inquiry constructs various *models* to represent what is most typical of theories under consideration. There is danger, of course, in abstracting some perspective such as panentheism. One risks setting up a straw man, easily disposed of but meaningless after all is said and done. The empirical sensibility of Peirce's pragmaticism mitigates that risk by working with those who are well established and experienced in their respective fields. When modeling "Christian Theism" in chapter two, for example, several historical theological studies in the doctrine of creation provide a diachronic assessment of beliefs consistently held among landmark figures of GCT. To be sure, this remains an abstraction, but one that mitigates arbitrariness and that derives from substantial accounts of representative views. The resulting model is sufficiently vague for comparison with panentheism. It is also sufficiently defined to maintain a distinct, consistent identity.[64]

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[63] Peirce's notion of pragmaticism was inspired by Jesus' teaching, "you shall know them by their fruits," (Matt 7:19). See discussion in chapter three below.

[64] This modeling strategy is similar to representing distinct schools of thought according to their "core beliefs" as practiced within the "research program" framework theorized by Imre Lakatos. Cf., Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

The second strategy is *case-study* experimentation. This works in the other direction from the modeling strategy. For example, in chapter four, a model of a semeiotic form of Christian natural theology qualifies Robert Neville as an exemplar. In that way Neville can be treated as a *case* of that sort of natural theology. This is a form of experimentation, because it treats representative writings of Neville as empirical evidence of the practice of a semeiotic Christian natural theology. His works are observed for the three criteria identifying a theology as panentheist defined in chapter two. A strength of this strategy is its empirical objectivity. The experiment in chapter four *discovers* Neville according to qualifying criteria established independently of considerations of Neville's work. The subsequent *discovery* of elements of panentheism in Neville's thought therefore correlates panentheism in some way with the Peircean concepts to which chapter four attends.[65]

The pragmaticist aspect of the present project is consistent with tacit assumptions at work in standard critical procedures in systematic theology. For example, consider Wayne Grudem's systematic theological approach to a critique of theistic evolution.[66] Grudem's manner of argument is to call attention to a number of ways claims made by proponents of theistic evolution contradict claims made by the text of the Bible and in the theological tradition of the Christian church. Its form could be represented as, "Theistic evolutionist *A* makes claim *x*, which directly contradicts traditional Christian teaching *z*." However, a pragmaticist dimension to the logic of this critique manifests in several places where Grudem uses the language of "would be" in structuring his criticism of certain tenets of theistic evolution. After listing twelve points on which

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[65] Peirce's philosophy informs a case study approach in biblical interpretation in Susannah Ticciati, "Anachronism or Illumination? Genesis 1 and Creation ex nihilo," *Anglican Theological Review* 99, no. 4 (2017): 694.

[66] Wayne Grudem, "Biblical and Theological Introduction: The Incompatibility of Theistic Evolution with the Biblical Account of Creation and with Important Christian Doctrines," in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J. P. Moreland et al. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2017).

exemplars of theistic evolution contradict a plain sense reading of Genesis 1-3 as historical narrative, Grudem writes, "no one *would* derive such a reading of the narrative from simply reading the biblical text alone." Similarly, he imagines that for theistic evolutionists "to remove the contradiction between [their view and scripture] *would* require denying the historicity of nearly *all* of the text in Genesis 1-3." Finally, Grudem claims that such a denial as he just described "*would* undermine a number of core Christian doctrines."[67] These statements can be taken as evidence of a tacit question in the logic of his critique: "If one were to really believe theistic evolution, what would the traditional doctrine *z* look like as a result?" Transposed into a pragmaticist register, Grudem's critical inquiry would begin with that question, reformed into a hypothesis *that* belief in theistic evolution would result in a contradiction of doctrine *z*. Perhaps some clarification of theistic evolutionary theory would be necessary. Then, Grudem would deduce doctrinal implications of theistic evolution relevant to the doctrine in question, say, the historical Adam and Eve. This would provide some definition to the manner of contradiction involved. Then, Grudem would look to what practicing theistic evolutionists have said on the matter to see if his deductions were correct. Evidence from their work confirming his deductions would consequently support his initial hypothesis.

One might object that the pragmatic method just described is much more complicated than Grudem's simple observation of contrasts. In his essay, Grudem observes what key theistic evolutionists appear to agree on in their writings on issues such as the historical Adam and Eve. Then he holds that up against traditional Christian teaching on the matter, clearly demonstrating the contradiction. However, the simplicity of this approach is misleading. There are a number of

[67] Grudem, "Biblical and Theological Introduction," 73. Emphasis added on occurrences of "would." Grudem's full argument includes his later chapter in the same book; cf., Wayne Grudem, "Theistic Evolution Undermines Twelve Creation Events and Several Crucial Christian Doctrines," in *Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, ed. J. P. Moreland et al. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2017).

tacit mental steps taken in the process, just as there are some number of tacit logical steps between "theistic evolution" and statement *x* that clearly contradicts doctrine *z*. How is one to know that the contradictory claims are truly due to what is essential to theistic evolutionary theory? Might it be the case that other beliefs and theories factor into such contradictory statements? Along that line, also, is it not important to identify *why* theistic evolutionists seem to draw conclusions similarly contradicting long-held doctrines of the Christian faith?

This is why this dissertation adopts a pragmaticist approach for its systematic theological critique of the possible panentheist entailments of semeiotic. The value and power of such a pragmaticist approach to theological inquiry consists, in part, in reifying beliefs and ideas serving as root causes producing certain theological claims. It is not sufficient simply to observe evident correlations between Peirce's views and tenets of panentheism. For example, proponents of the view that Peirce's metaphysics is panentheistic, almost in every case, establish their claim in connection to Peirce's metaphysical doctrine of continuity.[68] Indeed, the similarity is compelling. However, according to this inquiry's analysis, Peirce's philosophy does not entail a clearly defined panentheism. Furthermore, the course of this pragmaticist inquiry shows that, when put into natural theological practice, a robust account of Peirce's semeiotic still does not produce conclusions attaining to criteria identifying the influence of panentheism. That is, this dissertation finds that an actual practitioner of a robustly semeiotic Christian natural theology, Robert Neville, does manifest beliefs consistent with panentheism, but that these panentheist beliefs result from Neville's prior ontological commitments rather than to Peirce's semeiotic philosophy. Grudem's much simpler tack would certainly show that a Peircean theologian holds strongly

[68] Cf. the leading studies on this question by Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*, 51; Corrington, *Introduction*, 202-03; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 139. In Cooper, continuity is implied by Peirce's concept of "Absolute First" and "Absolute Second," which are mediated by the cosmos as a "Third." These allude to Peirce's phnomenological categories, on which, cf. chapter three below.

panentheist beliefs, but it could not truly claim to have shown how those beliefs relate to Peirce's semeiotic.

**Other Terms and Delimitations**

By now it is evident that this dissertation uses an unusual form of the word for theories about signs. Charles Peirce used several variations of *semeiotic* when referring to his philosophy of signs. Max Fisch, among the founders of Peirce scholarship, writes, "For…the art or science or doctrine or general theory of semiosis [Peirce] uses *semeiotic*; much less often, *semeiotics* or *semiotic*; very rarely, *semeotic*; never *semiotics*." Fisch argues that semeiotic is the proper term by which to reference Peirce's theory of signs. Peirce derived the term from the Greek when naming his distinctive philosophy of signs. Further, "To tell us how to pronounce his preferred form, he marks it sēmeio′tic (MS 318:52)." Fisch notes that it is pronounced with a long *o*.[69] This dissertation follows that tradition of Peirce scholarship respecting this as the proper form by which to designate the Peircean sign theory, rather than the more familiar form *semiotics*. T. L. Short expresses this sentiment well when he writes, "I use 'semeiotic', in Peirce's occasional spelling, for his theory or theories of signs, and the more usual 'semiotic' for that movement which originated in Europe…independently of Peirce and that later appropriated him, with confusion all around."[70]

As an engagement with the theological entailments of panentheist ontology, this dissertation pays great attention to the question of the God-world relation. In contrast to semeiotic as the

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[69] Max H. Fisch, "Peirce's General Theory of Signs," in *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 322.

[70] T. L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ix. Cf., also, Kenneth Laine Ketner, "Semeiotic," in *Das Bild zwischen Kognition und Kreativität: Interdisziplinäre Zugänge zum bildhaften Denken*, ed. Elize Bisanz (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011). I am grateful to Dr. Ketner for providing a copy of this essay during a visit to the Institute for Studies of Pragmaticism, which he founded, and for which he served as Director.

term for Peirce's theory of signs vis-à-vis other sign theories, this dissertation does not use *world* as a specific philosophical term. Throughout the dissertation, *world*, *cosmos*, and *universe* serve as synonyms for the idea of the totality of whatever is commonly referred to as *natural*. Therefore, to whatever extent faculties of consciousness and mind are part of the order of nature, these are included within the scope of these synonyms. Theologically, these synonyms refer to all that is commonly conceived as the *creation*.

Additionally, this dissertation limits its scope in two important ways. In engaging and defining *panentheism*, the most relevant literature is from the past two decades. Prior to that, scholars identified panentheism with process theism and the metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead.[71] However, currently the panentheism field wishes to include Hartshorne's dipolar model as one type of panentheism rather than the definitive one. Consequently, much of the past generation of theological engagements with panentheism speak only to what panentheists consider now a minority view. On the other hand, admittedly, past detailed critiques of panentheism in its process form would make relevant points one could apply to panentheism more broadly. That would easily supply a researcher abundant material to consider for a book-length project in its own right.

This dissertation engages Peirce's thought in the opposite temporal orientation. That is, this research is interested in Peirce's own ideas about signs, God, and metaphysics. Much has been done since Peirce to correct and develop his profound thinking on many matters.[72] Present Peirce scholarship surely understands Peirce better than he understood himself in many ways.

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[71] E.g., Norman L. Geisler and William D. Watkins, *Worlds Apart: A Handbook on World Views*, second ed. (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 107-08; their exemplars of panentheism are Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Ogden.

[72] E.g., cf., Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*; Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Michael L. Raposa, *Theosemiotic: Religion, Reading, and the Gift of Meaning* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020).

However, there is always a risk of misrepresenting Peirce, or even refashioning Peirce in the image of later generations who are interested in appropriating his ideas. Inevitably, interpreting Peirce's ideas incorporates values and beliefs of the time of the one writing. The question motivating this dissertation responds to claims by Peirce scholars that Peirce's ideas *as he conceived them* indicate or even entail a panentheist ontology. Therefore, it will not do to test these claims according to contemporary interpretations of Peirce's thought. If panentheism pertains to the present *zeitgeist* as some have indicated, then these interpretations naturally will tend to read panentheism into Peirce's thought.[73] Consequently, this dissertation engages Peirce's ideas directly, in their primary sources in his writings. Where secondary sources are used, this project makes every effort to discern where descriptive commentary ends and constructive development begins. Not long ago this would not have been a feasible approach for any project for which engagement with Peirce's thought constitutes only a part. Now there is a growing body of reference material facilitating the study of topics Peirce's comments on which are scattered throughout Peirce's writings. Also, the Peirce Edition Project and the Institute for the Study of Pragmaticism continue to produce critical editions of Peirce's writings so that nonexperts can engage Peirce and his ideas.[74]

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[73] Arthur Peacocke, "Introduction: 'In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being?'," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), xix-xxi. Robert Corrington admits that he interprets Peirce in terms of panentheism, because Peirce's own ideas leave the God-world relation quite vague; cf., Corrington, *Introduction*, 202-04.

[74] Most notably, *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, published by the Peirce Edition Project, has published its seventh volume. With that series to date, critical editions of Peirce's writings through 1892 are now available.

## Overview

The chapters that follow pursue a pragmatic inquiry into the ways in which Peirce's semeiotic relates to a panentheist metaphysics that would, according to a systematic theology of creation, render Christian natural theology incoherent. Chapter two takes the first steps in this inquiry by defining the respective GCT and present day panentheist models for the God-cosmos relation. This work models Christian theism according to a set of seven distinguishing beliefs. It models panentheism according to a set of six distinguishing beliefs. A comparison of these views defines the problem of panentheism according to Christian systematic theological standards. There are three characteristic ways that panentheism talks about the God-cosmos relation that traditional Christian theists cannot affirm. These provide criteria for recognizing the presence of panentheism in the experimental portion of chapter four.

Chapter three offers an account of Peirce's semeiotic set within Peirce's philosophical system. The work of this chapter observes how Peirce's semeiotic epistemology and metaphysics contribute to his ideas about God, especially how God relates to the cosmos. In short, Peirce conceived of God's relation to the world in terms of an artisan to the artisan's works. Peirce uses the imagery of authorship, as in the world as God's great *poem.* These observations consistently show that Peirce held the God-world relation to be semeiotic in nature. Accordingly, Peirce's theology and metaphysics do not meet the panentheist standard discovered in chapter two. However, neither are Peirce's views wholly unlike a panentheist model. Therefore, chapter three concludes that Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics is *not yet* panentheism; that there seems to be a bias toward panentheism in Peirce but not panentheism as such.

Finally, chapter four experimentally tests the hypothesis of this project that a Christian natural theology incorporation of a robust semeiotic will also incorporate Peirce's relationship to panentheism. In light of the results of chapter three, this hypothesis becomes, *a robust*

*incorporation of Peirce's semeiotic by Christian natural theology will also incorporate the panentheist bias inherent in Peirce's thought*. The work of this chapter sets up the experiment by drawing upon the *theosemiotic* of Michael Raposa to guide a Peircean take on McGrath's project. This produces an outline of ideas describing a Christian theosemiotic, for which Robert Neville serves as an exemplar. The experiment looks at Neville's experience, as a theologian working with Peirce's semeiotic, to see if there is evidence of a panentheist metaphysics—or a bias in that direction—in his conclusions. The inquiry finds that Neville's work does demonstrate a panentheist ontology, but that this does not seem to have come from the influence of semeiotic. Rather, it seems that Neville's panentheism is, in a sense, *in spite of* his use of Peirce's ideas. That is, Neville adapts Peirce's theory to Neville's ontology of the world as the creation of a "divine" *eternal ontological creative act*. Moreover, this dissertation finds that Neville's ontological commitments produce ideas that go beyond panentheist forms of religious naturalism. Therefore, a Christian natural theology informed by a robust semeiotic theory would not be panentheist as long as its ontology remains determined by GCT orthodoxy.

## Two: Modeling the God-World Relation

This dissertation engages alleged panentheist tendencies in C. S. Peirce's metaphysics as a potential problem for the use of Peirce's semeiotic by renewed attempts at natural theology such as that of Alister McGrath. This requires the careful definition of the elements of that problematic. One needs to have a clear sense for what "panentheism" is. One then needs also to understand just how panentheism is a problem for orthodox Christian theological projects such as McGrath's Christian Natural Theology (CNT). Both of these objectives require the definition of a basic, GCT conception of God's relation to the cosmos. Defining these three elements of the problematic is the objective of the present chapter.

A premise of the problematic is that panentheism is incompatible with GCT theology pursued in this project. Not everyone would agree that such is the case. Some of the major proponents of panentheism consider themselves faithful to the mainstream of Christian tradition.[1] However, an ongoing problem among panentheists just is how to define their theistic model to include the gamut of variations claiming "panentheist" for their own view. This problem of definition is accompanied by the problem of demarcation: How does panentheism distinguish itself from other theistic models? These remain open questions in the panentheism literature, so it is necessary to spend time working through them below.

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[1] E.g., Arthur Peacocke, "A Naturalistic Christian Faith for the Twenty-First Century: An Essay in Interpretation," in *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Philip Clayton (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 10. Peacocke describes his substantial introductory essay, writing, "In what follows, an attempt will be made to develop features of a more specifically *Christian* faith that are consistent with…a naturalistic perspective…I attribute ontological status to theological terms [viz., "God"] through the warrant of a critical realism…." Philip Clayton counts himself among Christian panentheists; cf., Clayton, "Panentheism," 700. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's recent systematic theology adopts a view he calls "Classical Panentheism"; cf., ch. 10, "Classical Panentheism" in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2014). Cf., also, Anna Case-Winters, *Reconstructing a Christian Theology of Nature: Down to Earth*, *Ashgate Science and Religion Series* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Jan-Olav Henriksen, "The Experience of God and the World: Christianity's Reasons for Considering Panentheism a Viable Option," *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1086-96.

Whatever one's definition of panentheism, it is also necessary to say clearly why it seems to be problematic. What is the theistic God-cosmos relation model promoted by this project, such that panentheism constitutes a problem to overcome? In the literature on demarcation, panentheism is usually contrasted with classical theism and pantheism. Classical theism refers to the broad tradition, primarily in Western thought, that there is a God somehow responsible for, wholly other than, and related to the experienced universe. It is rooted in Greek philosophy that has influenced aspects of Christian thought.[2] In contrast, pantheism is a model in which God and the world are identical and coextensive, such that "all is God."[3]

However, the theistic model of God's relation to the cosmos for this project needs to be defined by GCT rather than by Western thought more generally. The ways panentheism may or may not be problematic for classical theism are not the same as how they may or may not be problematic for traditional Christian theology. For example, some versions of classical theism hold that God is absolutely unchanging.[4] Therefore, the claim by panentheists that God is constantly changing (except in God's world-transcending essence) is a direct contradiction. A model informed by GCT, however, can also affirm that with respect to God's essential character and his own being God is unchanging (Ps 102:26, 27), but with respect to God's relations to the cosmos and creatures within it there is a sense in which God is changing (Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 15:11).[5]

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[2] Williams, "Introduction to Classical Theism," 95, identifies Classical Theism as primarily characterized by a number of perfections ascribed to God. The Classical theist God acts upon others but is not acted upon by others.

[3] Ted Peters, "Models of God," *Philosophia* 35, no. 3 (2007): 281-82.

[4] E.g., Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, 233, writes, "a necessary Being has no possibility of change whatsoever."

[5] To be clear, such changes are neither fickle nor arbitrary. God's covenant decisions are unchanging, but God's covenant allows for repentance and redemption from the consequences of sin. For example, God promises Judah's destruction and that he will not change his mind on this; however, God also offers to change his mind if they repent (Jer 4:28; 26:13). Similarly, the unchanging nature of God's covenant is in view in Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 6:18; 13:8; James 1:17. This is a complex issue, and there are diverse options available within GCT. For example, there are proponents for a determinist view and for an open theist view. For the purposes of this inquiry, it suffices

Therefore, classical theism will be considered when demarcating panentheism as a model of the God-cosmos relation. However, this chapter will need to define a Christian theism model of the God-cosmos relation according to the sources particular to GCT.[6]

This chapter first defines a Christian theism model of the God-cosmos relation (CT). That inquiry finds that the doctrine of the incarnation informs seven ontological principles structured by an overarching metaphor of the craftsman. The resulting model emphasizes the stark ontological distinction between Creator and creature inherent to the doctrine of creation from nothing. It also emphasizes the personal, redemptive, and loving actions of the Creator toward and with the creation. Then CT is shown to be consistent with the theological structure of Alister McGrath's vision for CNT. After that, the chapter pursues a definition of a panentheist model of the God-cosmos relation (PEM). Though the definition and demarcation problems remain unsettled, this work finds sufficient agreement in key sources to construct a model. The chapter concludes by identifying ways in which PEM entails problems according to CT. These considerations will, first, enable the work of chapter three to decide how Peirce's metaphysics relates to PEM. They will also enable chapter four to determine whether a semeiotic CNT might suffer in the ways PEM is problematic vis-à-vis CT.

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to note the availability of the middle ground described here. For a discussion of these questions within the tensions of beliefs rooted in the Bible, cf., Jay Wesley Richards, *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Immutability, and Simplicity* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003). For recent defenses of determinism, cf., Guillame Bignon and Paul Helm, *Excusing Sinners and Blaming God: A Calvinist Assessment of Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Divine Involvement in Evil* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2018); Peter Furlong, *The Challenges of Divine Determinism: A Philosophical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). For a salient example of open theism, cf., Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster Press, 2001). It has recently been argued that the controversy in this debate might be due, at least in part, to a misunderstanding of Aquinas' views; cf., Michael J. Dodds, *The Unchanging God of Love: Thomas Aquinas and Contemporary Theology on Divine Immutability*, Second ed. (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

[6] Admittedly, clarifying a Christian theist model as distinct from classical theism compares to the work of defining a species within a genus of theistic models.

## Christian Theism (CT)

Orthodox Christian discourse speaks of the God-world relation as being between Creator and creature.[7] In speaking here of a Creator-creature model of the God-world relation, the ancient Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* nuances the term "creation."[8] So, while there is a sense in which the Creator's work continues in the forms of providence typically described in systematic theology, it remains grounded in the definitive act of origination, in which God made to exist the very material that God subsequently formed and is forming in various ways.[9] Accordingly, then, the metaphor of the *artisan*, of the *craftsman* frames the model describing Christian theistic ontology.[10] Seven ontological principles comprise the Christian theist model (CT) for this project.[11] First, the principle of the Redemption Economy is that redemption is at the heart of

[7] The aim here is a bird's-eye view on the basic features of a catholic-evangelical way of speaking of the God-world relation. This intends to be normative to the extent that parameters of a mainstream view are evident in the tradition. Emphasis lies on observations in historical theology. See note 11 below.

[8] On the relation of the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* to biblical roots and to developments in Christian doctrine, cf., Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of "Creation Out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought* (New York;: T & T Clark International, 2004); Gary A. Anderson, *Creation Ex Nihilo: Origins, Development, Contemporary Challenges* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018); Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Baker Publishing Group, 2004).

[9] The term "creation" and its cognates have become associated with the concept of "continuing creation," which holds a different sense of the term "creation" than the traditional Christian view. E.g., Ted Peters, *God—The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 252, "God creates continually and will not finish this creative work until the creation is consummated in the eschaton." This is stated in contrast to the notion that "creation" pertains primarily to a past action, which is the sense advocated by CT. Further, ibid., 257, "God as constantly engaged in drawing the world out of nonbeing and into existence with the aim of consummating this creative work in the future," clarifies Peters' sense of "creation." The process of becoming existent from nonexistence is ongoing until the end.

[10] While the artisan metaphor (so, also, the second CT principle, the Maker Analogy) provides a robust structure by which to explain the traditional ontology of God's relation to the cosmos, the underlying doctrines are not derived analytically from the biblical metaphor. That is, orthodox Christian teaching on the relation of God to the world did not result from extensive reflection on the divine artisan symbolism evident in scripture. Rather, the doctrines follow logically as implications of the incarnation of the Son as Jesus Christ as will be noted throughout the explanation of the principles below.

[11] For these seven principles, I am especially indebted to excellent historical surveys in Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Alban Books Limited, 1998); Paul M. Blowers, *Drama of the Divine Economy: Creator and Creation in Early Christian Theology and Piety* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); I.A. McFarland, *From Nothing: A Theology of Creation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2014).

God's purpose for creation. Second, the principle of the Maker Analogy states that the artisan metaphor, though imperfect, fittingly represents the Creator-creature relation. Third, the principle of the Freedom of Divine Action speaks to the utter transcendence of God in being and power. Fourth, the principle of Absolute Ontological Distinction expresses an important implication of creation *ex nihilo*. Fifth, the principle of Two Orders of Being follows as a corollary of Absolute Ontological Distinction to emphasize the separate ontological integrity of God and of what God has made. Sixth, the principle of the Divine Ground of Being guards against Deism by highlighting the creation's constant existential dependence upon the Creator. Seventh, the principle of the Relation of Others returns to the basic theme of Redemption Economy, now informed by the strict ontological otherness of creation from Creator, yet as other held in constant redemptive relation to and by the Creator.

The principle of the Redemption Economy (RE) is that God created the cosmos as the object of his love to be perfected through the work of redemption.[12] That is, God's plan in creating the heavens and the earth was always already to redeem it through the course of an historical project centered in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10). It is therefore the light of the life of Christ Jesus that manifests this purpose of God's entire project of creation. Specifically, the incarnation provides "the model" of the Creator-creature relation.[13] The paradigmatic

[12] On God's redemptive purpose for creating the cosmos, cf., e.g., J. J. Johnson Leese, *Christ, Creation, and the Cosmic Goal of Redemption: A Study of Pauline Creation Theology as Read by Irenaeus and Applied to Ecotheology*, vol. 580, *Library of New Testament Studies* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2018); John G. Gibbs, *Creation and Redemption: A Study in Pauline Theology*, vol. 26, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Jonathan R. Wilson, *God's Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Kimlyn J. Bender, "Christ, Creation and the Drama of Redemption: 'The Play's the Thing . . .'," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 2 (2009): 156-59.

[13] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 183, "The incarnation—the act of free divine interrelation with the created world—provides the model of mediation that we need. Christology … the Son of God in free personal relation to the world, indeed identification with part of that world, is the basis for an understanding of God the Father's relations with his creation."

significance of the incarnation taught patristic theologians to read Genesis in light of gospel sources, such as the Gospel of John (John 1:1-3). It also taught them to recognize that the divine act of origination accomplished in creating everything *ex nihilo* was done with the intention of redeeming that very creation.[14] Indeed, God's act of creation in the beginning initiated a "project" to perfect the creation that requires overcoming sin and its evil produce.[15] As Irenaeus affirmed, the incarnation manifests the "recapitulation" by which God is redeeming and so perfecting the created order.[16] Also, the plan of recapitulation revealed in the incarnation entails that God's good work of origination in the beginning (Gen 1:31) was nevertheless incomplete. Its intended purpose was to be fulfilled through the direct, internal involvement of Christ (Eph 1:4; 1 Pe 1:20).[17] Recapitulation in christology holds that evil in the very nature of the order of creation requires "that creation's purpose can be achieved only by its redirection from within by the creator himself."[18] Therefore, God did not create initially without already having in view the need to overcome sin in order to bring the fullness of his creation plan to completion.

In light of the Spirit's role in the resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1:4; Eph 1:19-20; 1 Pe 3:18), one understands that it is through the ongoing work of the Spirit that God administers the project

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[14] Blowers, *Drama*, 136, 140.

[15] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 86. Similarly, Blowers, *Drama*, 292, "for early Christian interpreters…[c]reating was an overarching and open-ended project of the divine economy that included nurturing, shaping, renewing, actualizing hidden potentialities, transforming, finishing."

[16] Blowers, *Drama*, 17, 373, 174; Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 169, writes that Irenaeus' understanding of christological "recapitulation" rests upon Ephesians 1:10 and places the cross at the center of the redemption economy.

[17] Cf., Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 202.

[18] Ibid., 11. Colin Gunton explains the principle of recapitulation: "Divine providential action takes place in a world which can be perfected only through the death of the mediator of creation on the cross of Calvary. In sum, the death and resurrection of Jesus is the model for all providential action, as those acts which enable the world to become itself by action within, and over against, its fallen structures," ibid., 190. So, the logic of recapitulation is that "the creation is renewed from within," ibid., 24.

by which that purpose is accomplished. Hence, a redemption *economy*.[19] It was by the enabling, empowering work and presence of the Spirit that the incarnation was realized and continued in the person of Jesus (Lk 1:35).[20] In other words, the Spirit's work of perfecting the creation and of completing the work of redemption is historical, being carried out within the structure of time.[21]

In the incarnation, God's free and redemptive involvement with the created order is made clear. The Spirit's role in raising Jesus from the dead provides insight into the historical manner in which God is working with the creation. In turn, the redemptive purpose of the cross and of the incarnation itself provides insight into the purpose in the Creator's creating in the beginning. This is, as it were, an inside job, in that the creator becomes part of the creation to "redirect the

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[19] The word "economy" represents the apostle Paul's use of οἰκονμία when writing about God's "*plan* for the fullness of time," (Eph 1:10) and God's "*plan* of the mystery hidden for ages," (Eph 3:9). Karl Rahner famously applied this word in his seminal treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity, Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2001; repr., 1970). Rahner's analysis of the immanent trinity and the economic trinity greatly influenced twentieth century trinitarian theology. Cf., Paul D. Molnar, *Faith, Freedom, and the Spirit: The Economic Trinity in Barth, Torrance and Contemporary Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2015); Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004). On avoiding some of the landmines associated with this complicated doctrine, cf., Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2006).

[20] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 184; also, ibid., 23-24, holds the incarnation to be an instance of new creation, since Jesus had to be created within Mary's womb. The role of the Spirit in the life of the incarnate Son, Jesus, is not meant to diminish the status of the Son, the Word, as the divine person enfleshed as Jesus (John 1:14). The intention is only to give proper place to the witness of Scripture as to the presence and involvement of the Spirit in the life of Jesus, without adopting the controversial position of a Spirit christology (e.g., Luke 4:18, 21; Matt 4:1; 12:28). Regarding efforts to work out an orthodox Spirit christology, cf., Myk Habets, *The Anointed Son: A Trinitarian Spirit Christology*, vol. 129, *Princeton Theological Monograph Series* (Eugene, Or: Pickwick Publications, 2010); Roger Haight, "The Case for Spirit Christology," *Theological Studies* 53, no. 2 (1992): 257-87; Greg Liston, "A 'Chalcedonian' Spirit Christology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2016): 74-93; Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). On the relevant history of doctrine, cf., Hershel Odell Bryant, "Spirit Christology in the Christian Tradition: From the Patristic Period to the Rise of Pentecostalism in the Twentieth-Century" (Ph.D. diss., Bangor University, 2013). The question of Spirit christology relates to the question of this dissertation in another respect. Joseph Bracken, a recent proponent of panentheism, sees in Spirit christology a justification for panentheist metaphysics; cf., Joseph A. Bracken, "Trinitarian Spirit Christology: In Need of a New Metaphysics?," *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2011): 750-67.

[21] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 170, writes that the resurrection is "the eschatological action par excellence," a work of the Spirit of God nevertheless very much within the temporal order. Cf., also, Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Michael Scott Horton, *Rediscovering the Holy Spirit: God's Perfecting Presence in Creation, Redemption, and Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017).

creation to its eschatological destiny."[22] So, the RE principle teaches that God created the heavens and the earth in such a way that, at just the right moment, the Son could be born of woman (Gal 4:4-5) and redeem all creation from the inside out (Rom 8:19-21).

Second, the principle of the Maker Analogy (MA) makes the artisan metaphor transparent and expresses God's work of creation as both like and unlike human craftsmanship. Church tradition made this form of the metaphor expressly a part of the Christian faith. As the Nicene Creed confesses, "We believe in one God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible...." The ancient creed was, of course, echoing eminent imagery used in Hebrew and Christian scripture when depicting God's relation to the cosmos.[23] In the scriptural witness one finds that there are ways in which the Creator's work of making is similar to that of human makers. Genesis 1 claims that God is the maker of the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.[24] This claim from the beginning of sacred scripture is repeated throughout the holy writings (e.g., Ex. 20:11, Neh. 9:6, Psa. 146:6, Jer. 32:17, Ac. 17:24, Col. 1:16, Rev. 14:7). It is fitting, then, that the imagery of the *potter* is used to represent God's work of making what he creates (Job 10:8-9, Jer. 18:3, Rom. 9:20-21).[25] So, God's work of making is *like* that of a human craftsman in that God makes something according to his good intention, which produces

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[22] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 24.

[23] Ibid., 15.

[24] So, the repetition of the key word *bara* and its cognate *asah* throughout the passage (Gen 1:1, 7, 16, 21, 25, 26, 27, 31. While not technical terms nuancing *ex nihilo*, *asah* is used of the work of making in general, and scripture's use of *bara* is limited to a special sort of making ascribed only to God (e.g., Isa. 41:20). Cf., Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 36; Othmar Keel, Silvia Schroer, and Peter T. Daniels, *Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 97; John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 133; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Revised ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 48-49; and David W. Cotter, *Genesis*, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 4. On the "ambiguous" presence of the doctrine of creation from nothing in the Bible, cf., Blowers, *Drama*, 186.

[25] On the use of the image of the potter in scripture for God's creative activity, cf., Keel & Schroer, *Creation*, 96-97.

something good and valuable (Gen. 1:31).[26] On the other hand, God is very much *unlike* a human craftsman in that God does not merely refashion preexisting matter or substance of any kind. God breaks the "maker" mold, and it fell to postapostolic theologians to make this clear. For example, Theophilus of Antioch understood, "For man, being below, begins to build from the earth, and cannot in order make the roof, unless he has first laid the foundation. But the power of God is shown in this, that, first of all, He creates out of nothing, according to His will, the things that are made."[27] This brings this inquiry to the third ontological principle of CT which highlights the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

Third, the principle of the Freedom of Divine Action (FDA) holds that the Creator's power is neither limited by nor dependent upon anything that is not God. Theological challenges encountered in non-Christian neighbors motivated early Christian thinkers to reflect on implications of the incarnation for creation theology.[28] The incarnation, demonstrating the infinite God's power to unite himself to the finite being of the human Jesus, suggests that God's power and being utterly transcend the created order. Colin Gunton writes, "The incarnation implies a certain freedom in the relations between God and the world, and so is the basis of the doctrine

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[26] Murray Rae, "Jesus Christ, the Order of Creation," in *Christ and the Created Order*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2018), 24, "a cosmos rather than a chaos," (e.g., Isa 45:18); Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity*, vol. 3, *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 74.

[27] *Theophilus of Antioch*, 2.10. Describing Theophilus' view, McFarland *From Nothing*, 21, writes, "creation cannot be thought of as God reshaping some preexisting material in the manner of a human artisan who, in making a pot from clay or bread from flour, creates from something else. Instead, God brings into being the very stuff of which the universe is made. In short, God creates from nothing." Similarly, cf. also Blowers, *Drama*, 167.

[28] The Platonic claim of the eternal nature of matter was recognized as especially threatening to the sovereignty of God as Creator, motivating the development of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in its classical sense. Cf., Blowers, *Drama*, 28, 170; also Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 3. McFarland, *From Nothing*, 36, adds that God's sovereignty carried important implications about God's power to save and to redeem; also, early theologians wished to guard God's "ability to engage directly with the world of change" without granting the Platonic principle of divine inclusion in the being of the world. Moreover, Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 54, calls attention to the "two hands" doctrine as entailing that God is directly involved with what he creates, rather than, as the Gnostics speculated, dependent upon intermediary beings.

that God creates 'out of nothing'."[29] That is, God's sovereignty over the created order is understood as being absolutely independent of that order (e.g., Isa 51:6; Rom 9:21; 2 Pe 3:10).[30] Simon Oliver also points out that God's freedom transcends not only the properties pertaining to the material stuff of creation but also to whatever principles and processes pertain to the cosmos as such.[31] So, the classic doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* implies the CT principle of Freedom of Divine Action. This doctrine resulted from reflection upon theological implications of the incarnation to distinguish the Christian conception of "creation" from the conceptions of neighbor cultures. It strongly implies that God as Creator is limited by nothing in his power to effect his will in creation, nor does God rely upon anything that is not God to create everything that is not God. God is sovereign to create as he wills.

Fourth, the principle of Absolute Ontological Distinction (AOD) maintains a strong Creator-creature distinction by denying any degree of ontological continuity between God and creation. This principle, too, is primarily determined in Christian thought by christology. For the same reason that the incarnation manifests the freedom of God's sovereign power over the creation, expressed in terms of *creatio ex nihilo*, the incarnation also implies "an absolute ontological

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[29] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 67-68. Even though this doctrine is not unambiguously taught in scripture, Blowers notes that the biblical use of the phrase "heaven and earth," etc., indicates "the Creator's perennial sovereignty over, and provision for the created cosmos." Cf., Blowers, *Drama*, 137. Similarly, see also Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 20, on the pneumatology of Ezekiel 37:1-14.

[30] Karl Barth's doctrine of God emphasized God's freedom vis-à-vis the created order, e.g., *Church Dogmatics* II/1, sect. 28, "The Being of God as the One Who Loves in Freedom." Cf., George S. Hendry, "The Freedom of God in the Theology of Karl Barth," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 31, no. 3 (1978): 229-44; Brian D. Asbill, *The Freedom of God for Us: Karl Barth's Doctrine of Divine Aseity*, vol. 25, *T & T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Tyler Wittman, *God and Creation in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[31] Simon Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift is From Above: Creation *Ex Nihilo* Before Nature and Culture," in *Knowing Creation*, ed. A.B. Torrance and T.H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2018), 34; what McFarland, *From Nothing*, 37, dubs "the realm of becoming." Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 25, 221, notes that in contrast to Greek notions, God's creative freedom and power transcend such cosmic principles as fate, necessity, and time.

distinction between creator and creation."[32] That is, christology confesses the union of two natures that do not mix and that remain consubstantial with others of like nature.[33] Therefore, AOD is evident in Christ himself. As the one by and through whom the creation is made and sustained, "the Son is the…principle of distinction" between God and the world. That is, in that the Son upholds the creation as such (Col 1:17; see below on TOB), he distinguishes it from divine being.[34] Like a craftsman who is neither identical to nor continuous with what he makes, neither is God ontologically continuous with anything God has made. McFarland writes that the common denominator among non-Christian "cosmogonies [is] the presupposition of a fundamental ontological continuity between Creator and creature." [35] The early Christian theologians realized that any such continuity, however, implies some degree of divinity in the created order of being, which is the claim of all forms of pantheism.[36] So, AOD underscores creation from nothing, affirms its christological roots, and avoids the idolatry of viewing the creation as having an ontological status equal to the Creator.[37]

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[32] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 67. So, also, McFarland, *From Nothing*, 13, writes of the "radical ontological discontinuity between Creator and creature encapsulated in the doctrine of creation from nothing." Blowers, *Drama*, 1, 164, observes that this element of creation doctrine in the patristic era manifests as the idea of an "ontological chasm (διάστημα) that separates [the triune Creator (and the) time-bound creation]."

[33] For an updated treatment of this topic, cf., Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: on the Divine Unity of Christ, Interventions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2016).

[34] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 31. Affirming Pannenberg's basic claim that the Son's distinction from the Father as begotten grounds creaturely distinction from God, cf., *Triune Creator*, 159, 142-43, 21-22; also, Karkkainen, *Creation and Humanity*, 60.

Consider, further, this distinction as implied in the *word* as means of divine creation. The divine word is not what is created, but the creation is an effect wrought by that word. So, speech-act theory appears to offer fruitful insights for Christian metaphysics. Cf., eg., Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship*, vol. 18, *Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[35] McFarland, *From Nothing*, 12,

[36] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 36, 37. This is also the primary mark of panentheism; on which, see below.

[37] Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift," 32.

Fifth, the principle of Two Orders of Being (TOB) affirms only two realities; one is God, the other is everything that is not God.[38] This principle of orthodox doctrine maintains the integrity of both the Creator and the creation.[39] The integrity of the Creator as such requires that the Creator is not part of a larger whole. So, TOB entails divine transcendence as existence in a unique order of being from that of the creation. That is, as Trinity, God is self-sufficient being and therefore in need of nothing else. Creation is an absolutely free act of God's will according to his love.[40] In contrast, creatures are contingent. The creation may not have been created at all, or it may have been created other than it was created. In addition to the categories of necessary and contingent, TOB is evident in the contrast between divine eternity and created temporality. Gunton points out that space and time are properties belonging to the created order. Time and space are therefore not continuous with the being of God.[41]

Further, there is a kind of difference pertaining to the way the Creator differs from all creation, and there is a kind of difference pertaining to the way creatures differ among themselves.[42] The first kind of difference, observed just now, regards the integrity of the Creator's

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[38] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 153, "[t]here are on this account only two realities, creator and creation."

[39] So, the creation's goodness as God observes it (Gen 1:31), and its objectivity when God judges it (Heb 12:27; 2 Pe 3:10-13; Rev 21:1). These imply that God is not looking at or judging himself, or even altogether what is his own doing (i.e., God is not responsible for the condemnable status of the world).

[40] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 66, writes of Aquinas' view that "God's essence and God's existence are one. In other words, it is of God's essence to exist." Which is to say that God is "self-subsistent being itself." Cf., Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift," 32-33. The work of creation is unique to God without being a principle of divine being as such.

[41] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 143. Of course, these issues are considerably complex, and a range of views among Christian thinkers continue in recent discussions. Cf., e.g., Gregory E. Ganssle and Paul Helm, *God & Time: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Natalja Deng, *God and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Gregory E. Ganssle and David M. Woodruff, *God and Time: Essays on the Divine Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Important defenses of divine timelessness, such as Gunton represents in the great tradition, include, Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time*, second ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); William Lane Craig, *God, Time, and Eternity*, vol. II, *The Coherence of Theism: Eternity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2001).

[42] Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift," 35.

order of being. The second kind of difference has to do with the integrity of the creaturely order of being. That is, in giving creation being, patristic thinkers understood God to have "empowered it with a graceful integrity of its own."[43] By "integrity," then, TOB refers to the need to protect creaturely being from being subsumed within the being of God, making the creation part of the life of God rather than having a creaturely life of its own.[44] Basil of Ceasarea therefore wrote of "the ontological homogeneity of the creation." That is, everything that is not God "has the same ontological status before God."[45] There is a creaturely order of being ontologically distinct from the divine order of being. So, the Creator differs from the entire created order in a way that is different from the way creatures differ among others within that order.

Orthodox Christian ontology maintains a strict distinction between the two orders and all that pertains to them. Nevertheless, the Absolute Ontological Distinction of the Two Orders of Being must, within properly Christian thought, be recognized as so "only in relation to the God who continues to uphold it by his 'two hands,'" as Irenaeus famously wrote regarding the roles of the Son and the Spirit in creating and sustaining the created order.[46] That is, Christian ontology, holding to the Creator-creature model, understands that the distinct reality of the created order is such precisely because of its ongoing dependence upon God for its being. This brings this inquiry to the next ontological principle of the CT model.

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[43] Blowers, *Drama*, 186. Similarly, Gunton writes "that the world is given value as a realm of being in its own right." It is, after all "the created order," which God deemed "very good." Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 10.

[44] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 65-66, "If the world is too closely tied to the being of God, its own proper reality is endangered, for it is too easily swallowed up into the being of God, and so deprived of its own proper existence."

[45] Ibid., 71, 72. This was in direct contradiction to Gnostic (and other forms of Platonism and Neoplatonism, including that of Plotinus) notion of "degrees of being." Cf., ibid., 71; Karkkainnen, *Creation and Humanity*, 74. Contrary to Plotinus' "great chain of being," it is not the case that created things are more or less real according to how close to the being of God they are alleged to be. McFarland, *From Nothing*, 11.

[46] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 54. Cf., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.20.1, 4.

Sixth, the principle of the Divine Ground of Being (DGB) underscores God's ontological transcendence in that God upholds and sustains the being of all things by granting their participation in being.[47] The contingency of the creaturely order is in the sense that it does not necessarily exist, nor does it necessarily exist as it does. The creation is also contingent in that it depends upon God at every moment for its very being (Heb 1:3). Therefore, the confession of the orthodox Christian tradition is that God as such is "the sole ground of being" for himself and for everything that is not God.[48] According to James Smith, proponents of Radical Orthodoxy (a recent effort to retrieve traditional theological perspectives to meet the challenges of the present post-secular, postmodern culture) hold that this must be understood according to the analogy of being, a concept which complements TOB. That is, being as such for creatures is by analogy to the divine being, not as an extension of God's own being.[49] The creation has being "only to the extent that it receives the gift of being from the Creator," in other words, to the extent "that the creature *participates* in" the ontological order granted by the Creator.[50]

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[47] The phrase "ground of being" is a way of speaking of God's transcendence famously expressed by Paul Tillich. The phrase here as in Tillich intends to hold together this divine transcendence vis-à-vis the created order and that order's constant existential reliance upon God's present sustaining power. The present study therein affirms Tillich's effort to resist the pull of naturalism. However, the use of the "ground of being" phrase here resists Tillich's implicit panentheism. Tillich explains his "ground of being" conception in terms of "self-transcendence." He appears to bring human experience of the world and human experience of God into such intimacy as to suggest a panentheist ontology. Cf., Paul Tillich, *Existence and the Christ*, vol. 2, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 7-9.

[48] McFarland, *From Nothing*, 28.

[49] Cf., Steven A. Long, *Analogia Entis: On the Analogy of Being, Metaphysics, and the Act of Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011); Keith L. Johnson, *Karl Barth and the Analogia Entis*, vol. 6, *T & T Clark Studies in Systematic Theology* (New York;: T&T Clark, 2010).

[50] James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 75. Smith writes, "that the creature *participates* in the being of the Creator." The creation is, as it were, "suspended" from the Creator's being; ibid., 56, 75. Similarly, Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift," 33, "Creatures only exist by participation in God's being…Everything that is not God…exists only by participating in God's essence." However, CT is careful to note the TOB principle, which calls for a concept of participation nuanced by the integrity of the separate ontological orders. A fuller explanation of Smith's meaning might avoid that appearance, but it is sufficient at this point to see that the concept of ontological participation is connected to the divine ground of being in orthodox Christian thought.

Theophilus of Antioch provides another way to conceive of DGB. With regard to creation *ex nihilo,* Theophilus wrote that the transcendence of God indicated by this doctrine "points to the fact that 'the heights of heaven, the depths of hell, and the ends of the earth are in [God's] hand.'"[51] Clearly, that everything is figuratively in God's "hand" is meant to express the conviction that all of the created order of being depends absolutely upon God for its ongoing existence.[52] Irenaeus strengthened this insight by conceiving God's relation to the cosmos in terms of God's "two hands," Christ and the Holy Spirit.[53] The work of one "hand," of Christ, according to Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 1:2-3, consists in "both origination and continuing interaction and upholding" all that God has made. God's second "hand," the Spirit, is "the presence of one enabling the world to be and become truly itself."[54]

What is emphatic in all of this is the great grace of God in so granting creaturely existence to share in being, albeit perhaps tangentially rather than in continuity with the divine essence. As Oliver affirms, "It is God who, at every moment, holds creation as other than himself." But this otherness in creaturely existence is itself God's first and constant gift to creatures.[55] Importantly, it is a gift constantly and personally delivered through the empowering presence of the Spirit. Through him, God not only grants being to the creation, but also guides the creation in love to the attainment of God's redemptive purpose.

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[51] McFarland, *From Nothing,* 30, quoting *Theophilus of Antioch,* 1.4.

[52] McFarland, *From Nothing*, 21, "If God is to be confessed as Lord without qualification, then everything that is not God must depend on God for its existence without qualification." The logic of this claim rests upon what was said earlier about the materials of God's work of creation must not be said to constrain God's work in any way.

[53] Cf., also, Leese, *Cosmic Goal of Redemption,* 140-44.

[54] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 143, "the one by whose mediation the Son became incarnate and is made the means of the relating of the creation to God the Father."

[55] Oliver, "Every Good and Perfect Gift," 35, writes that the "fundamental ontology of creation [*ex nihilo,* entails that creation] is a wholly unmerited, gratuitous, and primordial *gift* that makes possible all intercreaturely relations characterized as self-donation."

Seventh, the principle of the Relation of Others (RO) observes that it is the nature of the triune love of God to bring the created other into relation with God according to the redeeming and perfecting purposes of God. Orthodox Christian thought confesses the triune being of the Creator (e.g., Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 Pe 1:2). This indicates the unity of action, bound by love, as Creator of all things. That is, God *as Trinity* creates and sustains creation. So, Levering writes of the "inseparable operation of the persons *ad extra*…in which the Father works through the Son and in the Spirit."[56] So, recall Irenaeus' notion that the work of creation is "attributed to the Father…realized through the work of his two hands, the Son and the Spirit."[57] As the one through whom all things are created and sustained as the creation, Christ, the Son, is the "link between God and the created world."[58] This is manifest above all in the incarnation of the Son, because, "In the unity of Christ's person, he is fully human and fully divine, fully creator and fully creation. This means not that the divine and the created are confused within the person of Christ, but that they are *inseparable*."[59] This relation is accomplished by the Spirit, just as the Spirit unites the divine and created orders in Jesus.[60] Likewise, as redemption per se is accomplished in the moment of the cross (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:14-16), the redemption economy motivated by the love of God is evident in the work of the Spirit (Rom 8:20-25; Phil 1:6).[61] The Spirit brings the

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[56] Matthew Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Creation: Cosmos, Creatures, and the Wise and Good Creator* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2017), 12-13.

[57] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 154. Of Irenaeus and the "two hands" imagery, Gunton writes, "Irenaeus frequently says that God creates by means of his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. This enables him to give a clear account of how God relates to that which is not God: of how the creator interacts with his creation," ibid., 54.

[58] Ibid., 120.

[59] Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall, "Introduction," in *Christ and the Created Order*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2018), 15.

[60] In other words, "the Son as the giver of structure, and the Holy Spirit as the one who gives the world space to become within but not apart from that structuring. The hinge on which all turns…is the incarnation." Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 192.

[61] McFarland, *From Nothing*, 32, points out Irenaeus' explanation of creaturely participation in the being of God as a function of God's engaging immanence; of "God's own loving presence to them."

loving presence of the Creator to creatures to "enable" them to attain their divine purpose (Phil 2:12, 13).[62] So, writes Blowers, "in patristic theology and piety, the creative mission of the Holy Spirit in concert with the Father and the Son revolved around four cognate activities consistently…associated with the Spirit: animating, sanctifying, beautifying, perfecting."[63] Therefore, RO holds that God embraces the creation – the ontological other, and that God's Spirit lovingly guides the creation to its redemptive purpose.

*Table 1* The CT Model

1. Redemption Economy (RE)
2. Maker Analogy (MA)
3. Freedom of Divine Action (FDA)
4. Absolute Ontological Distinction (AOD)
5. Two Orders of Being (TOB)
6. Divine Ground of Being (DGB)
7. Relation of Others (RO)

A summary of these principles of CT shows how MA, the second ontological principle of CT, provides the basic framework within which the other principles of the CT model must be understood, ensuring their GCT flavor. According to RE, the finished work of the creation is continuously worked on as the Maker actively brings the purposed project to perfection. The skilled craftsman has the *freedom* to make whatever he wants from the material he uses (FDA). Further, neither the material nor the completed work are identical to the craftsman even as there are manifest ways in which the maker's personality has imprinted itself upon the work (AOD, TOB). The completed work forever owes its existence to its maker, and in the God-world relation this is intensified such that the creation continues its existence only by the gracious will of the Maker

[62] Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 161, "The world does indeed cohere in the Son, but is diversified and particularized as the second hand of the Father enables things to be what they are created to be in the Son."

[63] Blowers, *Drama*, 292.

(DGB). Finally, RO reiterates that the created other is the object of the Creator's love. The Creator's continuous work on the project entails the Creator's immanence, becoming united with the project to guide it from within.

## CNT & CT

It is important to highlight briefly the continuity between McGrath's Christian Natural Theology proposal (CNT) and the CT model of the God-cosmos relation. This is necessary to establish the relevance of the CT-panentheism relationship discussed in this chapter to the experiment with a semeiotic CNT in chapter four. Specifically, chapter four constructs an experimental form of CNT according to Peirce's semeiotic philosophy. That experimental version is then evaluated according to the ways panentheism is problematic for CT, as will be defined in the section "The Problem of Panentheism" below. Comparing that constructed version of CNT to CT to discern a panentheist influence in semeiotic requires that CNT *sans* semeiotic is theologically on par with the CT standard. The next two paragraphs demonstrate the positive correlation of the two theological schemas.

McGrath identifies five beliefs comprising the core of CNT's theological structure: the Self-Revealing God, the *Analogia Entis*, the *Imago Dei*, the Economy of Salvation, and the Incarnation.[64] Self-Revealing God is "the idea of a transcendent God who chooses to self-disclose in history and nature," (*OS* 4423; *FT* 71). *Analogia Entis* holds forth the Augustinian doctrine "that there exists, on the one hand, a perceptible correspondence and, on the other, an ontological difference, between the creator and the creation," (*OS* 4551). This follows from *creatio ex nihilo* in that creation remains dependent upon the power of its creator (*FT* 73-74). Therefore, also, "the

[64] Cf., Appendix B for a comprehensive discussion of McGrath's account of these beliefs and for a consideration of their relation to CT.

created order is capable of rendering the character of God, especially God's wisdom, goodness, and beauty," (*FT* 74). The CNT belief *Imago Dei* grounds the human faculty of making theological sense of natural phenomena in the "rationality of God" who created "both the fundamental ordering of nature and the human observer of nature," (*FT* 77). Part of God's ordering of the observer's mind is to grant the human mind its own agency, comparable to God's creative agency, to construct imaginatively and rationally its perception of significance in nature (*OS* 4683). The Economy of Salvation refers to the narrative schema in which the natural world is currently subject to the "fall," but its restoration anticipated according to God's plan: the narrative structure of "creation, fall, redemption, and consummation," (*OS* 4423, 4772). Finally, the CNT belief in the Incarnation holds "that God entered into the natural order in Christ, in order to transform and redeem it," (*OS* 4423). McGrath writes that this belief is definitive for all the others (*RI* 98-100; *OS* 4443).

*Table 2* CNT & CT Parity

| **CNT** | **CT** |
|---|---|
| 1. Self-Revealing God | (RO) |
| 2. *Analogia Entis* | DGB, FDA, AOD, TOB |
| 3. *Imago Dei* | MA, (RE) |
| 4. Economy of Salvation | RE |
| 5. Incarnation | FDA, TOB |

Theological parity between CT and CNT is evident in that four of the five theological beliefs of CNT relate closely to CT (Table 2). Only the first theological belief of CNT, the Self-Revealing God, stands outside of CT's expressed claims. Even in that case, there is an indirect relationship to CT's principle of the Relation of Others. The second and third CNT theological beliefs also relate imprecisely to CT principles, but there are genuine points of contact nevertheless. CT and CNT both highlight the way the doctrine of the *Analogia Entis* holds forth the

ontological otherness of Creator and creature. CNT goes the additional step to argue that the doctrine also affirms the suitability of the creaturely being to represent the self-revealing God. The third CNT doctrine, the *Imago Dei,* relates implicitly to CT's principle of the Maker Analogy. Additionally, on the common ground of the problem of sin, this CNT core belief also relates implicitly to Redemption Economy among the CT principles. The fourth and fifth CNT core theological beliefs agree quite closely with claims of the CT model. The parallel relationship of CT and CNT manifests in synonymous relation of the Redemption Economy principle in CT and the Economy of Salvation belief in CNT. Finally, both theories agree that the Incarnation serves as the defining principle for the other beliefs. However, CT focuses on the ontological implications of the Incarnation, and CNT focuses on the epistemological ones. There is, therefore, close theological agreement between CNT and CT. This overview has shown a "before" snapshot of CNT theologically. In chapter four, this will be compared to an "after" snapshot of the theological effects of semeiotic upon CNT.

## Panentheism (PEM)

This section has two objectives. The first is to describe the array of variations on the panentheism theme according to recent scholarship.[65] The second is to abstract from these what seem to be the essential characteristics qualifying a view as panentheist. That is, this section seeks to model panentheism per se according to the common factors across the known types of panentheism. However, very little distinguishes panentheism as a God-world model compared to

[65] E.g., cf. the analysis of the wide variety of panentheist perspectives by Philip Clayton, "Panentheism Today: A Constructive and Systematic Evaluation," in *In Whom We Live and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World,* ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004). Clayton uses this language of "variations on a single theme" in discussing correlations among the essays of the volume; ibid., 250. Also, see the detailed review of that volume with this theme of panentheistic pluralism in view, in Edgar A. Towne, "The Variety of Panentheisms," *Zygon* 40, no. 3 (2005): 780-81.

other models. That is, there are almost no theological claims made by panentheism that are not found within proponents of classical theisms or pantheism. Yet, there is certainly a panentheism movement of considerable scope and duration.[66]

The field of writers expressly ascribing to panentheism is quite broad. Many authors have some degree of a sympathetic relationship to Christianity, for example, Schubert Ogden, Jürgen Moltmann, Philip Clayton, Arthur Peacocke, and David Pailin.[67] Process philosophers are an important subset of panentheists.[68] However, when process theists describe divine attributes and actions, their views are markedly different than those who attempt to remain basically under the tent of Christianity.[69] Another subset takes a rather mystical approach. For example, Philip Clayton describes the mystical panentheism of Catherine Keller as one whose theology "is spoken in the liminal language of postmodernism and poststructuralism...a speaking that is at the same time an unsaying. Her language is invariably translucent and evocative; it never allows one to grasp a proposition, to pin down a truth."[70] All so far at least have in common a minimal sort of theism.

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[66] Brierley, "Naming," 3-5. Brierley surveys the contemporary range of conceptions of panentheism as a twentieth century phenomenon in theology and philosophy of religion. For studies demonstrating panentheism as a persistent model with a long history, cf., Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*; Cooper, *Panentheism*.

[67] Brierley, "Naming," 3.

[68] In fact, process philosopher Charles Hartshorne is credited with sparking the contemporary panentheist movement; cf. Brierley, "Naming," 3. The seminal works in this regard are Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964; repr., 1948); Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*. Influential disciples of Hartshorne include, Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology, Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*; Griffin, *Reenchantment*.

[69] So, most panentheists distance themselves to some extent from a process form of panentheism, according to Thomas, "Problems in Panentheism," 655. Cf., also, the discussion of Niels Gregersen's conception of "Qualified (Christian) Panentheism (QP)," in Ronnie P. Campbell, "Mere Christian Theism and the Problem of Evil: Toward A Trinitarian Perichoretic Theodicy" (Ph.D. diss., Liberty University, 2015), 99-100, 102-03. There, Campbell discusses Niels Henrik Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 22-24. Campbell's dissertation is now published as Ronnie P. Campbell, *Worldviews and the Problem of Evil: A Comparative Approach* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019).

[70] Philip Clayton, "How Radically Can God be Reconceived Before Ceasing to Be God? The Four Faces of Panentheism," *Zygon* 52, no. 4 (2017): 1051.

That is, they would affirm even a most generic sense of "there is a God." Yet, the panentheist "family" has recently been shown also to include non-theists, such as adherents of Buddhism, and atheists.[71]

Not only is the field of explicit panentheists broad enough to suggest contradictions. There are others who are counted as "implicit" panentheists. Their views are considered to manifest the basic panentheist claim, even if only implied—and even if expressly denied, as in the cases of John Polkinghorne and Wolfhart Pannenberg. In fact, the entire history of panentheism prior to the nineteenth century consists of implicit panentheists, because the term was not coined until then, and it was not developed and promoted as a theological model until Hartshorne's work in the middle third of the twentieth century.[72]

This broad diversity raises the problem of definition: Is the term "panentheism" meaningful if both Christian theologians and non-theist Buddhist philosophers affirm it? The problem of coherence is also raised: Can Panentheism remain consistent across this diversity, or does it have different senses in different contexts? Do these senses harmonize or conflict? Panentheism proponents recognize one another and claim some who do not profess to be panentheist.[73] How is this possible? These questions are well beyond the scope of this project. Yet, what matters here is whether there is sufficient consistency in the panentheist field to define a basic model of what unifies them as a community called "Panentheist."

The panentheism literature generally concurs with the definition of *panentheism* standardized by the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "'The belief that the Being of God

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[71] Cooper, *Panentheism*, 18-19. Cf. also Michael Murphy, "The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism," in *Panentheism Across the World's Traditions*, ed. Loriliai Biernacki and Philip Clayton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[72] Cooper, *Panentheism*, 26-28.

[73] Ibid., 27-28; Brierley, "Naming," 3-4.

includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part of it exists in Him, but (as against Pantheism) that His Being is more than, and is not exhausted by, the universe.'"[74] This is indeed the heart of panentheism, as the discussion below shows.[75] However, proponents of panentheism also point out that important terms in that definition remain too vague. For example, the preposition "in" receives much attention in the literature for two reasons. First, it is the salient element of the term panentheism (literally, "all-in-god").[76] Second, this preposition has a wide range of possible senses.[77] So, in his review essay summarizing the work accomplished by the contributors to *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*, Philip Clayton notes that as many senses of "in" are represented as there are authors of the essays.[78] Therefore, the challenge for

[74] S. v. "Panentheism," *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1027; quoted in Peacocke, "Introduction: 'In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being?',".

[75] Joanna Leidenhag, "Deploying Panpsychism for the Demarcation of Panentheism," in *Panentheism and Panpsychism: Philosophy of Religion Meets Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Godehard Brüntrup, Benedikt Paul Göcke, and Ludwig Jaskolla, Innsbruck Studies in Philosophy of Religion (Boston, MA: mentis Verlag, 2020), 65, identifies panentheism's "central claims" as the "panentheistic slogans" that "'the world is the body of God'" and "'the world is in God.'"

[76] Philip Clayton, "Panentheism," in *The Routledge Companion to Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Chad Meister and James K. Beilby (New York: Routledge, 2013), 692-93; Georg Gasser, "God's Omnipresence in the World: On Possible Meanings of 'En' in Panentheism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 85, no. 1 (2019): 44.

[77] Gregory R. Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?," *Zygon* 36, no. 3 (2001): 396, called for work defining the "en" in panentheism as a priority for resolving panentheism's internal "tensions." Several researchers took on such a task. For example, see Benedikt Paul Göcke, "There is No Panentheistic Paradigm," *The Heythrop Journal* (2015): 4-5. He writes, "The key notion 'in' is the most troublesome of the notions the panentheist has to clarify…the panentheist has to decide on a particular interpretation of what it is supposed to mean that everything is in God. The problem is that there are countless interpretations of the preposition 'in' to be found in the debate…'in' is just a placeholder for whatever one wishes to assert about the relationship between God and the world," ibid., 4.

[78] Clayton, "Panentheism Today: A Constructive and Systematic Evaluation," 253, provides a list of thirteen senses of "in" represented among the various essays. There are seventeen essays explicating panentheism according to various perspectives. As recently as 2019, Philip Clayton admits that there is still much work to be done to define panentheism as such vis-à-vis other views; Philip Clayton, "Prospects for Panentheism as Research Program," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 1 (2019): 4. His own conclusion for now is that panentheism is recognized according to various "family resemblances," though he remains hopeful that further "constructive work" will clarify panentheism's distinct identity; ibid., 16. Hence, his advocacy of identifying panentheism as a "research program" rather than as a distinct theological model. Similarly, cf., Gasser, "God's omnipresence," 43-44.

this effort to model basic "Panentheism" is to define a distinctly panentheist sense of how the world is "in" God.

*Table 3* The Brierley Model (BM)

1. The cosmos is God's body
2. Language of "in and through"
3. Cosmos as sacrament
4. Inextricable intertwining
5. God's dependence upon the cosmos
6. Intrinsic positive value of the cosmos
7. Passibility
8. Degree Christology

Michael Brierley's essay, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: the Panentheist Turn in Modern Theology" is especially helpful. Brierley's doctoral research focused on the rise of panentheism as a theological model in the twentieth century.[79] Based on that research, Brierley offers that the field is indeed quite diverse, nevertheless it is possible to set down several hypotheses that generally describe panentheism across the board. His own approach to that descriptive task is to focus attention on the work of seven "key panentheists." They are so named because they are the ones Brierley finds to offer sustained engagement with the definitive problem of panentheism: What does it mean to say that all is "in" God.[80] Consequently, the Brierley Model (BM) lists the eight "themes" answering the question of "in" (see Table 3).[81]

[79] Brierley, "Naming," 1.

[80] Ibid., 5. He identifies Philip Clayton, David Griffin, Charles Hartshorne, John Macquarrie, Jay McDaniel, David Pailin, and Arthur Peacocke. Of these, according to Brierley, all but Clayton, Macquarrie, and Peacocke are process panentheists; ibid., 3.

[81] Ibid., 7-12.

The content of each of these themes can be quickly summarized. That the cosmos is God's body is a standard metaphor in panentheist literature.[82] Though often cast as an analogy with the human mind-body (or, psychosomatic) anthropology, Brierley prefers "*person*-body." That is, God's relation to the universe is like the relation of a human person to their body.[83] Therefore, to touch some part of the universe is to touch God, though God's essential self is distinct from the universe. As the person is more than just a body, so is God. Most important, the person depends upon the body and the body depends upon the person, though in different ways. The remaining seven themes follow from the first. Panentheists use "in and through" language to speak of God's active relation to the universe. It is the instrument through which God acts and lives.[84] Also, God's relation is to all of the universe, present in such a way as to act through it as a person acts through their body. Therefore, the universe has a sacramental aspect, being the means of God's presence to his creatures.[85] More than that, God and the universe are inextricably

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[82] E.g., cf., Clayton, "Panentheism," 695.

[83] Brierley, "Naming," 6.

[84] Ibid., 7.

[85] Ibid., 8-9. Brierley reflects a common Christian view of "sacrament" as "a physical thing 'under,' 'in,' or 'through' which God comes." Put this way, it is not clear how this is something belonging to panentheism more than to classical theism, or even CT. Such a view is easily construed in terms of the gracious gift of being discussed in CT's core belief, Divine Ground of Being. According to CT, in God's freedom and love, God is able to be present in and active through what is yet ontologically other than himself. Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen also associates sacramentalism with the doctrine of God's omnipresence and active preservation of all being, Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, 56. According to Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 142-48, the Radical Orthodoxy project develops a Christian ontology of "participation. According to this view, creaturely being is graciously "suspended" by the transcendent being of the Creator immanent to the creaturely being. This theory is guarded from panentheism by insisting on the themes of gift and difference in the God-world relation.

Of course, it is possible, as Brierley shows, to construe sacramentalism according to a panentheist ontology, such that the sacramental aspect is a function of the interdependence of the being of God and the being of creation. For example, Henriksen, "The Experience of God and the World," 1080-83, argues that a "sacramental panentheism" motivates the adoption of panentheism by Christians. A salient claim of that argument is that there is ontological interdependence in the God-world relationship, because God needs the world as the medium of interrelation with and revelation to creatures. On the other hand, Henriksen also relies upon the semiotic nature of the sacramentality of creation. One might argue that the "sacramental panentheism" view stops short of a demarcated panentheism, such as this chapter finds below. It is the semeiotic aspect of Peirce's ontology that appears to guard his metaphysics from panentheism; see chapter three below.

intertwined, which is to say that there is a "mutual coinherence" intrinsic to the being of both God and the universe.[86] These things, furthermore, entail a real sense in which God needs the universe. Though God's transcendence according to panentheism entails God's ontological priority to the universe, nevertheless God depends on the universe for God's experience of life. Of course, there is a considerably stronger sense of dependence in the universe's relation to God. The very existence of the universe depends upon God. Therefore, the universe participates in divine qualities such as God's goodness. Not every divine attribute or quality extends to the universe. God's being is eternal in God's essence, while the universe is strictly temporal. So, goodness extends to the universe because God creates it (continuous creation is a view often held by panentheists) and acts through it as God's instrument. Being so intertwined and ontologically interdependent with the universe, panentheists hold that God is passible. God empathizes with everything. More than that, Brierley writes that the experiences of the universe just are God's own experiences. Finally, degree Christology is the view that the Incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus was a marked case of what is generally true of God's relation to the cosmos.[87] That is to say that the mind-body analogy is descriptive of the panentheist view, and not merely metaphorical. Brierley holds that these eight themes constitute not only a definition of the term "panentheism," but also a standard – a "yardstick" – by which to qualify any view as an instance of bona fide panentheism.[88] Therefore, these themes explicate the simple panentheist definition: the cosmos is in God but God is more than the cosmos.

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[86] Brierley uses this phrase in a later essay; Michael W. Brierley, "The Potential of Panentheism for Dialogue Between Science and Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 637.

[87] Brierley, "Naming," 12. However, Brierley notes that this view is not as widespread among panentheists.

[88] That definitive model of panentheism according to Brierley is, "Panentheism can be defined as the doctrine of the cosmos being the good…'body'…, or 'sacrament,' needed by God… with which God is inextricably

However, the question of demarcating a panentheism model among other theistic models has not yet been settled. That is, it is not sufficient to describe the basic claims made by panentheists in setting forth their versions of panentheism. Since panentheism is a recent theistic model, it is necessary also to show how the set of basic beliefs of panentheism distinguish themselves from other types of theism.[89] This is called the "demarcation problem."[90] Three recent studies engage this problem in some detail. The studies compare beliefs held by panentheists with sets of beliefs generally recognized as pertaining to classical theism and pantheism. In each case, the authors show the lack of any clear demarcation between panentheism and the other models.[91] That is, the set of beliefs associated with panentheism suggests it is a form of classical theism repulsed by a strong sense of transcendence perceived as definitive of classical theism and attracted to a strong immanence found in pantheism but unwilling to go that far (viz., a God-world identity).[92] Still, the great degree of general agreement across demarcation analyses

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intertwined and 'in and through' which God works and suffers. The doctrine involves a degree Christology," Brierley, "Naming," 12-13.

[89] The identity of "panentheism" as a theological model is recent. Cf., Brierley, "Naming," 2, "'Panentheism'…was coined by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), the German idealist philosopher and a contemporary of Hegel." Also, cf., Philip Clayton, *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 56, 66; Gregory Peterson, *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 198. Historical studies of panentheism across millennia are necessarily *a posteriori* identifications of cases of panentheism; e.g., Hartshorne & Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*; Cooper, *Panentheism*.

The modern panentheist movement has been motivated by dissatisfaction with classical theist and pantheist alternatives; cf., Michael Levine, "Non-Theistic Conceptions of God," in *Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Chad Meister and Paul Copan (Routledge, 2012), 237-38.

[90] Cf., Clayton, "Prospects," 3; Göcke, "There is No Panentheistic Paradigm," 2; R. T. Mullins, "The Difficulty with Demarcating Panentheism," *Sophia* 55, no. 3 (2016): 325-46. Also, Leidenhag, "Deploying," 66, writes that demarcation is necessary to prevent panentheism from becoming "a somewhat suspect 'fudge' word."

[91] Cf. the Appendix for details. Brierley, "Potential," 638, distinguishes a "'basic' panentheism," that includes Christian sympathizers such as Arthur Peacocke, from "'advanced' panentheism," which is best represented among process thinkers; Mullins, "Difficulty," 334-36, 338-41; Mikael Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 85, no. 1 (2019): 41. Mullins offers a brief sketch of a hypothesis of two ways that could be developed toward demarcating panentheism. Similarly, Stenmark finds panentheist nuances to beliefs that have a version in other models, which beliefs he calls "extensions."

[92] Cf., the second paragraph in note 94 below. Notwithstanding the expressed desire of prominent panentheists to avoid pantheism, some have argued forcefully that panentheism logically entails pantheism. Cf.,

suggests the possibility of integrating their findings into a panentheism "meta-model." The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM) synthesizes these three studies to highlight the correlations among their findings. The result is an evident, demarcated order among classical theism, panentheism, and pantheism.[93] In this way the Meta-Model shows which beliefs held among panentheism's proponents serve to define panentheism's distinctive sense in which the world is "in" God.[94] Table 4 reduces the Meta-Model to represent panentheism in terms of its definitive beliefs.

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John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence: God's Interaction with the World*, Templeton Foundation Press ed. (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 20; William Lane Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves: God and Infinity in Contemporary Theology," in *For Faith and Clarity: Philosophical Contributions to Christian Theology*, ed. James K. Beilby (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006); Uwe Meixner, "Orthodox Panentheism: Sergius Bulgakov's Sophiology," in *Panentheism and Panpsychism: Philosophy of Religion Meets Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Ludwig Jaskolla, Benedikt Paul Göcke, and Godehard Brüntrup (Boston, MA: mentis Verlag, 2020), 206. Cf., also, William Rowe, "Does Panentheism Reduce to Pantheism? A Response to Craig," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 61, no. 2 (2007): 65-67.

[93] Cf. Table 7 The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM) Detail in Appendix A.

[94] If resolving the demarcation problem requires that PEM includes beliefs unavailable to other models, then there is no PEM paradigm or research program. This is the conclusion of Mullins, "Demarcating Panentheism," 342; and, in another sense, of Göcke, "Panentheistic Paradigm," 1, 6. However, note that Göcke takes an analytical approach rather than a demarcation approach. Rather than comparing panentheism to other models, he considers analytical possibilities of the salient terms of panentheism (everything, is, in, God). He finds that the possible variations are immense, and there is not yet a consensus view, a bona fide panentheism paradigm. This is consistent with the demarcation findings discussed here. To outsiders, panentheism presents as logically a variation on classical philosophical theism more than a distinctive model in its own right. Yet, a panentheism core is still evident, as will be shown.

If Mullins and Göcke are correct in this, then it would follow that panentheism is a form of classical philosophical theism that favors pantheism in limited respects. Such a conclusion finds perhaps unwitting support even in panentheism literature. It is common in the literature for the panentheism movement to be described as working out as strong a notion of divine immanence as possible (against a vicious divine impassibility alleged as a core belief of classical philosophical theism) without sliding into pantheism's God-world identification. E.g., cf., Peacocke, "Introduction," xviii, xxi; Brierley, "Naming," 3-5; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 322.

*Table 4* The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM)

| | Belief | Variants | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **Empathy** | (S10) Divine Sensibility; (B5) God is affected by the cosmos | Correlates with denial of Classical Philosophical Theism (CPT) belief in impassibility. |
| 2 | **Ontological Inclusion** | (S6) Ontological Inclusion; (M) All-in-God; (B4) God contains the universe | Correlates with denial of CPT belief in ontological distinction. |
| 3 | **Mind-Body Analogy** | (M) Mind-Body analogy; (B10) The cosmos is God's body; (B11) God includes the cosmos, as whole includes part | |
| 4 | **Mutual Co-Inherence** | (M) Relational; (B12) God and cosmos inextricably intertwined; (B) Mutual Co-Inherence | Correlates with denial of Pantheism (P) belief in God-world identity. |
| 5 | **Dynamic Dipolarity** | (M) Dynamic; (B14) God is dipolar | |
| 6 | **Symmetrical Ontological Dependence** | (S7) Symmetrical Ontological Dependence; **[**(M) God needs the world ontologically**]**; (B13) God is dependent on the cosmos (B) | |

The middle column details correlations among the demarcation studies: Stenmark (S), Mullins (M), and Brierley (B). A number with the initial indicates a numbered item given in the respective study. Brackets indicate a view as possible but not at panentheism's core according to that study.

The Meta-Model order reflects a preference for Stenmark's ordering, because of his organized approach. However, now that the ideas from the several studies are correlated, the deeper logic of PEM is clarified by discussing PEM in light of BM. That is, BM is not concerned with demarcation but with the explication of what is basic to the broad base of panentheists. BM shows that the mind-body analogy supplies the logical structure within which the other tenets of Penentheism work as a coherent theory. Therefore, with BM, the following discussion of PEM begins with Mind-Body Analogy. It then follows the embodiment logic to discuss Ontological Inclusion, Dynamic Dipolarity, Mutual Co-Inherence, Symmetrical Ontological Dependence, and Empathy. Though the correlation of PEM and BM is not precise, the degree of agreement seems sufficient to corroborate PEM, since most doctrines are held in common and in similar

senses according to the logic of divine embodiment. Therefore, a revised PEM is shown in Table 5.

*Table 5* PEM According to the Logic of BM

1. Mind-Body Analogy
2. Ontological Inclusion
3. Dynamic Dipolarity
4. Mutual Co-Inherence
5. Symmetrical Ontological Dependence (SOD)
6. Empathy

The first tenet of PEM is the Mind-Body Analogy. This point is deceptively simple. On the one hand, it is the straightforward claim that God's relation to the universe is in some way like the relation of human minds to their bodies. Philip Clayton, a prolific proponent of Panentheism, writes that God's relation to the universe is "somehow analogous" to the way the mind "indwells" the body.[95] The qualification "in some way like" is important, because this is claimed only as an *analogy*. As such, there are certain ways the analogy works to clarify the relation. There are other ways in which the analogy does not work.[96] Clearly, the analogy is proposed only to the extent that it provides positive support.[97] The positive implication of the analogy is in that one is generally conscious that one's mind somehow effects bodily events; one's mind perceives by way of bodily senses; further, one's mind causes effects beyond one's body by acting through one's body.[98] Recall item two from BM above, "the language of in and through." So,

[95] Clayton, "Panentheism," 695. Further, this analogy is central enough to warrant Clayton to promote it as "the panentheistic analogy," in Philip Clayton, "Panentheism in Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 83. Mullins, "Difficulty," 335, describes this analogy as a panentheist way of speaking of divine omnipresence.

[96] Peterson, "Whither Panentheism?," 402.

[97] Brierley, "Naming," 7.

[98] Mullins, "Difficulty," 336. By "body," Mullins finds that panentheists mean that the God-world relation satisfies two criteria. First, that "the mind can move the body through a basic action. A basic action is when an agent can perform an act without having to perform some other action in order to accomplish the first act. For instance, I move my arm by a basic act. I do not move the cup of water on my desk by a basic act." Second, that "the mind can

bodily events and actions are expressions of the will of one's mind. This is held by most panentheists as a basic sense of God's relation to the world.[99] On PEM, then, events in the world are embodied self-expressions of the will of God. This appears to be in view when Brierley comments upon the process theism view that "cosmic events are divine actions *per se*."[100] For example, Philip Clayton writes, "panentheists understand the regularities of the natural world as themselves expressions of the regularities of God's nature, somewhat like the autonomic functioning of the human body. Special divine action then represents God's intentional actions – roughly analogous to individual conscious actions by human agents."[101]

On the other hand, there are already signs of a much greater complexity to this analogy. What does it mean to claim that God acts via the world like a mind acts via its body, for example? The additional points of PEM serve to flesh out this definitive, if vague, metaphor for PEM. That the universe is the bodily means by which God experiences or does anything lends to an adjacent item in Brierley's fifteen-fold list of senses of "in": "God includes the cosmos, as a whole includes a part."[102] When explaining the mind-body analogy for the formulation of BM, Brierley

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look out from the world from where the body is. The body is the mind's locus of perception of the world. The mind acquires perceptual knowledge as mediated through the body."

[99] However, Brierley prefers analogy of pregnant mother rather than the typical panentheist analogy of the cosmos as God's body; the cosmos is in God like a fetus is in the mother. Cf., Brierley, "Potential," 638.

[100] Ibid., 639. Note, further, that Brierley holds process theism as the exemplar of "advanced" panentheism, which embraces #11-#14 of his list (see Appendix A). Clayton's explanation of this analogy includes the notion that God acts in and through the universe as Brierley's note about cosmic events indicates above. Clayton, "Metaphysical and Scientific Perspective," 83-84, writes, "The power of this analogy lies in the fact that mental causation, as every human agent knows it, is more than physical causation and yet still a part of the natural world. Apparently, no natural law is broken when you form the (mental) intention to raise your hand and then you cause that particular physical object in the world, your hand, to rise. The PA [panentheistic analogy] therefore offers the possibility of conceiving divine actions that express divine intentions and agency without breaking natural law. On the PA there would be no qualitative difference between the regularity of natural law conceived as expressing the regular or repetitive operation of divine agency and the intentionality of special divine actions."

[101] Clayton, "Panentheism," 700. Gasser, "God's omnipresence," 58, advocates for a different way in which divine action might define panentheism. He describes a view of divine omnipresence according to the logical necessity that God is present wherever God acts upon anything.

[102] Brierley, "Potential," 637. This notion of a "locative" sense of "in" for defining and demarcating panentheism has received emphasis recently in Karl Pfeifer, "Naïve Panentheism," in *Panentheism and*

writes, "part of God can be seen and touched…, while part nevertheless exists 'beyond.'"[103] So, the second item in PEM is "Ontological Inclusion."

Stenmark summarizes the panentheist doctrine of "ontological inclusion" as "the world is a part of God but not identical to God."[104] This is explained by way of a strong take on the mind-body analogy, as follows:

> Panentheists, like deists and traditional theists, believe in a personal or personal-like God, but reject the idea that God is ontologically distinct from the world. Rather, the world is God's body, through which God lives his or her life, as we live our lives through our bodies. God, like a human person, is physically embodied in a body and is growing older through time, and changes as the world changes. Since the world constitutes a part of God, God is ontologically affected by changes in the world. God is within, but not totally confined by, the temporal order and nothing comes into being except through God. But God nevertheless needs a body (a world) for God's existence. God could not exist without that part of Godself.[105]

This is the panentheist way of expressing God's transcendence, according to Stenmark.[106] However, this is clearly something else from the traditional theist conception of transcendence. Notice at the beginning of the above quote that the doctrine of ontological inclusion is grounded in panentheism's denial of the traditional view of God's ontological distinction from the universe. Therefore, ontologically, panentheists hold that God and the world are somehow of similar

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*Panspsychism: Philosophy of Religion Meets Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Godehard Brüntrup, Benedikt Paul Göcke, and Ludwig Jaskolla, Innsbruck Studies in Philosophy of Religion (Boston, MA: mentis Verlag, 2020), 126.

[103] Brierley, "Naming," 6.

[104] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 26. The present discussion relies upon Stenmark's treatment of this concept here, since his is the clearest. Brierley's 4th of 15 possible senses of "in" is that "God contains the universe." By itself, this is really just a logical corollary of everything is in God. The significance for this sense of "in" is that it is the starting point for the panentheism spectrum in Brierley's list (Brierley, "Potential," 638). However, Brierley makes it clear that "contains" ultimately is problematic for panentheism, and works better with traditional theism, because it implies an *external* relation between God and the world. In contrast, therefore, if panentheism affirms "contains" it must be carefully nuanced to entail an *internal* relation. This is why, according to Brierley, panentheists quite often follow the assertion all is in God with "God is in all," (ibid., 637). Therefore, this might be explained by Stenmark's discussion of the doctrine of ontological inclusion. If God "contains" the world it is analogous to the way human minds might be said to contain their bodies. Ultimately, it is a way of expressing God's transcendence while maintaining an intimate, ontological relation.

[105] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 26-27.

[106] Ibid., 27.

being. Keep in mind, on the other hand, that panentheism also rejects the God-world identity promoted in pantheism. Therefore, there is somehow not an ontological distinction between God and the universe, but neither is there ontological identity. Hence, once again, the usefulness of the panentheist analogy.[107] Common sense seems to hold that human experience of the mind-body relation does not identify human minds as ontologically the same as their bodies. Given that dualism is false, one's mind cannot be something entirely ontologically other than one's body.[108]

Stenmark's strong form of the mind-body analogy in describing Ontological Inclusion shows that, for panentheists, the universe is necessary to God's existence and thus also for all of God's experience. As with one's body, so with the cosmos: God lives through the cosmos, according to panentheism. Therefore, it is also the case that as it is human minds that are conscious of living through their bodies, God is the self-consciousness of the universe.[109] Not surprisingly, then, Stenmark writes that Ontological Inclusion also entails *panpsychism*. This is the belief—especially prominent in process theism—that conscious experience in some form is common throughout the universe.[110] So, the third tenet of PEM, Dynamic Dipolarity.[111]

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[107] On the "panentheist analogy," cf., note 100 above. In light of the defining importance of this analogy, Leidenhag, "Deploying," 68, holds that the concept of panpsychism provides powerful resources to explain a panentheistic model. Namely, she identifies a variation called "cosmospsychism," according to which all "in" God would mean that the cosmos of minds all "exist by virtue of being part of God's experience." However, in the same volume, Pfeifer, "Naïve Panentheism," 124, denies the cogency of a panentheist "in" in the sense of "God experiences or 'prehends' the world."

[108] The denial of dualism is an important presupposition of panentheism, according to Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 27.

[109] So, Leidenhag, "Deploying," 80, commends panpsychism as a way to avoid identifying "all in God" with "God in the world," "the traditional doctrine of divine omnipresence or indwelling."

[110] Ibid., 39-40.

[111] Notice that panpsychism has also been indicated in Brierley's explanations of Ontological Inclusion. Brierley's whole-part language includes the statement that "part of God can be seen and touched…, while part nevertheless exists 'beyond,'" Brierley, "Naming," 6; cf., also, Brierley, "Potential," 637.

Dynamic Dipolarity highlights the salient feature of Process Theism, which models the God-world relation in terms of complementary, distinct modes of divine existence.[112] In one aspect, God as mind transcends the universe as God's body. In the other aspect, the universe as God's body is the actuality of God's experience and growth and living.[113] David Ray Griffin writes that Process Panentheism distinguishes two senses in which God has dipolarity of being. First, "The dipolarity emphasized by [Charles] Hartshorne, says that, besides having an *abstract* essence that is strictly unchanging, God also has *concrete states* that – contrary to the traditional doctrine of divine immutability – involve change."[114] The second sense in which God is said to be dipolar features Alfred North Whitehead's "distinction between 'primordial' and 'consequent' natures, [which] emphasizes the fact that God both *influences the world* and is also – contrary to the doctrine of divine impassibility – *influenced by the world*." Griffin illustrates this dipolarity by calling the reader's attention to the mind-body analogy. He writes, "The point of the analogy…is to emphasize the intimacy and directness of the relation. My body is the part of the universe that I directly influence and that directly influences me…To call the world the body of God is to say that God both directly influences all things and that God has the kind of sympathy with all creatures that humans have for their bodily members."[115]

Mutual Co-Inherence holds that the God-world relation is *intrinsic* to both the world and God. Brierley emphasizes that this belief is especially important to panentheists when he

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[112] Leidenhag, "Deploying," 66-67, notes that most panentheist proponents distance themselves from process theism per se, though some of its features, such as its approval of panpsychism, are useful in demarcating panentheism.

[113] Mullins, "Demarcating Panentheism," 335.

[114] David Ray Griffin, "Panentheism: A Postmodern Revelation," in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Perspective in a Scientific World*, ed. Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 43.

[115] Ibid., 44.

includes "language of inextricable intertwining" among the tenets of his model of panentheism. The point is that the God-cosmos complex is an irreducible unity, though panentheism holds that the form of the universe is contingent upon God's creative will. That there is a cosmos to function as God's body is an intrinsic quality of God, and that the cosmos functions as a body to God is an intrinsic quality of the cosmos. Therefore, again as Brierley writes regarding his model, God and the cosmos cannot be separated.[116] According to process panentheism, Griffin writes, "God is essentially the soul of the universe. Although God is distinct from the universe, God's relation to it belongs to the divine essence."[117]

Next is Symmetrical Ontological Dependence. If God and the world cannot be separated, as Mutual Co-Inherence claims and as the Mind-Body Analogy implies, then it follows that God and the cosmos also depend upon one another in some way for their respective ways of being. Stenmark defines Symmetrical Ontological Dependence as the belief that "God depends on the world (or the creation of another world) for God's own existence."[118] He explains further that

> [panentheists] believe that God could not exist without the world or without a world, just like we—assuming that dualism is false—cannot exist without our body or a new resurrected body (as Christians might say), while still being more than our body. Thus, I suggest that panentheism essentially contains the doctrine of symmetrical ontological dependence, that is, the relation of ontological reliance goes both ways. Not just from God to the world, which the doctrine of asymmetrical dependence says, but from the world to God: not only no God, no world; but also no world no God.[119]

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[116] Brierley, "Potential," 639-40. Cf. also, Mullins, "Demarcating Panentheism," 338, who notes "relational" as a defining aspect of a panentheist doctrine of God; that it is intrinsic to God's nature to be in relation to the universe. However, Mullins also notes that this aspect of panentheism does not demarcate it from classical theism.

[117] Griffin, "Panentheism," 42.

[118] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 26-27.

[119] Ibid., 27.

Therefore, the doctrine of symmetrical ontological dependence holds that God and the universe somehow need one another. Stenmark uses "symmetrical" just in this sense that there is an *inter-dependent* God-cosmos relation.[120] Philip Clayton expresses this doctrine, writing,

> It is not difficult to state the fundamental claim that the panentheistic metaphor makes: the interdependence of God and the world. The world depends on God because God is its necessary and eternal source; without God's creative act it would neither have come into existence nor exist at this moment. And God depends on the world because the nature of God's actual experience – and the occasion for the external expression of God's love – depends on interactions with finite creatures like ourselves.[121]

That God depends upon the cosmos and vice versa is a common view among PEM proponents.[122] However, according to Brierley, not all panentheists understand God's dependence on the cosmos as a *necessary* one. Some, such as Clayton and Peacocke, hold that God's ontological dependence upon the universe is *voluntary*; that God *chose* to create his relation to the universe in this way.[123] Further, this choice is driven by God's need for an object to love.

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[120] However, he does not intend to thus describe the qualitative aspect of the relation. That is, the way the universe needs God is not the same as the way God needs the universe. Likewise, Brierley states, "God and mind each being dependent on cosmos and body, but not in the same way that cosmos and body are in turn dependent on them"; Brierley, "Naming," 6. Note that Brierley is making the point that there is an *a*symmetrical relation of dependence between God and the world. Though the terms used appear to state an opinion opposite that of Stenmark, this is misleading. Stenmark's concept of "symmetrical" only highlights that the relation is mutual; God and the world need one another. Brierley's focus is on the qualitative difference between the way God and the world need each other.

[121] Clayton, "Panentheism," 695.

[122] Cf., also, Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism," 20, who writes, "The idea of bilateral relations between God and the world may even be said to be distinctive for panentheism." His ensuing analysis of three varieties of panentheism highlights this theme. However, the necessity of the world for God has recently been debated by panentheism proponents Benedikt P. Göcke and Raphael Lataster. Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panentheism and Classical Theism," *Sophia* 52, no. 1 (2013): 61, claims panentheism's distinction vis-à-vis classical theism is because the former holds the necessity of the world, but this necessity has yet to be established. So, for Göcke, panentheism has not yet attained a defined status as a model. Raphael Lataster, "The Attractiveness of Panentheism—a Reply to Benedikt Paul Göcke," *Sophia* 53, no. 3 (2014): 389-93, objects that Göcke's view is idiosyncratic, ignoring Eastern forms of panentheism that would meet the necessity condition. The Göcke-Lataster dialogue continued through several more articles, mostly clarifying claims and counterclaims from the initial essays. Cf., Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Reply to Raphael Latester," *Sophia* 53, no. 3 (2014): 397-400; Raphael Lataster, "Theists Misrepresenting Panentheism—Another Reply to Benedikt Paul Göcke," *Sophia* 54, no. 1 (2015): 93-98; Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Another Reply to Raphael Lataster," *Sophia* 54, no. 1 (2015): 99-102.

[123] Cf., Brierley, "Naming," 9-10. Also, see Brierley, "Potential," 637. It seems that a voluntary "dependence" strains for coherence. If God in himself is ontologically dependent upon something it could not logically be voluntary. Brierley notes that Clayton appeals to voluntary kenosis in Christology as a parallel.

The final tenet of PEM, Empathy, highlights an aspect of the God-world relation that has been touched on in the course of discussing the preceding doctrines. Like a mind and its body, God is conscious of that body's experiences and feelings. Therefore, PEM's core is marked by a denial of the classical doctrine of impassibility.[124] Stated positively, this is the belief that God experiences empathy (recall "Passibility" from Brierley's model discussed above). This is what Stenmark calls "divine sensibility"; "the view that "God is capable of emotions, in particular is capable of feeling sorrow or suffering as a result of the afflictions of God's creatures." He explains:

> On the other hand, and on this point Gregersen is quite correct, the affirmation that the natures and activities of creatures do have real feedback effect on God is central to panentheism. For panentheists, the natures and acts of creatures do after all constitute a part of God, so a core claim of panentheism is that God could be moved by suffering in the world.[125]

According to the common-sense subjective experience of one's mind empathizing with feelings in the body, likewise, God empathizes with the universe. This is closely related to the preceding point about God's dynamic nature. God experiences through the universe. Therefore, God's empathy includes the experience of becoming and changing that the universe experiences.

Therefore, PEM presents a coherent set of beliefs several researchers agree as definitive of panentheism. The six beliefs comprising PEM are shared by researchers seeking to resolve the demarcation and definition problems for panentheism. That is, these six beliefs represent points of agreement in research by Mullins and Stenmark as distinctively PEM. In correlating these

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However, that is problematic on other grounds, not least that the Incarnation does not claim that Jesus is representative of the divine nature as such (in terms of ontology).

[124] This is important, because denying impassibility is arguably a "classic" feature of panentheism. Recall the quote from Griffin above in which this denial is explicit regarding God's dipolar being. Impassibility is often held as a defining feature of CPT, which panentheists seek to resist. So, the denial of impassibility is at the core of panentheism, but the affirmation of impassibility is an auxiliary view within classical philosophical theism. Cf., Appendix A.

[125] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 30.

with the Brierley Model, it is now evident that five of Brierley's eight themes are clearly represented in PEM: cosmos as God's body, language of in and through, inextricable intertwining, God's dependence on the cosmos, and passibility.[126] Accordingly, PEM stands as a distinctive way of construing the God-cosmos relation according to Empathy, Symmetrical Ontological Dependence, Mutual Co-Inherence, Dynamic Dipolarity, and Ontological Inclusion as these function within the logic of the Mind-Body analogy. These represent Panentheism's sense of how everything is "in" God.

## The Problem of Panentheism

*Table 6* CT & PEM Side-By-Side Comparison

| | **CT** | | **PEM** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Redemption Economy | | |
| 2 | Maker Analogy | 1 | Mind-Body Analogy |
| 3 | Freedom of Divine Action | 5 | Symmetrical Ontological Dependence |
| 4 | Absolute Ontological Distinction | 2 | Ontological Inclusion |
| 5 | Two Orders of Being | 3 | Dynamic Dipolarity |
| 6 | Divine Ground of Being | 4 | Mutual Co-Inherence |
| 7 | Relation of Others | 6 | Empathy |

In view of these working models for CT and PEM it remains to consider in what ways PEM is problematic according to CT. One approach simply observes the prima facie contradictions evident in a side-by-side comparison of the models (Table 6). For example, only CT includes an expressed purpose for the God-cosmos relation, the Redemption Economy.[127] This

[126] The three not mentioned are the cosmos as sacrament, intrinsic positive value of the cosmos, and degree Christology. In each case, these represent theological aspects of the other themes in Brierley's model. Cosmos as sacrament is a variant of the mind-body analogy, in that the cosmos is the means by which God acts and relates to others. The positive value of the cosmos is a consequence of the cosmos as God's creation, which is closely related to symmetrical ontological dependence. Degree Christology identifies a christological implication of the set of basic Panentheism themes. For details, cf. Brierley, "Naming."

[127] One might object that PEM includes an implied purpose in its principle of Symmetrical Ontological Dependence. God is related to the world because God needs a cosmos through which to live God's life. If this point

omission by PEM might be taken as a tacit admission of an inherent naturalism.[128] That is, God's relation to the world is simply the way things *naturally* are. More than that, the absence of purpose is also the absence of hope, leaving nihilism in its place.[129] Consequently, the PEM claim of divine Empathy loses its significance. Empathy unmotivated by a purpose, such as redemption, means nothing to creatures who remain subject to the fickle forces of nature. So, the PEM "God" loses the very personality grounding the divine love that responds redemptively to the world's plight.[130] Another clear contradiction lies right at the heart of both models in the contrast of their structural metaphors. A craftsman does not relate to what he makes as though making his own body. So, the metaphors "Creator" and "Mind" are not parallel. The contrast rises to the level of a contradiction when factoring in that the Creator makes his own material from nothing before working with it as his project. In other words, CT operates on the principle that the Creator makes something with his own hands that is other than those hands. PEM, in contrast, only considers the mind's relation to those hands (along with the rest of its "body").[131] So, further,

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is granted, it only serves to strengthen the inference of an inherent naturalism in PEM, making God an aspect or part of a larger whole that also includes the cosmos; or, "God" *is* the whole of which the cosmos is a part.

[128] Such naturalism is explicit in the late Arthur Peacocke's attempt to set forth a Christian panentheism, in Peacocke, "A Naturalistic Christian Faith," 10-11.

[129] Cf., for example, a study of Jürgen Moltmann's panentheism that finds a nihilistic lack of purpose as an entailment of Moltmann's panentheistic ethics, in Benjamin Blair Phillips, "The Crisis of Creation: A Critical Analysis of Juergen Moltmann's Panentheism" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003), 2, 156-59.

[130] On the forfeiture of personality in a panentheist model of God, cf., Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 17, 67; Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 134.

Panentheism can speak of divine love, but it must be a kind of self-love. For example, Clayton, "Panentheism," 695, holds that God creates because of God's need for objects of God's love. Murphy, "The Emergence of Evolutionary Panentheism," 180, writes that the world "manifest[s] its latent divinity [in part, in a] self-surpassing love." Either way, panentheistic love relates to the process of self-realization. So, the love motivating, for example, the process of concretion (in terms of Whitehead's metaphysics) is the desire for self-improvement of a finite god, rather than the redemptive ἀγάπη of the Almighty Suitor (Isa 54:5).

[131] Also criticizing panentheism for its denial of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, cf. Copan and Craig, *Creation Out of Nothing*, 13-14, 147; Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 108; Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, Second ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999), loc 68943. Jürgen Moltmann attempted to construct a Christian panentheism that maintains creation *ex nihilo*, Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of*

Ontological Inclusion explicitly denies Absolute Ontological Distinction in the God-cosmos relation. Such identification of God with the world is the defining quality of pagan idolatry that has exercised God's prophets and preachers through history (Exod 20:4; Jer 10:3-5; Acts 17:29; Rom 1:23).[132] This could go on regarding each principle of the models. This much, therefore, suffices to show the problem of panentheism concerning the present inquiry: a demarcated form of panentheism strongly contradicts essential features of a traditional Christian theology of creation. A natural theology adopting such panentheism would not be Christian.[133]

A direct comparison reveals PEM as problematic according to CT. Still, the purpose of this inquiry requires looking deeper, into the broader principles behind the contrasts among the tenets of the models. That is, neither Peirce nor a semeiotic CNT express themselves in the terms identified in CT and PEM. Identifying the more general underlying principles involved in those

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*Creation and the Spirit of God* (Philadelphia, MA: Fortress Press, 1984). However, his attempt is less successful than classical theism, according to Phillips, "The Crisis of Creation," 123.

[132] Cf., the recent study on the necessity of the doctrine of the economy of redemption for a creation theology that resists devolving into paganism, the divinization of the creature, in Bender, "Drama of Redemption," 172.

[133] This finding is consistent with Royce Gruenler's personal testimony regarding his experience as a process theist. He explains that process panentheism destroyed every tenet of the biblical faith he held before adopting process thought; Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 15-16. More recently, Kevin Vanhoozer has discussed how panentheism undermines the Christian gospel; cf., Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 134, 150, 154. Oliver Crisp has recently constructed a demarcated panentheism he calls "Mereological Panentheism." This model borrows from Jonathan Edwards, Jürgen Moltmann, and Robert Jenson. He finds that it fails to maintain tenets basic to a "broadly orthodox Christian theology." Cf., Oliver D. Crisp, "Against Mereological Panentheism," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11, no. 2 (2019): 23-41. Also, although Roger Olson argues in favor of orthodox Christian panentheism, he strongly qualifies his claim, requiring that any Christian panentheism must maintain "the gratuity of grace in creation and redemption"; cf., Olson, "Response to Panentheism,"337. However, in light of demarcation research cited in this dissertation, Olson's qualifying condition would keep such a view within the scope of classical theism.

Some hold that a Christian panentheism is made possible by the trinitarian doctrine of perichoresis. Cf., e.g., Keith Lemna, "Trinitarian Panentheism: A Study of the God-World Relationship in the Theology of Louis Bouyer" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2007); Jeong-Woo Lee, "Toward a Trinitarian Ecological Theology: A Study in Juergen Moltmann's Panentheism" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Michael's College and Toronto School of Theology, 2007); Jan-Olav Henriksen, "Panentheism Without the Supernatural: On a Perichoretic Trinitarian Conception of Reality," *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2016): 65-69. However, Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 131, 149-54, argues cogently that applying perichoresis in this way commits a category mistake fatal to claims of an orthodox Christian panentheism. Panentheism creates other problems for the doctrine of the Trinity; on which, see ibid., 139-40; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 329.

models facilitates recognizing where—if at all—Peirce or a semeiotic CNT express something consistent with those principles. Specifically, this inquiry requires general principles pertaining to PEM's problematic relation to CT. In light of preceding discussions of those models, three principles evident in that problematic relation provide the criteria for evaluating whether a CNT appropriation of semeiotic (in chapter four) also incorporates a PEM ontology.[134]

First, if a semeiotic CNT speaks of the God-world relation in terms of a self-relation rather than a relation of two others, PEM would be indicated.[135] That is, CNT ontology in this case would somehow indicate that the relation of the being of God to the being of the world is continuous rather than marked by an Absolute Ontological Distinction. This would mean that CNT's model would formally resemble Dynamic Dipolarity rather than speaking of Two Orders of Being. God and the cosmos would be ontologically united, though manifesting qualitative and functional distinctions similar to those between a mind and its body.[136] Consequently, there would be a different sense of "transcendence" in a CNT affected by PEM. In CT, divine transcendence is marked by notions of independence and absolute freedom with respect to the creation. PEM, on the other hand, speaks of God in terms of a creaturely sort of transcendence. God transcends the

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[134] These three criteria also pertain to evaluating Peirce's relation to PEM in chapter three. The following discussion remains focused on the primary question motivating this study; i.e., how these criteria will facilitate recognizing PEM's influence on a semeiotic CNT, if any.

[135] This presumes that a semeiotic CNT would maintain some degree of God-world distinction. Otherwise, this criterion would indicate pantheism.

On the category of "self" as implicated in panentheist ontology, cf., Cooper, *Panentheism*, 328-29; Beck, "Schubert Ogden,", 163.

[136] Possibly muddying the water are recent explorations of Christian idealism. E.g., M. Wasmeier-Sailer and Benedikt Paul Göcke, *Idealismus und natürliche Theologie* (Alber, 2011); Joshua Ryan Farris, S. Mark Hamilton, and James S. Spiegel, *Idealism and Christian Theology: Idealism and Christianity*, vol. 1 (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); S.B. Cowan and J.S. Spiegel, *Idealism and Christian Philosophy: Idealism and Christianity* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); James S. Spiegel, "Berkeleyan idealism and Christian philosophy," *Philosophy Compass* 12, no. 2 (2017): n.p. However, that is beyond the scope of the present inquiry, since it is not included in CT. It may be relevant for a subsequent project constructing a robust Peircean and traditional Christian ontological model.

cosmos as a whole transcends its parts. This is a qualitative transcendence, such that "God" is more than but not altogether other than the cosmos.[137]

One obtains a fuller sense of the significance of this first problem area by considering how it manifests in a PEM-influenced christology. Both models consider the incarnation of the Son in the person of Jesus as manifesting what is typical of the God-cosmos relation more generally. Consequently, how each understands the incarnation amplifies the fundamental contradiction between the models. CT affirms that even in the Incarnation, the principles of AOD and TOB maintain. As the Nicene Creed confesses, Jesus is the divine Son incarnate, such that the natures remain unmixed and consubstantial with their kinds. It is in this way that CT would affirm a sense in which the incarnation is typical of the God-cosmos relation. Yet, consistent with DGB and RO – emphasizing the divine prerogative and initiative, in Jesus the two separate and distinct natures are unified into one person. This hypostatic union in the case of Jesus is unique, a *sui generis* historical phenomenon. It is at this point that CT would not affirm the incarnation as typical of the God-cosmos relation. PEM christology, on the other hand, takes precisely the opposite view. For the generic PEM proponent described by Brierley, the hypostatic union in Jesus manifests to a limited degree what is generally true of the God-cosmos relation.[138] That relation, as with Jesus, is that of a unified *person* – a self. This is formally represented in the PEM tenet of

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[137] Cf., Cooper, *Panentheism*, 328; Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, loc 68943. In his treatment of panentheism vis-à-vis Christian theology, Michael Horton focuses on this point. For example, he writes that the "*qualitative*" difference between God and the world "marks the chasm separating biblical faith from polytheism, pantheism, and panentheism," Michael Scott Horton, *Pilgrim Theology: Core Doctrines for Christian Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 22. Cf., also Michael Scott Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011). Horton writes that pantheism and panentheism result from a "confusion of the Creator with creation"; similarly, "God's aseity marks the chasm between biblical faith and pantheism/panentheism." Ibid., n.p.

[138] Recall that Brierley includes "degree christology" among the eight themes describing the general panentheist model, Brierley, "Naming," 12. On which, cf., Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 150-51; Beck, "Schubert Ogden," 173; Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, loc 68943.

Dynamic Dipolarity, according to which God and the cosmos relate as two poles of some totality. Therefore, PEM christology falls into at least two classical heresies. One is the Eutychian heresy in which the divine and human natures are mixed and therefore confused. This is the effect of the PEM tenet of Mutual Co-Inherence, and of the tenet Symmetrical Ontological Dependence. The other heresy follows the Apollinarians in denying Jesus a human mind, and so a fully human nature. Instead, God is the mind and the body is the extent of the human aspect of Jesus.

Second, PEM's influence would be evident if a semeiotic CNT expresses the God-cosmos relation in terms of ontological co-inherence and interdependence rather than as a unilateral gift of being from God to the cosmos.[139] This calls attention to the contradiction between CT's Divine Ground of Being and PEM's Mutual Co-Inherence. The former holds that the God-world relation consists in God's gracious action to constantly uphold the being of the cosmos. The latter, however, holds that the being of God requires a relation to a cosmos. Therefore, PEM entails that God's relation to the cosmos is an ontological necessity for God. God needs to create a cosmos in order to be God. PEM goes further. Recall that Symmetrical Ontological Dependence holds that God needs the world for God to live the divine life. These are ways in which PEM contradicts the sense of divine freedom affirmed by CT.[140] According to CT, God creates and sustains the cosmos as a completely voluntary action. Only God exists necessarily, and God can live and exist as God without any cosmos, or anything else that is not God. For PEM, however, "create" comes to have the sense of continuing creation, a process of the cosmos' becoming.

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[139] Beyond the several criticisms at the ontological level, Kevin Vanhoozer links panentheism's corruption of the doctrine of redemption to this category, ontological interdependence; cf., Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 150, 154. Cf., also, Gruenler, *The Inexhaustible God*, 108.

[140] Cf., Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 134, 151, 162, 167-68; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 325-26; Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, loc 63119.

More than that, because the cosmos enables the life of God, continuing creation is another way of speaking of divine self-improvement. The cosmos' process of becoming is also God's growth in experience and understanding.[141] So, now to the last of the problem areas considered briefly here.

Third, if "God" becomes a label for the metaphysical principles of the cosmos, then a semeiotic CNT would manifest a PEM ontology.[142] That is, PEM will have influenced CNT to have a different conception of divinity than CT has. In CT, divinity is defined in terms of the strict ontological otherness and freedom according to which God transcends the cosmos.[143] The cosmos and its governing principles together constitute the created ontological order, and as such, are wholly other than God. In PEM, however, divinity has a creaturely sort of transcendence. This is, again, the "transcendence" of a whole to its parts. This is truly a sense of "transcendence," but in terms of a qualitative otherness within an ontological continuity. In this way, according to Dynamic Dipolarity, it becomes evident that the God of PEM is a principle – albeit a spiritual one – determining the cosmic processes and as such sharing a natural and necessary relation to the cosmos.[144] Everything about God's life and purpose and being is related to and

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[141] Two problems are evident here. First, if natural processes are the direct actions of the life experience of God, then the integrity of creaturely being (cf., TOB) is violated. On which, cf., Polkinghorne, *Science and Providence*, 20, 28. Second, the Creator is confused with the creature; cf., Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 167; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 328; Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, loc 59067.

The latter problem has the further consequence that sin, evil, even hell also contribute to the divine being; Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 155; Cooper, *Panentheism*, 332, 342; William J. Wainwright, "God's Body," in *The Concept of God*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 81-82.

[142] As with the first principle, this one would indicate panentheism rather than pantheism only as long as a semeiotic CNT maintains a sufficient degree of God-world distinction.

[143] This is not to ignore other attributes qualifying divinity in a CT sense, such as the omnipotence manifest in *creatio ex nihilo* and the infinite wisdom manifest in the logic and order of creation.

[144] So, writing of process panentheism, Beck, "Schubert Ogden," 163, writes, "God's existence is to be conceived as strictly analogous to that of the self, because God is not the exception to metaphysical principles but rather their eminent example." So, panentheism is marked by the tendency to apply principles pertaining to trinitarian doctrine to the metaphysics of the created order; Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 131, 153, writes of the misapplication of the concepts perichoresis and kenosis.

determined by cosmic events. Therefore, the one who created the cosmos, the sovereign God confessed by CT, becomes the dependent god of PEM. The cosmos and its processes are given dominion over God. A contemporary philosophical theology "revolution" indeed.[145]

The analysis in this section has highlighted panentheism's basic tendency to naturalize God. The theological produce of PEM thus exposes its ancient pagan roots.[146] Accordingly, it is evident that CT and PEM oppose one another at every point. Terms shared by the models (e.g., transcendence, God, creation, incarnation) contradict at the level of reference. Therefore, the problem of panentheism is its antichristian force. It bears an innate influence toward pantheism, evident in the number and range of compromises classical theists—and especially those holding to more specifically Christian doctrines—must make to accommodate a demarcated form of panentheism.[147]

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[145] Brierley, "Naming," 13.

[146] Of course, the literature on panentheism admits of these roots, but without seeing them as theologically problematic. For example, Hartshorne and Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 38-57. John Cooper's important, diachronic study of panentheism provides a helpful analysis of the ways panentheism draws from Neoplatonism in ways that are theologically problematic vis-à-vis orthodox Christian tradition, yet others contributing to GCT (e.g., Augustine) utilized aspects of Neoplatonism more or less faithfully. See Cooper, *Panentheism*, 17-20.

[147] Andrew Robinson found, in experimenting with process panentheism, "that Christian theology has to give up too much to enable it to mesh with Whitehead's scheme," Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 3.

## Three: Panentheist Aspects of Semeiotic

This chapter scrutinizes the alleged relationship of Peirce's philosophy to panentheism. Recall from chapter one that Peirce scholars agree that Peirce's semeiotic entails a panentheist metaphysics, according to "panentheism" broadly conceived. If this is true for panentheism defined as PEM, then to fully appropriate semeiotic for the theoretical structure of Christian Natural Theology (CNT) would seem to entail also incorporating the contradictory beliefs of PEM. In light of the previous chapter, then, CNT would to some extent identify the Creator with the creation. CNT would become another voice drowning out the truth of the gospel in this time. Toward testing these consequences of a panentheist semeiotic in chapter four, the primary question of this chapter is, How is PEM implicated by Peirce's semeiotic? To answer this question it is necessary to understand Peirce's semeiotic within the theoretical structure of Peirce's philosophy. In particular, since the question of panentheism pertains to metaphysics, one must understand how Peirce related semeiotic and metaphysics within his philosophical system.[1] The discussion of Peirce's views therefore works within the sophisticated interrelation of phenomenology, logic, and metaphysics, according to Peirce's *architectonic* schema of the logical relationship among all sciences (Appendix C).[2]

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[1] Raposa, *PPR*, 145-46, comments on the—often neglected—importance of maintaining the metaphysical context of Peirce's semeiotic when appropriating semeiotic for work in other inquiries.

[2] On the Kantian idea of architectonic philosophy that Peirce adapted, cf., W8:99. Also, cf., Kelly A. Parker, *The Continuity of Peirce's Thought* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998), 2-4. A description of Peirce's mature view of the architectonic relation among the various sciences is given in his "A Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic," which Peirce wrote to accompany his 1903 Lowell Lectures. The relevant text is published in EP2:258-62 and CP 1.180-202. Appendix C distills Peirce's outline according to the EP2 text.

It is also important to note that Peirce had a broad conception of "science" as any disciplined inquiry genuinely pursuing the truth of its object. Cf. Joshua David Black, "Peirce's conception of metaphysics" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 2017), 19.

Therefore, this chapter's inquiry proceeds through two stages. First, it describes the major doctrines of Peirce's philosophy as they bear on the question of the relation of semeiotic to metaphysics.[3] In doing so, the inquiry pays attention to Peirce's own theological comments made in the context of his discussions of metaphysical questions. One will see the interdependence Peirce conceived for semeiotic and metaphysics, such that Peirce's metaphysics defines what he believes to be true about semeiotic. More to the point, one will see that semeiotic works with Peirce's conceptions of continuity, evolution, and naturalism so that his conception of God is given in terms of a creator who is manifest in the purposeful growth of all creation. This is *prima facie* consistent with PEM. So, second, this inquiry compares Peirce's metaphysical God-talk with the three criteria of PEM to assess the degree and manner of Peirce's agreement with PEM. It finds that Peirce's theological statements in connection with synechism and the Absolute Mind would be especially attractive to PEM proponents. However, since Peirce's God-world model operates according to semeiotic logic, Peirce's apparent affinity for PEM turns out not to be agreement with PEM. These discussions identify several aspects of Peirce's thought that may be taken as a bias toward panentheism while not completely agreeing with PEM. The ground is in this way prepared for the empirical work of the next chapter, testing whether a robust appropriation of semeiotic for CNT practice causes CNT to share Peirce's apparent panentheist bias.

[3] The term *metaphysics* as used here indicates concepts regarding those most general features of reality. In one place, Peirce supplied a representative list of the sorts of questions addressed by metaphysics as a scientific discipline, "What is reality? Are necessity and contingency real modes of being? Are the laws of nature real? Can they be assumed to be immutable or are they presumably results of evolution? Is there any real chance, or departure from real law?" (EP2:420). So, Peirce holds that metaphysics is an ontological discipline. Accordingly, concerns to understand what is "real," and so "reality" as such, dominate Peirce's representative list of questions. In this same context, Peirce's discussion proceeds to include time and space as important metaphysical questions, as well as "the question of a future life and especially [the question] of One Incomprehensible but Personal God, not immanent in but creating the universe," (EP2:421).

## Semeiotic Metaphysics

As will be evident in the next chapter, Alister McGrath's appropriation of semeiotic is abstracted from the systematic setting of Peirce's thought. This is not an illicit philosophical move. Others have found an abstracted semeiotic to shed helpful light on questions of interpretation. For example, Jesper Tang Nielsen studies the thematic signs in the Gospel of John with the help of Peirce's analysis of signs as such and of the logical array of possible sign types.[4] Andrew Robinson makes fuller use of Peirce's theoretical resources to apply semeiotic to Trinitarian theology, though he remains somewhat idiosyncratic.[5] What makes McGrath's case worth considering is that CNT proposes to appropriate semeiotic as the epistemological engine of CNT's methodology as natural theological inquiry. For Peirce, semeiotic indeed supplies the logic of the inquiry process, as will be evident in the course of this chapter. Therefore, McGrath's CNT proposal parallels Peirce's purpose for his decades of developing semeiotic philosophy. To abstract semeiotic from the systematic settings funding its efficacy, while intending for semeiotic to function according to its purpose and role within that system, risks impoverishing semeiotic and thus creating a logical problem for CNT theory.[6]

In light of this, the present exposition of Peirce's semeiotic takes a systematic approach. That is, this discussion sets Peirce's semeiotic within the philosophical structure Peirce envisioned. In the middle to late 1880s Peirce began to work on his own answers to questions about metaphysics. In a chapter Peirce drafted for a planned book on metaphysics, Peirce cast his

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[4] Jesper Tang Nielsen, "The Secondness of the Fourth Gospel," *Studia Theologica* 60, no. 2 (2006): 124.

[5] Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*. The use of "idiosyncratic" here refers to Robinson's direct move from Peirce's metaphysical categories to their application by analogy to the economic Trinity. This skips a few steps in the route Peirce himself took in applying his universal categories theologically (*W*6:166-67). Whether Robinson's move is problematic from the standpoint of Peirce's philosophy remains to be determined.

[6] Raposa, *PPR*, 146, writes that one can abstract semeiotic from Peirce's system but not without great cost to its cogency.

vision setting forth a new theoretical structure for philosophy (W6:168). Peirce describes this grand scheme for philosophy in terms of architectonic (W6:440n168.1-3). This is the idea that the various sciences (among which Peirce includes mathematics and philosophy and every area of inquiry interested in discovering the truth of its object) relate to one another as the more specific relying upon the vaguer (cf. Appendix B).[7] At the same time, the vaguer sciences draw upon findings from the more specific ones (W8:99).[8] So, Mathematics is maximally vague, being applicable to every other field of inquiry. Philosophy also applies to all fields of inquiry but is itself dependent upon Mathematics for the development of its ideas and principles. More specific sciences, such as physics and biology, rely upon Philosophy in important ways.

Peirce subdivided Philosophy into three divisions: Phenomenology, Normative Science, and Metaphysics (EP2:259). Phenomenology is the philosophical science in which Peirce works out his analytical approach to all phenomena of experience. What Peirce called Normative Science included the subdisciplines of Aesthetics, Ethics, and Logic.[9] Metaphysics, applies the epistemological doctrines gained in Normative Science as answers to metaphysical questions.[10] This is to construct ontology in the light of epistemology.[11] Theoretical ideas formulated in

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[7] Though Peirce devised his own manner of arranging the sciences, the concept of "architectonic"—a systematic organization of the sciences—is inherited from Kant; cf. Parker, *Continuity*, 2.

[8] The parenthetical reference is to Peirce's *Monist* essay, "The Architecture of Theories," in which he makes much of the structural metaphor implied by "architectonic." For fuller discussions of his architectonic theory (a.k.a., the classification of sciences), cf., e.g., Black, "Peirce's Conception," 26-32; Parker, *Continuity*, 28-58.

[9] Aesthetics has to do with the quality of human perceptions. Ethics at this level in Peirce's arrangement has to do with being able to recognize the *summum bonum*, the greatest good. Peirce's Logic is thoroughly semeiotic. These "Normative Sciences" are dedicated to working out an understanding of how to reason well about what one knows. Cf., Rosa Maria Perez-Teran Mayorga, *From Realism to "Realicism": The Metaphysics of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Lexington Books, 2007), 115-16, on the epistemological nature of Peirce's categories. also,

[10] On the normative sciences as epistemological ground for metaphysics, cf., esp., Black, "Peirce's Conception of Metaphysics," 5, 157; Joseph L. Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics: The Development of Peirce's Theory of Categories* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980), 2; Carl R. Hausman, *Charles S. Pierce's Evolutionary Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; repr., 1993), 2. Similarly, cf., Christopher Hookway, *Peirce, The Arguments of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2, 219.

[11] Parker, *Continuity*, 197, writes that semeiotic is Peirce's starting point for metaphysics, because "the nature of thought, as described in semeiotic, is sufficiently analogous to the nature of being that the elements of

Phenomenology and Normative Science are given a form in Metaphysics that makes them easily relatable to the more specific fields of scientific inquiry (termed by Peirce "Special Sciences," or "idioscopy").[12]

What Peirce offers in the way of Metaphysics especially applies concepts he developed in Logic, which is the architectonic home of semeiotic (MS 1334).[13] Peirce warranted this move according to his doctrine of anthropomorphism. That is, Peirce held that the human mind imaged the nature of the cosmos in which it evolved. In these things Peirce follows Kant in that he agrees with Kant that the fundamental metaphysical principles of the universe are reflected in corresponding fundamental principles of human logic, and that this conclusion follows because such principles are already in the mind before reasoning begins.[14] Peirce moves beyond this

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semeiotic may be considered prototypes of the elements of being." Further, then, semeiotic supplies four "main hypotheses" for metaphysics: "there is a reality," "that reality is to be conceived as a *process* similar to the process of semiosis," "modes of action or relation are fundamental to understanding modes of being," and "the elementary metaphysical categories describing these modes of being are variations of the three indecomposable kinds of relation that are manifest in phenomenology and semeiotic."

[12] Including, e.g., Psychology, Biology, Physics, History, etc. (EP2:259-60).

[13] Cf. the critical text in Charles S. Peirce, *Prolegomena to a Science of Reasoning: Phaneroscopy, Semeiotic, Logic*, ed. Elize Bisanz (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2016), 60.

[14] Peirce was clear that in this regard he was following the tradition of Kant. Peirce writes,

> How is the extraordinary prominence of these conceptions to be explained? Must it not be that they have their origin in the nature of the mind? This is the Kantian form of inference…We find the ideas of First, Second, Third, constant ingredients of our knowledge…it is the peculiar nature of the mind to mix them with our thoughts…due to congenital tendencies of the mind. So far there is nothing in my argument to distinguish it from that of many a Kantian, (W6:182-83; cf. also, W5:235).

Cf. esp., Black, "Peirce's Conception of Metaphysics," 163-64, discussing Peirce's Kantian way of relating logic to metaphysics, Black quotes Peirce on an implication of his theory of three universal categories, "'I submit for your consideration the following metaphysical principle which is of the nature of a retroduction: Whatever unanalyzable element *sui generis seems* to be in nature, although it be not really where it seems to be, yet must really be [in] nature somewhere, since nothing else could have produced even the false appearance of such an element *sui generis*.' (RLT, p. 161)." Black then explains, "This retroduction, allows us to move from claims about the essential and irreducible role of a concept in cognition to claims about reality. It functions as a bridge between logic and metaphysics. According to this principle, if the categories are irreducible to one another, and thus '*sui generis*,' and if they seem to be in nature, then we can take them to have *some* extra-cognitive reality." Thus, Black argues that the *sui generis* character of the Categories, on Peirce's account, strongly suggests their metaphysical reality, so that they could be in the mind at all. So, on Peirce's view, principles of logic (i.e., Peirce's semeiotic) are suggestive of metaphysical realities. On Peirce's phenomenological categores, cf., "Triad" below.

Kantian background in offering his evolutionary explanation for the correlation of human logic with the logic of the cosmos. Discussing Galileo's concept of *il lume naturale*, Peirce writes, "Thus, in dynamics [i.e., physics], the natural ideas of the human mind tend to approximate to the truth of nature, because the mind has been formed under the influence of dynamical laws," (W8:95).[15] Therefore, Peirce's manifestly metaphysical doctrines are his semeiotic Logic read into observed cosmic phenomena.

This discussion of Peirce's Metaphysics follows an order according to Peirce's philosophical doctrines pertaining to Phenomenology and Logic, which are logically prior to Metaphysics, according to Peirce's system. As Peirce held that these doctrines are images of cosmic realities this discussion treats them as signaling metaphysical themes, discussion of which pairs the philosophical doctrine with its metaphysical correlate. Beginning with the theme of Meaning, this discussion describes Peirce's truly seminal doctrine, *Pragmaticism*. This influenced all of his philosophical work and is therefore a fitting starting point for this discussion. Its metaphysical correlate is Peirce's doctrine of *Scholastic Realism*. Next comes the theme of the Triad, which highlights his tripartite doctrine of *Universal Categories*. From there Interpretation includes Peirce's *Semeiotic* and its correlate in Metaphysics, *Growth*. Then Mind is described by the

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[15] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 88, discussing Peirce's "anthropomorphism," Peirce's tendency to read nature in light of human being, writes,

> "every single truth of science is due to the affinity of the human soul to the soul of the universe, imperfect as that affinity no doubt is" (*CP* 5.47). That such an "imperfect" affinity exists is a conjectured presupposition that Peirce embraced as the best way to account for the otherwise inexplicable success with which scientists have so rapidly and efficiently discovered truths about nature. While they err with regularity, their success is vastly disproportionate to the infinite number of candidate hypotheses available for the explanation of any given phenomenon. It is not a mysterious presupposition, but one buttressed by an evolutionary theory explaining how our capacity for reasoning must have developed in continuous adaptation to the natural world in which human beings live and move and have their being.

Cf. also, Raposa, *PPR*, 97; and ibid., 100, in light of Peirce's evolutionary explanation, "Macrocosm mirrors microcosm; the logic of objective mind is the same logic that ought to govern human reasoning." Also, cf., Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 230.

doctrines of *Synechism* and *Objective Idealism*. This course of discussion of Peirce's thought shows that his Metaphysics is summarized by the statement that the universe is a great sign, "that consists in a living inferential metaboly of symbols. In fact, 'all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.'"[16] How this semeiotic metaphysics relates to Peirce's doctrine of God will be the final theme of this survey.

**Meaning**

The chief doctrine of Peirce's philosophy, Pragmaticism, explains how to establish the true meaning of concepts.[17] He used this word for the theory that

> a *conception*, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that…if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and *there is absolutely nothing more in it* (EP2:332, original italics).[18]

In other words, Peirce's doctrine is that the entire idea of some concept one holds is defined by what one imagines *would be* the ultimate, concrete results it would produce in terms of behavioral habits.[19] The would-be practical result one imagines a concept to have provides no

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[16] Raposa, *PPR*, 121, quoting CP 5.448, n1.

[17] "Pragmaticism" is one of Peirce's many neologisms coined in his attempt to maintain specific conceptual references for terms used in his philosophy. In this case, Peirce invented this word to distinguish his concept of pragmatism from the one made popular by William James and others. When later impelled to rename his original concept, Peirce recalls that he was the first to use "pragmatism." Peirce describes this background for "pragmaticism" in his 1905 *Monist* article, "What Pragmatism Is" (EP2:331-45, 1905). The Jamesian legacy of pragmatism continues in American pragmatist philosophers such as John Dewey, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty; though the distinction between the pragmatisms of Peirce and of James should not be overstated. Cf., Sami Pihlström, "Peirce's Place in the Pragmatist Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*, ed. Cheryl Misak (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Nevertheless, the Jamesian tradition has nominalist tendencies (James' "will to believe"). Nathan Houser, in his introductory essay for volume two of *The Essential Peirce*, notes that Peirce named "'pluralism'" as one of the characteristics of James' pragmatism motivating Peirce to distinguish his own version as "pragmaticism" (EP2:xxviii).

[18] This is clearly a reiteration of Peirce's pragmatic maxim, which, in its classical form is to "consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object," (EP2:346, restating the form of the maxim originally published in separate articles in 1877 and 1878. Cf., EP1:109-23, 132).

[19] The maxim of pragmaticism is conveyed in terms of habit in EP2:418, "Consequently, the most perfect account of a concept that words can convey will consist in a description of the habit which that concept is calculated

guarantee that one's belief is true. Peirce consistently advocated for scientists and philosophers to have a measure of humility regarding beliefs about the truth of things.[20] Beliefs are likely to change over time as further experience refines what one believes about that concept. Yet, it is also not the case that one's belief about a concept is likely to be completely mistaken. Because Peirce believed that the human mind evolved by and within the cosmos, he held that humans have a natural faculty for picking out external realities. Therefore, on Pragmaticism, definitions of concepts in terms of what one expects they would eventually produce bear some degree of truth according to the reality independent of any one mind.[21] Moreover, through further experience, Peirce theorized, there will be a tendency to increase the correspondence between belief about the concept and its external reality. The notion that a concept has external reality brings us to Peirce's doctrine of Scholastic Realism.

Peirce's studies in logic brought him to read deeply in Medieval philosophy. He became interested in the Scholastic debates between realists and nominalists; viz., Scotus v. Ockham. Peirce favored Scotus and the realists. However, he found that their work was nevertheless greatly marked by nominalism, which Peirce increasingly came to recognize as the scourge of modern thought.[22] They thought that generals—broad, encompassing ideas such as Truth, Beauty, Goodness—inhered in individuals. So, for example, the general idea of Beauty gained

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to produce. But how otherwise can a habit be described than by a description of the kind of action to which it gives rise, with the specification of the conditions and of the motive?"

[20] On Peirce's *fallibilism,* cf., e.g., Hookway, *Peirce*, 91; also, Black, "Peirce's Conception of Metaphysics," 33; Mayorga, *Realicism,* 99.

[21] What Hausman discusses as the "extrasemeiotic or extraepistemic condition," Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*, 140.

[22] Mayorga, *Realicism*, 81-84; 87-89. "Nominalist" refers to "[t]hose who deny the existence of universals," James K. Dew and Paul M. Gould, *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2019), 105. That this takes the form of the belief that users assign meanings to words is evident in Hookway's characterization of nominalism as "'the hypothesis that [abstract] realities…spring into existence when investigators come to acknowledge them,'" Christopher Hookway, "Reference, Causation, and Reality," in *Semiotica* (1988): 331-48, quoted in Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*, 157.

from an individual rose is perceived to have a form unique to that individual rose.[23] For Peirce, this left too much responsibility in the subject for the communication of general ideas in individuals.[24]

Still, Peirce believed that Scotus was on the right track, in that Scotus advocated for the *reality* of generals (EP2:354).[25] By this he meant that a general idea, such as Beauty, has characteristics and qualities that are independent of what anyone thinks about Beauty or whether anyone is thinking about Beauty.[26] Beauty does not mean just whatever anyone wants it to. Something objective about it causes subjective conceptions of Beauty to share that common ground. Real generals bear a consistency across individual cases that manifests their objectivity (PPMRT:193-95).[27]

Peirce's Scholastic Realism distinguishes between reality and *existence*. This distinction parallels that between generals and individuals. For Peirce, a real general has reality but not existence, because it is indeterminate, vague.[28] An individual is marked by its determinacy. It is not necessarily determinate absolutely, in every respect. Yet, it is a single thing. It has what Scotus called *haecceity*, or "thisness," (W6:205).[29] Individuals, as singular determinate things, have

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[23] Mayorga, *Realicism*, 48.

[24] Ibid., 137-38.

[25] On the Scotist background here, cf., Mayorga, *Realicism*, 83; also, Raposa, *PPR*, 157n29.

[26] Peirce's realism is consistent in this claim that something real is such because it is what it is independent of any individual mind's thought about it. A well-known statement in this regard is found in "The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," (CP 6.453).

[27] Peirce modified Scotus' doctrine in that Peirce held that only *some* generals are real. Humans are able to imaginatively create all sorts of ideas whose reality consists only as a product of their own mind. For example, one's dreams are not real ideas in Peirce's sense, though ideas about one's dreams are real (CP 6.453). The dream of eating an ice cream cone is not real in itself. However, the idea that one dreamed about eating an ice cream cone is real.

[28] Mayorga, *Realicism*, 152.

[29] Mayorga, *Realicism*, 84-85, 148; Parker, *Continuity*, 213; Raposa, *PPR*, 21 helpfully discusses Peirce's view that even individuals maintain some level of generality on Peirce's view.

existence but not reality, according to Peirce's distinction. For example, a certain red rose exists. One, therefore, can say t*his* red rose is *not that* red rose. The generals used to identify them, however, do not exist. They are merely ideas. Redness and roseness are generals instantiated in both this and that other red rose. Yet, both redness and roseness are real generals because they have recognizable characteristics independent of anyone's thoughts about them.

According to Peirce, therefore, generals are encountered directly when one experiences an individual in which the general is instantiated. In the experience of an individual red rose, for example, redness and roseness are immediately perceived, being given in that individual rose. Peirce explained this in his 1903 Harvard Lectures when he described his theory of *perceptual judgment* (PJ). The PJ is an automatically formed hypothesis of a general idea that might explain an individual case that is surprising or unfamiliar. This hypothesis draws upon prior experience unconsciously to fund a plausible explanation (PPMRT:242-43).[30] On one's first encounter with a new individual, such as a red rose, the resulting PJs will tend to be vague. Perhaps one can recognize red due to prior experiences of colors, but this is the first rose so one only hypothesizes "flower" perhaps. On further experience, such as seeing a store sign identifying that flower as a rose, PJs gain definition.

Consequently, Peirce's Scholastic Realism also holds that real generals are effective, as in the preceding paragraph where the reality of generals led to the refinement of PJs. Ongoing experience with realities of various kinds eventually leads to more accurate conceptions of those realities. Peirce's example par excellence is that real generals such as the Law of Gravity bear effects upon existent individuals (PPMRT:190-93). Peirce explained that this is because real generals influence the development of behavioral habits. An example Peirce used is that a child

[30] Cf. also Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*, 155-56.

quickly develops the habit of avoiding hot surfaces after only one or two experiences of the real general, hotness (CP 6.454).[31] At the level of Metaphysics, Scholastic Realism holds that the real general, Gravity, effects existent individuals in the cosmos in a way that has become a habit of the cosmos.

Scholastic Realism is Peirce's doctrine that generals are real and effective in the experience of existent individuals. As a metaphysical principle this helps to account for regularities in the cosmos, cosmic habits. As an epistemological principle this builds upon the pragmaticist conception of meaning. There are ideas that have sufficient objectivity that they are perceived similarly across manifold cases of instantiation. Accordingly, as experience of such instantiations increases, the conceptions defining those objective realities converge upon identity with the real idea itself. In these ways, Peirce's doctrines of Pragmaticism and Scholastic Realism participate in the theme of meaning in Peirce's thought.

**Triad**

Recall that Mathematics, in Peirce's architectonic schema, supplies hypothetical principles for everything else. One of the most profound of these in Peirce's hands is the principle of *adicity* according to the logic of relations.[32] Peirce found that three types of relations—monads, dyads, and triads—are irreducible and distinct from each other. No number of monads constitute a dyad, nor can a triad be composed of any combination of monads and dyads (W6:174-75). However, he found that all other modes of relation, including monads and dyads, can be formed

[31] Cf., also, Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 79-80. Esposito discusses Peirce's use of this illustration in MS 891 for the idea that generals are perceived in individuals; that the whole is communicated through experience of a part, that "'the transparency of the drop of water must actually convey a meaning to our conscious affections as truly as the Whole Sea itself,'" (MS 891, quoted in Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 80).

[32] Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 71; cf., also the detailed discussion of Peirce's existential graphs for which adicity figures prominently via the logic of relations in Peter Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 212-27.

from triads (EP2:364).[33] Consequently, he reasoned that the triad should be the basic unit of analysis in every field of inquiry, including the theory-constructing work of Philosophy. The doctrines described in this section bear this out. Peirce's doctrine of the three Universal Categories describes the triad in Phenomenology, and his doctrine of the three Cosmic Elements describes the triad in Metaphysics. Therefore, Peirce's doctrines taken together hold that the human mind images a cosmos in which every possible experience entails a triadic relation.[34]

Peirce applied his findings about triadicity to Phenomenology and discovered that the three basic relations correspond to three fundamental elements of experience.[35] The monad in experience is its qualitative aspect. Just as a monad is one object by itself, without consideration of a relation to any other than itself, so is the *quality of feeling* in an experience just what it is in itself.[36] This is the phenomenological category of Firstness. The dyad in experience is its *brute* aspect. This category has to do with *reaction* and *resistance* that manifest in the experience of otherness. With Secondness, however, there is no sense of meaning about the relation. The triad in experience is its aspect of *intelligibility.* It is in the category of Thirdness that experience as such is possible. Experience is not a brute—which is to say, meaningless—encounter with some other.

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[33] Cf. Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 178, discussing how Peirce's logic of relations grounds his metaphysics via the three universal categories.

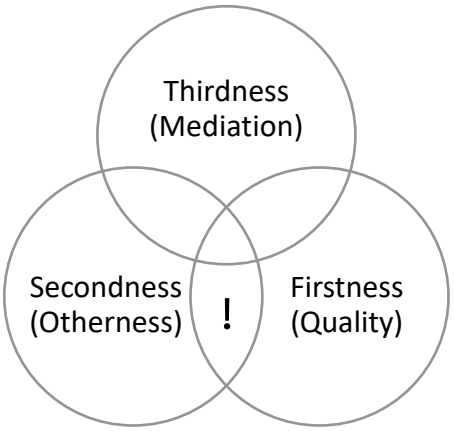
[34] Ibid., 3; so, also, the semeiotic nature of mind discussed in Parker, *Continuity*, 165.

[35] Parker, *Continuity*, 128, these categories function "as fundamental conceptions in any specialized analysis of the features of experience."

[36] The present discussion of Peirce's basic conception of the categories of experience follows especially his explanation in "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," (CP 6.454-55). However, that explanation is a mature statement of Peirce's thought on the categories since at least "One, Two, Three" (W5:242-47; 292-308).

Much less is it a mere focus on an abstract quality. For experience per se there must be some perception of meaning.[37] That comes when a third brings two others in relation (Figure 1).

*Figure 1* Peirce's Universal Categories




The exclamation point represents the intelligibility created by Thirdness.

Therefore, most important for phenomenology is the triad, marked by the category of Thirdness.[38] This is the category of the *whole*. Peirce often illustrated this with the idea of *giving*. If *A* gives *B* to *C*, there is an irreducible relation among all three due to the nature of giving. *C*

[37] Cf. Parker, *Continuity*, 108. For example, the qualitative, vague feeling of a beautiful performance of a symphony (a classic example of Firstness) is a bona fide experience by virtue of one's consciousness of the feeling of beauty. So, Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 38. Cf. also Peirce, "Neglected Argument," (*CP* 6.455).

[38] Peirce held that Firstness and Secondness are "degenerate" forms of Thirdness. Secondness is degenerate Thirdness in the first degree, and Firstness is degenerate Thirdness in the second degree. What is important is to see that Firstness and Secondness—monadic and dyadic relations—are abstracted from Thirdness, some triadic, true relation. If one observes a relation of two, having Secondness, the sense of reaction and otherness, one is, in fact, abstracting a dyadic relation from what really is a triad. For example, Peirce's classic illustration of Secondness is attempting to push open a door and experiencing more resistance than expected. At the level of an experience of Secondness, this is simply a brute fact that the door will not move very easily. As Secondness, one's attention is directed to the relation of just two objects, oneself and the door. However, notice that the expectation that the door should have opened is due to a triadic relation, perhaps of oneself, door, and the idea of opening or of passageway. So, the dyadic relation of myself and the door on which the Secondness of the moment has one's attention wholly fixed is truly in that moment abstracted from the triad in which they properly belong. Similarly for Firstness. The moment of some experience causes one's attention to become fixed just on the quality of that experience, perhaps a feeling of joy or beauty, and on nothing else. Nevertheless, that quality of feeling truly belongs within a triad in which it is made intelligible as a part of some triadic relation. In the example of trying to open the door, one might imagine that for some moment one's attention is wholly fixed on the feeling of frustration. It has not occurred to one yet why one is frustrated. On Peirce's theory of "degenerate" categories, cf., W6:176-79.

would not have *B* unless *A* had given it. More importantly, something cannot be *given* unless there is a *giver*, a *receiver*, and a *gift*. The very idea of "giving" logically requires all three terms (W5:244; W6:174-75). This is the effect Thirdness has as the category by which two things are brought into relation in the experiencing mind. Thirdness *unifies* a complex of three objects into an individual whole. This is dynamic, and it is immediate whenever the relation is perceived. So, the phenomenological category of Thirdness entails *triadic action*, which is the dynamic, immediate, unifying relation of two objects by a third object.

Peirce held that the three phenomenological categories are metaphysical realities, principles of the very nature of the cosmos as such (PPMRT:190-203).[39] The metaphysical form of the Categories is found in chapter seven of "A Guess at the Riddle." This chapter describes "The Triad in Physics."[40] Peirce concludes that "three elements are active in the world, first, chance; second, law; and third, habit-taking. Such is our guess at the secret of the Sphynx," (W6:208).[41] Therefore, Peirce holds that Firstness as a metaphysical reality is evident in the principle of *chance*. Mathematicians of Peirce's day moved away from long-held notions of precise axioms in geometry. They were realizing that experience yields approximations for which there remain

[39] Cf., also John K. Sheriff, *Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds for Human Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 40; Parker, *Continuity*, 197, 200; Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 127. Hoping to establish this vision publicly, Peirce drafted several versions of plans for a book first titled *One, Two, Three* (a transparent allusion to the Categories) and then revised as *A Guess at the Riddle*. In that book, Peirce planned to trace these Categories from their forms and functions in the work of Philosophy into their manifestations in several salient fields of inquiry (Logic, Metaphysics, Psychology, Physiology, Biology, Physics, Sociology, and Theology) (W6:166-67). It is important to note that the order of these chapters is not merely determined by Peirce's architectonic reasoning. He writes that these are the areas of inquiry into which his own reflections actually led him and in this order (W6:175-76). Their ubiquity would imply their status as metaphysical principles of the cosmos. Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 206, on Peirce's "'speculative cosmology.'"

[40] Under the heading of Physics, Peirce observes what he calls "three elements" of the cosmos, which correspond to the three Categories. Also, Peirce begins the chapter by discussing the fact that Metaphysics in philosophy had long been considered both possible and tracking with the state of the art in geometry (W6:208, 203).

[41] The "Riddle" is the ancient question of Metaphysics, "What is the universe made of?" (W5:295). Cf. editorial comments in W6:438-39. Also, on Peirce's conception of the riddle of the Sphinx, cf., Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 2; Sheriff, *Peirce's Guess*, xvii.

the possibility of infinite variations.[42] The vague and approximate nature of *possibility* recognized by mathematicians meant to Peirce that *chance* must be granted as an essential element of the metaphysics of the cosmos. Chance manifests Firstness in Peirce's view, because in itself it is pure possibility. There is no relation with another to determine it one way or another. Secondness manifests in the principle of *law* throughout the cosmos. Peirce's example here are the natural laws that account for the various regularities observed in the cosmos. The concept of natural laws just is that under certain conditions, certain actions occur, as it were, automatically. Like a deductive argument in logic, there is an aspect of necessity.[43] So, the Secondness of law is seen in its nature as a brute, automatic reaction (W6:206). Finally, *habit-taking* is Peirce's metaphysical correlate for Thirdness. Peirce held that the fact that there are such regularities in the cosmos signified that somehow the cosmos came to have certain processes or principles as cosmic habits. Habit-taking is the dynamic aspect of becoming in the cosmos and of the cosmos itself, Peirce noted. This is the realization of wholeness, the unification of related objects in an intelligible manner.[44]

The theme of the triad makes Peirce's anthropomorphic relation of epistemology and ontology especially evident. Both the human faculty of perception and the many kinds of natural phenomena display similar categorial triadicity. In this way not only are humans readily able to construct meanings discovered in engagements with those phenomena. Human inquirers also

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[42] For example, geometry divides a circle into three hundred sixty degrees. However, the scope of a "degree" is problematized as deceptive regarding its specificity. That is, a "degree" is imprecise, as one may subdivide it, subdivide the subdivisions, etc., *ad infinitum* (cf. "Triad in Physics," W6:203-4).

[43] Peirce wrote of deductive reasoning in natural processes; cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 199.

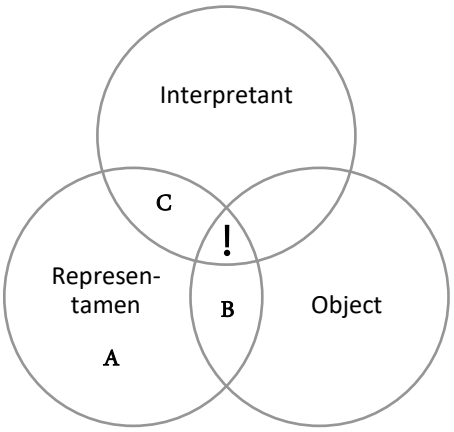
[44] Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 70-71, that the triad entails *combination*. Similarly, Esposito, *Evolutionary Metaphysics*, 131-32, discusses Peirce's theory that the thirdness of cognition combines past and future in the present moment. Raposa discusses this at the metaphysical level of the "Absolute Mind," as "the whole which calls out its parts," in *PPR*, 50.

find ubiquitous warrant to believe that those meanings are to some extent determined by the reality of things. This brings this discussion to the next theme, Interpretation.

**Interpretation**

At the epistemological level, Peirce's theory of signs (Semeiotic) provides a formal analysis of Meaning in the Pragmaticist sense. In doing so, Peirce relies upon the Triadic form and its relational dynamics. According to Semeiotic, signs include their interpretation and are dynamic interpretative processes. Interpretation increases in the sign process until attaining to a meaning that fully realizes the sign. So, transposed to the level of Metaphysics, Semeiotic informs Peirce's evolutionary theory of cosmic Growth.

*Figure 2* Peirce's Triadic Sign Model




**A.** presentative relation; **B.** representative relation; **C.** interpretive relation.

For Peirce, a sign is anything that represents something else to someone.[45] One recognizes immediately the triadic form of this sign model (Figure 2). There is a sign vehicle (a *representamen* in Peirce's terms), its object, and an *interpretant* (the idea inferred by an interpreter)

[45] Parker supplies a representative sample of variations on this theme of Peirce's definition of "sign." Cf. Parker, *Continuity*, 144. Also, Parker references several of Peirce's salient definitions of the sign: CP 2.228; CP 2.274; *SS* 32; *SS* 80-81. Cf. also Sheriff, *Peirce's Guess*, 34-35.

held in an irreducible relation (EP2:272-73, 1903).[46] Further, Peirce theorized the three-fold internal relations of a sign which analyze the semeiotic process of the growing interpretation of a Sign.[47] These are the representamen's dominant quality *qua* representamen—its *presentative relation*, its *representative relation* to its object, and its *interpretive relation* to its interpretant.[48] For each of these, Peirce's Universal Categories suggest a triadic analysis of types (EP2:289-96).[49]

For example, the representative relation concerns how the representamen stands to its object *as* a representation of that object in some way. A representamen might be an *icon* of its object. In that case, its relation to the object consists solely in its quality as a representation of the object. For example, a map is an icon of some territory that is its object. If a representamen is an *index* of its object, it functions as a representamen due to some actual, causal relation between the object and itself. A weathervane, for example, is an index of the object of wind direction. Finally, a representamen might be a *symbol* of its object. A symbol implies its object to an interpreter according to some set of conventional rules (EP2:291-92). A stop sign provides an example here. Much more is understood from the sign than is given in the sign itself, given that the interpreter also understands the requisite conventions.

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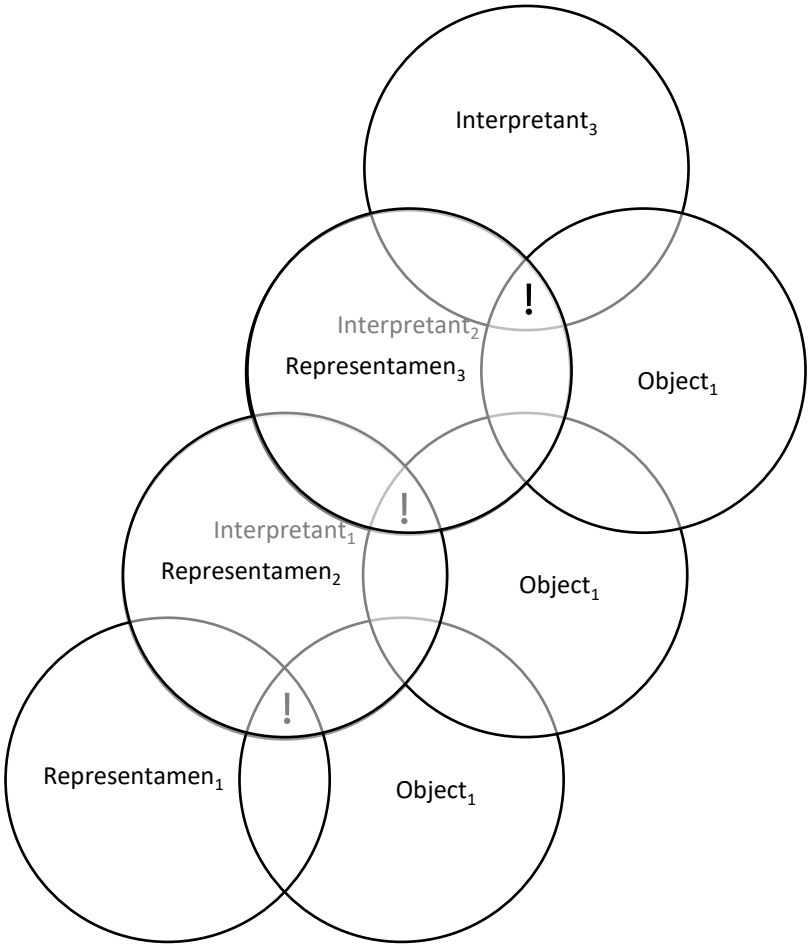
[46] Notice Peirce's distinction between a sign and a representamen. Sometimes Peirce used both terms to refer to the sign vehicle, or representamen. However, his semeiotic theory manifests two distinct ideas. The representamen is the phenomenon encountered by the interpreter by which the semeiotic idea of the object is communicated. A sign as such just is the triadic relation of a representamen, its object, and an interpretant. See, Parker, *Continuity*, 137.

[47] To attempt to avoid ambiguity, "sign" with a lower-case "s" from here on indicates an individual case of the relation of representamen, object, and interpretant. "Sign" with an upper-case "S" indicates what Peirce called *semeiosis*, the interpretive process involving a series of related signs.

[48] Cf., James Jakob Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Indiana University Press, 1996), 18-19.

[49] Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 207. Consequently, each of the three relations internal to a sign analyze into three subtypes; such as icon, index, and symbol for the representative relation in the next paragraph. The resulting subtypes, on Peirce's view, translate into a taxonomy of ten possible types of sign. Any sign includes one subtype from each of the three sign relations. See Peirce's diagram, EP2:296.

*Figure 3* Semeiosis Diagram




Peirce theorized multiple variations of the object of a Sign. This diagram simplifies the object to reflect Peirce's doctrine that the entire Sign remains grounded in the original object ($Object_1$) as semeiosis occurs via a series of parallels in the representative relation ($B_1$). Also, this diagram simplifies the interpretant. It only indicates semeiosis in a linear way, whereas interpretants may form in a wide array of variants consistent with the preceding sign.

One of Peirce's earliest convictions regarding the nature of signs is that all thoughts are signs and thinking occurs in Signs (W2:207). A Sign as such yields an interpretant, which is a *thought* in the mind of one encountering the sign. Consequently, due to Thirdness, it is the nature of signs to produce further signs. This dynamic, triadic aspect of signs Peirce called *semeiosis* (CP 5.484).[50] This process produces a continuum of signs carrying forward the idea of the

[50] Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 158; Parker, *Continuity*, 148-49.

original object (Figure 3). That is, some sign began the process. As a sign, it produced an interpretant. That interpretant represents the original object in a way to some extent determined by the representamen in that original sign. This interpretant is now the representamen of another sign consistent with, but not identical to, the first sign. This process continues infinitely. However, "infinitely" in Peirce's theory of continua does not mean endlessly.[51] Peirce theorized that semeiosis continues until the process has produced a *habit* that satisfies the original object.[52] This will be some habit of behavior rather than a thought, which would be another sign.

What must not be missed is that semeiosis is the process whereby something of the reality of the object communicates to the mind of an interpreter. At some point in the process, the reality of the object to some extent becomes embodied in the life habits of some interpreting mind. At the risk of oversimplification, suffice it to say that Peirce explained this objective continuity in the Sign by relating the object to an interpretant through *final causation*.[53] This is when a desired outcome somehow bears a real causal relation to the development of the process leading to it. In semeiosis, the convergence of interpretants with the reality of the object supplies final causal force to the process. This expresses the heart of the pragmaticist logic of inquiry, according to which inquirers adjust beliefs closer to the truth of things according to ongoing experience. Accordingly, semeiosis—like inquiry—proceeds in the experimental manner of trial-and-error. Due to the generality of the objective reality grounding the Sign, various habits might conclude the semeiotic process. The upshot of this discussion of Peirce's theory of signs is that

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[51] Cf. Parker, *Continuity*, 147-48.

[52] Notice the parallel to Peirce's Pragmatic Maxim. The full meaning of one's concept is evident only in some practice they imagine would result if their concept were fully believed.

[53] Cf., EP2:496, 499-500; where Peirce discusses the "final interpretant." Also, cf. discussion of final interpretant in context of Peirce's conception of final causation in Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 136-39, 183; cf. also, Raposa, *PPR*, 22, discusses final causation in terms of "'the whole call[ing] out its parts,' (*CP* 1.220)."

interpretation is a process involving the multiplication of cases that share a common originating object and a general purpose directing the overall trajectory of development. Peirce found this a powerful model for understanding relationships among "intellectual concepts" and for imagining how the present cosmos came to be.[54] Hence, Peirce's metaphysical theory of evolutionary Growth.

Peirce's concept of Growth is akin to the present day notion of increasing *complexity*.[55] Peirce hypothesized that Growth might somehow be a feature of the cosmos at the metaphysical level, because he found it in every field of science he explored.[56] Therefore, Peirce's Metaphysics includes doctrines setting expectations for how Growth is a metaphysical principle of a cosmos marked by Pragmaticism and Semeiotic and reflected in the human mind evolved by this growing cosmos. One of these, which Peirce called *tychism* (W8:135), is his doctrine that chance is an important consideration for all of Philosophy.[57]

Chance, the metaphysical form of Firstness, has to do with *possibility*. Many things possibly could happen. By chance, certain possibilities are realized as facts of experience. Tychism is a key to Peirce's theory of Growth, because it is the principle whereby *new* cosmic habits can be

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[54] The phrase "intellectual concepts" alludes to Peirce's definition of Pragmaticism; that it is his theory of how to define such concepts. This trades upon his Pragmatic Maxim, which an earlier discussion noted is closely related to his explanation of continuity in Semeiotic. Cf., CP 5.467.

[55] E.g., Robert Corrington draws upon Peirce's sign theory to explain the increasing complexity within the framework of *ecstatic naturalism* in Robert S. Corrington, *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Complexity also figures strongly in Philip Clayton's theory of emergence in Philip Clayton, *Mind and Emergence: From Quantum to Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[56] Recall his interdisciplinary plan for "A Guess at the Riddle" discussed earlier. Also, in "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined," Peirce appeals to the ubiquity of "growth" evident in any area of natural science as evidence for the principle of evolution (W8:122). Later, in "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," Peirce mentions growth as a metaphysical principle the contemplation of which eventually leads to belief in God (CP 6.465).

[57] Peirce names this doctrine here, at the beginning of "The Law of Mind." However, note that he refers the reader to his previous essay in the early *Monist* series, "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined" (W8:111-25) as the place where he discussed in detail that chance is a fundamental element of things and crucial for a modern philosophy.

formed (W8:157).[58] According to Peirce, habits are formed as prior experience of chance events makes those things more likely to happen again in the future (W8:97).[59] Eventually, one of those outcomes becomes the regular one due to its unique fitness for the character inherent in that particular process. Consider the development of bird species, for example. According to chance and law as elemental principles of Growth, the experience of some bird species begins to include some new feature, say, a modification of the shape of the beak. This happens, apparently accidentally, by chance, in only one or a very few individuals of that species. Peirce's concept of the habit-taking tendency holds that this beak change could become a regularly recurring feature of this species, which might be enough of a change to mark a new species of that kind of bird. That beak shape would then have become a habit.

Clearly, however, some element of these processes remains missing. What explains why it is that certain chance facts rather than others become the habitual ones? Why would any accidental change to the shape of a bird's beak ever become the norm for that—or now a new—species? The answer to these questions is *purpose*. Peirce conceived of Growth as an evolutionary process of taking on new habits, realizing new possibilities. This process is described semeiotically as a form of the process of interpretation of a cosmos full of Signs, which is itself a Sign. Peirce held that the Sign process involves *purpose*. It is teleological in nature. It is seeking its fulfilling end. It seeks that habit which will finally and fully realize the meaning of the object originating the Sign.[60] What remains is to explain why any Sign—especially the cosmos—should

[58] Peirce associates tychism with his theory of evolution expressly at the conclusion of "The Law of Mind," referenced in the text above. In a later essay, "Evolutionary Love," Peirce writes about a form of evolution distinguished by its Firstness according to tychism. He called this form of evolution *tychasm* (W8:194).

[59] Cf. also discussion in Hookway, *Peirce*, 209.

[60] This language of a Sign "seeking" its end is mainly metaphorical. Yet, Peirce identified personality as such having the triadic form of a Sign. Cf., e.g., Raposa, *PPR*, 67-68, discussing CP 6.270. Likewise, as a scientist has the personality of seeking the truth of the matter through trial-and-error, Peirce recognized an analogous

have any guiding purpose, why it should have a *telos*. Peirce's teleological doctrine for Metaphysics is one he called *agapasm*, or "Evolutionary Love."[61]

Peirce reasoned that the teleological appearance of the development of the cosmos is not merely anthropomorphic. That is, there is some reality causing the feeling of teleology one gets from cosmic phenomena, rather than a mere projection of human psychology.[62] In Peirce's view, there are three types of evolution occurring in the cosmic processes.[63] Evolution by chance is marked by Firstness. Evolution by causal necessity is marked by Secondness. Evolution *by attraction*, *agapastic* evolution, is marked by Thirdness. That is, the new ideas encountered in the process of development are attractive, such that they become habits. Further, the attraction is due to their purpose.[64] That is, certain habits seem to contribute to the realization of the purpose of being. Because of the aesthetic nature of agapastic evolution, Peirce theorized *love* as a driving principle of cosmic Growth.[65] Peirce explained that this love is defined by Jesus, in that the "Gospel of Christ says that progress comes from every individual merging his individuality in

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dynamic at work in cosmic evolution; cf., Ivo Assad Ibri, *Kósmos Noetós: The Metaphysical Architecture of Charles S. Peirce*, vol. 131, *Philosophical Studies Series* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2018), 95-96.

[61] Peirce had a tendency to coin terms specific to his technical philosophical meanings for them. Agap*asm* is his doctrine that love affects the cosmic evolutionary processes. Agap*ism* is his doctrine that love is an important principle for philosophy to consider. Cf., W8:194. Similarly, we have seen that Tych*ism* is Peirce's doctrine that chance is important for philosophy to include in its theorizing work. Tych*asm*, on the other hand, is the doctrine that chance is a key element of the cosmic evolutionary processes.

[62] Raposa, *PPR*, 100, "…Peirce's perspective…evolution is nothing other than the process of inquiry writ large. Anthropomorphic conceptions had more than a merely metaphorical validity for Peirce. Macrocosm mirrors microcosm; the logic of objective mind is the same logic that ought to govern human reasoning. Evolution is always, then, a 'thinking' process, the development of ideas embodied in concrete fact; and human inquiry is itself evolutionary."

[63] The following comments draw upon Peirce's essay, "Evolutionary Love," viz., W8:194-205.

[64] Cf., Hausman, *Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy*, 176; Hookway, *Peirce*, 215.

[65] Peirce expressly draws upon the Gospel of John to identify this principle of his metaphysics of Growth. See the section below on "God."

sympathy with his neighbors (W8:189). So, Growth proceeds via the agapistic "sympathy" of semeiotic individuals, coming together as habits of the increasingly orderly cosmos.[66]

If Peirce is right about agapastic (i.e., purpose-guided attraction) evolution, and that evolution per se is a process of Sign interpretation, it would follow that the cosmos and its constituent parts must somehow have the properties and nature of *mind*. Indeed, this idea now seems a necessary implication of Peirce's Kantian belief that the principles and dynamics of human minds image similar principles and dynamics of the cosmos itself. The idealism that belief suggests is now evident in the semeiotic, purposive nature of the development of the cosmos. Peirce's epistemological "Law of Mind" and its metaphysical correlate, *Objective Idealism*, now emerge as the capstone doctrines of Peirce's Logic and Metaphysics.

**Mind**

Peirce defined the Law of Mind as the principle by which there is a continuous spread of ideas as some ideas affect others (W8:136). This affection among ideas, according to Peirce, is due to certain categorial properties of ideas. The Firstness of an idea is its constant quality of feeling. Its Secondness is its energy to affect other ideas in reaction to an encounter with them. The affect of one idea upon another is an attraction according to Thirdness. This is the tendency in an idea to bring other ideas along with it (W8:148). In other words, Thirdness in ideas individually and among ideas collectively leads to increasing generalization as ideas become "welded" to—or associated with—one another in complexes of ideas. Peirce explained this welding process as due to the loss of energy as more ideas are associated into a more general idea (W8:149).

[66] Parker, *Continuity*, 16, writes of Peirce's agapasm, "Peirce proposed a theory of evolution of ideas that regards their development as an evolution *toward* a harmonious state of rational order, of reality."

That is, generalization diminishes the initial intensity of the ideas to affect one another.[67] Consequently, it is evident that Mind is marked especially by Thirdness and therefore by a growing continuum consisting of relations of things.

Accordingly, Peirce explains how Mind works the way it does in terms of *Synechism*, his doctrine that continuity is important to understanding everything (W8:136). What is important is just that Peirce relies upon the nature of continua to understand Mind, the cosmos, and the semeiotic nature of everything. On Peirce's understanding of continua, any individual identified within the continuum embodies what precedes it and determines what comes after it (W8:146-47).[68] Peirce held that Signs are teleological continua grounded by some general idea, an object indicated by the representamen and which determines some interpretant. In terms of Peirce's Scholastic Realism, the *individual* representamen inherently communicates the *general* idea of its dynamic object. So, as Mind forms generalized classes of ideas—continuous relations among Signs—Signs begin to imply one another as the entire cosmos of Signs becomes harmoniously interrelated. The Law of Mind readily transposes to the level of Metaphysics.

Also in his 1890s series in *The Monist*, Peirce described his doctrine of Objective Idealism, "The one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws," (W8:106). In other words, the evolution of the universe manifests mindlike characteristics—such as its semeiotic dynamics and categorial elements—because it is also mind. Peirce writes "effete" mind, which indicates that Mind characterizes the nature of whatever substances there are. Accordingly, ideas, real generals, are Mind in

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[67] Cf., Raposa, *PPR*, 38.

[68] Peirce's discussion here of time as demonstrating the continuity of mind draws upon his earlier discussion of infinitesimals and their role in continuity. Namely, infinitesimals are undetermined "parts" of a continuum such that they hold together what comes before and after them. W8:137-46.

a vague state of great possibility. Concrete, material things are Mind in the form of Signs now completely given to their habits. They are mind that has lost its dynamic, living quality—has become effete. They are individuals in which Thirdness has resolved to a steady state of Secondness.[69]

To be clear, chance remains a major factor. Peirce did not claim that the generalization process was somehow discursive or that it is by deductive necessity.[70] It is not as though the cosmos *tries* to organize itself. The resulting generalizations of complexes of ideas occur as a form of habit resulting from a purposeful sifting (a la Agapasm) of many accidental Sign associations (due to Tychasm). According to Peirce, it is the nature of Mind as such to be active and in process until those very processes result in an established habit. Mind is that which actively coordinates many such Signs, as evident in Peirce's Law of Mind. Therefore, the cosmos as a mind (on Objective Idealism) entails the coordination of its constituent Signs. As Peirce hypothesized, the cosmos is comprised of Signs and is itself a Sign. Therefore, Peirce's Metaphysics finds its voice in his monist doctrine of Objective Idealism.

**God**

Abundant evidence that Peirce had a working—if largely tacit—theology is scattered throughout his writings on the diverse array of topics on which he wrote.[71] This has made it

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[69] Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 201-02; Hookway, *Peirce*, 211, 219.

[70] To the contrary, Peirce writes of mental action, "There always remains a certain amount of arbitrary spontaneity in its action, without which it would be dead," (W8:153).

[71] Raposa, *PPR*, 3-4. Focused treatments of theology are relatively rare in Peirce's writings. Book II: Religion of *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* provides a convenient digest of the handful of Peirce's writings devoted to his theology, including, especially "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" (CP 6.452-93) and "Answers to Questions Concerning My Belief in God" (CP 6.494-521). Moreover, the first generation of Peirce scholarship minimized theology as a theme relevant to understanding Peirce's philosophy. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, "Editorial Note," in *Scientific Metaphysics*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1965), v, "The second book of the volume, devoted to religion or 'psychical metaphysics,' has rather tenuous connections with the rest of the [philosophical] system, offering, apart from scattered flashes of insight, views which have a sociological or

possible for book-length treatments synthesizing this dappled evidence of Peirce's religious thought.[72] Moreover, there is broad agreement that Peirce held at least to a classical theism, if not even to trinitarian Christian theism. At times, Peirce seemed to self-consciously write from within the tradition of Christian thought. Michael Raposa observes that Peirce

> does seem for the most part to have identified himself as a Christian and to have conceived of Christianity as a highly evolved form of more "primitive" systems of belief (CP 6.442), in particular, "a higher development out of Buddhism" ([SS]78). Most importantly, the *framework* for the majority of Peirce's explicitly religious writings is decisively theistic and Christian (however creatively he formulated his own ideas within that context).[73]

Roger Ward has followed this theme comprehensively through key writings marking the development of Peirce's philosophy. He finds that Peirce self-consciously ascribed to crucial aspects of Christian belief and included them as facts upon which to develop further philosophical views.[74] Ward's opinion seems to agree with Gérard Deledalle's assessment. After writing that Peirce "married Melusina in the Episcopalian Church and adopted Melusina's triune conception of God," Deledalle observes that Peirce's triadic model of signs and Peirce's triadic metaphysical

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biographical, rather than a fundamental systematic interest." Yet, as in the case of the editors of the *Collected Papers*, even critics must admit that Peirce gave theological questions a formal location within his system as the division of metaphysics Peirce called "psychical metaphysics." Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 55.

[72] The major expositions of this topic in Peirce studies continue to be Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God*, and Raposa, *PPR.* Also, Roger Ward, *Peirce and Religion*, should be included here because he argues for the integral relation of Peirce's religious beliefs for all of his thinking, though the work tends to read more like a biography.

[73] Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*, 84; Peirce writes this way in his "Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," ibid., 147. Christopher Hookway agrees. Cf. Christopher Hookway, *Truth, Rationality, and Pragmatism: Themes from Peirce* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2000), 284. Similarly, regarding Peirce's essay "The Law of Mind," Robert Corrington writes, "In this essay he still wants to see God as the JudeoChristian creator of the world who is itself full of personality." Corrington, *Introduction*, 187.

[74] E.g., Ward writes, "the Trinity provides a platform for [Peirce's] developing semiotic account of meaning that extends throughout his philosophy," in Ward, *Peirce and Religion*, 150. However, Ward may overestimate the degree of influence of particularly Christian theistic elements on Peirce's philosophy; cf. Michael L. Raposa, "Peirce and Religion: Knowledge, Transformation, and the Reality of God. By Roger Ward," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 87, no. 2 (2019):

categories correlate in important ways with traditional views of the triune divine relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[75]

Others find Peirce to hold forth the God of Christian theism due to Peirce's use of the set of divine attributes often predicated in that tradition. For example, Vincent Potter observes that Peirce defines God in the "Neglected Argument" in the personal theistic terms of traditional Christian thought. He writes of Peirce's God in that essay, "that He is one, personal, transcendent, Creator of the universe of experience, omniscient, omnipotent, infallible, not subject to time, not finite, provident."[76] David Mills corroborates Potter's assessment, writing, "Peirce's God looks very much like the God of traditional theism," according to Peirce's "orthodox meanings for these attributes."[77]

Yet, Mills also recognizes, as Robert Corrington emphasized, Peirce held that these orthodox attributes of the Christian God must remain quite vague. The attempt to ascribe specific definitions to these vague terms only leads to confusion.[78] Notwithstanding such qualifications of

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[75] Deledalle, *Philosophy of Signs*, 170, 173. Most theologians engaging Peirce also note such correlations as discussed in the literature review in chapter one.

[76] Vincent G. Potter and Vincent M. Colapietro, *Peirce's Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Fordham Univ Pr, 1996), 175; cf. also ibid., 157. Similarly, Michael Slater sees Peirce not only as "a Christian theist," but one "who endorsed the Anselmian conception of God as a necessary being and who argued for the naturalness and reasonableness of theistic belief," in Michael R. Slater, *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 80.

[77] Mills, "Drama of Creation," 114. Cf. also Shook, "Panentheism," 12; William L. Power, "Peircean Semiotics, Religion, and Theological Realism," in *New Essays in Religious Naturalism*, ed. Creighton Peden and Larry E Axel, Highlands Institute Series (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1993), 222.

[78] Mills, "Drama of Creation," 114; Corrington, *Introduction*, 201-02. Charles Hartshorne writes, "Peirce held that, although it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to state in wholly definite terms the religious meaning of 'God' (Allah, Isvara, or whatever word is used for the all surpassing reality), there is a fundamental 'instinct' or intuition that calls for some such idea." Charles Hartshorne, "Peirce and Religion: Between Two Forms of Religious Belief," in *Peirce and contemporary thought: philosophical inquiries*, ed. Kevin L. Ketner (NY: Fordham University Press, 1995), 340. Likewise, William Power writes that Peirce "never attempted to explicate his conception of God, and basically left it vague." Power writes that "God" functions symbolically in Peirce's writing so that whatever reader with any conception relevant to the term "God" would find meaning in Peirce's work. Cf., Power, "Peircean Semiotics," 221-22. Cf. also Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God*, 82, 85.

Consequently, debate continues as to just what Peirce had in mind when writing the many pages in which he engaged religious ideas. Robert Corrington pointed out that Peirce's "conception of God is incomplete…There is

vagueness for Peirce's religious terminology, as Jeffrey Kasser writes, "though he continued to remind his reader about the limitations of our language for discussing the divine nature, Peirce's conception of God is in many respects unabashedly traditional, both in its transcendence and in its anthropomorphism."[79] That is, Peirce's religious self-consciousness was ostensibly, and perhaps purposely, traditionally Christian.

The task now is to describe how Peirce thought about God as a theme in relation to Metaphysics, the culminating branch of his philosophy. The starting point for this discussion is Peirce's statement that truth-seekers like himself must be "materialists without flinching." Also, that statement provides the framework within which to understand other salient theological statements Peirce made in metaphysics contexts. "Materialists without flinching" expresses Peirce's guiding theological principle, and his religious comments on evolutionary love, Thirdness, and the semeiotic nature of the cosmos provide cases of Peirce practicing this principle.

In the beginning of Peirce's earnest efforts to work out his philosophy for posterity, he intended to write an entire chapter in "A Guess at the Riddle" on the theological implications of his categorial Metaphysics. The only thing he wrote for that chapter was a single sentence summary in his outline for the work, "Faith requires that we be materialists without flinching," (W6:167). When it comes to his theology with respect to Metaphysics, Peirce provided only a riddle. However, there may be clues supplied by Peirce in other contexts. Max Fisch, explains:

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some disagreement as to the upshot of his philosophical theology; some scholars insist that his views, though cast in his own unique language, remain fairly traditional, while other scholars see more radical things afoot in his attempts to correlate an evolving God with an equally dynamic universe"; cf., Corrington, *Introduction,* 167. Note that Corrington references Donna Orange and Michael Raposa as the exemplars of this debate. One understands Peirce's theology along process lines, as in the Whiteheadian process theology of Charles Hartshorne. The other disagrees. In his most recent book, Raposa indicates that the debate remains unresolved, writing that Peirce's thought is related to "theism in at least one of its forms." Cf. Raposa, *Theosemiotic,* 96. Cf. also Ejsing, *Theology of Anticipation,* 8.

[79] Jeffrey L. Kasser, "Peirce on God, Reality and Personality," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities,* ed. Jeanine Diller and Asa Kasher (Netherlands: Dordrecht Springer, 2013), 436.

> The clue is the address on "Design and Chance," where [Peirce] chides even Epicurus for flinching, by exempting his gods from the absolute chance that gives rise to his infinite worlds. For he places his gods in the spaces between the worlds and rests their divinity on the fineness of the atoms that compose them. "Thus, divineness comes from a special cause and does not originate by chance from elements not containing it. Darwin's view is nearer to mine. Indeed my opinion is only Darwinism analyzed, generalized, and brought into the realm of Ontology," (W4:552).[80]

Peirce critiques Epicurus for "flinching" in his writings about the nature and origin of the gods. Epicurus wished to have the gods subject to their own reality and not that of the cosmos humans experience. For Peirce, this was problematic. Instead, Epicurus should have constructed his theories so that the gods are also subject to metaphysical principles such as chance. From this, it is evident that "materialist without flinching" means that theological knowledge gained from the cosmos must, in Peirce's view, maintain reference to principles belonging to the cosmos, such as the principle of chance.

Fisch goes on to commend the following statement by Peirce as a case of such an unflinching conception of God:

> "I think that the existence of God, as well as we can conceive of it, consists in this, that a tendency toward ends is so necessary a constituent of the universe that the mere action of Chance upon innumerable atoms has an inevitable teleological result. One of the ends so brought about is the development of intelligence and of knowledge; and therefore I should say that God's omniscience, humanly conceived, consists in the fact that knowledge in its development leaves no question unanswered."[81]

Here, in "American Plato," Peirce responds to Josiah Royce's recent work, *Religious Aspects of Philosophy* (W5:221). At issue are implications of the idea of God's omniscience upon forms of idealism. According to Peirce, Royce's concept entails that God exists because God thinks about himself (W5:228). In contrast, Peirce states that cosmic teleology is the form of God's existence,

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[80] The Peirce Edition Project, eds., "Annotations," W6:440n167.11-12; quoting Max H. Fisch, "Peirce's Arisbe," in *Peirce, Semeiotic, and Pragmatism*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner and Christian J. W. Kloesel (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1986), 234.

[81] Fisch, "Peirce's Arisbe," 235. The text of the passage Fisch quotes is also published in W5:229.

and the perfection of science is an individual case of the general teleology of the cosmos.[82] Therefore, God's omniscience manifests in the perfection of science, the time when there are no unanswered questions.[83]

Importantly, in this essay Peirce appears to have been careful not to draw conclusions about whether there is such a being as God who always has perfect knowledge of everything that can be known. He allows that this is a possibility but insists on remaining vague on the precise nature of the reality of the set of Real generals the perfection of science endeavors to discover. Those realities, Peirce wrote, belong to "an absolute thought," whether or not "there be a living being whose thought coincides with this absolute thought," (MS1369s).[84] In the case of God's existence being in the form of cosmic teleology, and of his omniscience existing in the someday perfection of science, one should respect Peirce's humble natural theology. That is, it seems unlikely that Peirce would have been making any claims identifying God with those forms of his existence. If Peirce was not willing to declare that God is the being thinking the absolute thought

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[82] By the 1880s Peirce was arriving at his mature form of Scholastic Realism (Mayorga, *Realicism*, 87-89). Recall that in this doctrine Peirce distinguished Existence from Reality. Existent things are concrete, definite, actual individuals. Reality consists of all ideas that would be the "final opinion" of a perfected course of inquiry. Existent things do not have Reality as an innate ontological property. Reality pertains to some generals. Yet, Real generals are manifest in Existent things. That is, Existent things are signs of some Real generals. My cracked windshield signifies the law of gravity that brought the rock into contact with the glass, for example. Now, also bear in mind that Peirce understood God to be a person. As such, on Peirce's view, God is a general, having Reality but not Existence. (See discussion below regarding Peirce's "vast representamen" statement. Also, this is explicit in Peirce's 1908 essay, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," CP 6.452-94). Accordingly, in stating that God's *existence* consists in the teleology of the cosmos, Peirce claims that cosmic teleology somehow constitutes a sign of God's Reality. In turn, therefore, the perfection of science would be a sign of God's omniscience. Because teleology implies conformity to some purpose, this is a more specific form of Peirce's statement that the cosmos signifies God's purpose (PPMRT, 201), discussed below.

[83] I read, "development of intelligence and knowledge" in Peirce's statement as implying "science," because of the context situating Peirce's engagement with Royce on the subject of divine knowledge. That is, Peirce is treating the larger questions of reality and truth, claiming that both have to do with what would be known by humans once the grand scientific project to understand and know the cosmos is complete. The relevance of God's omniscience is that everything science would come to discover must already be known by God. In an alternate draft of Peirce's response to Royce, Peirce writes that God's knowledge is "the standard toward which human science, with its methods of experiment and reasoning, is ultimately tending, so that it is the goal which sufficient investigation would reach," (MS 1369s); quoted in Orange, *Conception*, 33.

[84] Quoted in Orange, *Conception*, 33.

of the developing cosmos, then it would be odd for him to then hold forth that God is what one experiences as cosmic teleology.[85]

Instead, when Peirce wrote his "materialists without flinching" idea for a chapter on the theological implications of his universal categories, he appears to have meant that knowledge of God is always mediated by phenomena governed by those categories and other metaphysical principles. It is unacceptable to pretend that humans can speak of God in terms of any metaphysics other than that which governs human minds. From this it follows that Peirce would advocate for speaking of God in terms of the metaphysics common to human experience.[86] This appears to be the very example Peirce sets in each of the remaining theological statements discussed in this section. Peirce spoke of God in terms of evolutionary love, categorial Thirdness, and the semeiotic continuum.

In 1892, Peirce published an essay, "Evolutionary Love." It is in this essay that Peirce introduces his theory of cosmic teleology – of cosmic Growth – that he called Agapastic evolution. In naming this doctrine, Peirce adapted the Greek word for profound, purposeful love—*agape*. Peirce's choice was inspired by the Johannine doctrine, "God is Love," (W8:184).[87] Peirce introduces this Johannine statement as a contribution to the long-standing philosophical tradition of identifying love as the "evolutionary agency of the universe" (W8:184). That tradition used *eros*

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[85] This metaphysical "God" appears to be the direction of Donna Orange's conclusion, cf., Orange, *Conception*, 84, where she writes, "In Peirce's mature view, God is the element of Reason or reasonableness which both expresses itself in creating, and also is emerging in the creative process." In contrast, Michael Raposa draws a distinction between the Absolute Mind directing the evolution of the cosmos and the creator of that Absolute Mind, Raposa, *PPR*, 59, 61; additionally, see below on Peirce's statement about the universe as a "vast representamen."

[86] So, for example, Orange, *Conception*, 40, "Much of what Peirce said of God in the early 1890s appears as the direct outgrowth of his previous decade's thought on categories, and on the related evolutionary cosmology."

[87] That Peirce's statement from this essay, "Evolutionary Love," offers a case of "materialists without flinching" seems evident in Raposa, *PPR*, 72, according to whom that essay's "religious notions and theological vocabulary are constitutive of that very account [of how the world develops]…What is implicit in many of Peirce's other writings is made explicit in this paper; his scientific metaphysics is not only shaped by but represents the articulation of his theism"; cf., also, ibid., 144.

as the form of love by which the cosmos evolves. This is where John distinguishes himself.[88] Peirce writes, "the ontological gospeller, in whose days those views were familiar topics, made the One Supreme Being, by whom all things have been made out of nothing, to be cherishing-love," (W8:184).

In contrast to *eros*, which entailed an oppositional model, Peirce finds in John's presentation of divine *agape* the definitive principle of Agapasm. Peirce notes that John identifies God both with love and with light. He infers from this that the way light relates to its opposite parallels the way love relates to its opposite. According to Peirce, "We are to understand, then, that as darkness is merely the defect of light, so hatred and evil are mere imperfect stages of *agape* and *agathon*, love and loveliness," (W8:184). Peirce grounds this model, a continuum between love and hatred, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, "'God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should through him be saved,'" (W8:184).[89] For Peirce, God's refusal to judge the hateful through punishment, but rather to let them "punish themselves" (W8:184-85), softens the dialectic so that hatred is not wholly other than love but is only "a defect of love," (W8:185). Peirce writes, "the love that God is…is a love which embraces hatred as an

[88] The precise identity of the author of the Gospel of John has been controversial among modern biblical scholars. For simplicity the following discussion will use the traditional appellation, "John." Also, Andreas Köstenberger has recently argued forcefully that internal and external evidence of authorship establishes the traditional view; cf., Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God, Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 72-79. This insight is a welcome contribution from Alistair McPherson, a colleague from the Ph.D. Theology and Apologetics program at Liberty University.

[89] In affirming the fundamental role of Peirce's doctrine of continuity (Synechism) for his doctrine of evolutionary love (Agapism), Raposa tacitly describes the principle of "materialists without flinching" the present inquiry observes in Peirce, "[Peirce's] talk about evolution presupposed that all of reality is continuous. In each instance, too, synechism is the key to understanding the religious dimension of Peirce's thought. Out of this stuff of 'melted continuity,' he both fashioned his conception of God and defended the vagueness of that conception"; Raposa, *PPR*, 41. Since knowledge of God is mediated by a universe marked by continuity, Peirce's God-talk endeavors to account for that continuity.

imperfect stage of it…even needs hatred and hatefulness as its object," (W8:185).[90] Therefore, Peirce concludes that these Johannine insights teach a *circular* rather than an oppositional model of the love that powers evolutionary development. Peirce writes, "The movement of love is circular, at one and the same impulse projecting creations into independency and drawing them into harmony," (W8:185).[91]

So, Peirce's unflinching materialist reading of John's writing on divine *agape* leads Peirce to conclude that "the statement of St. John is the formula of an evolutionary philosophy, which teaches that growth only comes from love…the ardent impulse to fulfill another's highest impulse," (W8:185). Two ideas work together here. First, Peirce holds that love alone causes evolutionary development ("growth").[92] Second, this dynamic is understood in *personal* terms. Love's desire "to fulfill another's highest impulse" is another way of stating the Golden Rule, "Sacrifice your own perfection to the perfectionment of your neighbor," (W8:185). Peirce explains that "neighbor" refers to a person, "one whom we live near, not locally perhaps, but in life and feeling," (W8:185).[93] This does not refer only to our common sense of neighboring persons in terms of other human beings. In fact, Peirce had long held a conception of "person" that

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[90] In saying that love "embraces" hatred, Peirce means that "the divine 'agape' [is] a power that harmonizes discordant elements," Raposa, *PPR,* 77.

[91] Ibid., 80, points out that Peirce's use of "creations" appears to be in a literal sense, "projected 'into independency'…is the moment of creation, from which all progress towards ultimate harmony or reasonableness can be traced." Therefore, Peirce appears to understand "creation" as it pertains to the "circular" action of evolutionary love, "in at least two senses…causing things both to be and to be-in-relation," ibid., 77. Further, Raposa points out the implication of love as creative when love is the universal harmonizing principle by which objects (whether individual or general) relate to one another. "It seems that Peirce intended to be understood quite literally when he asserted that God is the creator of sin and 'delights' in the hateful. Out of nothing, God has created everything, including that which is evil," ibid., 89.

[92] Orange, *Conception*, 45, "Just as tending and cherishing are necessary to the life and growth of living things, the universe as a whole grows toward reasonableness by being loved—being projected forth from God and drawn back into harmony, a dialectic of independence and unity."

[93] With the introduction of the concept of "person" Peirce continues to speak in a literal way, according to how he defines the concept. Orange, *Conception*, 44-45, correctly describes the way one can relate to evolutionary love according to one's own social experience of love, "Growth, or evolution, according to Peirce, comes only from love (CP 6.289), and this love is not love for an abstraction, but is directed toward those near and dear to us."

pertains to any semeiotic object, any general idea.[94] In this way, Peirce's philosophy of evolutionary love ties in directly to his Objective Idealism in which everything is mind and is marked by mental action. Peirce makes this connection explicit when he writes

> The philosophy we draw from John's Gospel is that this is the way mind develops; and as for the cosmos, only so far as it yet is mind, and so has life, is it capable of further evolution. Love, recognizing germs of loveliness in the hateful, gradually warms it into life, and makes it lovely. That is the sort of evolution which every careful student of my essay "The Law of Mind" must see that *synechism* calls for," (W8:185-86).

Since Agapasm describes the power at work in the growth of mind, phrases such as "warms it into life," "perfectionment of your neighbor," and "drawing them into harmony," express Peirce's concept of metaphysical habit-formation.[95] Therefore, Raposa is correct to hold that the law of mind, that ideas affect one another unto increasing generalization, "is also…the law of love, love constituting not only the creative origin of such ideas but also the gentle force that welds them into harmony."[96]

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[94] Raposa is careful to point out that Peirce "broadened considerably the notion of personality to embrace a wide range of phenomena," which notion is "cast now in an explicitly religious form." That is, in the religious garb of God's cherishing-love for persons, Peirce holds that 'a person is only a particular kind of general idea,…nothing more than a symbol involving a general idea' (CP 6.270)," Raposa, *PPR*, 76. As per ibid., 163n21, on Peirce's "semiotic conception of persons," cf. also, CP 5.313ff; W1:490-504.

[95] Cf., Raposa, *PPR,* 100.

[96] Raposa, *PPR*, 77. Peirce's agapastic theology would seem to make a strong case identifying God as a natural phenomenon. If it is true that "God is love" and that love is the power at work in mental action throughout the cosmos, then it follows that "God" is that dynamic cosmic force. Donna Orange seems to draw this conclusion, writing that Peirce "identif[ied] God with loving and growth-producing relationships between and among human beings"; cf., Orange, *Conception*, 45. Again, "God is love, that is, God is the totality of the relationships between and among human beings." Ibid., 49. Michael Raposa agrees that Peirce's view recognizes that love is "constitutive of God's very Being." However, Raposa seems not to follow Orange in so strongly identifying God *as* the operative force of love in the cosmos. Instead, Raposa highlights the semeiotic nature of the God-cosmos relation. If Peirce's Agapasm is correct, then

> love is the creative force responsible for the development of such "personalities," for the growth of mind. It is the primordial and quintessential principle of generalization. Human beings, out of love for one another and through a common devotion to specific goals and ideals, form communities, greater "selves." The paradigm for such behavior, the prototype for such feeble imitations, is the divine love, a love constitutive of God's very Being (Raposa, *PPR,* 77).

The semeiotic nature of the relation is manifest here in that love among human beings only represents ("paradigm…prototype…imitations") divine love, whereas Orange holds that the two are the same.

Clearly, Peirce's materialism is evident here in that he interprets John by applying Johannine ideas to Peirce's metaphysical question of a cosmic evolutionary force. Peirce makes no claim that his Agapastic conclusions describe what John meant to say. Rather, it seems that Peirce's Synechism and triadic Semeiotic illuminated for him an opportunity to correct the dualistic tradition that *eros* governs the evolutionary process. John's writing that God—the agent of creation and evolution—is understood best in terms of *agape* supplied powerful insights with which Peirce could develop certain metaphysical implications of other elements of his philosophy. This seems to practice a "materialist" theology in a different way than Fisch indicated. This is not to say that Fisch was incorrect, only that following his clue only led to an incomplete understanding. In that earlier case, this study noticed that Peirce defined his theology according to science. He wrote that God's existence is found in cosmic teleology, and therefore God's omniscience would only exist when science is perfected.[97] In this way Peirce speaks about God strictly according to his scientific metaphysical convictions. In the case of Agapasm, however, the influence works the other way. That is, Peirce draws upon theology to better understand his evolutionary metaphysics. Either way, observe Peirce's theology is unflinchingly materialistic, because whatever he says about God is cast in terms of his scientific convictions.[98]

The love operative in the law of mind, bringing objects into relations of increasing generality is a metaphysical form of Peirce's category of Thirdness, the category of the dynamic of

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[97] This sense of God's existence compares to the way Roger Olson has described Wolfhart Pannenberg's view of God's existence pending full realization in the future. Olson argues that Pannenberg did not mean that God himself does not exist. Rather, God's existence from the perspective of human knowledge and experience awaits its fullness in a future perfection of divine rule. Cf., Olson, "Response to Panentheism," 335-36.

[98] So, Rapsoa, *PPR*, 78, regarding Peirce's theological metaphysics in "Evolutionary Love," "In this fashion, drawing upon theological, even biblical resources, Peirce was able to formulate his hypothesis about how development occurs. [Likewise] the scientific method must have some bearing on the issue of how, precisely, such notions are to be formulated. Furthermore, apart from the teachings of any 'revelatory religion,' something like this theory of agapism ought to have been formulated on purely scientific principles." Ward, *Peirce and Religion*, 69, comments on Peirce's church experience as also background for his work in "Evolutionary Love."

unification. In writing about the metaphysics of Thirdness, Peirce made a theological comment that provides another case of his unflinching materialist theology. Drafting his proof of Pragmaticism for *The Monist* around 1907, Peirce appears concerned to strengthen his case for Thirdness as an elementary metaphysical principle. In doing so, Peirce appeals to Trinitarian theology for support. He writes, "if the metaphysicians are right in saying (those of them who do say so) that there is but one absolutely necessary idea, which is that of the Triune God, then this idea of the Triune God must in some way be identical with the simple idea of combination," (EP2:364).[99] A broader insight this statement provides regarding Peirce's materialist theology, perhaps yet a third way in which Peirce practices his unflinching materialism, Peirce calls attention to a point of agreement between theology and science. Unlike the statement regarding divine omniscience, Peirce is not conforming theology to science. Unlike the argument for evolutionary love, Peirce is not conforming science to theology. Here Peirce argues for the metaphysical reality of Thirdness by comparing the scientific idea of combination and the theological idea of the triune God. That is, Peirce appears to hold forth that theology and science share something that is the same idea "in some way," though each discipline interprets the idea using different terminology.

What does Peirce mean when he says that the two ideas must be "in some way *identical*" to each other? This is salient in context with Donna Orange's opinion that Peirce identified God as, literally, the force of evolutionary development in nature. On this view, then, if the Triune God and combination are identical, then to perceive combination just is to perceive God himself. However, Raposa is correct to emphasize that God in himself precedes any of the categories, including Thirdness, which grounds combination. Peirce was clear about his belief that God is "Really creator of all three Universes of Experience" (CP 6.452), which is to say the creator of

[99] "Combination" alludes to the nature of Thirdness to bring two others into meaningful relation.

the cosmos in its present form. This entails that Thirdness per se is also a creation of God. It follows that God cannot also be what he has created. In this context, Raposa writes, "God creates the world ex nihilo, but no habit, no law, no Third can cause anything to exist."[100] Therefore, God as creator cannot be the same thing as either Thirdness or combination per se, which are God's creatures.

Furthermore, Peirce did not write that the Triune God himself is in some way identical with combination as such. Peirce wrote, instead, that it is the *idea* of the Triune God that is in some way identical to the *idea* of combination. Therefore, Peirce's claim is that the two *conceptions* are in some way identical. This crucial distinction suggests that Peirce's statement regards a semeiotic relation. In fact, Raposa writes that because thoughts are necessarily Thirds, "any conception of God must be regarded…as the conception of a *sign* of that reality."[101] In other words, the idea of the Triune God and the idea of combination relate to each other as a semeiotic identity rather than an ontological identity. This is therefore a parallel case to the semeiotic relation noted in the "God is love" statement above.[102] God is not ontologically identical to the love at work in the evolutionary process and among the social relations among human beings. Rather, God is love in a way that is semeiotically identical to those other love relations. In the case of human relationships, according to Peirce's view, love among human persons "imitate[es]" the

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[100] Raposa, *PPR*, 79. Peirce's concept of *creatio ex nihilo* identifies "nothing" with the formless and void heavens and earth (Gen 1:2). For Peirce, this was an absolutely indeterminate mass of pure possibility—a something that is "no thing" in particular (Raposa, *PPR*, 71). In a chance process akin to continuous creation among today's theistic evolutionists, Peirce held that from this "no thing" emerged the habit-forming tendency, the Universal Categories, and the cosmos as we know it; cf., W6:181, 209-10, for Peirce's cosmology. For an example of continuing creation among theistic evolutionists, cf., John H. Walton, "Origins in Genesis: Claims of an Ancient Text in a Modern Scientific World," in *Knowing Creation: Perspectives from Theology, Philosophy, and Science*, ed. Andrew B. Torrance and Thomas H. McCall (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 120-21; also, cf., Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology*.

[101] Ibid., 67; italics added.

[102] Cf., n96 above.

reality of divine love that is the being of God.[103] Recall that Peirce called this sort of sign an *icon*. That is, an icon in Peirce's semeiotic is a representamen that relates to its object precisely by the quality of its *resemblance* of the object itself. One could substitute "imitation" for "resemblance" and have the same meaning. Therefore, one seems warranted to conclude that Peirce claims that the idea of the Triune God and the idea of combination are identical in the sense of an iconic relation. That is to say, they relate to each other by virtue of a shared quality that is identical.[104] Given that Peirce observed the identity of "Triune God" and "combination" to demonstrate the reality of Thirdness, it is evident that the shared quality is Thirdness. So, the two ideas bear iconic identity in that they both have to do with irreducible wholes that may nevertheless be subdivided into parts as a matter of abstraction.[105] Therefore, it appears that Peirce holds forth that the concept of an attribute of God's being manifests Thirdness, a metaphysical category pertaining to the cosmos.[106] This is Peirce's unflinching materialism on display.

Another case of Peirce's materialist theology is in his 1890s essay, "The Law of Mind." Peirce states that his Synechism *entails* a personal, directly perceivable God. That is, Peirce

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[103] Raposa, *PPR*, 77.

[104] This conclusion places Peirce in the company of Augustine vis-à-vis "vestiges" of the Triune God in the created order (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 9.12.18). Andrew Robinson develops this intuition, arguing that the Trinity is iconically represented by the Universal Categories Peirce theorized; Robinson, *God and the World of Signs*, 260-61.

[105] Ward, *Peirce and Religion*, 148, notes that the idea of the Triune God entails the concept of *perichoresis*, which is surely marked by combination via a mutual, interdependent "participation" of discernible members though these members are not actually parts. Cf., also, Deledalle, *Philosophy of Signs*, 73, for discussion of correlations between Peirce's triadic semeiotic and the Trinity.

[106] If this is correct, then one better understands why Peirce stated that these two ideas "must" be identical in some way. Being icons of Thirdness, their identity is a logical necessity. Recall the context of Peirce's statement. He is arguing for the metaphysical reality of Thirdness. If Thirdness is such a reality, then it must pertain to every phenomenon. At this point in his argument Peirce is describing the Thirdness inherent in ideas as such. Consequently, it should be the case that any idea whatever has Thirdness, though that may not be the predominant categorial quality in every case. (This alludes to Peirce's understanding of Firstness and Secondness as degenerate forms of Thirdness; cf., n38 above. This also raises the issue of Peirce's typology of signs. On which, cf., the excellent discussions in Liszka, *General Introduction*; Short, *Theory of Signs*; and Parker, *Continuity*.) As cases illustrating his point, Peirce points out that an idea from theology and an idea from philosophy clearly manifest Thirdness.

draws a theological conclusion as a logical consequence of his philosophical doctrines. As in the case of the existence of God's omniscience with which this discussion began, this is a case of theology determined by science. Of his "synechistic philosophy," Peirce writes,

> In considering personality, that philosophy is forced to accept the doctrine of a personal God; but in considering communication, it cannot but admit that if there is a personal God, we must have a direct perception of that person and indeed be in personal communication with him. Now, if that be the case, the question arises how it is possible that the existence of this being should ever have been doubted by anybody. The only answer that I can at present make is that facts that stand before our face and eyes and stare us in the face are far from being, in all cases, the ones most easily discerned, (W8:156-57).

In this concise statement, Peirce provides several theological propositions. First, God is in a continuous relation with human beings. Second, God is personal. Third, God is communicative. Fourth, because of the preceding three attributes it follows that God is within the scope of direct perception by human beings. Finally, notwithstanding item four, like many things in human experience, though knowledge of God "stare[s] us in the face," perceiving that information does not come necessarily or in every case.

This doctrinal complex is explained by Peirce's view that God and the cosmos are related semeiotically, as object to Sign.[107] Notice that Peirce framed this statement as a consequence of his "synechistic philosophy." That is, these divine attributes are evident in light of Peirce's doctrine, Synechism, in which he holds that continuity is a crucial factor for all philosophy. Therefore, it is evident that Peirce conceived God and human beings as related by way of some continuum. Given that Peirce appealed to Synechism to explain the Law of Mind, this continuous relation, according to Peirce, must at least consist of that attribute common to everything, mind. Since all thoughts are via Signs, semiosis just is mental action. Therefore, God is semeiotically

[107] Raposa, *PPR*, 61.

related to everything that is real and everything that is existent (maintaining Peirce's terminology).

Another of his salient theological comments given in a metaphysics context makes it clear that there can be no question that Peirce conceived the God-world relation as a semeiotic one. In Lecture Four of his 1903 Lectures on Pragmatism at Harvard University, Peirce argues for the reality of Firstness. That is, perceptions pick out real qualities of Firstness in objects of experience. Peirce concludes this portion of his lecture,

> Therefore, if you ask me what part Qualities can play in the economy of the universe, I shall reply that the universe is a vast representamen, a great symbol of God's purpose, working out its conclusions in living realities. Now every symbol, must have organically attached to it, its Indices of Reactions and its Icons of Qualities; and such part as these reactions and these qualities play in an argument, that they of course play in the universe, that universe being precisely an argument…
>
> Now as to their function in the economy of the Universe,– the Universe as an argument is necessarily a great work of art, a great poem,– for every fine argument is a poem and a symphony,– just as every true poem is a sound argument. But let us compare it rather with a painting,– with the impressionist seashore piece,– then every Quality in a premiss [*sic*] is one of the elementary, colored particles of the painting; they are all meant to go together to make up the intended Quality that belongs to the whole as a whole…. (PPMRT 201).

To identify the universe as a representamen is, of course, to identify it as something related to some object in such a way that the relation is capable of determining an interpretant. Most important, Peirce identifies the universe as a type of sign that he called a symbol. The universe as a symbol explains how it is that God must be directly perceivable by human interpreters.

Raposa writes that, according to Peirce, symbols "perform their representative function by virtue of intending to be interpreted as a sign [according to] a particular rule or habit [that] governs their interpretation."[108] In other words, symbols as such, according to Peirce's schema, are meant to reproduce further signs (interpretants) consistent with the rule that determines the

[108] Raposa, *PPR*, 119.

inner logic of the symbol. Peirce's view of the universe as a symbol is that it is governed by the rule supplied by "God's purpose." Peirce describes the universe symbol as being in the form of an "argument," especially of "a great work of art, a great poem," more particularly a work of art such as an impressionist style painting.[109] In terms of an argument, such as a poem, Peirce presents the universe symbol as a dynamic thing. It is somehow a complex continuum of signs representing the divine purpose. Raposa understands Peirce to imply by this the purposeful way in which the cosmos is evolving.[110]

In this way one gains insight into how it is that synechism entails a personal God. Recall that for Peirce a person is a symbol. Personality is a function of regular habits that are due to a general rule, a purpose, determining them.[111] In this respect, the cosmos has personality. The nature of symbols also explains why a personal God is an entailment of synechism. Symbols yield further symbols. Even if an interpretant of a symbol is primarily iconic in character, it is nevertheless still a symbol.[112] That is, it is a Sign functioning via the triadic action of Thirdness, which Peirce called semeiosis. Therefore, if the universe is a symbol, it could only have been produced

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[109] "Argument" names a type of sign Peirce theorized to be strongly marked by Thirdness. That is, Thirdness marks all three of the relations internal to the sign (EP2:296). For Peirce, this means that the sign produces a rule-governed interpretant logically, much like a syllogism for which the conclusion follows from its premises (EP2:435). Cf., also, Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 233.

[110] Raposa, *PPR*, 121.

[111] Ibid., 122. Cf., n60 above. At this point this discussion overlaps with what was said about divine, evolutionary love earlier in that love is purposeful in its creative and unifying action.

[112] There is some equivocation in Peirce's use of the term "symbol." In his taxonomy of signs, "symbol" pertains to a Sign marked by Thirdness in its representative relation. So, Symbols marked primarily by their iconic character Peirce called "rhematic symbols." Similarly, symbols marked primarily by the Secondness of their indexical character Peirce called "dicent symbols." Cf., e.g., Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 237. On the other hand, Peirce's entire semeiotic theory regards Signs as symbols in a broader sense as cases of Thirdness; cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 142-43. In that broader sense, symbols determine interpretants that are also symbols, because semeiosis maintains the same kind of sign-object relation throughout its continuous process. Peirce wrote that in a genuine sign, the representamen is related to its object so "as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object," (EP2:272-73). Cf., Figure 3 above.

by some prior symbol. If God is the creator of the universe, which Peirce affirmed, then God must be personal and so able to produce another symbol, the universe.

The semeiotic process of one symbol determining further symbols manifests a personal aspect and so can be described, like Raposa does, as "a communication event occurring between minds in dialogue."[113] Another theological comment from the fourth of the 1903 Harvard lectures shows that Raposa is not putting words in Peirce's mouth. Arguing for the metaphysical reality of Thirdness, Peirce's case rests upon his doctrine of Scholastic Realism. In that regard he appeals to natural laws as familiar examples of real generals that are effective in the world of existents, without which there would be no regularity. He traces the logical connections from this common experience of regularity to the semeiotic nature of the underlying laws and that those laws therefore demonstrate the effective power of thought as such. Peirce explains, "[a]nalogy suggests that the laws of nature are ideas or resolutions in the mind of some vast consciousness, who whether Supreme or subordinate, is a Deity relatively to us," (PPMRT, 195). Peirce apparently reasons that the semeiotic character of the laws of nature grounds their analogy to human thought. Thinking is the work of mind. It follows that to speak of a law-governed cosmos is as much as saying a cosmic Mind thinks those governing laws.

Furthermore, Peirce's comparison of the universe to a great work of art from earlier in lecture four highlights his view that the universe communicates its purpose primarily iconically.[114] Recall that the context of that earlier comparison is Peirce's argument for the reality of Firstness, which is the distinguishing category of signs that function as icons of their objects. Peirce therefore describes one's engagement with the cosmic symbol in terms of the way one

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[113] Raposa, *PPR*, 122.

[114] Ibid., 117. Again, notice that this is a point of overlap with the evolutionary love discussion previously.

would engage an impressionist painting. It's meaning as a whole is vague but perceptible the more of its constituent color flecks one can synthesize. Applied to perceiving God via the cosmos, Raposa writes,

> …at the same time that [the universe] performs its representative function by virtue of the law that governs its development, this universal mind also embodies a *quality* of purposefulness, of reasonableness, and is an index of that purpose, having been *caused* by it, having been projected, through a divine act of volition, into being.[115]

This way of reiterating the picture Peirce supplied also highlights Peirce's view that symbols are triadic things. That is, they are marked primarily by their Thirdness in representing an object according to a rule or purpose. At the same time, any symbol also has elements of Secondness and Firstness, indexes and qualities functioning together in the determination of subsequent interpretants. While any symbol includes all three categorial elements, symbols vary according to the primary manner in which the representamen represents its object. A symbol's representative relation might be marked primarily by any of the three Categories.[116] In the case of the universe, it was Peirce's view that its function as a symbol of God's purpose is primarily by way of Firstness; as Raposa writes, "a *quality* of purposefulness, of reasonableness" is the element determining interpretants of the cosmic symbol.

This might seem to indicate an *indirect* perception of God rather than a direct one, as Peirce claimed. If the universe is a symbol of God's purpose, and if as such it represents God's purpose iconically to interpreters such as human minds, it appears that it is God's purpose and not God himself that is directly perceivable. However, in light of Peirce's synechism, his theory of continuity, this appearance is mistaken. Peirce held that a continuum contains its limits.

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[115] Ibid., 121. "Projected" is a key word in Peirce's semeiotic understanding of creation. This will be treated below vis-à-vis Peirce's map metaphor of the cosmos' iconic relation to the divine, creative idea.

[116] Cf., n112 above.

Further, according to his conception of infinitesimals, Peirce held that a continuum as such has no parts but has an infinite number of possibilities for construing parts of the continuum. For example, a continuous line does not have any points. Nevertheless, any number of points may be defined for that continuous line. Finally, Peirce theorized that any infinitesimal along a continuum implies the entire continuum.[117] Therefore, when Peirce claims that synechism entails a directly perceivable, personal God, he implies that there is a continuum uniting human beings with the mind of God. This is confirmed by Peirce's view of a semeiotic relation between God and the cosmos. Semeiosis takes the form of a continuum, in fact of a continuum of continua. So Raposa writes, "…the great power of a sign consists in the fact that it establishes a certain continuity between its object and its interpretant. It brings them into relation…God's 'poem' achieves just such an effect, bringing its interpreters into an active communion with the divine mind."[118] By way of the continuity supplied by semeiosis, then, human beings directly perceive the God who originated the semeiotic continuum in which human interpretation participates.

In view of these cases of Peirce's theology according to an unflinching materialism, Peircean theology takes natural signs *as* cases of the existence of God, in Peirce's Scholastic Realist sense. The perfection of science would be the existence of God's omniscience. God's own existence is evident in the purposeful evolution of the cosmos, according to Peirce. This development is marked by the Thirdness of divine love. In fact, the entire cosmos is a complex, iconic sign, displaying God's personality in the infinite array of meaningful phenomena, symbols having a sort of personality. The "law" of personality governs the action of its symbol. In each case, Peirce's materialistic theology holds that divine attributes exist semeiotically in the cosmos.

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[117] This is especially evident in Peirce's discussion of time as a way of thinking about continua, W8:137-38. Cf., also, Parker, *Continuity*, 79-93.

[118] Raposa, *PPR*, 122.

Hence, God is the divine personality according to which the cosmos evolves toward perfect realization, or, complete "concrete reasonableness." To "directly" perceive God, in Peirce's view, is *not* to have unmediated epistemic access to the divine being. That is, God in himself is not existent and therefore not subject to materialist ways of speaking. According to his Scholastic Realism, Peirce holds God to be the ultimate Reality, whose attributes manifest in some way symbolically throughout the cosmos. Theology speaks about divine attributes according to the way that these are evident to inquirers. Therefore, according to Peirce, theology must be unflinchingly materialistic, because theology must speak according to the theological significance of existent phenomena. In other words, because knowledge of God is mediated by natural things, theology must discipline itself according to the principles governing those things.

## The Panentheism Issue

What, then, is the answer to the chief question for this chapter, "How is Peirce's Semeiotic related to PEM?"[119] One response is to say that Semeiotic is not related to PEM in any direct way. Peirce's architectonic arrangement requires that Semeiotic cannot effectively be compared to PEM, like the fallacy of comparing the proverbial apples and oranges. One belongs to Logic and the other to Metaphysics. Therefore, the work of the preceding discussions has been necessary to discover how Peirce's Semeiotic influenced his talk of God in relation to topics in Metaphysics. Consequently, this discussion of the theme of God in Peirce's Metaphysics includes Semeiotic concepts interpreted theologically with respect to the God-world relation. Now one can compare apples to apples. Additionally, it is evident that Peirce's epistemological and ontological doctrines are integrally related. Therefore, evaluating the theological suitability of Semeiotic

[119] Recall from the last chapter the Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM). It consists of six tenets, which will now be discussed with respect to Peirce's God statements above: 1. Mind-Body Analogy; 2. Ontological Inclusion; 3. Dynamic (Dipolar); 4. Mutual Co-Inherence; 5. Symmetrical Ontological Dependence; and 6. Empathy.

for CNT requires considering Semeiotic in its systematic context in Peirce's thought. Again, the preceding discussion of the theme "God" provides just the sort of data this evaluation requires. Peirce's theological commentary upon several of his concepts in metaphysics makes it possible for those propositions to be compared to the tenets of PEM. The following paragraphs argue that Peirce's semeiotic Metaphysics is *not yet* PEM, though it is certainly quite friendly with it.[120] This result does not alleviate the prospect of incorporating a theological corruption when incorporating Semeiotic into CNT. The following analysis raises awareness of the aspects of Semeiotic, and of Peirce's thought more generally, creating the sense of a bias toward PEM. The following discussion of the evident sympathies between Peirce's metaphysics and PEM reifies these aspects.

The previous discussion of "God" in Peirce's metaphysics found semeiotic at the heart of how he related theology and science. In contrast to the supervenient metaphor of PEM, the mind-body analogy, Peirce's thought about God and the world follows the logic of the object-sign relation. That is, PEM holds God to relate to the world somehow like human minds relate to their bodies. Peirce holds the cosmos to be a grand symbol of God, such that God is the object for which the cosmos is a sign. This was made explicit in Peirce's "vast representamen" statement, while explanations of his other statements continually returned to semeiotic theory. This discussion of Peirce's relation to PEM therefore proceeds through three broad themes intimately

[120] Hartshorne and Rease, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 269, identify several "panentheistic elements" from samples of Peirce's writing. These include "that the universe exists in the mind of God," that it is God's nature always to create but not to create any predetermined particular, that God's purpose develops gradually, and that God is not necessarily omniscient. Nevertheless, "He did not put these ideas together in this manner [as panentheism per se] or even…assert all of them with confidence." Likewise, Robert S. Corrington, "Beyond Experience: Pragmatism and Nature's God," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (1993): 157, writes, "My growing conviction is that Peirce worked out of an orthodox trinitarian position, but edged toward a robust panentheism which itself pointed toward the unsaid lying at the foundation of his general perspective." Corrington appears to hold that Peirce would have embraced panentheism had he realized that his system virtually implied it. One reason Peirce never said the "unsaid" in this manner, according to Corrington, is that Peirce did not go far enough beyond experience itself to the hidden ground of that experience.

related to his semeiotic way of thinking about the God-world relation: the continuum, personality, and objective idealism. These themes characteristic of Peirce's semeiotic Metaphysics appear to relate approximately to the three criteria distinguishing PEM.[121] One may take the PEM criterion of a self-relation to correlate to the Peircean theme of symbolic personality. Also, one may understandably infer the criterion of interdependence from a sort of dipolarity implied by Peirce's Objective Idealism. Finally, the criterion of "God" being used as a symbol of metaphysical principles seems evident in Peirce's theological reading of Synechism.[122] Nevertheless, further consideration shows that each case of Peirce's apparent agreement with PEM falls apart due to the semeiotic nature of the God-world relation in Peirce's thought.

Peirce's theory of continuity, his Synechism, leads the discussion here, because it is the context of one of Peirce's most important theological statements surveyed in the previous section. In "The Law of Mind" Peirce wrote, "In considering personality, [synechistic] philosophy is forced to accept the doctrine of a personal God; but in considering communication, it cannot but admit that if there is a personal God, we must have a direct perception of that person and indeed be in personal communication with him," (W8:156). Peirce identified Synechism as one of his philosophical doctrines, because he found that everything is related by way of a vast continuum consisting of many smaller continua. Peirce's theological comment reflects his belief that God, too, is related to everything by way of some continuum.

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[121] Both Peirce's philosophy and the beliefs comprising PEM are integrated systems. Consequently, the interrelations among their ideas are complex. Though the discussions here consider certain beliefs as pertaining to particular themes (e.g., ontological inclusion and Synechism), all of the themes and beliefs potentially bear upon one another.

[122] That there is such a positive relation between the Peircean themes and the PEM criteria will be evident in the course of the following discussion. To prevent unnecessary complication, the preceding comments suffice to indicate these connections.

Michael Raposa holds that the continuum by which everything else is related may just be God. On this ground, Raposa identifies Peirce's view as panentheistic. He writes, "God's relationship to individuals in the world might be roughly compared to that existing between a continuum and its topical singularities…Peirce…might properly be labeled a *panentheist*."[123] In that light, Peirce's synechistic theology would seem to resemble PEM's notion of Ontological Inclusion. That is the idea that the cosmos is included in the being of God. This appearance gains strength when Robert Corrington agrees with Raposa's assessment, writing, "Raposa is clearly correct when he sees an intimate connection between Peirce's theory of continuity and the various continua (topical singularities) that enter into the world and the inner life of God."[124] However, Corrington quickly qualifies the implied identification of Peirce's view with panentheism. He reads Peirce's concepts as "a radicalized panentheism, specifically, what I will call an 'ordinal monotheism.'"[125] That is, Corrington holds that God is as much a creature as anything else, but God is the broadest and therefore most inclusive continuum of creation. If Corrington's view is correct, Peirce's God is not ultimately the creator of all things. This would be inconsistent with PEM.[126] Similarly, on closer inspection, Raposa's identification of Peirce with panentheism due to Peirce's Synechism breaks down according to a demarcated panentheism defined by PEM.[127]

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[123] Raposa, *PPR*, 51. "Topical singularities," Raposa explains, are like marks drawn on a chalkboard, the chalkboard being the grand continuum.

[124] Corrington, *Introduction*, 202.

[125] Ibid., 203. Corrington does not claim that this was Peirce's view, but that Peirce's vagueness allows Corrington's schema as a possible interpretation of Peirce; cf., ibid., 203-04.

[126] However, Corrington allows that "there is a mysterious sense in which God is also a creative ground of the world." But he limits this to God's evolutionary love to whatever extent it has been involved in creation. ibid., 203.

[127] Raposa recognizes that Peirce's thought can be said to be panentheistic "only in the broadest sense," Raposa, *PPR*, 160-61n22. Raposa only claims that Peirce's view qualifies as panentheistic according to the gloss definition for panentheism, "one who views the world as being included in but not exhaustive of the divine reality." ibid, 51.

This is because Raposa describes the ontological distinction between the underlying continuum and the topical singularities it might contain,

> For even if a continuum is to be regarded as somehow 'containing' its limits, still, the continuum *as such* 'contains no definite parts' (*CP* 6.168). Indeed, the continuum and its singularities are not the same 'sorts' of things at all. They are of different dimensionalities…they occupy different 'levels of reality.' Once again, the 'whole' has properties and a kind of reality that no mere aggregate of parts could ever have (see *CP* 1.220). As a system, it is *essentially* different from, albeit continuous with, its various subsystems.[128]

On Raposa's understanding, then, Peirce's view denies ontological inclusion in the PEM sense. The continuum and its constituent singularities are ontologically distinct. Translated into theological language, if God is the continuum and God's creatures are its singularities, then Peirce affirms a strict distinction between God and God's creatures.[129] This is one of the doctrines of classical theism that PEM expressly rejects.

Peirce's theological statement on Synechism alleged that it not only entails that God is personal but that human beings must be able "to have a direct perception" of God. It seems that this claim might relate to the PEM belief in Empathy.[130] On that view, God's relation to the world is immanent to such a degree that God feels all the feelings of the cosmos at any given time. Though PEM discussions express Empathy only in the direction of God's perception of aesthetic states in the cosmos, on PEM's mind-body logic it follows that the perception works the other way, too. Although, since any constituent mind in the cosmos is finite, so is the degree

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[128] Raposa, *PPR*, 51.

[129] In this way, this Peircean analogy indicates some form of ground-of-being theology. Further consideration would be required to define Peirce's view as being closer to Paul Tillich's conception or that explained above in CT' belief, Divine Ground of Being.

[130] Commenting on this statement from Peirce, Mills recognizes that it positions Peirce's view "to be compatible with panentheism"; cf., Mills, "Drama," 119. However, Mills does not indicate Empathy. Further, ibid., 123, argues that Peirce's balance of transcendence and immanence entails an ontological continuity between God and the world. Mills denies a "radical discontinuity" while admitting the traditional ontological language of divine necessity and creaturely contingency. Mills concludes that Peirce's view was an "idealist panentheism" according to which the cosmos is "an idea in the mind of God," ibid., 124.

of perception of God's feelings. Peirce's statement seems to suggest this two-way aesthetic relation when he adds that humans must be "in communication with" this personal God.

On the other hand, in light of the more detailed consideration of this statement earlier, Peirce's semeiotic conception of "communication" and "direct perception" does not quite meet the standard PEM sets for God-cosmos empathy. According to PEM, God does not just feel the cosmos' feelings, God experiences them *from the inside*. That is, God does not just perceive the aesthetic quality of stepping on sharp rocks when a person walks barefoot in gravel. God experiences that quality as though God is that person walking barefoot. Peirce's semeiotic conception allows for divine sympathy with all feelings in the cosmos but not with empathy in this PEM sense. Recall that the previous discussion of this statement from Peirce found that the communication and "direct" perception is iconic. Icons are signs that *resemble* their objects. Therefore, God's perception of cosmic feelings only resembles those feelings. Empathy as constructed in PEM entails that God's feeling just is what any part of the cosmos is feeling.

Peirce's semeiotic conception of personality relates to two more PEM core beliefs. According to Peirce, a person is a sort of symbol. Symbols determine their interpretants according to some ruling principle, just as a person's personality determines the character of their effects. Accordingly, if God's relation to the cosmos is also semeiotic, then PEM's core beliefs Mind-Body Analogy and Mutual Co-Inherence seem to find a place in Peirce's Metaphysics.

Mind-Body Analogy appears to relate positively to Peirce's Agapasm. Recall that Peirce agreed with the Johannine identity of God with love; that God's being is love. Peirce embraced that and applied it to his triadic conception of cosmic evolution. A triad, in Peirce's view, is also a symbol, because two others are brought into meaningful relation by a third. Accordingly, one can say that Peirce's view entails that divine love (*agape*) creates the personality of the cosmos

as a symbol. All growth in and of the cosmos itself is determined according to divine love. This is along the lines described by Donna Orange regarding God's creative relation to the cosmos. Orange writes,

> God and creation could be conceived as person and personality respectively. Just as in the case of a human person, personality, as its actual expression at any time, is always only a partial expression, so creation, (God's 'personality,' as it were) is always only a partial expression of the deity as person, that is, subject who expresses self outwardly in creation.[131]

This may be taken in the PEM sense of the Mind-Body Analogy. That is, just as one experiences one's mind expressing itself through their bodily life, so also God expresses himself through cosmic life. Further, as human minds *need* their bodies for such expression and life, so, too, does God need the cosmos on a PEM reading.

Peirce's view seems to agree with Mind-Body Analogy in another respect. Symbols, and so personality, are marked by Thirdness, according to Peirce's system. It is the Thirdness of the cosmos that leads Leon Niemoczynski to identify Peirce as panentheist. In fact, Niemoczynski appears to hold that, for Peirce, "God" just is a symbol of cosmic Thirdness; perhaps a religious way of speaking about a metaphysical reality. Specifically, per Niemoczynski, Thirdness explains how it is that Peirce can speak of God being both "part of the world, yet also exist[ing] beyond the world." He writes that "God represents Thirdness – generality to come, in addition to being reflected within nature as order, rationality, and established habit."[132] Niemoczynski strengthens his claim in a way that might suggest the Mind-Body Analogy when he writes, "the supreme being of God includes and penetrates the whole cosmos so that all members and facts of

[131] Orange, *Conception*, 47.

[132] Niemoczynski, "The Sacred Depths of Nature," 112. This inquiry takes Niemoczynski to say God "exists" in Thirdness beyond the cosmos in a more common-sense of the term existence rather than the technical Peircean sense, since Peirce holds that nothing beyond the cosmos exists, though it might be real.

the cosmos exist in God's reality, yet God's being is more than, and not exhausted by, those members and their facts." Accordingly, then, the evolving cosmos is "identified with an evolving God." The Thirdness transcending the cosmos, the "generality to come" as evolution progresses, Niemoczynski identifies as the cosmic ideal, its end, which just is the "divine transcendence."[133] Like a mind to its body, for Peirce according to Niemoczynski's assessment, "God" represents the ideal end governing the development of the cosmos that is its expression.[134]

On the other hand, Mind-Body Analogy on its own is vague, such that Peirce's apparent agreement with this PEM belief cannot be taken as sufficient qualification of Peirce's views as panentheist. There are versions of the mind-body analogy open to classical theists.[135] A doctrine that clarifies the PEM sense of Mind-Body Analogy is Mutual Co-Inherence, the belief that the being and life of God and the cosmos are so intimately intertwined that each implies the other. It is no difficulty for an orthodox Christian view to hold that the being and life of the cosmos implies God. That is the whole point of the concept of "natural signs."[136] PEM distinguishes itself from other theistic models in the reciprocity expressed by "mutual" co-inherence. That is, PEM holds that God as such implies the cosmos, which contradicts the Christian doctrine of the absolute freedom of God to create or not to create anything at all. Certainly, the statements by Orange and Niemoczynski above suggest that Peirce would agree with this PEM sense of Mutual Co-Inherence, according to the way they expressed the mind-body analogy.

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[133] Ibid., 112-14.

[134] John Shook agrees with Niemoczynski that "thirdness must be an attribute of God, a crucial mode of God's creative activity." Moreover, it is in terms of Thirdness that God is transcendent with respect to the cosmos. But the divine Thirdness in and beyond the cosmos, according to Shook, is "much like the creativity and process of an artist." By that Shook means that God creates loosely according to a plan but largely lets the work develop as it will. Cf., Shook, "Panentheism," 19, 22.

[135] Cf., Appendix A.

[136] Cf., e.g., C. Stephen Evans, *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Peirce's Agapasm may also indicate his agreement with Mutual Co-Inherence. Peirce described the divine love motivating the evolution of the cosmos in terms of Thirdness. He called attention to Johannine testimony that the divine love embraces the other and creates a unifying relation. Therefore, in God's love for the world, God not only created the world initially but continues to create the world ever closer to his good purpose for it, continuously bringing it into relation with himself.[137] Depending on the degree to which God unifies himself with the cosmos, Peirce's view may indicate significant agreement with Mutual Co-Inherence. For example, Michael Raposa offers two metaphors for Peirce's view of God's relation to the world that could be taken to imply a strong enough God-world unification to qualify as mutual co-inherence in the PEM sense. In one place, Raposa writes regarding human beings who interpret the cosmos as "a divinely authored text"; that "by interpreting we become a part of [the meaning of that text]. In some very real sense, then, we can share in the divine life, in God's own being."[138] If the divine life is the love governing the symbolic evolution of the cosmos, then human interpretive activity becomes united to this totalizing divine power at work in everything. However, this only expresses one side of the Mutual Co-Inherence equation. Raposa's comment says that human interpretive activity implies the divine, agapic being. Does it also entail that God's agapic being implies human interpretive activity?

While that is not evident in the context of that statement, another metaphor Raposa employs may indicate this other side of the Mutual Co-Inherence equation. He writes,

> It might be more useful to conceptualize the relationship between Creator and creation in terms of that which obtains between a law and the "cases" that it governs…While a law is quite distinct, on realistic premises, from the collection of actual "instances" that it

[137] Of course, "create" and "creation" as divine a divine activity is used here equivocally with respect to the CT sense of the term. Peirce's synechism led him to hold a form of continuing creation.

[138] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 220.

> governs, nevertheless it is intimately related to each instance, defines it, lends to it something of its own general character, indeed, its own reality.[139]

Recall that Peirce held real generals, such as the Law of Gravity, to be efficacious in the realm of existents. So, a rock let go of from my hand will always fall until something interrupts its descent. That is an instance, a case, of the Law of Gravity. The Raposan analogy to the God-world relation is that God, like the law, "governs" any and every instance that occurs. In the process, each instance bears a resemblance to that law without any instance – or even the totality of instances – being identical to the law itself. Accordingly, the world is not God nor is God the world, but the two are "inextricably intertwined," to apply Brierley's phrase.[140] Further, the Law of Gravity implies instances of itself, in the form of, "given the Law of Gravity, if a person lets go of a rock then that rock will fall toward the earth." Likewise, any instance implies the law. Therefore, Raposa's law-instance analogy agrees with Mutual Co-Inherence.

However, Raposa's discussion of this analogy does not indicate any understanding of how God implies a cosmos. In light of Agapasm, perhaps he could claim that *agape* implies a beloved. Peirce did describe the nature of this form of love as "circular." *Agape* creates and brings its creation into a relation that is also a perfecting process. Since *agape* marks the being and character of God, it follows that, as "Creator," God indeed implies a created other. This certainly seems to agree with Mutual Co-Inherence. However, more precisely, *agape* pertains to an implied relation to another, a beloved. That God *is* "Creator" is not entailed by "God is love," especially in view of Peirce's sympathies with Trinitarian theology. The triune Godhead is sufficient for a mutual relation in love. Furthermore, the law governing the development of the cosmos is God's purpose, of which the cosmos is a "vast representamen." Therefore, the law-instance

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[139] Raposa, *PPR*, 52.

[140] Brierley, "Potential," 637.

analogy Raposa suggests is more precisely translated theologically as divine purpose-cosmos. Consequently, it seems Peirce would not concur with Mutual Co-Inherence.

Additionally, the "artist" metaphor in Peirce's thought casts doubt on any agreement with PEM's Mutual Co-Inherence belief, because the artist metaphor holds to the semeiotic nature of the God-world relation.[141] Referring to Peirce's "vast representamen" statement from the fourth 1903 Harvard Lecture, Raposa writes,

> On Peirce's view, the world as a work of art is related to God in *semeiotic* terms, as sign to reality signified. It is a "vast argument" that symbolizes a divine purpose, while also representing (as "icon") a certain quality of purposefulness, finally, serving as an "index" of that purpose (being related to it as effect to cause). Here the poet is distinguished from the poem, as creator from creation….[142]

In that statement to which Raposa alludes, Peirce gave examples of works of art illustrating God's relation to the world as artist to art. He said the universe is God's "great poem"; that the cosmos might be also thought of as an impressionist's painting of a seashore. In both cases, it is evident that a mind is responsible for the existence and form of the resulting work and that the creation is not also the creator. Therefore, contra Mind-Body Analogy, the being of the Creator is not also the being of the creature. Admittedly, there is a sense in which Peirce agrees with Mutual Co-Inherence. The concept "artist" implies "art," and "art" implies "artist." However, Peirce's use of this imagery is *not yet* PEM. Peirce did not go so far as to claim that God as such relates to some cosmos, which is the PEM view. For Peirce, *the fact* of the cosmos implies God, and further reflections led him to think that God's divine love explains the evolutionary nature of the cosmos God is creating. But Peirce's view remains on one side of the Mutual Co-Inherence

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[141] So, Mills, "Drama, 137, identifies Peirce's view as "panentheistic idealism," which takes a "view of the universe as a work of art developing under God's agapastic artistic creativity…." Of course, whether this in fact qualifies as bona fide panentheism (PEM) is the aim of the current discussion.

[142] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 215.

equation. Peirce's artist metaphor emphasizes a non-PEM distinction between God and the cosmos. A poet is not their poem any more than a painting is its painter. Certainly, something of the artist is discovered in their work, but, again, as an iconic representation of the artist in some respect. Therefore, Peirce's semeiotic conception of God's personal relation to the cosmos does not agree with PEM's doctrines of Mind-Body Analogy or Mutual Co-Inherence. With respect to the ontological aspect of the God-world relation, Peirce's semeiotic model maintains a strict distinction consistent with classical theism.[143]

The remaining PEM doctrines—Dynamic Dipolarity and Symmetrical Ontological Dependence—relate to statements Peirce made regarding his Objective Idealism.[144] These beliefs pertain especially to Peirce's doctrine Objective Idealism, because that monistic doctrine holds that everything is mind. Peirce's doctrine therefore holds that the cosmos is a continuum of mind, and that this continuum includes its divine source. So, there is pure mind, consisting in the infinite possibilities available as the cosmos evolves according to God's purpose. There is also mind in its concrete state, often called "matter." According to Peirce, matter just is "effete" mind, mind that has completely realized its process of becoming according to its purpose. Just as this is the destiny of the creator's purpose for a rock somewhere, it is also the trajectory of the entire cosmos as such, evolving toward the perfect realization of God's purpose for it. This is the metaphysical construct contextualizing Peirce's theological statements.

Peirce's programmatic theological statement was that scientific inquirers must be "materialists without flinching." Peirce seems to mean that any knowledge of God comes through the metaphysical medium in which we live. Whatever is true of God in himself, in other words, is

[143] That is, classical theism other than in a deistic degree of transcendence. Cf., Raposa, *PPR*, 50.

[144] The claim here is not that Peirce made these statements expressly in connection to his Objective Idealism. Rather, the statements considered below are thematically related to that theory.

absolutely beyond human ken. Theology must discipline its speech to the forms in which God is encountered. These are the forms in which, Peirce said, God exists, in his Scholastic Realist sense of that term. For example, Peirce said that God exists in the teleology evident in the universe, and that God's omniscience will exist when scientific knowledge is perfected (though, recall that this is qualified as existing from the perspective of human perception).

In such comments by Peirce the basic form of the PEM belief Dynamic Dipolarity becomes evident. Recall that this is a model of God according to which the totality that is God includes the cosmos, but God is more than the cosmos. This is a more precise version of the Mind-Body Analogy, and so is, as Brierley states, panentheism par excellence.[145] The God totality is constantly developing in its immanent, cosmic component, and the possibilities for all development are in God's transcendence. Hence, the two poles of "dipolar." Inherent to the dipolar model is the PEM belief in Symmetrical Ontological Dependence. Recall that according to this view God needs the cosmos, and the cosmos needs God. They do not necessarily need each other in precisely the same ways, of course. The cosmos' ontological dependence upon God is not controversial for theists in general. What demarcates PEM from Christian theism and classical theism is the belief that God is ontologically dependent upon the cosmos. God needs the cosmos to live his life, to learn and to grow, to experience.[146]

Vies expressed by several scholars regarding Peirce's relationship to panentheism would affirm that Peirce agrees with Dynamic Dipolarity and Symmetrical Ontological Dependence.

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[145] Brierley, "Potential," 639, "Process theism represents the most advanced form of panentheism."

[146] One could easily argue that all of the core beliefs of PEM are implied by Dynamic Dipolarity. However, that would be unnecessarily tedious. It should be evident that if God just is the totality of the actual cosmos and its transcendent infinity of possibilities, then not only Symmetrical Ontological Dependence, but also Mutual Co-Inherence, Ontological Inclusion, and Empathy follow. Further, these analyze what PEM means by Mind-Body Analogy. To avoid unnecessary complication, the following discussion takes this systematic integration for granted, such that in discussing Peirce's relation to especially Dynamic Dipolarity one is really discussing Peirce's relation to the heart of PEM as such.

John Shook constructs a Peircean version of panentheism, calling it "emergent panentheism," because he finds Peirce to advocate a "natural God that evolves right along with reality." He claims that, for Peirce, God is the Thirdness emergent from the "'boundless possibility'" of the primordial "nothingness."[147] Benjamin Chicka goes as far as to identify Peirce's panentheism as specifically having a form consistent with the dipolar model of process theism, that Peirce's God is "wedded to the world" and therefore "lives in all three categories."[148] Corrington agrees that it is possible to read Peirce as a process panentheist.[149] In fact, Corrington views process theism as the essence of panentheism. The varieties of panentheism, according to Corrington, "multiply from their progenitive wellsprings in Whitehead and Hartshorne."[150] Michael Raposa provides an apt description of the process form of panentheism as established by Charles Hartshorne, as follows:

> at the heart of Hartshorne's metaphysical vision is the description of reality as "an ocean of feeling"...That reality, taken as a whole, is divine on Hartshorne's panentheistic account, as God embraces and includes, even while also emphatically transcending, what we experience in the world. While the abstract essence of the Deity may be transcended, however, the divine actuality (*how* God exists) very much depends on the existence of finite things in the world and is aesthetically enriched by them.[151]

Though not claiming process theism specifically, John Cooper's account of Peirce's panentheism is certainly consistent with Hartshorne. Cooper holds that all three of Peirce's metaphysical

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[147] Shook, "Panentheism," 24, 23, 17. Shook grants that he must speculate in this, because "Peirce's philosophy barely admits a consideration of basic panentheism, much less anything more sophisticated," ibid., 17. So, he constructs two pantheist and two panentheist models arguably consistent with Peirce's views. "Emergent Panentheism" is deemed most satisfactory among these. On identifying God with emergent Thirdness, cf., also, Brier, "Pragmatism, Science, Theology," 142. So, Shook and Brier agree with Corrington to some degree that "God" is itself emergent and creaturely.

[148] Chicka, "God the Created," 71. Chicka draws upon the analysis of Donna Orange, according to whom God just is both the ideal toward which the cosmos evolves and such "concrete reasonableness" as is attained through the process of realizing that ideal. Cf., Orange, *Conception*, 32.

[149] Corrington, "Beyond Experience," 157.

[150] Ibid., 147.

[151] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 212.

categories pertain just as well to God. Accordingly, writes, Cooper, "Although the universe is an aspect of and thus 'in' the divine Mind, Peirce strongly distinguishes God and creatures, affirming that God is more than the material universe." This, of course, is the signal claim of panentheists. Cooper goes farther, writing that God's creation consists of "extensions of the divine essence," as in pantheism. However, he recognizes that Peirce's view is not pantheist due to the fact that God and creatures remain distinct as "they possess their own actuality and sponteneity." On these grounds, Cooper judges that "Peirce's view of God and the world is a clear case of modern panentheism."[152]

However, it is not clear that Peirce's views truly align with the dipolar panentheist model. It was Charles Hartshorne who introduced Peirce as a modern panentheist. Others since then have followed his lead.[153] Yet, at the same time, it was Hartshorne who suggested that Peirce was not yet a panentheist. Introducing Peirce in the chapter "Modern Panentheism," Hartshorne and Reese write,

> The reason that we claim him for this chapter is primarily that he is one of the chief exponents of the supporting conceptions which *in other thinkers have led to* an unequivocally dipolar conception of God. These are his recognition of potentiality as a real feature of the universe, the primacy of becoming over being, growth as a feature of the universe, and his thesis of panpsychism.[154]

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[152] Cooper, *Panentheism*, 139.

[153] Cf., e.g., Brier, "Pragmaticism, Science, and Theology," 142.

[154] Hartshorne & Reese, *Philosophers*, 258. Italics added. Notice that Hartshorne and Reese identify as potentially panentheist Peirce's tychism, law of mind, agapasm, and objective idealism. However, Peirce's Objective Idealism is not panpsychism in its present-day sense. The latter holds that everything has consciousness; that all things are experiencing subjects. On which, cf., Benedikt Paul Göcke, "Panpsychism and Panentheism," in *Panentheism and Panpsychism: Philosophy of Religion Meets Philosophy of Mind*, ed. Ludwig Jaskolla, Benedikt Paul Göcke, and Godehard Brüntrup (Paderborn: mentis Verlag, 2020), 39. Though Peirce was a monist, he expressed his monism not in terms of substance but in terms of a common dynamic mental quality pervading everything. That is, Peirce's Objective Idealism holds only that everything is subject to mind-like developmental processes.

Further, Michael Raposa argues convincingly against the notion that Peirce's metaphysics was an early version of process panentheism. He writes that Hartshorne's view is "quite different from Charles Peirce's announcement that the world is God's 'great poem.'" If Peirce shared Hartshorne's view then Peirce's Poet-poem analogy for the God-world relation would entail that "God both *is* the 'never-ending poem' and also the 'poet as enjoying this poem.'"[155] Raposa appeals to Peirce's semeiotic construction of the God-world relation to explain why Peirce in fact would not agree with Hartshorne. According to Raposa, from Peirce's perspective, "Hartshorne makes the mistake of confusing a sign with the thing signified."[156] That is, Peirce would not say that God is *both* poet *and* poem, because a sign is not at the same time its object. If Raposa is correct, then this is devastating for any claim that Peirce's metaphysics aligns with PEM, though one sees ways that Peirce's views arguably lend themselves to proponents of panentheism, such as Hartshorne.[157]

One need not rely on a logical inference from Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics to determine whether he would agree with Hartshorne's dipolar description of God. Peirce himself left some strong suggestions that he maintained a robust distinction between God himself and the cosmos he creates.[158] Recall the earlier discussion of Peirce's statement that the laws of nature are ideas in the mind of some "vast consciousness." Peirce is expressly unwilling to draw a

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[155] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 214-15. Mills proposes a similar construal of Peirce's metaphysics, which he calls "idealist panentheism." He formulates his view via an "author-text" analogy, "That is, the text of the universe has its reality as an idea in the mind of God. Its reality is 'included in but not exhaustive of the divine reality.'" He goes on to explain that this is called for in light of Peirce's insistence that God himself is mind. Mills writes, "if the universe is to be within God, it must be an idea in the mind of God, or more precisely, an idea within the mind that *is* God, since that is all that God is." Mills, "Drama of Creation," 117, 124.

[156] Raposa, "Never Ending Poem," 215.

[157] Cf., n154 above.

[158] Again, Peirce advocated a form of continuing creation, such that "creation" in Peirce's thought is not a singular event in the beginning but a continuous process.

conclusion on whether this mind is God himself. Instead, Peirce avers that this mind, whatever it is, is "a Deity relatively to us," (PPMRT:195). That is, as far as humans are concerned, the mind thinking the laws of this universe infinitely transcends human minds. Relative to humans, then, this mind might as well be deity though one will never be able to know for sure.

In this, Peirce is consistent with another indication of his tendency not to identify God with the cosmos. In his engagement with Royce that was discussed earlier, Peirce distinguished his from Royce's understanding of The Absolute. Peirce states that he does not identify God with anything science or philosophy can speak about. Nevertheless, Peirce does hold that there is an "absolute thought" that contains all the realities of the evolving cosmos (MS1369s). Importantly, a thought is a symbol, as Peirce held that ideas are symbols.[159] The cosmos as a symbol has the form of PEM's Dynamic Dipolarity and Symmetrical Ontological Dependence. The Absolute Thought transcends its evolving realization in the cosmos like the mind transcends the body. Also, on Peirce's synechistic Objective Idealism, the Absolute Thought contains the cosmos it governs. Furthermore, an Absolute Thought depends ontologically on the cosmos as its form of life and realization of self, even as the cosmos depends upon the Absolute Thought for its being and development. This much one can reason on one's own by applying the logic of Peirce's semeiotic to his statement about the absolute thought. These insights are confirmed in light of Michael Raposa's discussion of Peirce's conception of the "Absolute Mind."

Raposa writes that Peirce conceived of the Absolute Mind as a sort of "all-embracing 'supersystem,' with its habits of thought and feeling constituting the natural laws that regulate all of

[159] Raposa, *PPR*, 118. Also, again, Peirce called the cosmos a "vast representamen," which is "a symbol of God's purpose," (PPMRT:201).

its coordinated subsystems (see MS 289:4ff)."[160] These "subsystems" include human minds.[161] Peirce's conception of the Absolute Mind bears the distinct dipolar metaphysical form. It "infinitely transcends" the universe, "encompass[ing] all possibile as well as all actual states of affairs."[162] Symmetrical Ontological Dependence comes into view when considering that the transcendent Absolute Mind also "must be really continuous with" the universe." This is according to the principle that any singularity of a continuum receives its continuous nature from that continuum. So, the universe consists of singularities that are, "in Peirce's religious metaphysics, the actualizations, by divine volition, of certain real possibilities...the intelligibility of any existing thing is derived from that general idea or purpose that links it to other fragments of the system, just as the continuity of the line 'comes from' that of the blackboard on which it is drawn."[163] The agreement of Peirce's conception of the Absolute Mind with PEM is evident when Raposa writes, "Now the Absolute Mind is that one incredibly complex general idea that renders intelligible everything that exists; its reasonableness is 'concretized' in the actual universe even though it continues to embody possible further determinations beyond all multitude."[164] This is Peirce's earlier notion of the absolute thought, and it is Orange's view of Peirce's conception of God as emergent "reasonableness."[165]

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[160] Raposa, *PPR*, 47.

[161] Ibid., 49.

[162] Ibid., 50. Raposa also notes that this is in accordance with Peirce's synechism. One can easily recognize Peirce's objective idealism manifest here.

[163] Raposa, *PPR*, 52.

[164] Raposa, *PPR*, 52.

[165] Orange, *Conception*, 84.

However, Raposa goes on to explain that the evidence from Peirce's writings indicates that Peirce did not identify God as the Absolute Mind as just described.[166] For Raposa, this is most likely the implication of Peirce's statement that the "vast consciousness" is "Deity relatively to us." Raposa speculates that Peirce may have considered the Absolute Mind as one "Platonic world" among many others.[167] God, then, "must *be* that primordial reality" from which all Platonic worlds "emerg[ed]." Though coming from this "creative source of all that exists," there remains an absolute distinction between the Platonic worlds and God.[168] They are "nothing like" God.[169] The key here is that Peirce conceived the God-world relation in semeiotic terms as, again, that of an object to a sign representing it. Raposa observes, importantly, that this is also how "Peirce construed the relationship of the Absolute Mind to God."[170] This is because, as Raposa explains, Peirce conceived of the Absolute Mind as that which is "projected" by God and as that which "projects" the cosmos:

> This projected reality in its entirety, this Absolute Mind, is the embodiment of a divine purpose. It *represents* that purpose by developing under its law-like influence, crudely similar to the way that a map-projection is generated through the application of certain rules...the created universe forms a rather distorted image of the divine idea that it maps. It is nonetheless a genuine symbol of the divine, with iconic and indexical features. That

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[166] For the purposes of his discussion of Peirce's "Absolute Mind" as a religious concept, Raposa only tentatively identified the Absolute Mind with Peirce's doctrine of God, "for the time being, Peirce's description of the Absolute Mind will be loosely regarded as 'God-talk,'" Raposa, *PPR*, 49.

[167] Ibid., 59.

[168] If Raposa is correct that the notion of "Platonic worlds" informs Peirce's theory of Absolute Mind, then there is warrant to consider Peirce's schema in relation to Plotinus' "great chain of being." However, against Plotinus' emanation model, Peirce maintains a classical theist God-world distinction with his semeiotic model. See on "projection" below. So, contra Cooper, *Panentheism*, 18, 23, 139, who identifies Peirce as a Plotinian panentheist.

[169] Raposa, *PPR*, 60. In contrast, Conway, "Metaphorical Theology," 179, holds that Peirce's thought entails the identity of God and the Absolute Mind. This is due to Peirce's semeiotic conception of "person" as a symbol, and that "the most general idea resides in the Absolute Mind." In fact, Conway expressly opposes Raposa on this when Conway argues that it is more specifically God the Holy Spirit who "is the Absolute Mind of the universe," ibid., 179n18. However, this study has already seen that Raposa shows how Peirce's view allows that the "absolute thought" for this universe might be in an Absolute Mind that is one of many such "Platonic worlds," according to Peirce's writings on the subject.

[170] Raposa, *PPR*, 61, referring to CP 5.119.

> is to say, at the same time that it performs its representative function by virtue of the law that governs its development, this universal mind also embodies a *quality* of purpose-fulness, of reasonableness, and is an index of that purpose, having been *caused* by it, having been projected, through a divine act of volition, into being.[171]

According to this schema, then, God creates the full idea of the cosmos and his purpose for what it is to be and do. This idea Peirce calls the Absolute Mind. It is then the work of this Absolute Mind to realize itself in the cosmos that it makes according to the purpose God determined for it. Therefore, PEM quite well describes Peirce's semeiotic conception of the relation of the Absolute Mind to the cosmos. But the Absolute Mind on Peirce's account is not God himself, only something like a deity when compared to human beings.[172] Consequently, Peirce's Metaphysics can easily be related to PEM, but it is not yet itself PEM. Peirce's unflinching materialism did not speak of God himself when speaking of the theological gleanings available to inquirers observing phenomena of the cosmos. That is to say that Peirce appears to maintain a degree of supernaturalism in his sense of what God is in himself.

## Conclusions

This chapter has pursued a careful description of the elements of Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics. It considered several key Peircean doctrines according to the themes of meaning, triad, interpretation, mind, and God. The purpose of this inquiry has been to identify beliefs that Peirce held that explain why Peirce scholars largely agree that Peirce held a panentheist Metaphysics. Several aspects of Peirce's semeiotic Metaphysics seem somehow like a sort of panentheism, but on closer inspection Peirce's views fall short of a demarcated panentheism, PEM.

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[171] Raposa, *PPR*, 121.

[172] Peirce related God to the Absolute Mind as "a 'supreme' to a 'subordinate' being," Raposa, *PPR*, 59. Also, since the Absolute Mind is only one of many Platonic worlds and relates to God as sign to object, ibid., 61, concludes there is "no reason to assume that [Peirce] considered God and the Absolute to be 'metaphysically identifiable' realities."

Peirce seems to sound panentheist (PEM) when paying theological attention to his Synechism. Peirce believed that the cosmos is a continuum of mind that includes its divine source. As such it also, as an absolute thought, contains all of the realities and existent individuals of the cosmos. Therefore, via a continuum God is related to everything in the cosmos. This is easily construed as expressing the mind-body logic of PEM with its attendant beliefs. On the other hand, what initially appears to constitute agreement between Peirce and PEM is reined in repeatedly by Peirce's semeiotic God-world relation model. Peirce consistently held that the relation of God to the world is best understood according to the logic of the relation of an object to its sign. So, the love Peirce says is at work in the cosmos is something only resembling the agapic being of God. It is not God himself. Likewise, in saying that the cosmos is God's "great poem," Peirce implies that God and the cosmos are ontologically distinct. A poet is not his poem just as an object is not its own sign. In terms of the Absolute Mind, Peirce appears to have maintained this ontological distinction. God is not the Absolute Mind creating the cosmos. This is a strong contradiction of PEM. However, Peirce is in lockstep with PEM in his belief that the Absolute Mind realizes itself by making the cosmos according to God's purpose. According to his Agapasm, Peirce held that God's love is determinate for this creative process. Not only is God's love represented in the cosmos as a result, but this love as such constantly maintains the cosmos in relation to God. This is why Peirce expressly believed that God's existence per se just is in the teleology of the cosmos. Once again, however, Peirce's agreement with PEM dissolves on further consideration. Peirce had a technical, Scholastic Realist sense for "exist." Also, as Peirce makes crystal clear in the "Neglected Argument," God is "real" and not existent. Rather than a contradiction, Peirce's meaning is clarified, once again, by keeping in mind his semeiotic God-world model. To say that God exists in the cosmos at all is to identify something that is a sign of God. The

semeiotic relation entails a fundamental distinction between God and the world, just as the artist is fundamentally distinct from their work. So, Peirce's Synechism seems to lean toward PEM, until it is checked by Peirce's semeiotic God-world model. Peirce's theory of the Absolute Mind as creator of the cosmos seems in fact to entail PEM in a robust way until it becomes evident that Peirce distinguished the Absolute Mind from God semeiotically.

While it is evident that Peirce himself would not have agreed with PEM, it is also true that Hartshorne and others have shown that Peirce's philosophy is conducive to a spectrum of panentheisms, including PEM.[173] Accordingly, Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics presents theological problems with respect to the conviction of CT. Three are salient in light of the preceding analysis. Peirce's semeiotic doctrine of God includes his concept of the Absolute Mind. Though Peirce seems not to have identified the two, neither does Peirce indicate "creation" in its CT sense. The creation of the Absolute Mind resembles Plotinus' great chain of being. According to Plotinus, God emanates a Mind that then emanates a World-Soul that then emanates the World.[174] Peirce does not express creation as emanation, but neither does Peirce express creation in the biblical language of divine fiat. Formally, Peirce's scheme resembles that of Plotinus, except that Peirce's Absolute Mind mediates God and the World without a World-Soul. Peirce's conception of creation remains underdeveloped and therefore open to interpretation. As semeiotic in nature it resists any sense of ontological interdependence between God and the world. However, the manner in which God effects semeiotic growth could be construed in various ways.

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[173] See above regarding the opinions of Hartshorne, Corrington, and Shook. While Raposa identifies Peirce as a panentheist, it is only in the "broadest sense" of the term. In light of the discussion here, then, Raposa's Peirce would be located with Clayton, Peacocke, and others among classical theists sympathetic to PEM but not fully agreeing with it.

[174] Cooper, *Panentheism*, 18.

Also, there are open questions in Peirce's theology with respect to his Synechism. The semeiotic God-world relation, according to Peirce, has the form of a continuum. Peirce's thought resists construing the metaphysical continuum including God in an ontological sense. Therefore, Peirce's view contradicts PEM. Peirce's view also in this way resists emanationist views of creation. This would rule out Corrington's speculation that God himself is emergent as among other creatures. Still, "emergence" as such remains a live option for interpreting Peirce's semeiotic model. This would encourage Shook's conclusion of "emergent panentheism" as implied by Peirce's metaphysics. It would also locate Peirce in the Christian panentheist camp with Philip Clayton and Paul Tillich.[175] Emergence would supply an answer to the question left open just above, regarding the manner in which God effects semeiotic growth in the cosmos. With respect to traditional views according to CT, however, emergence would be a problematic way to interpret Peirce's vague ideas.[176] This is evident in light of the third theological problem.

Finally, Peirce's Objective Idealism remains problematic for CT, because Peirce's monism pertains somehow to the God-world relation. As discussed, Peirce's view does not hold forth a monism in a PEM ontological sense. Also, Peirce's monism somehow resists Plotinus' emanationist model. Instead, Peirce's monism is a sort of panpsychism. Unlike Hartshorne's pan-experiential sense of panpsychism, Peirce advocated that everything shares a similar character of mental process. This is to say that everything grows and increases interconnections until realizing its purpose in a concrete form. Accordingly, matter is substance the mental processes of which have become frozen in habit (as Peirce says, "effete mind"). According to Synechism,

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[175] Clayton, *Mind and Emergence*, esp., ch. 5, "Emergence and Transcendence"; on these themes in Tillich's thought, cf., discussion of ecstatic naturalism in Tillich, in Christopher Demuth Rodkey, "Paul Tillich's Pantheon of Theisms: An Invitation to Think Theonomously," in *Models of God and Alternative Ultimate Realities*, ed. J. Diller and A. Kasher (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013), 489-90.

[176] For a systematic theological critique of emergence naturalism, cf., Joanna Leidenhag, "A Critique of Emergent Theologies," *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science* 51, no. 4 (2016): 867-82.

then, even God must be implicated somehow in this growth pertaining to all mind. Peirce wrestled with this implication (CP 6.466). Though he could not reconcile it with his theistic beliefs, he could not deny it as a consequence of his philosophy. This is another question Peirce left open that could be resolved philosophically by positing emergence theory. Emergence holds ontological distinction, continuity, and naturalism together coherently. However, this would be a problematic solution with respect to CT.

Therefore, semeiotic Metaphysics according to Peirce, while not itself PEM, appears to bear a distinctive panentheist bias. In light of the consistent way Peirce scholars take Peirce as panentheist (though not necessarily in a carefully demarcated sense such as PEM), one is justified to conclude that Peirce's semeiotic as situated within Peirce's system is conducive to the panentheist *zeitgeist* evident in religion and science discussions today. Applied as a theoretical structure for CNT, semeiotic might likewise open CNT to the panentheist spirit. The next chapter explores this consequence by experimentally conforming CNT to a robustly Peircean semeiotic and observing its theological effects.

# Four: Panentheism and a Christian Theosemiotic

With the previous chapter, this inquiry has added a detailed understanding of Peirce's Semeiotic within its systematic philosophical context to a definition of the relevant theistic models, CT and PEM. It is now time to consider the degree to which including Peirce's Semeiotic in the structure of Alister McGrath's approach to Christian natural theology (CNT) would invite a bias toward PEM. The present chapter answers this question empirically, seeking experiential evidence that Peirce's susceptibility to PEM is an entailment of a thick conception of semeiotic within theological method. This chapter, therefore, prepares for this experiment by constructing a form of CNT embodying a robust semeiotic structure. For this, Peirce's own dialogical interpretive process brings McGrath's proposal into conversation with "theosemiotic," Michael Raposa's term for Peirce's method of natural theology. Finally, Robert Neville serves as an exemplar of such a theosemiotic CNT. The three PEM criteria provide the means for testing Neville's work for evidence of a tendency toward PEM. The experiment demonstrates the thesis of this dissertation: that a fully Peircean Semeiotic brings with it Peirce's relation to PEM. However, the result is complex. Neville's theosemiotic manifests the PEM criteria, but Neville goes far beyond where Peirce himself likely would have led him with respect to PEM.

## A Christian Theosemiotic

### McGrath's Use of Semeiotic

McGrath's writing on CNT so far has been exploratory. He has briefly discussed various theoretical components to set forth his vision for a direction Christian natural theology should take. He has experimented with his own approach, in setting forth abductive arguments regarding

"anthropic" features of the cosmos.[1] This is to say that McGrath's focus has been on casting a vision for a renewed natural theology rather than developing the different aspects of the theory in detail. One such aspect that has received only brief attention, disproportional to its importance for McGrath's vision, is Peirce's Semeiotic and precisely how it contributes to the "structure" of CNT (*RI* 96).

It is a core belief of CNT that nature is "ambiguous," and therefore its meaning is not self-evident but must be interpreted through the application of a conceptual framework one brings to the experience of nature.[2] Consequently, like any theory of natural theology, CNT must be able to account for holding natural objects as signs of transcendent realities. McGrath states that Peirce's Semeiotic provides a "framework" precisely to this effect (*RI* 93-95).[3] Chapter three above has shown the powerful triadic action of Thirdness in Peirce's theory. In this way Peirce explains how something not identical to an invisible object nevertheless consistently communicates true ideas about that object. The discussion below shows that McGrath appreciates that Semeiotic supplies a robust, objective interpretive framework on which CNT can operate as a community-based interpretive method.

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[1] *FT*, chapters 9-15.

[2] The metaphor of "framework" is used at a couple of different levels in McGrath's discussions. There is the second-order level considering the theoretical question of how the interpretation of nature's meaning is conceived. Peirce's semeiotic frames CNT at this level. Then there is the first-order level of framework in the sense of a distinct perspective from which nature is approached. In the case of CNT, the five theological beliefs considered earlier frame the Christian perspective of nature McGrath advocates. On the latter, first-order, sense, cf., *RI* 35.

[3] If not Peirce's semeiotic theory of sign-interpretation, then McGrath would need to draw upon some other theory of signs. Other than Peirce, the primary option in contemporary discourse is a dyadic model, most famously according to Ferdinand de Saussure. With a dyadic model, however, one loses the grounding of the interpretation in an object that lends consistency to a series of interpretations. Meaning becomes elusive with a dyadic model, because interpretation is ultimately arbitrary. Context plays a role even in a dyadic account of signs, but context is a house of cards: interpretations are interpretations of interpretations. Meaning becomes utterly conventional upon an arbitrary foundation of significance. Cf. Winfried Nöth, *Handbook of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 59. Ferdinand de Saussure focused his "semiology" on linguistic signs. His dyadic model of the sign included a "*signifier* and *signified*." Writes Nöth, "The distinctive feature of its bilaterality is the exclusion of the referential object."

The full explanatory power of Peirce's sign theory depends upon its integration with other elements of Peirce's philosophical system. Raposa writes, "Nor is it to be denied that his semiotic can, to a great extent, be lifted from its metaphysical underpinnings and employed for various contemporary purposes. In doing so, however, it must be admitted that this theory loses a good deal of its original power."[4] So, though it is possible to abstract useful aspects of Peirce's theory for other applications, such as CNT, McGrath rightly recognizes that Semeiotic properly functions within the context of Peirce's philosophical *system*. He writes, "The theory of signs which Peirce develops is not to be seen as some detached and independent element of his thought, but rather interconnects his thought as a whole," (*RI* 94). McGrath implies, then, that Peirce's sign theory provides for the sort of "further development" of "sign" as a metaphor for human knowledge of nature upon which CNT builds (*RI* 3). However, McGrath's own discussion of Semeiotic is quite abbreviated. He focuses upon Peirce's conception of the interpretant, especially as it is determined by mental habits interpreters bring to the experience (*RI* 96). Therefore, an underdeveloped explanation of how Semeiotic structures CNT epistemology opens the door for this experiment.

**A Theosemiotic Reading of CNT**

The present research project raises a cautionary flag regarding the appropriation of Peirce's sign theory within a Christian theological framework. If McGrath intended merely to abstract the idea of habit-determined interpretants from the empowering context of Peirce's thought, he might thereby have mitigated to some extent the risk of incorporating Semeiotic's susceptibility to PEM (or, its "bias"). Instead, since McGrath tacitly confesses to an

[4] Raposa, *PPR*, 146. In particular, Raposa mentions the loss of cogency as at risk when separating semeiotic from Peirce's metaphysical concepts of synechism and objective idealism; cf., ibid., 145.

underdeveloped explanation of Peirce's value for CNT, it seems that CNT intends a robust appropriation of semeiotic. That manner of framing CNT epistemology, were it to be developed in detail, would draw deeply from Peirce's thought. If Peirce's philosophy entails a PEM bias, it is reasonable to suppose that the incorporation of semeiotic would make CNT vulnerable to that bias as well. If realized, a PEM bias would risk CNT coherence, given the correlation of CNT with CT (recall from chapter two).

## Introducing Theosemiotic

To assess this risk, this inquiry engages an experimental development and application of CNT epistemology according to a robust Peircean, semeiotic framework. Michael L. Raposa provides guidance on the elements of Peirce's thought salient to the semeiotic structure alluded to by McGrath. In his seminal book, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion*, Raposa coined the term "theosemiotic" to refer to a "framework" comprised of Peirce's concepts that function together as a method of natural theology.[5] Theosemiotic follows Peirce in conceiving of all of reality as a great mind, sharing the general characteristics of thought, "Peirce portrayed thought as consisting 'in the living inferential metaboly of symbols whose purport lies in conditional general resolutions to act.'"[6] So, Peirce's conception of thought is also "a useful characterization of any philosophical theology conceived as theosemiotic."[7] That is, theosemiotic method holds that theology—like any other form of thinking, of inquiring into the truth of things—results in certain kinds of practices. Raposa writes,

> From a theosemiotic perspective...theology...is to be classified as a practical science, a mode of reflection the ultimate purpose of which is the guiding of human actions. Some

[5] Raposa, *PPR*, 148, 144. Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, summarizes and extends his life's work of developing his theosemiotic theory.

[6] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 3, quoting Peirce, CP 5.402, note 3.

[7] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 3.

> of these actions will be therapeutic, some liberating in a more broadly political and social sense, once again, with no sharp line to be drawn in order to distinguish between them. In either case, the concern is to enhance human agency...the constraints on human agency consist primarily in constraints on attention, resulting from the fact that we are embodied creatures, occupying a certain temporal and spatial location, enmeshed in diverse relationships, governed by laws, living in communities, affiliated with various institutions, and so on.[8]

A core belief of theosemiotic is that theory and practice are related as sign and interpretation. That is, Peirce's theory of inquiry, pragmaticism, explains theory and practice in terms of a semeiotic continuum.[9] Raposa poignantly expresses this continuum, writing, "we struggle to interpret what lies most deeply 'hidden in the icon,' and so to signify the mystery encountered therein, always mostly failing, but sometimes being grasped by it, graced by it, becoming its sign, and so embodying...a tiny fragment of its meaning."[10] What one vaguely perceives as "hidden" in the sign, one is impelled to interpret through embodying something of that quality, though it is bound to be imperfect. Such embodiment, per theosemiotic, entails that one has adopted as one's own habits of thought, what is consistent with one's perception of the object of the sign. These habits inevitably manifest in conduct, which Peirce theorized could be feelings, actions, or ideas.

How does pragmaticism structure the continuum between belief and behavior? The basic semeiotic perspective of pragmaticism is evident when Raposa writes,

> From the vantage point supplied by Peirce's theosemiotic, the world is 'perfused with signs.' Conceived as semiosis, our human experience of the world is always a matter of interpretation; even the simplest perceptual judgments take the form of interpretive inferences, albeit often ones that are unconscious and not subject to immediate self-control...Finally, human beings are themselves properly to be regarded as complex symbols, with interactions between them consisting at least partially in acts of reading.[11]

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[8] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 146.

[9] Ibid., 140.

[10] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 138-39.

[11] Ibid., x.

The three parts of that statement imply a pragmaticist structure for theosemiotic that becomes explicit later in Raposa's book: the world perfused with signs, experience as interpretation, and symbolic interaction as reading. The three major movements of theosemiotic theory begin with the basic perspective that humans live in a "world perfused with signs." Therefore, the second movement follows; that engagement with and within such a world often relies on interpreting signs. Theosemiotic holds that Peirce's sign theory explains how that works. Finally, that engagement includes the interpreting subject in a dialogic process of "reading." Raposa conceives this intersubjective reading in terms of praxis—according to a pragmaticist understanding of beliefs according to their practical manifestations—is truly the heartbeat of theosemiotic as Raposa presents it. Praxis rests upon the belief that "fruits" manifest the "roots." It is no accident that this language brings to mind Jesus' statement that false teachers would be known by their "fruits" (Matt. 7:19). This teaching from Jesus was part of Peirce's inspiration for pragmaticism.[12] Accordingly, then, pragmaticism aligns with praxis—perhaps, in fact, is a form of praxis—because of its belief that the "best interpretation" of any sign (including religious ones) is "embodied in...disciplined conduct."[13] That is, what one believes to be the meaning of the sign will manifest inevitably as *habits* of one's behavior.

The present experiment brings this theosemiotic framework into dialogue with—indeed, a "rereading" of—McGrath's CNT theory.[14] "Reading" is a salient term in Raposa's

[12] Raposa, *PPR*, 82, writes, "Peirce identified his theory of meaning as 'an application of the sole principle of logic that was recommended by Jesus; "Ye may know them by their fruits"' (CP 5.402, note 2). But these fruits need to be regarded in a collective sense as 'the achievement of the whole people.'"

[13] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 149.

[14] Ibid., 10. The use of Raposa's key word "rereading" indicates the asymmetrical nature of this "dialogue." For the purposes of this experiment—namely, the reification of potential PEM bias via the influence of semeiotic—it is necessary to exaggerate the influence of theosemiotic upon CNT. That is where theosemiotic contacts CNT, theosemiotic is given the defining role. This is open to the "straw man" objection; that the imbalance should favor CNT instead, such that CNT redefines comparable aspects of theosemiotic. However, the aim is to test how a robust

theosemiotic to express the sense of pragmaticist *interpretation*. When the concept is understood in its theoretical context, "reading" is less of a metaphor for interpretation than a description of the process. Perhaps one's common sense is that interpreters engage a sign, such as a written text, through an intellectual process of deciding what the various words—distinct symbols—*mean* within the context of one another. That is, "reading" in this sense names a synthetic process of making sense of a collection of signs. Or, perhaps one may say that a text one reads is a complex sign consisting of some number of other signs whose contextual situation communicates an author's meaning. Peirce—and so theosemiotic—would not disagree with this, except to say that it barely scratches the surface of what is going on in the interpretive process of a textual symbol.

Theosemiotic highlights Peirce's semeiotic concept of personality in a theosemiotic theory of reading, of pragmaticist interpretation.[15] Recall from the previous chapter that Peirce considered the common sense of a "person" as consisting of the essential properties of a *symbol*. Now, "symbol" must here be taken in Peirce's sense of a sign marked by Thirdness, whose relation between object and representamen—the *manner* in which the representamen represents its object—is marked by a sort of *law*. The law governing a symbol is just a general idea determining the arc of a symbol's personality, or character, some pattern of regularity relatively consistent throughout the life of the sign.[16] This receives further consideration below when working out how Peirce's concept of persons as symbols enriches the idea that interpretations conform to

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Peircean semeiotic affects CNT with respect to PEM. By privileging theosemiotic for this experiment, this inquiry hopes to preserve Peirce's semeiotic theory in applying it to the interests of CNT.

[15] Raposa prefers to discuss this aspect in terms of the symbolic "self" rather than "person." This respects the anthropomorphic nuance of Peirce's thought without slipping into anthropocentrism. On this distinction in Peirce, cf., Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 92. On Raposa's treatment of the "symbolic self,'" cf., e.g., *ibid.*, 43. Keeping this in mind, for the present this discussion will proceed using "person," since it has established that background already.

[16] Cf., ibid., 37.

certain habits of thought. For the present, observe that a Peircean account of reading entails that the reader is also a symbol, being a person whose manner of life manifests certain characteristic habits of behavior.[17] A theosemiotic conception of "reading," therefore, holds that the common sense as readers of texts may be expressed as the engagement of one symbol by another. A symbol is thus "read" by another. Moreover, the engagement is of a dialogical nature.[18] While one symbol reads the other, the first symbol is also read by the other. The point to be made here is that theosemiotic "reading" occurs as "symbolic engagement" in which meaning is pursued by paying attention to how one *as a symbol* is affected by the symbol one engages.[19]

## Overview of Experimental Method

Peirce conceived inquiry as a process involving three modes of thought: abduction (also, "retroduction"), deduction, and induction. Theosemiotic embraces these enthusiastically as three "phases" of the process of inquiry, just as Peirce theorized in his own explanation of semeiotic theological method in "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" (EP2:440-42).[20] Although, Raposa is careful to state that they are phases only in an analytical sense. One abstracts them in turn from the inquiry process to consider that aspect of the process in more detail.[21] Yet, thought *as such*—and, so, inquiry as a thinking process, consists of all three modes of thinking working together constantly. Even so, three phases of pragmaticist inquiry distinguish

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[17] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 37.

[18] Ibid., 71. Recently, Kevin Vanhoozer has advocated for the importance of genuine dialogue in the course of theological work, although he does not mention Peirce's theory; Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing*, xvi.

[19] The phrase "symbolic engagement" is borrowed from Robert Neville's Peircean approach to comparative theology without intending any allusion to that project. On which, cf., Robert Cummings Neville, *On the Scope and Truth of Theology: Theology as Symbolic Engagement* (A&C Black, 2006), in which he sets forth his Peircean methodology for his larger "Philosophical Theology" project.

[20] Raposa, *PPR*, 143.

[21] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 5, 113.

themselves in their respective contributions to the process of inquiry. The abductive phase produces hypotheses to account for facts, experiences that one may not fully understand. Something catches one's interest and the mind naturally infers some way of explaining it. As a hypothesis it is not the answer, but the beginning of inquiry. The deductive phase then works with that hypothesis as though it is true. Deduction explicates implications that follow from that. The inductive phase tests the hypothesis by seeking experiential confirmation—or lack thereof—of the outcomes deduced in the previous phase. These basic phases of inquiry frame the present experiment, since the idea is to read CNT from the perspective of theosemiotic. That is, a theosemiotic interpretation of CNT would follow its own method, so the present reading attempts to do so here.

Since pragmaticist interpretation is conceived as symbolic engagement, it must begin with the engagement of the relevant symbols. Generally, this is marked by the practice of "musement." Musement is Peirce's term for a certain sort of attention one pays to signs one seeks to understand.[22] In "A Neglected Argument," Peirce describes musement as something one does somewhat intentionally, but also *playfully* as one let's one's mind wander on some matter. In Peirce's case, the muser considers the natural order while on an evening stroll (CP 6.458). There is a level of discipline in that one maintains thought upon the general subject, but not in a way that seeks to control that process or direct it in any way. In terms of pragmaticist inquiry, this is a stage marked by abductive inference as the imagination is fully and creatively engaged. Since the present experiment concerns symbols in the form of texts McGrath has written explaining his vision for CNT, the method will be musement upon the relevant texts. A simpler way to express

[22] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 115.

this step is to use a phrase familiar to biblical exegetes, reading a text in its "plain sense."[23] Peter Ochs, another Peirce scholar working out how to appropriate pragmaticism for theological method, uses the concept of a "plain sense" reading precisely for the abductive work of musement on a written text that this experiment requires.[24] This initial symbolic engagement with the plain sense of McGrath's CNT *oeuvre* should yield some number of responses from the theosemiotic perspective. A brief description of those responses follow that plain sense musement, without yet trying to understand what they mean, since meaning, on pragmaticism, results from engagement in the inquiry process.

Those abductive responses from musement on the plain sense of CNT supply the objects for further consideration in the theosemiotic inquiry. This experiment will take each of these in turn, thinking through them until defining a form of their idea recognizable in the later search for experiential evidence of their meaning. The distinctive pragmaticist phases will be evident during the experiment process. Let their general description here suffice to inform the reader of their presence in the method followed below. That is, taking one of the abductive responses the process of inquiry pursues the question, "Why is a theosemiotic mind responding to this part of CNT?" On theosemiotic, the answer to the question will lead to a growing sense for the meaning of a theosemiotic form of CNT, which this experiment will call "Christian theosemiotic."[25] In terms of the inquiry process, the first step is to hypothesize what the relevant concepts or values

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[23] Cf., e.g.,Mordechai Z. Cohen, *The Rule of Peshat: Jewish Constructions of the Plain Sense of Scripture and Their Christian and Muslim Contexts, 900-1270* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

[24] Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 6. Ochs' work provides an alternative to Raposa's theosemiotic method. However, the aims of the present project prefer Raposa whose conception of theosemiotic stays quite close to Peirce's methods and concepts. Ochs' method, which he calls "pragmatic method of interpretation and repair," incorporates Ochs' own interpretation of Peirce within the primary structure of his methodology. However, Ochs provides the method of choice for the project to follow this one, the task of which will be to repair CNT epistemology according to a version of Peirce's pragmaticism for which the PEM bias has been removed.

[25] Raposa, *PPR*, 144; ibid., *Theosemiotic*, 236.

would be if fully conformed to theosemiotic. This requires first clarifying the CNT and theosemiotic ideas (a deductive move).[26] Then, in an imaginative use of deductive reasoning (therefore nearly as abductive as deductive) the next step describes that hypothesis of the resulting idea of a Christian theosemiotic. This process repeats for each of the theosemiotic responses to the plain sense reading of CNT.

Since deductive conclusions are imagined *as if* the hypothesis is true, to gain a better sense for authenticity requires the inductive phase. That is, are these hypotheses true to Peirce's theosemiotic? If so, then those deductions should lead to the conception of outcomes that bear a real resemblance to what one will find in the experience of putting Peirce's theories into practice. The inductive phase of pragmaticist inquiry requires testing the hypothesis in lived, experimental experience. Normally, that would involve designing experiments for the purpose of testing the hypothesis, that is, to see whether the practice of the hypothesis yields the sorts of results described in the deductive step. However, since Robert Neville has spent his theological career experimentally bringing Peirce's ideas to bear on questions in Christian theology, his experience documented in his many writings serves that inductive purpose of this inquiry.[27] Locating instances of the ideas of a hypothetical Christian theosemiotic in Neville's prolific work in pragmatic philosophical theology will demonstrate his relevance to this inquiry.[28] Then, evidence that

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[26] This mimics Peter Ochs' move to "deeper plain sense reading" in his distinct method; cf., Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, 165.

[27] Lisanne Winslow has recently published a work holding forth a theology of nature according to McGrath's CNT vision. She brings together McGrath's insights with those of Emil Brunner and Jonathan Edwards in Lisanne Winslow, *A Trinitarian Theology of Nature* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2020). Winslow's work participates in the general orbit of theosemiotic. Edwards provides a way for her to speak of the semiotics of nature in its function as divine communication. She does not discuss Peirce, however. Recall that Raposa identifies Edwards as among several American thinkers contributing to a larger theosemiotic tradition that includes Peirce but does not depend upon his ideas. Cf., Raposa's chapter "A Brief History of Theosemiotic," in Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 15-42.

[28] Neville's entire career provides relevant material regarding Christian theosemiotic. Since he has recently published a *magnum opus* embodying a mature statement of his life's work, the present inquiry draws primarily

the three PEM criteria are present in Neville's case of a Christian theosemiotic answers the question motivating this dissertation. The experiment now begins with a plain sense reading of McGrath's CNT theory.

## Plain Sense Reading of CNT

McGrath's CNT writings aim to retrieve a "thick" conception of natural theology, which takes orthodox Christian doctrine as its starting point (*RI* 24, 22; *OS* 246). He holds that a critical-realist epistemology warrants beginning with the Christian framework as a hypothetical means of interpreting natural phenomena (*OS* 327; *FT* 27). That is, while there is an objective reality grounding one's perception in the experience of some thing, the larger significance of the thing is ambiguous. There is a need for some subjective "key" to interpret the meaning of nature. McGrath writes, "Nature does not coerce us evidentially into any specific 'clear and distinct ideas' (Descartes) concerning its meaning or significance. It can be argued to be consistent with atheism, agnosticism, and theism—but entails none of them. The meaning of nature must be unlocked using a key which nature itself does not supply," (*RI* 33). Therefore, those who would understand the meaning of natural phenomena must bring some interpreting framework to the experience (*RI* 71-74; *OS* 298; *FT* 27). An interpreter's framework, according to McGrath, is some "*habitus*" by which one makes sense of the world. A *habitus*, formed by the influence of one's social context, produces *a schema* representing the world as one sees it (*RI* 28-30, 70). These *schemas* vary in explanatory cogency. Within the conventions of arguing by inference to the best explanation (IBE), McGrath holds that CNT explanations of natural signs will be more cogent than non-Christian alternatives (*RI* 98, 178; *OS* 442). This method turns, of course, upon an

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from the four volumes of that "Philosophical Theology" project. For bibliographical information on these works, see the section discussing Neville's work below.

authentic Christian way of seeing the natural world. McGrath calls such a definitive Christian *schema* the "Christian *imaginarium*." In this way McGrath refers to an imagination transformed by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the core beliefs of the great Christian tradition (*RI* 43, 51, 52; 35, 36).[29] He holds that this Christian perspective—being defined by the self-revelation of the Creator—is grounded in the root of all truth, beauty, and goodness in nature (*RI* 154; *FT* 28). Therefore, IBE arguments constructed according to this perspective will be compelling even to non-Christians, given that human nature has proven to have an attraction to these values wherever they might be found (*OS* 478, 5469).

While a critical realist epistemology is taken as justification for CNT's adoption of IBE methodology for natural theology arguments, McGrath looks to Peirce's semeiotic for help to explain how the Christian *imaginarium* determines Christian interpretations of nature.[30] McGrath writes that semeiotic supplies a "framework" by which cultural and natural signs are correlated. This is because semeiotic explains "the creative and constructive role of the individual thinker in creating patterns of associations" between certain phenomena and certain responses to them (*RI* 96). This explanation dovetails with critical realism in the concept of *habitus*. That is, semeiotic shares the belief that one's interpretation of some experience forms to a great degree according to the influence of habits already inherent in one's imagination. At the same time, semeiotic

[29] On which, cf., Appendix B.

[30] In *The Open Secret*, McGrath defines critical realism as a view "which affirms both the existence of an extra-mental reality and the active, constructive role of the observer in representing and interpreting it...critical realism insists that human thought is constrained and informed by an engagement with an external reality." Applied to CNT, McGrath (*OS* 370-79) writes, "our approach insists that the human attempt to make sense of things is shaped by the way things actually are." Though it appears from McGrath's account that critical realism generally does not explain *how* perception and experiment have access to the fact and structures of the objective reality being studied, critical realism emphasizes *that* this is the case. Further, McGrath highlights that his preferred form of critical realism advocates that reality is "stratified," such that various scientific disciplines conform their methods to their distinctive objects; cf., Alister E. McGrath, *The Science of God: An Introduction to Scientific Theology* (A&C Black, 2004), 141, 147. For McGrath's more detailed discussions of critical realism theories, cf., McGrath, *Reality*, 195-244.

explains that interpretations also depend upon a grounding relation to the reality of their object (*RI* 95). This objective grounding of the sign occurs due to triadic action, which sets semeiotic apart from the semiology of Saussure.[31] This entire critical realist dynamic occurs in the function of the interpretant in semiosis. So, McGrath's discussion of semeiotic focuses on Peirce's conception of the interpretant.

Because they are triadically related to the originating object of the sign, McGrath writes that interpretants can be conceived as "translations" of the original sign, in that they "develop" the understanding of the object to which the sign is related (*RI* 95). This development and translation occur because of the influence of the interpreter's habits of imagination—i.e., their *habitus*—upon interpretant formation. In semeiotic terms, then, the Christian *imaginarium* constitutes the set of interpretive habits distinctive to Christians as such. The result is that Christian interpretations of natural signs are marked by characteristically Christian qualities, such as love, mercy, and hope. Additionally, Peirce theorized that interpretants can take three basic forms: emotional, energetic, and logical. Therefore, CNT interpreters of nature may represent a Christian perspective on the world aesthetically or through their actions as well as through conceptual propositions (*RI* 95).

That is where McGrath moves on from Peirce as a resource for CNT theory. McGrath's greater interest for semeiotic is its application to the way communities function in training individuals in their interpretive habits. For this McGrath looks to Josiah Royce, who developed Peirce's pragmaticist conception of the inquiry community into a theology of the Christian

[31] Cf., n3 above.

"community of interpretation," (*RI* 96).[32] McGrath understands Royce to have theorized the interpretive community as being defined by shared interpretive habits, which McGrath calls the Christian *imaginarium*. So, McGrath understands Royce's concept of community "loyalty" as community members maintaining common "interpretive traditions," (*RI* 96-97). For the purposes of CNT, McGrath proposes that the Christian community of interpretation should seek to conform its *imaginarium* to the *signum crucis.* McGrath holds that this sign pertains to the vagueness of the natural world at the same time that it defines the self-revelation of God. It just is a definitive sign of the revelatory utility of the natural world, notwithstanding the world's ambiguity, even its evils. McGrath holds that Christian communities can do this because the *habitus* forms according to that on which the community constantly attends in its practices. Consequently, McGrath argues that the Church's *sacramental* practices, for example, train the community in the Christian *imaginarium* defined by the *signum crucis* (*RI* 97-100). Bringing these things together, then, it is evident that McGrath holds forth semeiotic as the explanatory framework justifying the strategic development of the Christian *imaginarium* through attention to the *signum crucis*. That semeiotic framework consists of Peirce's theory of interpretant-formation according to habits of thinking, which are themselves formed according to the interpreter's developmental context.

A mind whose habits of thought are determined according to theosemiotic would respond to this plain text representation of CNT at six points. From a theosemiotic perspective, strategically using the Christian framework as the interpretive lens as though nature in itself is absolutely ambiguous calls for interpretive dialogue. Also, theosemiotic would respond that

[32] Recall that a salient aspect of pragmaticism is the notion that meaning is discovered in the long-run experience of a community of inquirers who are such because of their common interest in getting to the truth of the matter.

abductive argumentation in the form of musement has greater cogency than constructed IBE arguments. A theosemiotic mind would notice that Peirce's semeiotic theory not only explains the subjective, constructive aspect of perception. It also explains how that subjectivity is yet influenced and formed over time by the objective reality inherent in the sign. Similarly, theosemiotic would object to the strategy of conceiving the interpretive *habitus* in static, determinate terms, such as the Christian *imaginarium*, notwithstanding the relative vagueness McGrath ascribes to the *signum crucis*. Further, the CNT conception of "community of interpretation" would require adjustment, according to a theosemiotic perspective, in that "loyalty" and community definition are to an undetermined Truth to be discovered rather than to a prescribed *habitus* already defined. Finally, theosemiotic would have significant contributions to make regarding the formation of the *imaginarium* via careful, constant, practical attention to the *signum crucis*. These points of response serve this experiment as signs pointing the way toward a theosemiotic interpretation of CNT. That path will emerge in the course of working out a theosemiotic interpretation of each of these signs.

## Theosemiotic Responses

**CNT Starting Point.** This first sign is McGrath's claim that CNT is warranted to start from the Christian *imaginarium* when offering interpretations of natural signs due to the great ambiguity of nature.[33] That is, "The meaning of nature must be unlocked using a key which nature itself does not supply," (*RI* 33). Consequently, some sort of "framework" is necessary for subjects to discern ways in which natural phenomena are meaningful.[34] Therefore, for CNT,

[33] In this respect, CNT's approach appears to accord well with Reformed Epistemology's concept of warranted "basic beliefs"; cf., Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[34] *RI* 71-72, 74, McGrath explains that the ambiguity of nature results from its great complexity, bearing both "good" and "evil" aspects simultaneously. Interpreters of nature must choose a way of "seeing [nature] as"

"Natural theology is understood to be the action of 'seeing' nature from a specifically Christian perspective."[35] McGrath describes CNT's use of the Christian schema as an interpretive framework reifying nature's profound meaning as follows:

> The grand themes of the Christian faith provide an interpretive framework by which nature may be seen in profound and significant ways. The web of Christian theology is the elixir, the philosopher's stone, which turns the mundane into the epiphanic, the world of nature into the realm of God's creation. Like a lens bringing a vast landscape into sharp focus, or a map helping us grasp the features of the terrain around us, the Christian vision of reality offers a new way of understanding, imagining, and behaving. It invites us to see the natural order, and ourselves within it, in a special way—a way that might be hinted at, but cannot be confirmed by, the natural order itself (*RI* 35-36).

The CNT claim taken as a sign for theosemiotic engagement here is, more specifically, since nature does not supply its own framework, its own interpretive key, "we are free to choose the manner in which we see nature, forcing us to identify the best way of beholding the natural world," (*FT* 27).[36] In sum, then, the CNT sign is that nature's ambiguity leaves interpreters "free to choose" the framework by which to construct hypotheses of nature's meaning.

Peirce's theosemiotic way of speaking of nature's ambiguity, on the other hand, emphasizes the concept of *vagueness*. Recall that this is the idea that there is a degree of definition that nevertheless remains underdetermined. Regarding the theosemiotic starting point vagueness has the form of the underdetermined sense that the cosmos is God's "great poem," that all of nature

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consistent with some schema. This is especially true for perceiving theological meaning in nature. According to McGrath, nature is "theologically opaque," a problem which might be resolved "using the device of framing," (*RI* 77). For example, judging some aspect of nature as evil is "not an empirical notion; it represents the interpretation of empirical observations from the standpoint of a theory," (*RI* 74).

[35] This is to set forth a plausible view of nature according to Christianity's "distinct notions of God, nature, and human agency, (*FT* 27; refers to *Open Secret,* 1-7, 12-14, 171-216 [pages not Kindle location]). Here the theoretical structure of CNT draws upon the five core theological beliefs discussed earlier. That is, those five diagram the "specifically Christian perspective."

[36] McGrath cites McGrath, *Open Secret,* 7-10, 147-56 (these refer to pages rather than to Kindle location). This way of putting it seems to stand in tension with McGrath's core theoretical belief that CNT holds to a "'critical realist' epistemology," according to which, "the human attempt to make sense of things is shaped by the way things actually are," even as human minds are also actively involved to structure their "vision of reality," (*OS* 372).

is a sort of "book" of divine authorship.[37] Importantly, the concept of the divine author of that book is vague, too, in stark contrast to CNT's desire to define "God" with Christian specificity.[38] Instead, for theosemiotic, the sense of divine authorship is recognized as a metaphor for the experience of beauty in encounters with natural phenomena.[39] On theosemiotic, this experience of beauty represents a vague sense for the entire teleology of the cosmos. That is, there is an indefinite perception of the *summum bonum* to which all of reality is somehow destined.[40] Moreover, that end is grounded in the originating "No-thing," the theoretical state of absolute potentiality.[41]

In other words, theosemiotic sees the cosmos in semeiotic terms as a "living inferential metaboly of symbols" whose results are found in "conditional general resolutions to act." Recall from Peirce's semeiotic that signs are vague, such that semiosis is a continuous process of defining their meaning.[42] As a *continuous* process, then, Peirce's fallibilism also comes into view. That is, interpretations of signs always to some degree fall short of the objective reality they represent.[43] This process of definition is the process of interpretation, in which subjective and objective elements work together to explore a range of possibilities grounded in the object of the sign. As a grand sign of the divine Mind, then, the cosmos and its many levels of interacting semeioses are related like topological continua grounded ultimately in the divine Mind.[44]

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[37] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, ix, 16; also, ibid., *PPR*, 144, "This is the essence of a *theosemiotic*. The universe is God's great poem, a living inferential metaboly of symbols."

[38] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 87; recalls Peirce's "claim that there cannot be 'a more adequate way' of understanding the cause or creator of the universe 'than as vaguely like a man' (CP 5.536)."

[39] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 15.

[40] Ibid., 21, 172.

[41] Raposa, *PPR*, 150; ibid., *Theosemiotic*, 25, 39.

[42] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 39.

[43] Ibid., 93-94. Consequently, the common sense of the world as "God's great poem" may—on theosemiotic—turn out to be false. Cf., ibid., *PPR*, 148.

[44] Raposa, *PPR*, 144. Recall from the previous chapter, discussion of Peirce's blackboard illustration of synechism and objective idealism.

Therefore, a "religious naturalism" is manifest in Peirce's theosemiotic.[45] This brings together salient theories pertaining to Peirce's semeiotic metaphysics. First of all, the vast continuum of signs grounded in the divine Mind is familiar from Peirce's objective idealism. A multitude of interrelated orders of ideas constitute all of reality, from mere general qualities such as beauty to the generality of material facts, such as mountain ranges.[46] Accordingly, then, Peirce's "extreme realism" is implicated in the reality of ideas and, indeed, of semiotic relations. This indicates, further, Peirce's Agapism, according to which cosmic semeiosis is determined ultimately by divine purposes of Love. Given the reality of such ideas, then, the facts of the cosmos embody these purposes, constituting signs of those purposes.[47] Hence, Peirce's anthropomorphism.[48] As it relates to the vagueness of nature and the role of the subject in interpreting nature, Peirce held that human minds are able to perceive—albeit vaguely—the purposes embodied in the realities encountered in experience. Religious experiences of natural phenomena result from perceiving the beauty of the purposes pertaining the nature's divine teleology. Hence, the theoretical starting point of the cosmos as a "great poem" of "God." The theosemiotic idea, then, is that the vagueness of Signs invites interpretive engagement with them. In the process of that engagement, interpreters perceive divine ideas embodied in natural facts. This leads to the growth of religious significance of natural Signs and the growth of religious meaning as interpreters begin to also embody those ideas.

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[45] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 120-21, 146.

[46] Recall that matter itself is, per Peirce, "effete mind."

[47] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 236.

[48] Ibid., 88-89, that "the whole of nature can be read as religiously meaningful...is possible at all only given the premises supplied by Peirce's semiotic realism; and it is against this same background that his anthropomorphism should be conceived and understood." Also, ibid., 189, describes Peirce's anthropomorphism, "as humans we have evolved within the womb and at the bosom of the universe as it really is. We are subtly but decisively attuned to it as a result of his natural evolutionary process."

How would the theosemiotic complex of ideas regarding nature's religiously significant vagueness redefine ("reread") the CNT conception that nature is ambiguous in such a way that interpreters rightly choose their own frame, such as the Christian *imaginarium*? A Christian theosemiotic would view nature as not so strongly ambiguous as CNT holds. Also, Christian theosemiotic would temper McGrath's language of choosing one's starting point, since one is not free at all to choose one's interpretive habits (except in a Peircean sense of the "self-controlled" development of such habits, on which see below). Consequently, Christian theosemiotic would take seriously the Christian *imaginarium* from which Christian interpreters of nature must rightly begin. That *habitus* would be granted status as a semeiotic complex nested within the fabric of semeiotic continua comprising all of reality. That is, the Christian *habitus* stands, according to theosemiotic, as a sign *somehow* representing the much more vague reality. Further, notwithstanding Christianity's specific claims about how to define the "somehow" of this representation (e.g., CT's definition of "Creator"), a Christian theosemiotic would insist that this definition of the nature of its representation is also only vaguely a sign of the underlying objective reality of the sign. In terms of a "book" or a "great poem," Christian natural theology constitutes a chapter or a stanza playings its part for the beauty and meaning of the whole. The meaning of the whole depends upon its end result. A Christian theosemiotic claims no warrant to assert its definitive priority over alternative views. Such a claim can only be established from the perspective of the end.

A general effect of theosemiotic upon CNT is the transposition of CNT's conception of *meaning* to one of increasing vagueness. Rather than CNT's vision of arguing for its views as definitive of the truth, a Christian theosemiotic would hold its own Christian definitions of natural signs as vague representations of an even more vague reality. This is to deny the plain sense

claims of the Christian signs, since *as signs* they claim to define the self-revelation of the "Self-Revealing God."[49] In other words, theosemiotic would *relativize* the theological significance of Christianity's signs. As Raposa observes, theosemiotic tends to *generalize* theology. He shows that the theosemiotic tradition manifests this even among those treating natural signs from a Christian perspective.[50] Christianity somehow discloses something of the ultimate reality behind religious experiences of nature, but a Christian theosemiotic grants the same status to *all* such experience. The limit of theological generalization, per theosemiotic, is that it must maintain a vague theism, in that "God" somehow represents some personality marked by beauty, goodness, and truth.[51] A Christian theosemiotic, then, must confront the challenge of how to understand its own signs within the context of the complex of all religious signs.

From the Raposan theosemiotic perspective adopted for this project it is striking that McGrath justifies the Christian *imaginarium* framework for natural theology on the ground that nature's theological opacity leaves interpreters free to postulate their starting point. Where CNT speaks of the "ambiguity" of nature, theosemiotic speaks of its vagueness. Semeiotic vagueness nevertheless entails that interpreters learn the habits for interpreting the Sign from engagement with the Sign. For a Christian theosemiotic, this means that the Christian *imaginarium* is a starting point determined by the Christian theologian's experiences of nature prior to CNT inquiry.

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[49] Recall this core theological belief of CNT.

[50] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 38-39, on the "radical monotheism" evident in some exemplars included in the theosemiotic tradition; viz., Jonathan Edwards, Josiah Royce, Peirce, and H. Richard Niebuhr. Note that Raposa does not claim that Jonathan Edwards is directly linked somehow to Peirce, or vice versa. Raposa's point is that the history of American theology bears a theosemiotic element in some of its thinkers. Royce, of course, intentionally worked from Peirce's ideas, and Niebuhr was influenced by Peirce through Royce, but also by theosemiotic more generally through Edwards, according to Raposa's account.

[51] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 89-90.

**IBE as Abductive Strategy.** Theosemiotic also responds to the form of abductive argumentation McGrath envisions for natural theology. CNT makes the modest claim that "this approach to natural theology holds that nature reinforces an existing belief in God through the resonance between observation and theory," (*OS* 459). That is, "The specific cognitive aspects of natural theology are affirmed, [namely,] as showing the capacity of the Christian faith to make sense of what is observed…em-phasiz[ing] resonance…not set[ting] out to prove any core element of that faith from an appeal to nature," (*FT* 28; refers to *OS* 15-18, 232-60).[52] Yet, CNT seeks more than to demonstrate resonance in its desire to engage in its dialogue with science by arguing according to inference to the best explanation (IBE). That McGrath advocates an IBE approach is clear when discussing his vision for the apologetics potential of CNT. In that mode, CNT asks, "'does the Christian *theoria* … "a way of seeing things" – make the best sense of what we experience within us, and observe in the natural world around us?'" Also in this context, McGrath appeals to Peirce's concept of abduction, Peirce's theory of hypothesis-formation. That is, McGrath claims warrant to posit Christian theology as an explanatory hypothesis for various natural phenomena, since if such a God exists it would explain many things (*RI* 178).[53] This retrieves an older approach to natural theology in the history of Christian theology, which shows "that 'naturalist' accounts of the natural world and the achievements of the natural sciences are intrinsically deficient, and that a theological approach is required to give a comprehensive and coherent interpretation of the natural order," (*RI* 20).

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[52] The fourth of McGrath's six natural theology models aims to demonstrate "analogy or intellectual resonance between the human experience of nature on the one hand, and of the Christian gospel on the other," (*RI* 20). It "affirm(s) the rationality of an existing faith" rather than proposing that faith's necessity due to the given facts of nature.

[53] When describing the cogency of CNT claims, McGrath (*OS* 442) appeals to IBE criteria (economy, scope, elegance, and fruitfulness) discussed by John C. Polkinghorne, *Science and the Trinity: the Christian Encounter with Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). For a more detailed treatment of this topic by McGrath, see his recent work, McGrath, *Territories of Human Reason.*

Given the divine self-revelation contained in the Christian *imaginarium*, especially in the *signum crucis*, McGrath holds that CNT's abductive argumentation would prove far superior to alternative views. He writes, "nature is here interpreted as an 'open secret'—a publicly accessible entity, whose true meaning is known only from the standpoint of the Christian faith," (*OS* 442).[54] Christian natural theology works from the basic belief that in Jesus the divine creator was incarnate to redeem the natural order from the corruption of sin (*OS* 408). Just as "the figure of Jesus of Nazareth can be argued to be both the foundation and criterion of Christian theology" generally, Jesus is also the key to a Christian natural theology (*OS* 4896). It is in the light of Jesus that the theological significance of nature becomes evident to one's perception. So, CNT holds that "the Christian *imaginarium* [is] an intellectual and imaginative framework which both reaffirms the rational transparency and the inherent beauty of nature, and grounds these in the deeper reality of a Trinitarian vision of God," which is defined in light of Jesus of Nazareth (*RI* 154). This strategy has immediate cogency for human minds, whose nature it is to seek these values (truth, beauty, and goodness) in the world (*OS* 478; *FT* 28).[55] Therefore, the basic CNT idea here is that the strategy of abductive argument (IBE) according to the Christian *imaginarium* will prove itself as a compelling perspective, since it will naturally bring to light the truth, beauty, and goodness in nature to which human minds are drawn.

[54] For example, a problem is how to reconcile the order and disorder present together in nature. In light of the economy of salvation, "a Trinitarian engagement with nature is already marked with the sign of the cross and is thus especially attentive to the problem of suffering in nature," (*FT* 80). Therefore, CNT well accounts for disorder as well as order. Expanded into a full abductive (IBE) argument, McGrath would say, the CNT view would present a superior explanation of suffering in nature compared to scientific or other views, because the Christian hypothesis of nature's meaning in fact accords with the Creator's revelation of nature's religious meaning. On the *signum crucis* as the locus of CNT's cogency, *RI* 98.

[55] McGrath envisions CNT as seeking to highlight where "truth, beauty, and goodness [are] evident in nature in the light of Jesus Christ"; also, cf., *OS* 221-31.

Abductive argumentation in the IBE sense does have a place in Peirce's philosophical system.[56] However, IBE is not the most powerful form of abductive argument that Peirce theorized. In fact, theosemiotic rests upon the sort of abductive argument that Peirce himself applied to the practice of natural theology. That is, *musement* is Peirce's prescribed practice of abductive meditation upon natural phenomena, and it is the beating heart of theosemiotic.[57]

Theosemiotic values musement, as did Peirce, as a powerful method of *argument*. Peirce supplied a technical sense for the term "argument" as referring to the natural operation of the mind in reasoning. In this sense, argument is synonymous with *inference*. One does not try to make an argument in this sense, an argument simply happens as the mind responds naturally to ideas. Peirce contrasts this with *argumentation*. An argumentation in Peirce's sense is an effort to communicate an idea from one mind to another. It is a complex strategy involving some number of arguments. The classic form is syllogism: major premise, minor premise, conclusion. An argumentation proceeds, because its internal arguments draw the mind toward the conclusion. The relevance to the present inquiry is that Peirce conceived of musement as a practice of abductive

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[56] Cf., K. T. Fann, *Peirce's Theory of Abduction* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 1970), 41. Though Peirce is best known for his careful attention to abduction in the sense of a perceptual inference, Fann discusses that Peirce also theorized a sense of abduction as a mode of *a posteriori* inquiry. This accords with IBE in that abduction in this inquiry form attempts to provide reasons why one hypothesis seems better than alternatives.

[57] Peirce, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," CP 6.458-65. Though much of what follows in this clarification of the theosemiotic idea relates directly to what Peirce himself gives in that essay, this discussion references Raposa. This is to establish that theosemiotic, according to Raposa, indeed follows Peirce's strategic appeal to the practice of musement in a way similar to McGrath's strategic use of IBE.

Though musement does not factor in McGrath's discussions of abductive reasoning in *Re-Imagining Nature*, his earlier work shows that he is aware of this form of abductive argument. In *FT* 42-45, McGrath discusses Peirce's conception of musement in "A Neglected Argument" as Peirce's abductive account of the natural human tendency to infer God from natural signs. McGrath's purpose for this discussion is to prepare the ground for the role that "surprising facts" will play in his IBE approach later in the same work (on which, cf., *FT* 83-94). That is, following Peirce, McGrath holds that CNT should direct its attention to scientific phenomena that are interesting due to their "counterfactual" quality. The case-in-point in that work are the various cosmic features that appear to suggest an "anthropic principle" operative somehow in the universe.

argument.[58] Musement, in other words, constitutes an aesthetic form of inquiry, which is no less able to perceive truth than more familiar, discursive strategies.

Musement is a "playful" manner of meditating upon natural phenomena that catch one's attention.[59] It is "disciplined" to an extent, because it maintains a general sort of focus. Also, Peirce holds that its practice requires a mind having scientific habits. Not that one seeks to follow any path of inquiry or pursue any prescribed result, but that such a mind will naturally reason in an orderly and logical manner without interrupting the attitude particular to musement (CP 6.461). That attitude is a "childlike" openness to wonder. Raposa writes that musement entails and restores, "A childlike freedom from bias, from well-entrenched, habitual modes of thought and perception, a certain playfulness, and capacity for wonder even in the encounter with seemingly ordinary things—these are the qualities that make possible an appreciation of nature's beauty."[60] It requires the phenomenological skill of "discernment" (of seeing what is there).[61] This requires that one maintain a degree of "detachment" from the object of one's attention.[62] This is accomplished in musement's playfulness not to pursue any particular objective. Musement, as mentioned above, is a form of aesthetic thinking, because musement is drawn forward through encounters with beauty.[63] Therefore, musement proceeds according to the logic of

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[58] On Peirce's distinction between argument and argumentation as terms, and Peirce's identification of musement as a form of argument, cf., CP 6.456, 465, 467.

[59] Raposa, *PPR*, 151-52.

[60] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 20. Freedom from "habitual modes of thought and perception," in this context refers to beliefs that normally act as leading principles of thought. Musement still involves the basic forms of thinking, so a well trained mind will conduct its play experimentally entertaining beliefs not normally held by moving through the mind's customary logical manner. Peirce understood that normal, logical manner as the modes of mind described in pragmaticism: abduction, deduction, induction.

[61] "Phaneroscopy" is Peirce's name for phenomenology. Peirce conceived of this as the practice of perceiving the "phaneron," which is all that is present to the mind at that moment. So, the discernment of musement attends especially to what is in one's mind, ibid., 192.

[62] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 11.

[63] Raposa, *PPR*, 144; ibid., *Theosemiotic*, 11, 17.

abductive inference. Abductions are explanatory hypotheses arising instinctively in the moment one encounters something one wants better to understand.[64] That is, abductive inferences begin the process of interpreting signs.[65]

As "argument" in this way, musement opens itself to be led by the nature of things to discover their truth. Musement is, therefore, a mode of natural theological inquiry that entrusts itself to the inherent theological significance of natural facts. Again, Peirce's anthropomorphism claims that human minds are formed in such a way as to pick out "fragments" of meaning embodied in natural facts. Raposa offers as an example, that the laws of nature embody divine purposes.[66] So, abductive inference perceives, vaguely, those divine thoughts. Musement leads one to discover not just the explanatory hypothesis of a personal, immanent Creator. It also leads one to discover that one *believes* this hypothesis; not as a result of discursive analysis, but as a matter of discovering that one's conduct begins to conform to such belief in God (CP 6.467).[67] This is because as musement picks out patterns of the divine mind embodied in natural facts, the inference of a divine personality becomes irresistable, according to Peirce.[68] This is consistent with the way one perceives any person. Furthermore, theosemiotic holds that abductive inference is the way one perceives their own personality from patterns of behavior that embody that set of mental habits unique to oneself.[69]

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[64] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 116; ibid., *PPR*, 144.

[65] Raposa, *PPR*, 152.

[66] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 236; ibid., *PPR*, 144.

[67] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 66-67.

[68] This was certainly Peirce's claim in the *NA*, but Raposa does not wish to follow Peirce on that point. One of the ways Raposa's theosemiotic moves beyond Peirce is in its openness to non-theistic interpretations of natural religious signs; cf., Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 12, 76.

[69] Ibid., 32.

A Christian theosemiotic would still rest on Peirce's theory of abductive inference for its strategy of engaging the interpretation of nature. Rather than abductive inference in the form of IBE argumentation, however, a Christian theosemiotic would prefer abductive inference as a form of argument in the aesthetic practice of musement. Rather than constructing argumentations to show the Christian *imaginarium* as a plausible explanatory hypothesis, Christian theosemioticians would practice the play of meditative musement upon some interesting natural phenomenon. Accordingly, there would be no prescribed program. There would be nothing prescribed at all, except the general "rules" of the play of musement and the parameters that come naturally to the phenemenon in question. But those parameters are only the starting point for musement, which is allowed to follow whatever reasonable paths of thought accord with a scientifically trained (i.e., logically ordered) mind. Importantly, the parameters of musement include the Christian *imaginarium*, which Christians naturally bring with them to the task. However, musement entails bracketing that set of Christian beliefs, holding them "as though one does not hold them." The Christian theosemiotician allows the play of musement to follow the perception of beauty beyond—or perhaps behind—the Christian Sign to the deeper levels of the signified reality; a movement into increasing degrees of vagueness of meaning.[70] A Christian theosemiotician would trust the embodied divine purposes to eventually make themselves known through the musement process of exploring the field of possibilities. In this experimental course of musement, the Christian theosemiotician would begin to perceive patterns in the things whose beauty continues to draw them forward. These patterns would begin to have the feel of personality, familiar to the muser from their own experience in perceiving their own personality according to

[70] The muser would indeed be drawn along by the sense of the beauty of the vague, divine ideas latent somewhere in the phenomenon—indeed, "hidden in the icon." Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 5.

patterns manifest in their behavioral habits. The meaning of these patterns emerges as musement translates them into behavioral habits in the muser's own life. In this way the Christian theosemiotician embodies the divine beauty discovered in natural Signs, becoming likewise a natural symbol of that divine beauty. The Christian theosemiotician in this way becomes conformed to the personal image of God.

The abductive theory funding Christian theosemiotic method comes very close to manifesting a PEM ontology, arguably implying that nature embodies God. Without the definition provided by Christian theology, "God" is necessarily quite vague. Even the sense of God's personality can only be accounted for in the sense of the personality of any sign as a "self."[71] This leaves theosemiotic religiously wide open. Only a strict atheism would be unavailable to the muser as an interpretation of their sense of "God" in nature.[72] Therefore, a Christian theosemiotic interpretation of this CNT sign results in a powerful validation of the religious experience of nature. It affirms one's sense of a grand unity and purpose for all things. However, a Christian theosemiotic would not insist on any particular definition of the reality causing the religious experience, such as the Christian *imaginarium* of CNT would offer.[73] A Christian theosemiotic would have to deny its own definitions of God to speak instead of a vague divine being, divine

[71] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 36-37.

[72] Ibid., 76, 89-90.

[73] Theosemiotic includes musement as the primary mode of the process of inquiry that continues seeking a more definite conception of the vague sense of "God" in nature. Such a process of definition develops through the gradual addition of qualities as patterns of God's identity emerge over time. However, theosemiotic holds that God is not definitely known until the end, in the perfection of "reasonablness." Even so, this vision of the process of definition likely holds the key to a positive theosemiotic CNT. That is, there is here somehow a clue for a CNT theosemiotic strategy that is able to affirm the Christian definition of "God." This will be explored in a subsequent project aimed at rereading theosemiotic according to CNT.

principle, or "ultimate reality."[74] A Christian theosemiotic interpretation of this CNT sign, therefore, would only deliver belief in a vague religious naturalism.

Inference to the best explanation (IBE) is a method commonly used when trying to decide among a range of plausible alternative hypotheses. Accordingly, there is great latitude granted for positing prospective hypotheses, such as McGrath envisions doing with the Christian *imaginarium*. His hope is only to demonstrate the plausibility of the Christian hypothesis of the meaning of nature. In contrast, theosemiotic holds that musement is a more powerful form of abductive argument. Rather than merely inviting interlocutors to deliberately consider the Christian perspective, Christian theosemiotic aims to lead Christians and all communities to a discovery of the truth of nature's religious significance through a disciplined practice of musement and community praxis.

**Subjective Focus of Semeiotic Structure.** A theosemiotic perspective also responds to McGrath's emphasis on the subjectivity of a semeiotic account of religious perception. From McGrath's comments on critical realist epistemology with respect to CNT, it is clear that he affirms the objective, "realist" aspect of that philosophy.[75] There is no question that McGrath affirms the scientific common sense that the objects of scientific—i.e., empirical—inquiry are realities external to and independent of ourselves as perceiving subjects. Accordingly, one's perceptions are *about* something other than one's own ideas of it. Also, somehow those external, independent realities affect how one perceives them. This is why various sciences differ in their methods. Their respective objects require different perceptual models and experimental

[74] Religious naturalism in a Peircean form does not necessarily deny a supernatural definition of "God," such as Christianity holds. As discussed in the previous chapter, Peirce would only speak to the definition of "God" to the extent that it was available in natural signs via scientific reasoning. Cf., the chapter "Scientific Theism," in Raposa, *PPR*, 7-34.

[75] See n30 above.

techniques. In McGrath's CNT writings, comments on critical realism consistently state only the basic definition, usually as he moves to discuss the subject's constructive role in perception. Yet, McGrath's primary interest for CNT purposes clearly is the "critical" aspect of this realism. That is, one's perceptions of those real, external, independent objects are necessarily formed according to one's own ideas accompanying one to the experience. One's preconceptions, previous experiences, and the multitude of influences from one's community context contribute to the form of one's perceptions. More than this, McGrath's interest is on the *active* role imagination takes in constructing perceptions. McGrath writes of the natural human desire "to make sense of things." This implies that often one's initial sense is a question. One's imagination immediately engages the question, bringing to bear whatever resources are available in the storehouse of one's experience and one's contextual influences. Drawing upon theoretical resources supplied by Peirce's semeiotic, McGrath finds a ready structure to account for this subjective moment in perception.

Perception is a form of interpretation, and Peirce theorized that the interpretive movement of Signs belongs with the formation of the interpretant. McGrath introduces the concept of the interpretant in the context of a brief discussion of Peirce's triadic sign model. Though McGrath does not elaborate, he mentions that interpretants relate to the object through the representamen. Consequently, interpretants develop and translate one's understanding of the object (*RI* 95). McGrath's discussion emphasizes the subjectivity of interpretant formation, for example, when he writes, "The role of the interpretant highlights the *creative* and *constructive* role of the individual thinker in *creating* patterns of association between stimuli and outcomes," (*RI* 95-96, emphasis added). Further, McGrath holds that CNT's interest in Semeiotic "really lies primarily in [Peirce's] proposal that we should think of signs in terms of 'habit' rather than

convention," (*RI* 96). Those habits operate through the imagination. Applied to CNT, the *imaginarium* is that set of interpretive habits determining a Christian interpretation of signs.[76]

Like CNT, theosemiotic takes an empirical approach.[77] That is, claims about religious knowledge are hypotheses grounded in external realities experienced as religious signs.[78] Further, experience as defined by Peirce is an abductive event. A perceptual judgment—an instinctive explanatory hypothesis—results from an encounter with some thing or idea.[79] Importantly, Signs are *given* in experience.[80] They are not selected or sought as much as they are discovered. One finds that one has had a religious experience. Then a process of reflection and inquiry begins so that one might understand it. So, theosemiotic holds that perceptions of religious experience are abductive inferences responding to Signs given in experience. Interpretations of Signs are therefore to a great degree discovered. Due to the important role granted to the objective reality, the creative and constructive aspect of interpretation is not so much a repetition of one's habits of thought as much as it is an event in which those habits creatively apply themselves to what is given in the Sign *via* abductive inference to discover a new form of interpretation of the object.

A theosmiotic treatment of the sign model emphasizes the objectivity of semiosis. The triadic action of signs *means* they act to form their interpretants. Two minds unite in the Sign so that something of the idea of the object communicates to a sufficient degree to determine an interpretant of that same object in the other mind. A salient structural element in Peirce's sign model is the object, which has this determining power due to the force of the interpretive relation

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[76] Recall that McGrath describes the *imaginarium* in terms of mental habits (*RI* 70).

[77] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 5.

[78] Raposa, *PPR*, 148.

[79] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 94.

[80] Raposa, *PPR*, 148.

as a final cause. The Sign as such naturally has the purpose of realizing itself eventually in an Ultimate Interpretant.[81] Semiosis in this way forms a continuum of interpretation until the Ultimate Interpretant—some habit of conduct—finally manifests the idea of the object motivating the Sign.

A final element should be brought under consideration here to clarify the theosemiotic idea. Notwithstanding the objectivity of semiosis, interpretation varies greatly and admits of subtle nuance, according to Peirce's taxonomy of signs. He was able successfully to work out a tenfold taxonomy, though his system is theoretically infinite. Beyond the ten types, the subtleties become too difficult to maintain for any practical benefit.[82] The upshot is that theosemiotic values the fact that the various sign types indicate different types of information communicated through such signs.[83] So, in a continuum of interpretants through the life of a Sign there can be varying amounts and types of information communicated. Not all interpretants will be of equal value with respect to the Sign's purpose to realize an Ultimate Interpretant. Consequently, the habits of mind operating in semeiotic abductions prove more or less useful to this purpose.

The theosemiotic idea, then, is that interpretants form abductively as one encounters Signs given in experience. One's habits of mind are used creatively by the imagination to make sense of the object perceived in the Sign. Such Signs along a continuum will be of varying types and qualities of information, such that knowledge of the truth of the Sign is hoped for in the long run when at last some Ultimate Interpretant in the form of behavioral habit manifests the

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[81] Cf., Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs*, 57-58.

[82] Short, *Theory of Signs*, 260.

[83] Raposa, *PPR*, 149-50. Yet, Raposa also cautions that the types are to be treated as heuristic devices rather than as keys to decoding specific meanings hidden in the form of any sign; cf., ibid., *Theosemiotic*, 57, 61.

meaning of the Sign. Nevertheless, the entire process continues to be determined largely by its originating object.

From a theosemiotic perspective, the sign here focuses on McGrath's use of Semeiotic primarily to explain the subjective aspect of perception. McGrath attends mostly to the role that the subject's habits play in the interpretation of natural signs.[84] In contrast, Peirce emphasizes the objectivity of semeiosis, such that a Christian theosemiotic would hold that nature provides objective assistance in its own interpretation. It would hold that *some* religious natural signs truly manifest some truth about God. The cosmos really is to some extent a "book" from which true knowledge of God can be gained. On the understanding of Peirce gained in chapter three, a Christian theosemiotic would resist claiming that God in himself is the object of any natural sign. Rather, vague information somehow relating to God objectively grounds whatever signs represent theological truth. One way to understand this, perhaps, is to think of the Absolute Mind as the created "wisdom" of the cosmos (Prov 8:22-31).[85] Therefore, further, religious experiences of nature would be taken as Signs *given* by nature itself that something of some religious value has been experienced. This would open wide the field of interreligious dialogue, because no subject's religious experience is meaningless.

Therefore, a Christian theosemiotic would trust the Sign to reveal itself somehow through the continuation of the interpretive process. A Christian theosemiotic would read natural signs in accordance with the Christian *habitus*, but the imagination also would seek to find a fit between that *habitus* and the objective sense given in the Sign. It would, again, pursue a strategy of

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[84] McGrath's emphasis on the determining role of subjective habits in the interpretation of signs extends through his discussion of the role community's play in forming, maintainin, and deploying those habits (*RI* 96-100).

[85] Some, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, advocated for a two-stage creation, such that the conception of the total divine plan for creation is distinguished from the gradual enactment of that plan. Cf., Blowers, *Drama*, 11.

musement and would expect "the answer" to be sometime in the future. In the meantime, a Christian theosemiotic would encourage playful experimentation with a range of possible interpretations of the Sign in question. A Christian theosemiotic would tolerate widely divergent alternatives as experimental objects, trusting that the truth of God is thereby making itself known.

McGrath holds that Semeiotic provides a suitable "framework" according to which interpreters creatively correlate cultural and natural signs. This specifically calls attention to the role of interpretive habits described by semeiotic. Theosemiotic would agree, of course, that the subject's interpretive habits play a creative role in the formation of the interpretant. However, theosemiotic also emphasizes that the object of the sign, vaguely sensed by interpreters via their experience of the representamen, plays a determining role in the subject's creative interpretation; that the interpreting subject is *learning from* signs how better to interpret them. A Christian theosemiotic interpretation of the CNT idea would trust the self-revealing nature of the Sign to interpret the Christian perspective as meaningful broadly across religious perspectives.

**The Determinate Habitus.** Theosemiotic would also respond to McGrath's sketch of the *habitus* as having a rather stable, determinate character. If the sense of a static *habitus* is not expressed in CNT literature, it is a reasonable inference from McGrath's indication that a symbolic core is necessary to maintain authentic Christian identity. CNT defines itself as "Christian" according to several specific theological beliefs and a powerful symbol of the heart of Christian faith (i.e., the Christian *imaginarium*). These are the five theological beliefs discussed earlier in the section comparing them to CT, and the *signum crucis* (*RI* 64-65).[86] These together inform the Christian *habitus* or habitual perspective on the world. It should be noted that the five beliefs are

[86] McGrath writes of the "'normative centering'" role of the *signum crucis*.

not exclusive for McGrath but representative (*OS* 4438).[87] Perhaps, then, it would be fair to say that the *habitus* implies the set of beliefs pertaining to the great tradition of the Christian faith. The ecumenical creeds—especially the Nicene Creed—supply a basic framework from which a hypothetical set might be constructed, but that would no doubt quickly bog down in controversy. So, McGrath wisely names a minimal set of doctrinal parameters, like a symbol representing an undefined larger whole. So, the claim here is not that *only these* five doctrines frame the CNT *imaginarium*. A complete list would surely include more. Nevertheless, even a representative list implies a desire for definition. To say "this" and "not that" in certain respects. This is the intent of the use of the term "static" or "determinate."

Also contributing to that sense of establishment and unchanging commitment is McGrath's emphasis on the role of the Christian community within CNT precisely to *preserve* and continue this *habitus* to serve CNT into the future (*RI* 96). However, the Christian *imaginarium* is not merely a result of holding a certain set of traditional doctrines. It is not simply the effect of consistently holding up the sign of the cross in the center of various sacraments and practices in the life of the Church. These aims and activities are necessary, but their formation as the Christian *imaginarium* is the divine work of the Holy Spirit illuminating and transforming the mind of the community and its members (*RI* 52). The CNT idea, then, is that the *habitus* remains consistent over time and useful to CNT's expressed purposes, because the Holy Spirit works through core Christian doctrines and cruciform practices of the Church to train the Church's imagination in the Christian *imaginarium*. The Church conducts itself in such a way as to allow *the Spirit* to maintain the Christian *imaginarium* in them, and to train new believers therein.

[87] McGrath writes of the five theological beliefs, "These themes illustrate, but do not exhaust, the distinctively Christian framework through which the natural world is seen."

McGrath's concern in this sign regarding the *habitus* may be expressed as a concern to maintain the Christian identity. Consequently, the "self" as a symbol is the relevant theosemiotic category here.[88] Any *symbol* as theorized in Peirce's taxonomy is a set of "general ideas [that have] become embodied concretely in habits."[89] In other words a symbol is significant because it operates according to some set of general ideas that function like laws or conventional norms governing the Sign.[90] So, a set of beliefs such as the Christian *imaginarium* constitutes a symbolic character.[91] They are organized and held together by a certain spirit, a purpose for their being as a whole. Whether as a "self" or in terms of "personality," the upshot is that a symbol's identity is defined by what remains consistent over time and in experience. This is why theosemiotic emphasizes that selves entail relations of *love*. The continuity of identity is a function of the symbol's desire to realize that meaning, its love of its purpose. Theosemiotic speaks of this love as a certain "quality of attention" that facilitates the process of realizing the meaning of the Sign.[92] So, theosemiotic holds that the attention directs the meaning of the self. Writes Raposa, "Now every person considered at any given point in time is a symbol, analogous to a word, so that a 'man denotes whatever is the object of his attention at the moment; he connotes whatever he knows or feels of this object, and is the incarnation of this form or intelligible species' (CP 7.591; W1: 498)."[93] Moreover, importantly for theosemiotic, semeiotic attention is not effective

[88] Cf., e.g., Rapoas, *Theosemiotic*, 48; also, cf., ibid., 53-54, where Raposa writes of the "continuity" of the self over time.

[89] Ibid., 37.

[90] So, Raposa writes that selves are "living legisigns." Ibid., 46. "Legisign" is a term from Peirce's sign taxonomy. It refers to a "presentative condition" marked by Thirdness. That is, a sign grounded by "any conventional, dispositional, or lawlike feature it may have acquired," Liszka, *General Introduction*, 36.

[91] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 37.

[92] Ibid., 83.

[93] Ibid., 48.

only in one direction. Symbolic selves "read" other selves, which affects both.[94] Consequently, a symbol is complex. There is not just one sign, but a continuum of Signs organized by the purpose of the symbol. Raposa writes, "the self consists in what Peirce might portray metaphorically as a living, moving train or stream of thought-signs." More accurately, the semeiotic continuum is more like a network of streams, or, as Peirce said, a cable.[95]

Therefore, communities are "corporate" selves.[96] A community as such is marked by some set of characteristic habits, beliefs constituting its identity and enduring character. Recall, then, that any Sign is a Sign because some purpose gives it life and governs its semeiotic development. Therefore, any individual self has the set of habits that they do, because their personality is a spirit unifying all of those elements into a coherent whole (so, the action of love within a self).[97] Theosemiotic understands communities in this same way. A genuine community of inquiry has the distinctive set of habits that it does, because its personality, a spirit, determines and maintains its distinctive set of beliefs.

CNT holds that its *habitus* is maintained by the Holy Spirit. A Christian theosemiotic would take that in terms of the symbolic self of the Christian community of interpretation. That is, the Church is a symbol whose habits embody the general ideas of the faith maintained across

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[94] Raposa, *PPR*, 54, *"*Moreover, within the context of theosemiotic, individuals *are* signs [among whom] reciprocal acts of interpretation...a kind of living intertextuality...complex system of meaning"; ibid., *Theosemiotic*, x, ""Finally, human beings are themselves properly to be regarded as complex symbols, with interactions between them consisting at least partially in acts of reading." Cf., also, ibid., 68.

[95] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 43.

[96] Ibid., 37.

[97] Ibid., 50, writes, "The ideals and purposes to which any individual is devoted will also act as final causes to which certain aspects of that person's life will be essentially ordered. A person's life as a whole will be more or less unified in this fashion to the extent that the selving process involves real growth in meaning...Insofar as it *can* be accomplished, however, the unity of the self will be 'the unity of symbolization—the unity of consistency.'...such consistency for Peirce was embodied in a certain kind of habit. It is a habit of attention, to be sure, since the self-as-sign can signify only those things to which it attends. Yet since the self-sign 'connotes' what it 'thinks and feels' about the object that it signifies, it is also a habit of thought and feeling."

the great Christian tradition. The Church is a communal self, constituted by many selves holding together by their love to do so *as this* communal self, and as this is accomplished through symbolic engagement. Unifying all of these dynamics, providing the overarching, governing purpose of the communal Sign is the Spirit of the Christian community. A Christian theosemiotic therefore explains the Spirit-led Church as a semeiotic interpretant. That is, the Spirit illuminates believers regarding the beliefs of the *habitus*. These become embodied in the habits of individual selves, an interpretive move. As a collective, the individual interpretations variously manifest the distinctive set of habits maintained by the Spirit for the whole. So, a theosemiotic CNT also expects the vagueness of the *habitus* and the variety endemic to semeiotic process to result in a community that at a certain level is a unified whole, while at a microscopic level any individual or subset of individuals might at that moment be out of sync with the *habitus* and therefore its Spirit. Indeed, given the developmental and experimental semeiotic process, a theosemiotic CNT would even suggest that any particular individual at the moment out of sync with the Spirit might yet be somehow in accord with the Spirit's developmental purpose for the symbol overall.

According to CNT, the well defined Christian *imaginarium* is learned from and maintained by the community. This defined perspective, or set of habits, is meant in CNT to supply a determining influence on the interpreter's intuitive construction of religious meaning. According to theosemiotic, in contrast, the *habitus* is also affected through the act of interpretation. The work of symbolic engagement changes the subject's interpretive habits to some degree, as the subject is motivated to know the truth of the matter. A Christian theosemiotic would therefore speak of the Christian *habitus* and its community context in terms of Peirce's conception of the symbolic "self."

**Community Definition.** Another theosemiotic response to the plain sense description of CNT would come at the point regarding the way the community of interpretation relates to the interpretive habits of its members. McGrath defines "community"—or writes that communities of interpretation are defined, are formed—as a number of people faithfully hold to a common set of interpretive traditions. The value of the Christian *imaginarium* determined by the *signum crucis* is as a symbol that can hold together such a community though there are some variations among ideas concerning that tradition.[98] So, for CNT the Christian community of interpretation just is the set of people "loyal" to that *imaginarium* and therefore marked by that *habitus*. Perhaps the essential idea here is McGrath's sense that community identity and therefore the integrity of the Christian *habitus* must be strategically, intentionally preserved by *choosing* the definitive symbol for that purpose. Recall McGrath's statement regarding the ambiguity of nature as warrant for adopting the Christian frame as starting point, "we are free to choose the manner in which we see nature, forcing us to identify the best way of beholding the natural world," (*FT* 27).[99] Though, ultimately, the formation of the Christian *imaginarium* itself in the minds of Christians, McGrath is clear, is the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.[100]The strategic function of the community seems indicated also in its role in *cultivating* that Christian identity through practices designed for the purpose. This function for the community is mentioned in a discussion of the value of the *signum crucis* for maintaining the requisite Christian character of

[98] The context of McGrath's discussion of the *signum crucis* implies that this is the vague symbol McGrath seeks for CNT, "for the purposes of the present study the most important outcome is the establishment of a communal interpretation of a sign which is open to multiple readings, none of which is self-evidently authoritative," (*RI* 97).

[99] Although, McGrath seems to hold that the Christian perspective is not as much chosen by CNT as it is received as the frame given for Christians as such. Consider, "Natural theology is here interpreted, not as a general search for divinity on terms of our own choosing, but as an engagement with nature that is conducted in the light of a Christian vision of reality, resting on a trinitarian, incarnational ontology," (*OS* 282).

[100] McGrath writes that the *imaginarium* is established through the Spirit's work of *metanoia*, (*RI* 51-52).

the *imaginarium*. McGrath writes that the *signum crucis* "can be accommodated in the notion of the church as a 'community of interpretation,' safeguarding, unfolding, and *using* the Christian *imaginarium* to grasp the significance of the world," (*RI* 100). The Christian community functions to develop its members' understanding of the sign of the cross in both "safeguarding" and then "unfolding" the cruciform *imaginarium*. That is, McGrath's idea seems to be that community members control their status as a community according to their commitment to preserving and cultivating a defined set of beliefs.

Peirce's idea was different as to the dynamics of community identity and loyalty. A community of inquiry is defined by a shared *objective*; namely, by a commitment to discover the truth of some matter on which all are interested.[101] This is the defining purpose of a community as a self. The search for the truth of the matter gives the community integrity and identity as it unifies all efforts, though they may appear to be disparate. Rapoasa writes, "The ideals and purposes to which any individual is devoted will also act as final causes to which certain aspects of that person's life will be essentially ordered. A person's life as a whole will be more or less unified in this fashion to the extent that the selving process involves real growth in meaning."[102] Habits of thought certainly contribute to the constitution of the community, but that is not due to loyalty to those habits. Rather, loyalty and love are to the community itself as the symbol of the purpose that unites them.[103] So, this sign, like the previous, has to do with the theosemiotic doctrine of the symbolic self. The basic theosemiotic correlate to the CNT idea is that the loyalty and

[101] Peirce's concept is grounded by a scientific model of communities of inquiry. Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 191-92. So, cf., also, Raposa, *PPR*, 154.

[102] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 50.

[103] Cf., Ibid., 83, 84.

interpretive habits of community members are the produce of their love for the purpose that defines and forms the community; namely, the quest for the truth of some matter.[104]

A Christian theosemiotic would affirm McGrath's claim that the Christian community of interpretation is marked by a shared *habitus*, and that that *habitus* can be analyzed into a representative set of beliefs framing the Christian *imaginarium*. Further, it would affirm McGrath's effort to identify the symbol giving definition to the entire community and its habits as the *signum crucis*. A Christian theosemiotic would nuance such claims as *descriptive*, as observing what are the "fruit" of the community symbol, of its governing *purpose*. So, it would express community identity, constitution, and loyalty in this case as: the Christian community of interpretation consists of all those who love the purpose that is represented in the cruciform *habitus*. This defining, governing purpose has been here associated with the Holy Spirit who forms these habits in the community.

If a theosemiotic idea of community turns on a shared commitment to discovery of the truth of some matter, how would that interpret the Holy Spirit as governing principle of the Christian community? A shared conviction of this community is that religious truth has been revealed in and through Jesus in a definitive and final manner. Perhaps a Christian theosemiotic would say that the loyalty of the Christian community is due to their shared love for the truth revealed in Jesus. This community is enamored by the beauty of Jesus, a sense of the profound divine glory he represents and most of all a vague sense of the infinite *meaning* of Jesus as the symbol of religious truth.[105] The Christian community is therefore organized by the Holy Spirit

[104] So, ibid., 34, 91, writes of the idea that beliefs, which are habits of interpretation, manifest in "fruits of life," habitual patterns of behavior and thought.

[105] Recall that inquiry is drawn forward by the perception of beauty, as in the practice of musement; cf., Raposa, *PPR*, 144. Similarly, on the motivating beauty of God, cf., idem., *Theosemiotic*, 17.

in the sense that it is the work of the Spirit to reveal and to glorify the Son in the name of the Father (John 16:14, 15). The Spirit maintains the purpose of the community's love: to discover the meaning of Jesus. To that end, the beliefs comprising the *imaginarium* and producing the Christian *habitus* are sustained, developed, deepened as the Spirit determines the interpretive life of the community.[106] The essence of this matter is that these habits are a result of what constitutes the Christian community of interpretation: loyalty due to love for the hope of knowing the full meaning of Jesus. So, a Christian theosemiotic shifts the focus of attention from dogmatics to personality. A Christian theosemiotic looks for conformity to the symbol of Jesus rather than merely conformity to doctrinal formulae. This continues to manifest the movement toward vagueness. A Christian theosemiotic would therefore recognize its own community as loyal to the symbol of Jesus, but Jesus is a symbol of something more vague and therefore more general in its appeal and application. A Christian theosemiotic would recognize its community as those loyal to that more general idea.

CNT holds that communities are, first of all, defined by the habits of interpretation to which its members are "loyal." McGrath describes these as "interpretive traditions." Theosemiotic holds that communities of interpretation are indeed defined by their common interest, for example, the recent community bound by its interest in discovering an effective vaccine for COVID-19. In contrast to the CNT conception is that the community is defined not by a set of traditional ideas to which it is loyal, but by a common hope for a discovery of the truth on some matter in question. A Christian theosemiotic community is therefore defined by the hope of discovering the full meaning of Jesus.

[106] The present study uses "determines" here in a soft sense of influence, as through the work of illumination and sanctification.

**Community Habitus Construction.** Finally, the CNT idea of the Christian community of interpretation cultivating its own *habitus* by paying close and constant attention to the *signum crucis* would raise a response from theosemiotic. The CNT idea here has two parts. One is McGrath's concept of *habitus* as a habitual way of seeing the world—of representing it in *schemas*—due to the training of the habits of the mind and imagination in and by one's social context (i.e., the *imaginarium*) (*RI* 28-30, 70). The second is that this training is accomplished by constant attention to the *signum crucis*; for example, through the practice of the sacraments (*RI* 97-99).[107] There seems to be a sense here, once again, that humans are the controlling agents of their imagination formation. It seems to be the idea that one can decide how one wants one's mind to function, then create that result by applying the proper techniques. This is not to ignore McGrath's attention to the Holy Spirit as the agent of transformative *metanoia*. Nor is it to ignore McGrath's aim as faithfulness to what is received as a given and authoritative tradition of faith. Rather, it is to focus attention on the prescriptive, intentional aspect of CNT's methodological decision to start with the Christian *imaginarium*. This is a decision to maintain a predefined perspective by establishing a defining symbol, the *signum crucis*, for that purpose. Therefore, McGrath's CNT notion of the self-controlled development of interpretive habits is to maintain constant attention to the *signum crucis*, trusting the Holy Spirit to work out the formation of the Christian *imaginarium* in the process. Thus established in that mental frame, CNT practitioners will naturally interpret natural signs in Christian ways.

The theosemiotic conception of the self-controlled development of habits of interpretation is a natural process of conforming one's habits to the purpose of the symbol. The

[107] McGrath discusses the *signum crucis* as that which governs the nature interpreting framework of CNT.

interpreting mind is drawn to the Sign by a vague sense of its beauty.[108] Interpretation is a process by which the mind seeks the meaning of the beauty perceived in the Sign. One's habits of interpretation are imperfectly suited to the task, and their reformation is an experimental process of developing those habits that prove useful in working out the meaning of the Sign. This, too, is a function of the objectivity of the Sign. Its ground in the object provides a constant pressure resisting subjectivity in interpretation—that is, resisting subjective arbitrariness. Theosemiotic holds that this self-controlled process occurs through the practice of musement. Raposa writes that musement effectively develops an interpreter's "reading skills."[109] The aim of this process is an interpretive embodiment of the beauty of the Sign. This just is that one's habits of mind represent the habits implied by the beauty of the Sign, such that one's actions manifest those habits.[110] Here theosemiotic affirms William James' phrase describing behavioral habits as "fruits for life."[111] They represent the "roots" of habits of interpretation trained by the objective purpose of the Sign.

An important point is that this behavioral fruit interprets the Sign according to mental habits learned from engaging the Sign.[112] As such, the resulting fruit is not merely an imitation or reproduction of the object. There is difference even as there is consistency. In other words there is a *development* of the Sign. This is understood as the "growth" of symbols. Indeed, it is the

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[108] For Peirce, beauty was a *functional* aesthetic, in that anything is beautiful if it is able to effect an interpretant. The purpose of any Sign is to represent itself in additional signs (interpretants). Therefore, effective function according to this purpose defines semeiotic beauty. In Peirce's architectonic arrangement of Philosophy, aesthetics comes before ethics and logic (which is semeiotic). Consequently, neither goodness (ethics) nor truth (semeiotic logic) factor in Peirce's understanding of beauty. Cf., Parker, *Continuity*, 50.

[109] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 18.

[110] Raposa, *PPR*, 150; ibid., *Theosemiotic*, 30.

[111] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 34.

[112] Ibid., 30.

growth of *meaning* as interpretive habits are embodied in the fruit of disciplined practices.[113] These are disciplined in that they continue the habits pertaining to the beauty of the Sign that formed them, because of the continuation of love for that Sign.[114] Therefore, theosemiotic speaks of the "gift of meaning."[115] Interpretations are discovered through this process of musing upon and so learning the mental habits of the Sign's beauty. No one can predict the fruit these habits will yield in the life of any interpreter. Yet, these fruit of meaning are the reason for engaging the process at all, "This is part of the raison d'etre of any theosemiotic inquiry: we struggle to interpret what lies most deeply 'hidden in the icon,' and so to signify the mystery encountered therein, always mostly failing, but sometimes being grasped by it, graced by it, becoming its sign, and so embodying (at best, I think, in conduct shaped by love and in communities rather than alone) a tiny fragment of its meaning."[116] The basic theosemiotic idea, then, is that habits of interpretation are trained naturally by the Sign as it is engaged through musement. This process works by waiting for "fruits of life" to finally align with the beauty of the Sign. At that point, that beauty has become embodied in the interpreter who has developed the requisite habits of mind.

In light of theosemiotic there is a double sense for "self" in the concept of self-controlled habit formation. Interpretation is a process of symbolic engagement. There are two "selves" engaged in the work of interpretation. Interpretation is therefore the endeavor to realize meaning that is consistent with the objective reality of both selves as symbols. In the present case, a Christian theosemiotic would recognize the *signum crucis* as the Sign embodying the beauty that

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[113] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 7, 44.

[114] Ibid., 81, 97.

[115] Ibid., 13, 98.

[116] Ibid., 138-39.

every member of the community loves and wants to discover its full meaning. To that end, the community attends constantly to the *signum crucis* through the practice of musement. In this case, certain meaningful practices can facilitate musement on the sign of the cross, such as the sacraments. Since musement itself has an experimental aspect, "reading skills" are developed even as one engages in the playful exploration of possible meaning. However, interpretive habits gained in musement are imperfect. A Christian theosemiotic would also look to the inductive process of testing hypotheses in experience as crucial to the development of the requisite habits. This involves attempts at putting beliefs into practice and observing the results. When the results embody to some extent the beauty of the Sign, they are confirmed as fruits for life and the habits that produced them become established. Other outcomes will prove dissonant with the beauty of the *signum crucis* and their underlying habits are marked for reform.

In this Christian theosemiotic account, the beauty of the Sign correlates to McGrath's role of the Holy Spirit in habit-formation for the Christian community of interpretation. The requisite habits of mind develop through experience as the objective purpose of the Sign constantly affects its interpreters through the beauty of the Sign. In other words, the Christian community of interpretation is formed by the purpose of the Holy Spirit as each member is drawn into union due to shared love for the meaning of the *signum crucis*. The Spirit's purpose—and so that of the "self" or symbol that is the Christian community of interpretation—is to realize the full meaning of the *signum crucis*. This is grounded in a perception of the beauty of that Sign—a beauty grounded in the objectivity of the *signum crucis*. Accordingly, in CNT terms, the Spirit works to develop the minds of the community to conform them to the beauty of the sign of the cross producing embodiments of meaning in practice.

The formation of interpretive habits internal to the Christian community of interpretation through continuous musement and praxis regarding the *signum crucis* develops the conception of the fourth CNT sign regarding the determinate *habitus*. The present interest here goes further. The Christian community as a self engages intra-community practices to cultivate the *habitus* for the purpose of engaging other symbols external to the community in an authentic Christian way. A Christian theosemiotic pursues this through the abductive strategy of musement upon natural signs. As a symbol whose purpose is the realization of the full meaning of Jesus, these engagements with external Signs are also governed by the Spirit of the Christian interpretive community. Therefore, not only are the objects of those natural Signs self-revealing, the Spirit of the Christian community works through that process of interpretation to develop the meaning of Jesus. That is, in engaging the selves of the natural Signs, Christian theosemioticians perceive ways that they themselves are being "read" by those Signs. The beauty of the spiritual purpose of the Christian interpretive community leads Christian theosemioticians to perceive the different senses for the meaning of Jesus in the engagements with those other Signs. Consequently, their own interpretive habits grow, and those that are coherent with respect to the cruciform *imaginarium* become part of the repertoire of the Christian theosemiotician. As Christian theosemiotic engages other Signs more broadly—natural and religious—the more their *habitus* embodies the full generality of the meaning of Jesus.

A Christian theosemiotic would be therefore a fairly robust natural theology, in that it implies that humans learn to embody the divine beauty of God through disciplined, enduring engagement with natural signs. Further, a Christian theosemiotic would understand the beauty of the *signum crucis* as an index of the divine beauty discovered in many different forms and sources of religious signs. Therefore, a Christian theosemiotic would have its own sense for

CNT's desire to preserve and cultivate its distinctive *habitus* according to the cruciform *imaginarium*. Remaining grounded in the Christian *imaginarium*, the Christian theosemiotic community is able collectively in the course of time to develop the full meaning of Jesus through Christian engagement with many different religious symbols of ever greater degrees of vagueness. This process of engaging other symbolic selves not only develops the meaning of Jesus as it is embodied in Christian interpreters. As these engage selves embodying habits of other religions, the engagement with cruciform symbols of the meaning of Jesus will "read" them to themselves, and their habits will grow under the influence of the Spirit. In this way a Christian theosemiotic might increase the community who loves the hope of the full meaning of Jesus as the beauty of that hope catches on through symbolic engagement with those whose habits are primarily formed through a certain quality of attention to the *signum crucis*.

Whereas CNT wants to situate the Christian *imaginarium* in a defined way according to the sign of the cross, a Christian theosemiotic would treat the *signum crucis* as a sign marking the starting point of the development of the Church's *imaginarium*. The difference is subtle but real. CNT holds the cruciform *imaginarium* as a pattern to be cultivated and *applied* to nature in such a way that it reifies nature's truth, beauty, and goodness. This is hoped to result in great explanatory cogency and power in CNT IBE arguments in natural theological engagements with science. A Christian theosemiotic, in contrast, expects that the cruciform engagement with nature will result in the growth of meaning of the symbol of the *signum crucis* as that symbol also contributes to the growth of meaning gained regarding the religious significance of the natural world.

Summary of A Christian Theosemiotic

From this interpretive exercise engaging CNT at certain points according to theosemiotic a Christian theosemiotic has emerged. The interpretation set forth here has favored theosemiotic conceptions when these have contrasted with those of CNT. The resulting model approaches natural theology in a way that intends to be Christian in its identity while also being global, universal in its relevance and meaning. That is to say that a Christian theosemiotic develops its theological meaning in successive levels of increasing vagueness, such that its religious truth appears to identify with truth manifest in other religious Signs. Accordingly, a Christian theosemiotic starts with the idea that the vagueness of natural Signs provides opportunities for symbolic engagement with the Christian *imaginarium*, such that the religious meaning of both grows according to the logic of vagueness. A Christian theosemiotic practices Peirce's abductive strategy of musement for this process of the growth of meaning. This is possible according to the semeiotic structure of Signs with respect to the self-revealing power of their objects. However, the growth of meaning through musement is not a straightforward process. The *habitus* of the Christian theosemiotic community remains consistent and coherent with its core symbol, the *signum crucis*, even as its collective musement manifests a dynamic experimental ebb and flow as community members learn the requisite interpretive habits. Binding all of this together and motivating its progress is the theosemiotic community's love for the hope of realizing the full meaning of Jesus. This love keeps them grounded in the sign of the cross as their experiments in musement on many natural religious signs and on many other religions results in the growth of the community of those who love the hope of the meaning of Jesus. Christian theosemioticians increasingly embody those habits realizing Jesus' meaning along with others who are drawn by Jesus' beauty into that semeiotic continuum. The final stage of the present experiment will identify a practicing

theosemiotician whose work manifests most or all of these qualities, and supplies experiential cases to illustrate whether Peirce's theosemiotic brings with it a tendency toward PEM ontology.

## Christian Theosemiotic Outcomes

This part of the present experiment looks to theosemiotic experience for evidence of the interpretive deductions made in the engagement of theosemiotic with CNT. These yielded a hypothesis for several beliefs pertaining to a Christian theosemiotic, which may be outlined as follows:[117]

1. The Christian *imaginarium* is the vague starting point from which Christian inquiry discovers the vaguer religious meaning of Signs.

2. The logic of vagueness operative in the aesthetic practice of musement produces the growth of the religious meaning of Signs.

3. The objectivity and final causation of semeiosis grounds confidence in the true religious meaning of nature to reveal itself through the process of symbolic engagement.

4. Religious interpretive communities, such as the Christian community, are unified by their love for a common purpose, which governs the development of their interpretive habits.

5. The symbol of Jesus, whose Christian community unites in the love of the hope of someday knowing Jesus' full meaning, represents a vaguer religious idea in loyalty to which a much broader community is united.

6. Symbolic engagement yields mutual self-revelation, such that the beauty of the growth of the meaning of Jesus, by engaging many other Signs with increasing vague significance while grounded always in the *signum crucis*, increasingly brings to light the full religious meaning of both.

[117] While there is an evident interrelation among these beliefs, this outline is not to imply an orderly, systematic philosophical argument for these as constituting a coherent Christian theosemiotic theory. These are the gleanings of an interpretive engagement with CNT. Their order and form have been determined by that engagement, such that there is an *ad hoc* aspect to this collection of beliefs. Consequently, this writer takes the *prima facie* coherence of this set of ideas as promising the potential for a more developed Christian theosemiotic theory. That must wait for another project. Their use for the present inquiry is to provide a set of signs by which to qualify Robert Neville as an exemplar of something like a Christian theosemiotic.

A further result of this sketch of a Christian theosemiotic is the hypothesis that Robert Neville might serve as an exemplar for the purposes of the empirical work of this chapter. It is germane to this empirical strategy that Neville was not in view at the beginning of the theosemiotic inquiry above. The suggestion of the Neville hypothesis came in the course of interpreting CNT according to theosemiotic. First, the language of "symbolic engagement" arose as though naturally within that discussion, yet without any intention of appealing to Neville's sense for that phrase. Then each of the conclusions revealing a rough form for a Christian theosemiotic in different ways suggested the idea that Neville might just provide a case for further study.

**Qualifying Robert Neville**

Consequently, the first task, as this study enters the inductive phase of the experiment, is to establish *that* Neville qualifies as an exemplar for a Christian theosemiotic. Obviously, the correspondence of Neville's work with this Christian theosemiotic model can only be approximate. Still, it should be evident whether there is sufficient likeness to consider Neville as a Christian interpreter of theosemiotic. Neville confesses to be a Christian, and therefore to have a Christian "bias," though he strives methodologically to neutralize this.[118] Neville also describes his work as a form of Christian theology, though he emphasizes that he intentionally avoids a confessional approach to that task.[119] In Raposa's estimation, Neville is a successful interpreter of Peirce in a manner akin to theosemiotic. He includes Neville's work "among the very few attempts to adapt Peirce's philosophy for theological purposes."[120] Further, Raposa commends

[118] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xxiv.

[119] Ibid., xiv. The context here is an extensive discussion characterizing Neville's work through a striking contrast to the theology of Stanley Hauerwas. That is, Neville claims both approaches as Christian theology, one philosophical and the other confessional.

[120] Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 285n5. The other named interpreter of Peirce is Peter Ochs and his "rabbinic pragmatism." Also, note that Raposa states these things in context of his discussion of theosemiotic's derivative relationship to Peirce's theories; namely, that Raposa and others are follow Peirce without being slaves to his ideas.

Neville as an example of the sort of "religious naturalism, capacious rather than narrow in its scope and methods," that theosemiotic must also be.[121]

Neville makes no secret of his indebtedness to Peirce's thought. Though the discussions carried out in the body of Neville's philosophical theology project are not usually transparent about Peirce's influence, where Neville explains his methodology he regularly highlights ways that Peirce's philosophy funds his own. The Peircean heart of Neville's project, of course, is Peirce's Semeiotic. Neville's work is a "theology of symbolic engagement," so he understandably takes advantage of the robust sign theory Peirce provides. Neville mentions that the semeiotic concepts of "[r]eference, meaning, and interpretation in context are the three main elements in a theory of signs that has learned from the semiotics of Charles Peirce."[122] Neville also incorporates Peirce's theory of the triadic action of Signs as such.[123] Also, Neville's work receives value from its reliance upon semeiotic due to the breadth of scope of Peirce's theory. In particular, Peirce's comprehensive sign theory includes an analysis of semeiotic dynamics and a taxonomy of sign types that enables coherent analysis of religious signs and their effects in a wide array of forms and contexts.[124] A major aspect of Neville's theology reflects Peirce's fallibilism. This belongs to the overall empirical approach to theology that Neville adopts, receiving theological claims as hypotheses that must be tested.[125] Neville's method also manifests the basic rationale of pragmaticist inquiry. In an unusually transparent passage regarding Peirce's influence on the process of Neville's work, Neville explains how his entire four-volume *Philosophical*

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[121] Ibid., 146; Neville is included in a list of exemplars at ibid., 289n70.

[122] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xiii.

[123] Ibid., xixn15.

[124] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xix.

[125] Ibid., xi.

*Theology* project moves according to the pragmaticist rhythm of abduction, deduction, and induction.[126] On the other hand, as Raposa noted, Neville does not ape Peirce's work. For example, Neville maintains a broader sense of the term "symbol" than it has in Peirce's system.[127]

From these things, one could "do the math" and posit that Neville comes within a reasonable approximation of Christian theosemiotic to illustrate the sorts of outcomes Christian theosemiotic is likely to have under the influence of a full-throated appropriation of Peirce's philosophy. However, correlating Neville's views with the six ideas in the outline above will strengthen this conclusion. It happens that evidence for several of the Christian theosemiotic ideas presents itself in Neville's discussion of four "principal points [that] distinguish this *Philosophical Theology* from more common approaches to theology in the contemporary world."[128] Evidence for the other ideas is also available in Neville's work.

There is no question that Neville's project manifests the Christian theosemiotic idea that the Christian *imaginarium* constitutes the starting point for—but not the final say in—theological understanding. Regarding the distinguishing mark of "engagement," Neville writes that this has the result "that the boundaries of religious communities that might be defined by doctrinal affiliation are blurred, if not wholly relativized."[129] That is, the process of a theology of symbolic engagement such as Neville advocates holds that tradition-specific doctrines—their religious

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[126] Robert Cummings Neville, *Ultimates*, vol. 1, *Philosophical Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), 57-58. On the reference to Neville's "four-volume *Philosophical Theology* project": *Scope and Truth* is the first, unnumbered, volume in the series, setting forth the methodology. The other volumes are Robert Cummings Neville, *Existence*, vol. 2, *Philosophical Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015); Robert Cummings Neville, *Religion*, vol. 3, *Philosophical Theology,* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016).

[127] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xxii.

[128] Neville, *Ultimates*, 13. The four things he mentions are "its metaphysical pragmatism...its shift from doctrines to engagements...its shift from viewing religions as comprised of socially constructed categories to viewing religion as a universal part of human nature with socially constructed variants [and] its emphasis on the breakdown of sacred canopies."

[129] Ibid., 15.

*identities*—are valid expressions of religious experiences and convictions pertaining to that tradition. However, they are not sufficient understandings of the vague, "ultimate reality" that they ultimately imply as symbols.[130] Consequently, "the project involves deliberate efforts to make theology vulnerable to correction, requiring theology in each tradition to be open to learning from other traditions and from the arts, sciences, and practical disciplines."[131] Discussing the distinctive concept of religion Neville's project advocates, the idea of the vague starting point manifests in his call to "recontextualize" the "theologies of traditions for which historical narratives are central" to accord with the "larger natural context." Christianity, of course, is among these.[132] So, "*Philosophical Theology* respects and interprets the revelatory claims of the religions it studies without treating them as unchallengeable premises. Thus *Philosophical Theology* speaks *to* and *for* the religious locations it studies but not *from* any of them in the sense of presupposing their truth."[133] For Neville's project, then, even a generic theistic conception of "God" is only one of many possible symbols supplying a coherent "rhetorical center" from which to begin theological inquiry as he conceives it.[134]

Neville's discussion of the four "points" marking *Philosophical Theology* vis-a-vis other theological approaches does not appear to indicate the second idea of a Christian theosemiotic. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that Neville's project entails that the logic of vagueness operates through the process of musement to reveal religious meaning.[135] Neville explains that

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[130] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xiv, writes, "Because any theological witness needs interpretation, and...to cope with arbitrariness, witness cannot be viewed as the infallible beginning of theology but at best as an orienting stimulus and tentative conclusion."

[131] Ibid., x.

[132] Neville, *Ultimates*, 19.

[133] Ibid., xvii.

[134] Neville, *Ultimates*, 2.

[135] Warren G. Frisinia, "Pragmatism, Logical Vagueness, and the Art of Comparative Engagement," in *Theology in Global Context: Essays in Honor of Robert Cummings Neville*, ed. Amos Yong and Peter G. Heltzel

his project endeavors to "exhibit its subject matter," namely, the ultimate meaning of religious symbols. This follows Peirce's logic of abduction, in that theological reflection has the form of musement as it explores explanatory possibilities.[136] Neville describes that this "process begins wildly and vaguely" and is refined "through stages of clarification and precision [abstraction]."[137] Indeed, he aims to engage "with as many domains of reality that might correct" his theology.[138] This reflects Neville's long-held belief that theological symbols just are vague representations of the underlying reality. That is, that reality is such that it is somehow "symbolizable" in terms of determinate realities (including general ideas) without being reducible to any of them.[139]

*Philosophical Theology's* distinguishing mark of "metaphysical pragmatism" entails the Christian theosemiotic idea that Signs can be trusted to reveal the truth of their ultimate objects through the process of interpretation. Neville writes that the work of inquiry provides a sort of "feedback" due to "the realities referred to in the engagement, resisting attempts to evaluate them

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(Bloomsbury, 2016; reprint, 2004), 167, writes, "This Peircean theory that all of our theories can be ranked in a hierarchy of vagueness, goes to the heart of Neville's comparative methodology."

[136] Neville, *Ultimates*, xxi, explains "exhibition" in this way:

> Charles Peirce taught that the first step in any reflection or "musement" is the "abduction" of an hypothesis that explains or describes the subject matter under investigation…The abductive process begins wildly and vaguely but works through stages of clarification and precision so as finally to reach a stage where one can make predictive inferences from it and test those predictions in experience. The result of abduction is a grand hypothesis that "exhibits" the structures, characters, textures, and values of its subject matter, allowing them to be grasped.

[137] Ibid.

[138] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xi. He goes on to apply this to Christian theology, writing, "Christian identity, I argue, should follow the truth rather than substitute self-proclamation of some identity for criteria of truth"; that in the interest of the truth "theology needs to learn from whatever sources are available. Hence, it should attend to many that go beyond the Christian Bible"; ibid., xv.

[139] Neville, *Truth of Broken Symbols*, xvii.

wrongly."[140] Such symbolic engagement with reality is therefore "vulnerable to correction by the realities they engage."[141] An illustration Neville raises utilizes the symbols of heaven and of personal gods. The semeiotic feedback takes the form of a sense of the "broken" status of such Signs. By this Neville means that an interpreter's context helps them perceive that such "symbols...obviously are not literally true." They are "broken." Yet, in other interpretive contexts—presumably vaguer ones, moving in the direction of ultimacy rather than particularity—they may be "taken to be true in broken innocence." That is, one gains a perception of their value for truth that is not determined by their literal sense.[142]

The fourth idea of a Christian theosemiotic is that religious interpretive communities are unified by their love for a common purpose, which is inherent in their identity and manifest in their habits of interpretation. Neville would not advocate any particular religious perspective as definitive of the whole of the truth to be discovered by *Philosophical Theology*. Still, Neville's project values the particular identities of religious communities for the purpose of discovering that truth. So, he advocates the importance of community-specific theological work, in which

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[140] Neville, *Ultimates*, 15. Neville credits this to the three-fold categorial schema of Peirce's phenomenology, according to which Thirdness provides the conception of the process of "actualizing form," of the becoming of the general idea.

[141] Ibid., 59. Jennifer Hockenberry, "Graceful Reality: A Foundation for the Future of Philosophical Theology," in *Theology in Global Context: Essays in Honor of Robert Cummings Neville*, ed. Amos Yong and Peter G. Heltzel (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016; reprint, 2004), 279, writes, "Neville is looking to clarify his basic understanding of the world. And his basic understanding of the world, Neville claims, is Christian...that viewpoint includes as part of its framework a belief that reality teaches us, that experience teaches us...that Truth pursues us."

[142] Neville, *Truth of Broken Symbols*, ix. This is Neville's concept of the "axiological" nature of symbolic engagement; that something of the truth of the underlying reality "carries over" to the interpreter's idea of it. Cf., George Allan, "Thinking Axiologically," in *Interpreting Neville*, ed. J. Harley Chapman and Nancy Frankenberry (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 11. Discussing this aspect of Neville's thought, Allen writes, "An assertion of truth is a judgment, a claim that what is represented in experience truly depicts the real world in some fashion because the value of the representation preserves some aspect of the value of the world represented." Similarly, Wesley Wildman notes that Neville's concept of engagement holds that "value is carried over in interpretation," in Wesley J. Wildman, "Neville's Systematic Theology of Symbolic Engagement," in *Theology in Global Context: Essays in Honor of Robert Cummings Neville*, ed. Amos Yong and Peter G. Heltzel (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016; reprint, 2004), 6.

communities seek to better understand their own symbols. He writes, "This is kataphatic theology, and is essential both to the vitality and ordering of religious communities and to the continuity of traditions in changing circumstances." This establishes, maintains, and develops the "sacred canopy" necessary to religious practice as such.[143]

As in a Christian theosemiotic, Neville's *Philosophical Theology* also manifests the idea that the particularity of a religious symbol represents a religious idea pertaining to a much broader community of inquiry. This manifests in Neville's discussion of the mark of engagement among the four distinguishing points of his theological approach. He writes that engagement "shifts the locus of theological truth from doctrines to interpretive engagement." This much is already in the earlier ideas of the symbolic starting point and the logic of vagueness. Like Christian theosemiotic, Neville also builds on those earlier ideas regarding the implication for defining communities of interpretation. Just as the symbol represents vaguer meanings, its interpretation leads one to identify with broader interpretive communities. Neville writes, "it also shifts the public for theology from the theologian's own religious community to a public consisting of anyone with an interest in the outcome of the inquiry."[144] For this reason, Neville advocates that theology "must be global and 'omni-disciplinary' in its public."[145] In other words, the "public for the philosophy as developed here for theological issues includes thinkers who come from any religious or secular tradition with ideas to contribute to the first-order issues or to the second and higher order issues of analysis and methodology."[146] In this way, "This project should serve the theological interests of Buddhists, Christians, Confucians, Daoists, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims

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[143] Neville, *Ultimates*, 19-20. Neville uses "sacred canopies" as a transparent reference to Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990; repr., 1967).

[144] Neville, *Ultimates*, 15.

[145] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xv.

[146] Neville, *Ultimates*, xvi.

just as much as the work of their own confessional theologians, and with an openness to comparison and correction that provides a broad and somewhat tested context."[147] Though not stating the Christian theosemiotic idea in so many words, nevertheless, Neville's idea is clearly parallel. His own project is to start from one's own theological perspective in a process of inquiry that opens out onto vaguer theological symbols, such that the litany of disparate traditions can somehow find common theological ground.

Finally, the sixth Christian theosemiotic idea adds emphasis to the particularity of one's home theological tradition as necessary for the successful inquiry into the ultimate vagueness of the reality behind all religious Signs. Neville's project manifests something very close to this. This is the reason Neville prefers to consider religious symbols in their indexical aspect rather than their iconic aspect. Clarifying his take on Peirce's concept of symbols, Neville writes, "Most deep religious symbols are indexical as well as perhaps iconic, and they have to be lived with for individuals and communities to be transformed so that they actually function to carry across something true."[148] It is therefore the "iconic" particularity of such religious symbols within their respective communities that facilitates the community's enduring experience of the "indexical" level of engagement. The consequence is that religious communities develop their understanding of the breadth of scope of a symbol's meaning. Part of this process includes symbols becoming "broken" for a religious community. Discussing the concept of broken symbols as a distinguishing mark of *Philosophical Theology*, Neville writes that when symbols break down, inquiry continues.

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[147] Neville, *Ultimates*, xvii.

[148] Robert Cummings Neville, "Thanks and Conversation: Responding to My Theological Colleagues," in *Theology in Global Context: Essays in Honor of Robert Cummings Neville*, ed. Amos Yong and Peter G. Heltzel (Bloomsbury 2016; reprint, 2004), 359.

> Most theologies...have apophatic moments when they recognize the limitations, falsehoods, failures to address realities, and the spiritual bondage of manifest sacred canopies. In this recognition they attempt to articulate more nearly ultimate sacred canopies that address the implosion of the manifest canopies, although these too are limited by the powers of symbolization.[149]

Such is the process of this sort of theological inquiry. Moving into ever more ultimate forms of the symbols, converging toward a perception of the ultimate reality. Though, strictly speaking, this point can never be reached, by virtue of its ultimate vagueness. So, the particularity of the confessional religious community is valued as necessary, "understanding that the tradition itself is aimed to develop and test the best hypotheses."[150] That testing occurs in the engagement from the omni-disciplinary community mentioned earlier, "Those claims that are most vulnerable, and yet are sustained and steadied through as many critical tests as can be devised, including criticism from all sides of a global public, have the greatest rational warrant."[151]

**The Question of Panentheism**

Having established Neville's credentials as a Christian theosemiotician, this inquiry arrives at its final step. The problem has been the evident probability that CNT's appeal to Semeiotic would entail an unwitting incorporation of Peirce's PEM bias. The six points outlining a Christian theosemiotic hypothesize some of the basic features such a CNT would have. It remains to answer the question of whether such a theological project has proven in experience to manifest one or more of the criteria of PEM. PEM would be indicated in a theology whose conception of the God-world relation (A) speaks of divine transcendence in terms of a self-relation;

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[149] Neville, *Ultimates*, 20. Though the earlier discussion of theosemiotic did not emphasize it, Michael Raposa conceives theosemiotic as valuing an apophatic attitude regarding religious experiences, that much more remains hidden than has been revealed. Cf., Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 85-86.

[150] Neville, *Scope and Truth*, xi.

[151] Ibid., x. Note that Neville's use of "vulnerable" recalls the vagueness emphasized in the first two ideas; that religious traditions subject their symbolic identity to the musing inquiry of a global array of others.

(B) is presented in terms of interdependence as necessary for growth of the divinity; or, (C) represents "God" as a reference to metaphysical principles. An initial foray into Neville's extensive work finds (C) strongly represented in Neville's writings, while (A) and (B) are implicated when considering the significance of Neville's method of engagement as *symbolic*.

Because Neville does not presuppose theism in even its simplest form, it makes sense to begin with the third criterion, that "God" is a symbol of metaphysical principles. According to Neville, any given religious symbol refers to the maximally vague "ultimate reality."[152] Consistent with the treatment of "God" as a metaphysical category, Neville's definition of his conception of ultimate reality is given as his overarching metaphysical hypothesis for *Philosophical Theology*. He writes, "The complex metaphysical hypothesis to be elaborated throughout the volumes of *Philosophical Theology* is that the ultimate reality of the world consists in its being created in all its spatiotemporal complexity by an ontological act of creation. Everything determinate in any way is part of the world so created."[153] This certainly seems to manifest something of the dipolarity of the PEM mind-body model of the God-world relation. PEM thus holds that God's being includes every determinate, created thing in the cosmos, while God's being as such is somehow more than what has become and is becoming created in the world. Specifically, regarding Neville's conception, "ultimate reality" refers to a metaphysical quality of the totality of determinate, created things. That is the "ontological act of creation," which is causally responsible for everything. Neville holds that "the ultimate is a singular act of creation, not in time or space but creative of time and space."[154] That moment of creative action is Neville's

[152] Recall, e.g., discussion of the concept of broken symbols as a mark of Neville's project. The move toward a more ultimate sacred canopy was movement toward perception of the ultimate reality.

[153] Neville, *Ultimates*, 1.

[154] Ibid., 322.

understanding of the meaning of "God."[155] Neville's likeness to PEM intensifies in light of the fact that he conceives of the act of creation as "eternal," as *ongoing*. Therefore, the determinate world always constitutes the work of "God," of that ongoing creative act.[156] In PEM terms, then, the world is always the self-expression of its ultimate reality as the process of creation from nothing.[157]

Speaking of ultimate reality expressing its "self" leads to a consideration of whether Neville's theology manifests the PEM criterion of the God-world relation conceived as a self-relation. Begin by noting that Neville denies any notion of a unifying self, or intelligibility, or purpose, characterizing the ultimate reality of things. He writes, "because the ultimate has no nature apart from creation, it cannot be a person apart from creation, who creates as a personal act. But neither can the ultimate create itself to be a person in any sense deeply analogous to finite creative people as persons."[158] On the other hand, Neville also describes ultimate reality in a way that seems parallel to Peirce's conception of the nested continua of all of reality. Notice in the following quote that the ultimate reality (the ontological creative act) is related through various contextual levels in which determinate things relate to each other. Neville writes,

> The ontological creative act is the source of possibility and value through the form in all things, allowing for temporal change to actualize possibilities with values...is the source of the components that harmonies harmonize in their time, and thus of the groundedness

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[155] Neville, *Ultimates*, 260, "the dialectical, metaphysical theory of the ontological act of creation is as much a name for God as a description."

[156] Ibid., 261-62.

[157] On creation from nothing, cf., ibid., 322. To speak of creation as God's self-expression can be a bit misleading. Neville does not follow Peirce in theorizing the cosmos as having personality in any sense. Neville emphasizes the nothingness of creation, such that creation is absolutely "arbitrary"; cf., ibid., 17. Further, Neville expressly does not rely on Peirce for ontology, only for the symbolic logic informing Neville's symbolic engagement epistemology and methodology. Cf., e.g., Robert Cummings Neville, *God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992; repr., 1968) , 131, 139.

[158] Neville, *Ultimates*, 323. This is consistent with Neville's earlier denials of a "personalistic" conception of the God-world relation, expressly as obtaining in panentheism in its process theism (dipolar) form; cf., Neville, *God the Creator*, 119, 191.

> of those harmonies...is the source of the existential location of each harmony in a field whereby it can be connected and mutually determined by other harmonies...is the source and context of the ultimate identity or value attained by each harmony, and of the harmonies together.[159]

So, although Neville certainly denies an overarching logic or teleology of things such as Peirce hypothesized, he nevertheless conceives of the totality of things in terms of an ordered series determined by their origin in the ontological act of creation.[160] While not precise, there is a sense in which Neville thus expresses a version of the mind-body analogy. As the body's form and actions are determined by its mind, so the ultimate reality—that ontological creative act—eternally determines the forms and actions of all determinate things.[161]

Two of the three PEM criteria are recognizable even in the cursory considerations of Neville made here. The remaining criterion regards the notion that God depends upon the world for his own growth, for God's own experience and becoming. Strictly speaking, this criterion should perhaps be denied as applying to Neville's work. Since the ultimate reality is simply an ongoing arbitrary creative act, that reality would not be in any sense a consciousness or a mind—which requires a sense of purpose at some level—that could experience being or becoming. On the

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[159] Neville, *Ultimates*, 322. Note that Neville's use of "harmony" and "harmonies" refers to the semeiotic nature of things and their interrelations. Moreover, elsewhere Neville states that harmonies are one of three "loci" of the divine nature; cf., Neville, "Thanks and Conversation" 366.

[160] In light of this, Neville's theology approaches that of Robert Corrington's "ecstatic naturalism." Corrington's naturalism follows Spinoza's "*natura naturans, natura naturata*" ("nature naturing, nature natured") construction, such that nature is its own creative source. Cf., e.g., Robert Corrington, *Semiotic Theory*. Important for this discussion, Corrington writes autobiographically that his naturalism, which also draws heavily upon Peirce's semeiotic, has progressed from panentheism now to pantheism, Robert S. Corrington, "My Passage from Panentheism to Pantheism," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 23, no. 2 (2002): 129-53. In that way, Corrington might provide a case study buttressing William Lane Craig's argument that panentheism inevitably shades into pantheism. Cf., e.g., Craig, "Pantheists in Spite of Themselves: God and Infinity in Contemporary Theology,". However, William Rowe argues that Craig misconstrues the view of Philip Clayton, a key exemplar of panentheism Craig considers in his argument; cf., Rowe, "Does Panentheism Reduce to Pantheism? A Response to Craig," 65-67.

[161] Indeed, Neville himself appears to sanction such a holistic view when in the frontmatter of *Ultimates* he explains the logic of the cover art for the volume. Namely, he writes that the very center space of the drawing represents the ontological creative act. The drawing then shows that everything else is determined by the form of that act. Neville, *Ultimates*, vi.

other hand, Neville holds that attributes predicated of "God" depend upon what is manifest in the created order. He writes, "We cannot say that God (or Brahman, or Shiva, or non-being, or the Dao, or Heaven, etc.) *apart from identification with the many* is good, true, unified, or beautiful...Much less can we say that God has intentional properties as a person."[162] This is consistent with Neville's doctrine that it is in the act of creating from nothing that the ultimate reality determines the creation and determines "God" to thereby become the creator.[163] Nevertheless, given Neville's defining logic of symbolic engagement, it is not necessary for the ultimate reality actually to be theorized by Neville as a cosmic purpose in a constant process of becoming. It is enough that Neville's conception stands as a vaguer—that is, more ultimate—level of such a conception. That is, one might say that PEM's concept of God as the mind that grows and experiences by way of its cosmic body is a less-than-ultimate conception of the ultimate reality. Yet, it is more ultimate—and, so, closer to the truth of things—than other theistic models, such as CT.[164] Therefore, in light of Neville's work, the trajectory of a Christian theosemiotic not only leads to the tell-tale PEM criteria. It also leads beyond PEM to a more radical form of religious naturalism, in which the basic theistic notion of a personal God is only a symbol of the maximally vague ontological act of creation from nothing.

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[162] Neville, *Ultimates*, 175. Emphasis added.

[163] Wildman, "Neville's Systematic Theology," 11, writes, "Specifically, for Neville, creation is a singular act in which both the world's nature and the divine nature are determined. Equivalently, being-itself has no determinate nature."

[164] Accordingly, Neville discusses a way that the persons of the Christian Trinity correlate to salient features of ultimate reality and its determinate creation according to Neville's hypothesis. The Father corresponds to ultimate reality as such, the arbitrary ontological act of creation. The Son, or "Logos," correlates to the "set of transcendentals that constitute the characters of harmony" inherent in all determinate things. The Spirit "is the force of temporal process that continually builds up harmonies and tears them down." Neville adds that the Logos and the Spirit "constitute the way by which the eternal act of creation proceeds within time from date to date." Neville, *Ultimates*, 261-62. Neville does not claim that the Trinitarian Persons are *merely* these metaphysical correlates. Neville wishes always to respect the specific theological content native to religious symbols in their home traditions. Still, it is the case that he claims that the Christian Trinity is, in truth, a too-determinate symbol of what are metaphysical qualities or principles.

Regarding all three PEM criteria, then, Neville follows the naturalist trajectory beyond Peirce's own conclusions. PEM holds that God and the world depend upon one another for growth and the experience of becoming. While Peirce's synechism can lend to such notions, Peirce conceived of the God-cosmos continuum as semeiotic in nature. The growth of meaning in the cosmos, on Peirce's account, was not God's own growth. Like Peirce, Neville denies that the growth of the cosmos is the growth of God, but that is because Neville denies any reality to "God" beyond one of many symbols for the act of creation. PEM holds that the God-cosmos relation is similar to that of a mind and body. It is, in other words, a self-relation. Peirce approaches this idea in his conception of the Absolute Mind. In the end, however, the Absolute Mind is the first creature of the cosmos, the first symbol of God's reality, on Peirce's reckoning. Neville surpasses PEM's claim of the God-cosmos totality as a self. Denying any sense of self or personality to God, Neville holds that the ultimate reality relates arbitrarily to the cosmos. Nevertheless, it is a totality due to the continuum resulting from the act of creation. Finally, PEM holds that "God" in fact represents certain metaphysical features and principles of the bipolar totality. Peirce approaches this idea, too, but stops short. Peirce holds that those principles—such as natural laws—are symbols of God's will and purposes in the cosmos, embodying information about God but are not God himself in the PEM sense. Neville, in contrast to Peirce, embraces the PEM idea in the strongest of terms. Yet, whereas PEM intends to remain a form of theism, Neville expressly denies any sense of theism for his view.[165] Rather than, as Peirce did, hold the creation of the cosmos and its ensuing developmental process as a "vast representamen," "a symbol of God's purpose," Neville turns that relation on its head. For Neville, it is "God"—even as conceived by PEM—that is a symbol of the self-creating cosmos.

[165] Neville, *Ultimates*, 1, 2.

This is a surprising conclusion that begs for explanation. *Why* does Neville go so far beyond Peirce and PEM? Is that somehow the logical outcome of Peirce's ideas? In other words, if it is correct to hold Neville as an exemplar of a Christian theosemiotic, does this result mean that Peirce's ideas entail Neville's radical form of theological naturalism? This might appear to be the case, since those who so far have taken Peirce most seriously for theology sympathize with one another on just this point: that Peirce's thought lends to a naturalistic religious paradigm in natural theology.[166] The common factor in Neville's post-Peircean relation to the PEM criteria is Neville's strict denial of even a vague sort of theism as an ultimate way of talking about the religious significance of the world. Neville strongly and consistently denies any objective reality to notions of personality in conceptions of the religious ultimate. This is evident in his emphasis on the *indexical* nature of natural symbols of ultimate reality, in that the created order of things represents the eternal creative act indexically, as effect represents cause.[167] It is thus evident that Neville's view is marked by its secondness. This is in contrast to Peirce's view that natural signs of God are purposeful and communicative like elements of a poem or painting. That is, for Peirce a symbol is a relation marked by its thirdness. Neville expressly did not use "symbol" in Peirce's more specific sense.[168] Therefore, Neville rejects Peirce's confident conclusion that Synechism entails a personal God, directly perceivable through natural signs. Recall that Peirce's doctrine of directly perceiving a personal God stands with his anthropomorphism and objective idealism. It

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[166] Importantly, they have in common a theological emphasis upon Peirce's conception of the primordial "nothing" from which all things are created. Cf., e.g., Neville, *Ultimates*, 1, 322; Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 85; and Corrington, *A Semiotic Theory*, 40-42, discusses "nature naturing" in terms of a "pretemporal" "abyss" that gives one the sense of infinity. He does not use "nothing" here, but the parallel is evident.

[167] Neville, "Thanks and Conversation," 359.

[168] This constitutes a definitive departure from Peirce's theory. Peirce held that thirds cannot result from any combination of firsts or seconds. If Neville's relation between the ultimate reality and the existent cosmos is merely indexical—lacking purpose and therefore personality as he claims, then Neville implies that the cosmic Thirdness results from a creative Secondness, an impossibility according to Peirce's understanding.

is evident, then, that Neville's departure from Peirce results at least from a rejection of these key ideas which Peirce held very closely: vague theism, anthropomorphism, objective idealism.[169]

Neville's prioritization of his ontology seems to account for the marked ways he departs from Peirce's Semeiotic and surpasses Peirce's naturalism even beyond PEM. Regarding the third PEM criterion—"God" as symbol of metaphysical principles—this study found that Neville's symbolic engagement project "elaborate[s]" his "complex metaphysical hypothesis" about the being of the ultimate reality.[170] Notice that he characterized the ultimate reality in an ontological manner: "the ontological reality of the world consists in its *being* created in all its spatiotemporal complexity by an ontological act of creation."[171] Also, according to Neville, notwithstanding Peirce's metaphysical extension of the three Universal Categories, Peirce did not work out an ontology.[172] For Neville, then, Peirce's Semeiotic holds epistemological but not ontological value. Consequently, Neville adapts Semeiotic to his ontology in the ways noted above. Regarding the question governing this experimental engagement with Neville, it is evident that Neville's PEM-transcending religious naturalism is a consequence of his ontology and not of his use of Peirce. Therefore, it seems to be the case that Peirce's views are susceptible to PEM—perhaps, even in terms of a PEM bias—but do not necessarily entail such an ontology.

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[169] It happens that Raposa, *Theosemiotic*, 12, names these three concepts as being in question for present-day philosophers. He writes that the consequence is that Peirce's metaphysical conception of personality becomes highly problematic, such that it is now an open question for Raposa as to whether theosemiotic needs to hold on to such notions.

[170] E.g., Neville interprets the persons of the Trinity according to his metaphysics of an eternal ontological creative act; Neville, *Ultimates*, 261-62.

[171] Ibid., 1. Emphasis added.

[172] Neville, *God the Creator*, 131.

## Conclusion

This chapter tested for Peircean PEM bias. That is, it inquired into whether incorporating Semeiotic into Christian natural theology would entail incorporating Peirce's bias toward PEM ontology. The inquiry began by constructing a form of CNT that factors Semeiotic according to Peirce's full systematic sense. With assistance from Raposa's theosemiotic, this study interpreted CNT as a Christian theosemiotic. In another step in the process, Neville's theology as symbolic engagement fit the Christian theosemiotic parameters. This experimental inquiry looked to Neville's long experience with Peirce and theology and found that Neville's case of a Christian theosemiotic shows evidence of PEM. In discussing the evidence of PEM criteria in Neville, it became evident that his Christian theosemiotic concludes in a radical religious naturalism far surpassing Peirce's bias toward PEM. Further reflection on this result concluded that Neville's positive relation to PEM, in contrast to Peirce, seems to result from Neville's ontological priorities. Accordingly, Neville's case seems to show that a Christian theosemiotic is susceptible to interpretation according to PEM or more radical religious naturalist ontologies. What might this mean for Semeiotic and the problem of panentheism? The study in chapter two found that CNT shares CT's antithetical relation to PEM. Therefore, the evidence suggests that a Christian theosemiotic bears Peirce's PEM bias as a result of a robust appropriation of Semeiotic.

## Five: Conclusion

This dissertation has engaged a suggestion from Alister McGrath that Charles Peirce's theory of signs supplies a fitting and powerful resource to structure the epistemology of a renewed vision for Christian theology of nature. McGrath's suggestion sympathizes with several other Christian theologians whose work aims to continue along the trajectory of the mainstream of the great Christian tradition; for example, Andrew Robinson, Hermann Deuser, and Amos Yong. These represent a growing community of researchers who find Peirce's ideas fruitful for theological interpretation, developing understanding of a wide range of religious ideas. On the other hand, Peirce scholars, including Michael Raposa and Robert Corrington, agree that Peirce's philosophy entails a panentheist ontology. Further, though it is possible to abstract Peirce's sign theory from its systematic context in Peirce's thought, Raposa holds that such a move sacrifices much of the power of Peirce's sign theory. All of this suggests, first, that theologians appropriating Peirce for their work have likely invited philosophical problems, wishing to claim powers of Semeiotic that are muted or lost due to abstraction from their Peircean roots. Second, these theologians invite theological problems (vis-à-vis a catholic-evangelical view), since a recovery of a robust, Peircean sign theory would involve those aspects of Peirce's thought that experts find to entail panentheism. This dissertation has taken McGrath's suggestion as an opportunity to test this problem. The guiding hypothesis has been that developing Peirce's sign theory within McGrath's proposed Christian natural theology (CNT) will also incorporate Peirce's bias toward panentheist ontology, which would then risk incoherence in CNT's theoretical structure. The ensuing inquiry found that CNT interpreted by a robust account of Semeiotic does skew theologically toward panentheism from its traditional Christian starting point. However, it does not appear that Peirce's ideas themselves entail a properly demarcated panentheism.

A key to that result is the "properly demarcated panentheism." Research found that the identity of panentheism is a current problem for the panentheism community. There is broad sympathy with the basic idea that "the world is in God, but God is more than the world." So far intractable problems arise when trying to grasp a clear concept of what "in" is meant to say in that vague definition. Philip Clayton, perhaps the most prolific proponent of panentheism today, is content to let the definition—and panentheism's identity—remain vague. He is happy to recognize highly disparate theologies as bona fide members of a panentheist community (theisms such as Christianity, but also naturalisms such as Daoists). Others, among them Michael Brierley, recognize a "demarcation problem." That is, such a broad conception of panentheism risks becoming meaningless. In other words, if everything is panentheist then nothing is. Working with recent studies engaging the demarcation problem, this dissertation constructed a model of a panentheism (PEM) that neither blends into classical theism nor pantheism. Six core beliefs mark PEM: the mind-body analogy, ontological inclusion, dynamic dipolarity, mutual coinherence, symmetrical ontological dependence, and empathy. PEM takes these as an interdependent whole, for which the mind-body analogy provides the unifying logic.

The fact that PEM can be clearly distinguished from classical theism suggests that theologies sympathetic to classical theism—such as CNT—would begin to contradict themselves if Semeiotic brings with it a panentheist ontology. On the other hand, the present inquiry does not approach panentheism as problematic from the broad philosophical perspective of classical theism. Rather, the theological perspective of this dissertation is, more specifically, that of a "catholic-evangelical" theological tradition. It differs from classical theism in its openly confessional claim that the incarnation of the Son in Jesus supplies the defining pattern for theological truth. This distinction is not meant as a critique of classical theism. Rather, it recognizes that classical

theism is proper to a philosophical approach to theology, whereas the approach taken here starts from openly Christian beliefs. Consequently, it was necessary to define that approach. Analysis of recent historical theologies of creation yielded a Christian theism model (CT). In light of traditional creation theology, whose ontological claims model the God-world relation according to the Incarnation, seven core beliefs emerged for CT: redemption economy, maker analogy, freedom of divine action, absolute ontological distinction, two orders of being, divine ground of being, and relation of others. The CT model made it possible then to define just why PEM would be problematic for any theology that intends to maintain a CT perspective. For the purposes of this project, the three points of this problematic served as the criteria by which to recognize a PEM influence upon a more fully semeiotic CNT. Those criteria are distinctive, PEM ways of speaking of the God-world relation: as a self-relation, as an interdependent relation, and as a symbolic relation indicating natural metaphysical principles.

Just as it was important to define the relationship of CT to PEM, it was also necessary to define Peirce's relationship to PEM. Chapter three engaged a critical inquiry in response to Peirce scholars' claims that Peirce's philosophy entails a panentheist ontology. It was not so much with the expectation of contradicting those claims. Rather, it was driven by a need to understand which of Peirce's ideas lend to a panentheist view and whether Peirce himself would have sympathized with panentheism. This kind of information would inform later analysis of the experimental semeiotic interpretation of CNT. Also, since the power of semeiotic lies in its various roots in Peirce's philosophy, to make sense of a semeiotic interpretation of CNT required a comprehensive view of that system and the place of semeiotic within it. That discussion of Peirce's thought highlighted the importance of his anthropomorphic epistemology. Peirce conceived of the human mind as having been formed in the image of the cosmic processes and

regularities under the influence of which the human mind evolved. Chapter three analyzed Peirce's thought in five themes: meaning, the triad, interpretation, mind, and God. Discussion of these themes centered on interpretation, in which semeiotic is a salient element. Also, the movement through these themes moved interpretively, consistent with Peirce's architectonic arrangement of sciences, such that semeiotic becomes an interpretive lens by which the triadic processes of the cosmos are recognized as a great mind, and the meaning of the cosmos is recognized as somehow defining the common term "God." The first four themes paired a major element of Peirce's epistemology with its correlate concept in Peirce's metaphysics. For example, in the theme Interpretation, Peirce's semeiotic epistemology corresponds to his concept of growth as a metaphysical principle. The theme of God in Peirce's thought required a different approach. Peirce did not develop a systematic explanation of his theology. Rather, his writings include numerous discussions of his theological ideas as bearing upon other philosophical matters. Consideration of several of Peirce's clearly theological statements provided a sense for his ideas about God's relation to the cosmos. This yielded the insight that Peirce consistently speaks of God's relation to the cosmos as semeiotic in nature and a metaphysical parallel to the relation of an artisan to their artifact. Therefore, Peirce's metaphysics was *not yet* panentheism, though it is evident why someone might see him as pointing in that direction.

These considerations prepared the way for the empirical, that is, experimental, investigation in chapter four. The method of inquiry of this dissertation sought evidence of PEM's influence in a version of CNT built upon a robust semeiotic theory. This experiment involved several steps. First, a closer look at McGrath's treatment of Semeiotic highlighted the function he believes it should have within CNT overall. McGrath's interest in Semeiotic is for the way Peirce accounted for the interpretive habits of the imagination that bear upon the subjective side of a

critical realist perception model. Then, this study introduced Michael Raposa's work on "theo-semiotic" as an appropriate model of a robust Peircean account of Semeiotic as it bears on perception in religious experience. Accordingly, the experiment of chapter four next followed the theosemiotic method of inquiry to discover an authentic Peircean interpretation of CNT: abductive formation of a hypothesis, deductive clarification of the implications of that hypothesis, and inductive testing for those implications in experience. In the abductive phase, musement involved a theosemiotic engagement with a plain sense representation of McGrath's CNT proposal. This discovered that theosemiotic would likely respond to CNT in six ways. The deductive phase defined how theosemiotic would alter the CNT idea, producing the six ideas pertaining to a Christian theosemiotic. These steps positioned this inquiry for the inductive phase of the experiment. That involved observing the theological results, relevant to the God-cosmos relation, of an actual case of something like Christian theosemiotic. Robert Neville's theology of symbolic engagement qualified as the Christian theosemiotic exemplar, according to the six defining ideas of that model.

A brief look into Neville's mature work found evidence of all three of the PEM criteria. On the other hand, it was also evident that Neville has a distinctive sense for a PEM God-cosmos relation. That is, Neville's metaphysics grants all three PEM criteria at a *symbolic* level. God's relation to the world can be considered a self-relation, as long as one understands it as a symbol of a much vaguer reality. Likewise for the second criterion: there is a sense in which the ultimate reality—the eternal creative act—grows interdependently with what is being created. Again, however, that is in a merely semiotic sense. In determining continuous developments of the creation, the ultimate reality also determines further developments of itself. Regarding the third PEM criterion, that "God" represents metaphysical principles, Neville's theory agrees fully. Therefore,

Neville's Christian theosemiotic both embraces a robust Peircean Semeiotic and far surpasses Peirce's relation to PEM. Whereas Peirce himself was not yet PEM in his metaphysics, Neville has moved beyond PEM in his radical form of religious naturalism. For Neville, not just "God" but any theism—even PEM and pantheism—must only stand as symbols of the maximally vague ultimate reality.

However, though Neville's religious ontology affirms PEM as a true, though imperfect, symbol of ultimate reality, Neville's case shows that Semeiotic as such does not entail a PEM ontology. Apparently due to his own ontological priorities, Neville amended Peirce's Semeiotic in definitive ways for use in Neville's symbolic engagement theory. Still, CNT—like CT—is not open to anything approaching PEM. Neville's case appears to show, therefore, that Semeiotic is a determining factor in the susceptibility to PEM of the Christian theosemiotic hypothesized above.

This outcome may give the reader the impression of a strong PEM risk with Semeiotic. However, let the reader keep two points in mind. First, the experiment in the previous chapter intentionally prioritized theosemiotic over CNT as the primary interpretive "reader." This likely exaggerated whatever PEM bias Peirce's ideas have, denying CNT the opportunity to modify that influence in light of broader considerations. So, as a hypothesis for another project, a more balanced dialogue conceived as a CNT interpretation of theosemiotic would be both robustly Christian and semeiotic. The crucial factor in such a result would be to ground Christian theo-semiotic in an authentic Christian ontology according to parameters like those set forth in CT. Second, the conclusion for this project must attend to Peirce's side of Neville's religious natural-ism. Neville goes far beyond Peirce's own ideas. It is evident that Peirce's Semeiotic, as Peirce understood it within his own philosophical system, does not entail a PEM model of the God-

cosmos relation. Though Peirce's underdeveloped semeiotic metaphysics is susceptible to PEM ontology, it is also the case that the *semeiotic* aspect of Peirce's metaphysics consistently resists PEM. Therefore, Peirce's philosophy might offer resources by which Christian theosemioticians might take full advantage of the explanatory scope and power of Semeiotic while avoiding the pitfalls of PEM or more radical religious naturalisms.[1] Further research regarding Christian theosemiotic will pursue the discovery of those resources.

This affirms the great promise Peirce's thought holds for the new natural theology emerging in the field of science and religion, as Alister McGrath has suggested. One might consider this dissertation as a case study in an experimental pragmaticist method of cultural engagement. The possibility of incorporating panentheist bias via Semeiotic within CNT represents to some degree the larger tendency within religion and science to adopt a panentheist metaphysics. The unexpected result of this study, that Semeiotic provides PEM-resistant resources for natural theology, might indicate a way to accomplish the ends of the new natural theology without compromising so much of traditional Christian faith. Further experience and experimentation with the Christian theological appropriation of Peirce's views will tell.

[1] Ochs, *Logic of Scripture*, will prove to be helpful in this regard. His work finds that Peirce's own philosophy requires that the Judeo-Christian scriptures supply true "leading principles" (defining beliefs) for any inquiry pursuing the truth of religious signs; cf., ibid., 288.

# Appendix A: Demarcating Panentheism

## The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM)

*Table 7* The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM) Detail

| | Belief or Doctrine | CPT | PE | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | **Ontological Distinction** (S1) Essential properties per Creator, creatures (M); God Separate from Cosmos (B1) | S, M, B | ~~M~~ | |
| B | Divine **Impassibility** (S9, M) | [S], [M] | ~~S~~ | |
| C | Asymmetrical Ontological Dependence (S3), Divine **Independence** (M) | S, [M] | | |
| D | **Creation** (S2), Contingent Creature Existence (M) | S, M | S | |
| E | **Omnipresence** (M), God is present to the cosmos (B3), God penetrates the cosmos (B8) | M, B | B | |
| F | Divine **Goodness** (S12), Omnibenevolent (M) | S, M | S | |
| G | Divine Power (S11), **Omnipotent** (M) | S, M | S | [M] |
| H | **Conservation** (S5), God Sustains the Universe (M), God is the ground of the cosmos (B9) | S, M, B | S, M, B | M |
| I | Divine Sensibility (S10), **Empathy** w/self-control (M), God is affected by the cosmos (B5) | [M], B | S, B | |
| J | **Ontological Inclusion** (S6), All-in-God (M), God contains the universe (B4) | [M], B | S, M, B | |
| K | **Mind-Body analogy** (M), The cosmos is God's body (B10), God includes the cosmos, as whole includes part (B11) | [M], [B] | M, B | [M] |
| L | Relational (M), God and cosmos inextricably intertwined (B12), **Mutual Co-Inherence** (B) | [M] | M, B | |
| M | **Dynamic** (M), God is **dipolar** (B14) | [M] | M, B | |
| N | **Symmetrical Ontological Dependence** (S7), God needs the world ontologically (M), God is dependent on the cosmos (B13) | [M] | S, [M], B | S |
| O | **Ontological Identity** (S8), God-World Identity (M), God is totally dependent on, or co-terminus with, the cosmos (B15) | | ~~M~~ | S, M, B |

The Panentheism Meta-Model (Table 7 The Panentheism Meta-Model (PEM) DetailTable 7 above) synthesizes the data from three important studies regarding a demarcated identity for panentheism. Beliefs pertaining to classical philosophical theism (CPT), panentheism (PE), and pantheism (P) are compared. The studies, Brierley (B), Mullins (M) and Stenmark (S), are discussed in more detail below. Those initials in the PEM table above mark the important beliefs of each model according to the different studies. Also note that PEM represents the views of these panentheism advocates who wish to demarcate their view from others. There is no critique as to the accuracy of their representation of either classical theism or pantheism. Focus remains on how leading panentheists conceive of the defining beliefs of their view.

A plain initial (e.g., S) indicates a core belief of the respective model, whereas a bracketed initial (e.g, [S]) indicates an auxiliary belief. In the table above, a strikethrough (e.g., ~~M~~) indicates that a core belief is the denial of that belief (e.g., line A, Mullins writes that the denial of a God-world ontological distinction is a core belief of panentheism). The primary structure of this table is from Stenmark, whose study ordered the core beliefs of the three models on a continuum (S1-S8). S9 and following are located according to Brierley's model.

Notice that item I, "Empathy," is the logical correlate of panentheism's core belief denying "Divine Impassibility," item B. Likewise, item J, Ontological Inclusion," is the logical correlate of panentheism's core belief denying "Ontological Distinction," item A. Item L, "Mutual Co-Inherence," is the logical correlate of panentheism's core belief denying "Ontological Identity," item O.

Finally, various shading patterns are used to identify the range of core beliefs respective to each model and the ranges of beliefs outside of that core. For example, panentheism's core as demarcated from CPT and P includes items J through N. Item I is also included in PEM in the

text of chapter two, because S and B agree it is a core belief of PE, and M holds that the corresponding denial of "Divine Impassibility" is a core belief of PE. Only B suggests that "Empathy" might be a core belief of CPT as well. Similarly, item N, "Symmetrical Ontological Dependence," is counted with PEM, because all three studies associate it with PE, and only S holds that it is also a core belief of P.

## The Logic of "In"

In a 2006 essay, Michael Brierley engages the problem of demarcating Panentheism from Classical Theism and Pantheism. He lists fifteen propositions constituting a continuum of denials or affirmations of the "in" of panentheism (all-in-god-ism).[1] The continuum consists of degrees of relation between denying that the world is in God and identifying God with the world. That is, each proposition states a logically possible way of describing the "in" of panentheism. Therefore, the continuum moves from classical philosophical theism (CPT) to pantheism (P), with Panentheism (PE) falling along a range somewhere between these.[2] Thus, for example, if one's version of theism would affirm that "the cosmos is God's body" (#10 below), then one's view is probably panentheist (PE). CPT's definitive hypothesis is #1, PE ranges between #4 and #14, and P's only relevant hypothesis is #15. Demarcating PE vis-à-vis P is not difficult since P has a strong form of God-world relation, such that the world *is* God without remainder. PE's distinction here resists identifying the two and maintains a form of divine transcendence. The difficulty comes in trying to demarcate PE from CPT. PE as such, according to Brierley, includes propositions #4-

[1] This paragraph discusses Brierley, "Potential," 636-41.

[2] Cf., Table 8 "Brierley's 'In' Propositions" below. Though Brierley's discussion mentions "Eschatological panentheism," the discussion here does not consider it. The table reflects it since it is part of Brierley's discussion, but it receives very little attention in that discussion. Brierley describes it as a future-oriented perspective among some classical theists. "Classical philosophical theism" is borrowed from Philip Clayton to clarify this dissertation's distinction between classical and Christian theism. (Although, that distinction is to clarify a certain species within a genus.) Cf., Clayton, "Panentheism," 699. Arthur Peacocke also uses this phrase in Peacocke, "Introduction," xviii.

14. However, Brierley also grants that CPT includes propositions #1-8. Further, Brierley holds that #9 and #10 are available to CPT if kept consistent with #1. Therefore, Brierley's account implies that only #11-14 are distinctly panentheistic. This is interesting, because #11-14 is the subrange of PE Brierley calls "advanced" PE.[3] It follows, then, that "basic" PE (#4-10) is a panentheist way of construing certain CPT beliefs.

*Table 8* Brierley's "In" Propositions

| | | **CPT** | | **PE** | | **P** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Classical Theism | Eschatological (Pan)Theism | Basic PE | Advanced PE | |
| 1. God is separate from the cosmos. | | Y | Y (for now) | | | |
| 2. The cosmos will be in God. | | Y | | | | |
| 3. God is present to the cosmos. | | Y | | | | |
| 4. God contains the cosmos. (external relation implied) | | Y | Y (for now) | Y | | |
| 5. God is affected by the cosmos (e.g., God suffers). | | Y | | Y | | |
| 6. God acts in and through the cosmos. | | Y | | Y | | |
| 7. The cosmos is a sacrament, or sacramental. | | Y | | Y | | |
| 8. God penetrates the cosmos. | | Y | | Y | | |
| 9. God is the ground of the cosmos. | | Y (if w/#1) | | Y | | |
| 10. The cosmos is God's body. | | Y (if w/#1) | | | Y | |
| 11. God includes the cosmos, as the whole includes the part. | | | | | Y | |
| 12. God and the cosmos are inextricably intertwined. | | | | | Y | |
| 13. God is dependent on the cosmos. | | | | | Y | |
| 14. God is dipolar. | | | | | Y | |
| 15. God is totally dependent on, or coterminus with, the cosmos. | | | | | | Y |

"Y" marks a proposition as being consistent within the respective model. Modifying conditions are indicated in parentheses. CPT can affirm propositions #1-#10. PE can affirm propositions #4-#14.

[3] Brierley, "Potential," 638, identifies "advanced" PE as expressed in a mature way in process theism.

## The Logic of "Core" Beliefs

Some recent studies explore the demarcation problem through the framework of Imre Lakatos' seminal work in philosophy of science.[4] Lakatos theorized a Research Program (RP) as constituted by "core" hypotheses and by "auxiliary" ones. It is the core hypotheses that define and direct the RP. So, possibly, PE can be demarcated by its core tenets vis-à-vis the core tenets of CPT and P. This discussion considers two recent studies utilizing this framework for demarcation analysis. One study is by R. Mullins.[5] The other is by Michael Stenmark.[6]

### Mullins Demarcation Model

R. Mullins' study seeks to demarcate PE vis-à-vis three subtypes of Western theism (classical theism [CPT], neo-classical theism [NCT], open theism [OT]) and pantheism (P) (Table 9 below). Mullins' method is to consider the range of beliefs held by these models. So, a comprehensive set of beliefs in classical theism are considered, then a few that are common among pantheists, then a moderate number that are held by panentheists to be definitive of their view. Then he considers how they compare on select beliefs.[7] Ultimately, Mullins finds that PE as currently described in the literature is not sufficiently distinct from the other models.

CPT's core beliefs include *a se*, strong immutability, omniscience, and sustaining the universe, among others. Alternate versions of CPT—NCT and OT—ascribe to the same range of core beliefs, though with qualifications in some instances, or alternative formulations in others.

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[4] Clayton, "Prospects," 1-18; cf., Lakatos, "Falsification and Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," 91-196.

[5] Mullins, "Difficulty."

[6] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors." Though Stenmark does not expressly appeal to Lakatos, his terminology implicitly invokes the research program framework; cf., Clayton, "Prospects," 8.

[7] The table reflects Mullins' discussion. Where Mullins did not speak to a model's position on some belief, the table leaves it blank. For example, there was no comment regarding PE's position on several CPT beliefs, including *a se*, timeless, and strong immutability. Although, one could reason how PE would respond to those.

NCT, for example, holds timelessness as a core belief but qualifies it as being with succession. God is infinite with respect to time but does experience movement from one state to another. CNT and OT qualify the core belief of immutability as a "weak" rather than strong form. By this, according to Mullins, these hold that God does not change in his essence but he does change in his relationships. Other views are represented among CPT, NCT, and OT, but they are auxiliary rather than core beliefs. That is, they do not qualify a view as CPT, NCT, or OT. For example, all three views have some who hold to the eternality of truth, but this can be denied without causing one's view to depart from the tradition. Similarly, the core of P is that the world is one substance, and God and the world are ontologically identical. Therefore, they have a strong sense in which God is manifest in individuals and events. Mullins notes that several core beliefs of CPT are auxiliary beliefs for P. For example, surprisingly, P can include the belief that God is *a se*, timeless, immutable, and simple.

PE's core beliefs include several from Charles Hartshorne's classic definition, that God is eternal, conscious, omniscient ("knows the world"), changing ("temporal"), and all-in-God ("world-inclusive").[8] Another, closely related core belief is that God is relational. PE also includes two negative core beliefs. One is the denial of a God-world identity (against P). The other is the denial of a God-world distinction, in the sense that CPT holds. The latter denial entails negative views of several of CPT's core beliefs (that God and creatures have essential properties distinctive to themselves and that God is independent). Most of PE's auxiliary beliefs, according to Mullins' discussion, have to do with various ways of interpreting the sense of the world "in"

[8] In an influential essay, Hartshorne defined Panentheism as the form of theism simultaneously affirming all five theistic categories that Hartshorne finds to be at issue throughout the history of Western theology, represented by the initials ETCKW: eternal, temporal, conscious, knowing the universe, world-inclusive. Cf., Charles Hartshorne, "Introduction: The Standpoint of Panentheism," in Hartshorne and Reese, eds., *Philosophers Speak of God*, 1-25.

God. These are also auxiliary beliefs available to CPT. Surprisingly, God's dependence upon the world is considered by Mullins to be auxiliary to PE. This is because some major proponents of PE hesitate to affirm that God needs the world. For example, Clayton holds that God freely chooses to need the world somehow like a mind needs its body.[9] Stronger forms of PE, such as Hartshorne's process view, hold that God truly and always needs a universe, but God can choose the kind that embodies him.[10]

As with Brierley's analysis, PE is clearly demarcated from P by resisting the pull toward identifying God and the world.[11] This denial is a core tenet of PE. Also, like Brierley, Mullins' work shows that PE has much more in common doctrinally with Classical Theism than with P. Although, the shared beliefs with CPT are primarily auxiliaries. The upshot of Mullins' work is that PE holds no core beliefs as distinctly its own. Every core and auxiliary belief marked for PE already pertains to either CPT or P. From this it looks more as though PE is a modified form of CPT, such as NCT and OT.

[9] Mullins, "Demarcating Panentheism," 341.

[10] Hartshorne, "Standpoint of Panentheism," 22.

[11] "Resisting" is appropriate, because Philip Clayton describes PE as a movement that aims to make God as immanent to the world as possible without slipping into a pantheistic mode marked by identifying God and the cosmos. Cf., e.g., Clayton, "Prospects," 9; idem., "Panentheism" (2015), 692.

*Table 9* Mullins Demarcation Model

| **Beliefs** | **Theism** | | | **Panentheism (PE)** | **Pantheism (P)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Classical Theism (CPT)** | **Neoclassical Theism (NCT)** | **Open Theism (OT)** | | |
| *a se* | Y | Y | Y | | [Y] |
| Timeless | Y | Y w/succes-sion | Y | | [Y] |
| Strong Immutability | Y | Y weak* | Y weak | | [Y] |
| Simple | Y | (cf. unity) | (cf. unity) | | [Y] |
| Impassible | Y | (cf. empathy) | (cf. empathy) | | |
| Omnibenevolent | Y | Y | Y | | |
| Omniscient | Y | Y | Y, limited fore-knowledge | Y | [Y] |
| Omnipotent | Y | Y | Y | | [Y] |
| Omnipresent | Y | Y | Y | (cf. body) | |
| Necessary divine existence | Y | Y | Y | | |
| Creatures Contingent | Y | Y | Y | | |
| God essential properties | Y | Y | Y | N (re: G-W distinction) | |
| Creatures essential properties | Y | Y | Y | N (re: C-W distinction) | |
| World is Plurality of Substances | Y | Y | Y | | |
| Sustains the Universe | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Eternality of truth | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | | |
| Temporal Ontology | [Y] | [Y] | | | |
| Creation Necessary or Contin-gent | [Y] | [Y] | Y contingent | | |
| Infinite | [Y] | [Y] | | | [Y] |
| Unity of distinct & coextensive attributes | | Y | Y | | |
| Empathy w/Self-Control | | Y | Y | | |
| Human Freedom | | [Y] | Y libertarian | | |
| Presentist | | [Y] | Y | | |
| Endurantist | | [Y] | Y | | |
| Divine independence | | | Y | N (re: G-W distinction) | |
| World is One Substance | | | | | Y |
| God-World Identity | | | | N | Y |
| Individuals & Events Manifest God | | | | | Y |
| Personal | | | | | [Y] |
| Conscious | | | | Y | [Y] |

| Beliefs | Theism | | | Panentheism (PE) | Pantheism (P) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Classical Theism (CPT) | Neoclassical Theism (NCT) | Open Theism (OT) | | |
| All-In-God | (cf. "In") | (cf. "In") | (cf. "In") | Y | |
| God More Than World | (cf. "body") | | | Y | |
| Transcendent/Immanent | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Mind-Body Analogy | [Y] but "body" | | | Y | [Y] |
| "In" = God energizes the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God experiences the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God ensouls the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God plays with the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God gives space to the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God provides the ground of emergence in the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| "In" = God befriends the world | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | [Y] | |
| Eternal | (cf. Timeless) | (cf. Timeless) | (cf. Timeless) | Y | |
| Dynamic | | [Y] | [Y] | Y | |
| Relational | | [Y] | [Y] | Y | |
| Changing | | [Y] | [Y] | Y | |
| God Needs the World Ontologically | [Y] | | | [Y] | |

Y/N = core; [Y] = auxiliary; * "weak" = unchanging essence, changing relationships

## Stenmark Demarcation Model

Mikael Stenmark's recent essay, similarly, finds very little distinguishing PE from the array of theistic models (Table 10 below). Like Brierley, Stenmark considers a list of beliefs ranging along a continuum moving from CPT to P. However, Stenmark also includes Deism, which constitutes the extreme opposite of P. Like both Brierley and Mullins, Stenmark finds the extreme on the Pantheism end of the continuum clearly demarcated from PE by its belief in the God-world identity. Stenmark also agrees that there is a substantial degree of correlation in the

beliefs of CPT and PE. However, he notes that several beliefs commonly held to be definitive for each of these models are in fact incidental to them. For example, a motivation driving panentheism in contemporary theology is a rejection of divine impassibility, held to be a core belief of CPT.[12] Stenmark finds, to the contrary, that this is an auxiliary belief. Simlarly, process theism is often closely identified with PE.[13] However, Stenmark finds that it is a logical possibility for CPT, too. Being at the core of neither CP, nor PE, then, it is an auxiliary belief. Consequently, on according to Stenmark, PE demarcates itself primarily by its relatively strong sense in which God includes the cosmos within God's own being.[14]

On Stenmark's analysis, of the fourteen beliefs considered, only two properly belong to the PE core without also being found in the others: "divine sensibility" (the view that "God is capable of emotions, in particular is capable of feeling sorrow or suffering as a result of the afflictions of God's creatures") and "ontological inclusion" (that "the world is a part of God but not identical to God").[15] However, we recall that Mullins' analysis showed that two variations of CPT (NCT and OT) hold that God has an empathetic relation to the cosmos. Taking that into account, then, PE really has only one distinctive core belief, ontological inclusion. Yet, that is merely the vague affirmation of the term "panentheism" (all-in-God). As we have seen both from Brierley and Mullins, the sense of "in" can vary widely even within CPT. Yet, Stenmark's demarcation of PE may nevertheless hold, because he defines "ontological inclusion" as entailing a

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[12] Cf., e.g., Peacocke, "Introduction," xviii.

[13] As with Brierley above, "advanced" PE.

[14] Since Stenmark's analysis conformed to a continuum across the models themselves, rather than an element related to the models, the Meta-Model generally holds to his structure. (In contrast to Brierley's demarcation study, which considers the three models relative to meanings of the world being "in" God that are logically available to them.) Brierley and Mullins, where not correlated directly with Stenmark, are included where they fit logically in the D-P continuum, relative to similar topics, and where the emphasis of the respective models seems to lie (in that descending order of priority).

[15] Stenmark, "Panentheism and Its Neighbors," 31, 27.

whole-part relation. CPT will not use whole-part language to explain possible ways the cosmos can be said to be "in" God, P will not agree to the whole-part language, because God-world identity entails coextension.

Therefore, for Stenmark, PE demarcates itself merely by its relatively strong sense in which God includes the cosmos within God's own being. This is consistent with Brierley's analysis. Brierley found PE to be distinctive especially in "advanced" ways of construing the "in" of all-in-God. Stenmark differs only in not further analyzing what the core belief of ontological inclusion may mean. In that way, perhaps Brierley's work complements that of Stenmark. Though Mullins concluded negatively regarding PE as a demarcated RP, in fact it seems his analysis concurs with Stenmark. Though Mullins – like Brierley – shows that CPT can have a sense of all "in" God, these are auxiliary to CPT proper. Also, CPT will not affirm "in" in a way truly comparable to the core of PE (recall Brierley here). They find, then, that PE can be demarcated from CPT by the particular sense in which PE construes the meaning of its identifying term "panentheism" (all-*in*-God-ism).[16] This underscores the cogency of The Brierley Model, which is corroborated in the PE Meta-Model.

[16] Two other studies corroborate this conclusion. Cf., Gregersen, "Three Varieties of Panentheism,", and Cooper, *Panentheism*.

*Table 10* Stenmark Demarcation Model

| Doctrine | Deism | Classical Theism | Panentheism | Pantheism |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (4) World Self-Sufficiency | Y | | | |
| (1) Ontological Distinction | Y | Y | | |
| (3) Asymmetrical Ontological Dependence | Y | Y | | |
| (9) Divine Impassibility | | [Y] | | |
| (2) Creation | Y | Y | Y | |
| (5) Conservation | | Y | Y | |
| (11) Divine Power | | Y | Y | |
| (12) Divine Goodness | | Y | Y | |
| (14) Process Theism | | [Y] | [Y] | |
| (10) Divine Sensibility | | | Y | |
| (6) Ontological Inclusion | | | Y | |
| (13) Pure (Divine) Persuasive Power | | | [Y] | |
| Panpsychism | | | [Y] | |
| (7) Symmetrical Ontological Dependence | | | Y | Y |
| (8) Ontological Identity | | | | Y |

Doctrines indicated as "Y" are core doctrines of the indicated research program. If indicated with brackets "[Y]" then the doctrine is not core but is an auxiliary option held by some. Stenmark's primary numerical order includes #1-#8. #1-#4 have been rearranged here to reflect their relation to the primary logic of Stenmark's continuum moving from Deism (extreme God-world separation) to Pantheism (extreme God-world identity).

## Appendix B: CNT & CT Parity

In *Re-Imagining Nature*, McGrath writes that the "foundations" for the CNT project therein described were laid in the course of three previous works, *The Open Secret, A Fine-Tuned Universe,* and *Darwinism and the Divine*.[1] The first two of those expressly address McGrath's Christian theological schema that distinguishes his natural theology project from other natural theologies.[2] These foundational works in relation to *Re-Imagining* set forth five basic Christian doctrines identified for CNT that this dissertation refers to as *theological* beliefs: the Self-Revealing God, the *Analogia Entis*, the *Imago Dei*, the Economy of Salvation, and the Incarnation.[3] The following discussion briefly explain CNT's theological beliefs and how they relate to the principles of CT.

First, CNT affirms the God of Christianity as the "Self-Revealing God." This is "the idea of a transcendent God who chooses to self-disclose in history and nature," (*OS* 4423; *FT* 71). So, McGrath adds that the illumination of the Holy Spirit informs this view. God is personally involved in the human process of interpreting both nature and scripture (*FT* 72). Though this belief

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[1] McGrath, *Re-Imagining*, 4.

[2] McGrath writes that Christian natural theology is a form of the more general human quest to discover and relate to what transcends ourselves. The history of religion manifests such a tendency across all times and places. That is, natural theology per se "can be broadly understood as a process of reflection on the religious entailments of the natural world, rather than a specific set of doctrines," (*RI* 7). Within such practices among those of Christian faith, some tenets set forth in this section distinguish McGrath's project as a subset. For example, McGrath's Christian natural theology contrasts with the process theology of Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology, Based on the Thought of Alfred North Whitehead*. Also, CNT distinguishes itself from the modern classical approach to theistic proofs promoted by Christian philosophers, such as William Lane Craig and James Porter Moreland, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); cf., also, E. Feser, *Five Proofs for the Existence of God* (Ignatius Press, 2017). Cf., section "Resonance, Not Proof," *OS* 433-70.

[3] There are two similar lists of traditional Christian doctrines. In *The Open Secret* McGrath discusses five "leading themes of the Christian faith," (*OS* 4423). Four of these are listed again in *A Fine-Tuned Universe* as the important "points" of "a Trinitarian vision of reality," (*FT* 70-71). The list in *Fine-Tuned* omits the incarnation as a distinct item in the list. However, it appears to include the incarnation within its discussion of the *imago Dei*, in that christology is expressly a definitive topic for the concept of "the image of God." Given the determinative force of the doctrine of the incarnation for Christian theology in general, it is maintained in this dissertation as a distinct structural element according to the original list given in *Open Secret*.

does not directly align with any of the CT principles, one might argue that it fits within the CT principle of the Relation of Others (RO). Recall that this principle holds that it is God who has the prerogative to initiate and sustain the redemptive relation with the creation. Structured in the person of Christ and accomplished by the constant activity of the Holy Spirit, in love God brings humans and the created order into relation to himself in perfecting the creation according to the Redemption Economy. The revelation of this plan to humans certainly belongs among the sorts of activities by which God brings humans into sanctifying relation to himself (e.g., Eph 1:9, 10; 17-19; 3:9-12).

Second, CNT affirms the a*nalogia Entis*. This is "the belief that there is an analogous relationship between God and nature, grounded in the created character of the natural order," (*OS* 4423). The concept of *analogia entis* rests especially on Augustine's thought, "that there exists, on the one hand, a perceptible correspondence and, on the other, an ontological difference, between the creator and the creation," (*OS* 4551). Both this difference and the correspondence follow from *creatio ex nihilo*, the crucial doctrine that divine creation is absolute, not a mere ordering of existent matter. Also, the creation that results is wholly dependent upon the mind and power of its creator (*FT* 73-74). In that dependence, "the created order is capable of rendering the character of God, especially God's wisdom, goodness, and beauty," (*FT* 74).[4]

[4] McGrath notes G. M. Hopkins' concepts of nature's "'inscape'" and "'instress.'" Also, Emil Brunner's notion of nature's "'permanent capacity for revelation,'" informs this view (*FT* 74).

Furthermore, with this belief it becomes evident how CNT brings together the most important elements of the orthodox tradition. That is, in *Re-Imagining Nature*, McGrath's list of six types of natural theological practice in history of Christian theology appears to correlate with several structural beliefs of CNT. McGrath writes that each type manifests "a broader and richer underlying concept, reflecting the needs or opportunities of the particular context within which it is embedded," (*RI* 18). That is, these types emerged in the times and places that they did, because a more comprehensive, tacit Christian natural theology determined such responses to the challenges particular to their context. In other words, these six types, according to McGrath, constitute a "thick description" of a more basic model of natural theology governed by beliefs basic to Christian theology. "Each can be seen as an enactment of an aspect of natural theology, rather than as defining in itself what natural theology actually is," (*RI* 23). The *analogia entis* represents the second such historical model incorporated into CNT as a sort of metamodel.

The analogy of being figures expressly in CT, though not for all the same reasons as here in CNT. CT focuses on the ontological disparity figured by *analogia entis*. In the Divine Ground of Being (DGB), the creaturely being is gifted by God, "suspended" from God's being as its manner of participation in divine being. This affirms CNT on the constant dependence of the created order upon God. Such participation "in" the being of God is guarded against panentheism by the central doctrines of CT emphasizing that the relation of Creator to creation is one of noncontinuous others. The CT principles of the Freedom of Divine Action, Absolute Ontological Distinction, and Two Orders of Being focus on the "ontological difference" CNT affirms from Augustine. So, CT majors on just one aspect of *analogia entis*, whereas CNT holds two complementary aspects (resemblance and ontological difference) together. That is, because the creation is created by God from nothing, its otherness from God is no obstacle to God's use of the creation to represent himself to human interpreters.

Third, CNT holds the *Imago Dei* as a core theological belief. For CNT, this is "the principle that humanity is created in the image of God and thus endowed with some capacity to discern traces of God within or through nature," (*OS* 4423).[5] McGrath affirms the model offered by Athanasius, that the *imago Dei* "designates the human capacity to reason—or, more accurately, to conform mentally to the patterns established by the divine *Logos* within creation—and hence to

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That second model "[proceeds] from engagement with the world of nature," (*RI* 20). This is an *a posteriori* "affirmation of the existence of God on the basis of the regularity and complexity of the natural world," (*RI* 19).

[5] This belief incorporates the first natural theology model from McGrath's list of six. (Cf., note 4 above) This is the model that corresponds to classical modern natural theology, "'which investigates what human reason unaided by revelation can tell us about God.'" It holds forth the basic concept that certain a priori principles have "theistic entailments" (*RI* 18-19). (Quoting George Hayward Joyce, *Principles of Natural Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2017; repr., 1922), 1.) This emphasizes that the basic equipment of the human mind is somehow naturally attuned to orderly, logical reasoning, and to discern subtle clues left by the creator upon the work of creation. Therefore, also the third model of natural theology is evident here. This model emphasizes "the intellectual outcome of the natural tendency of the human mind to desire or be inclined toward God," (*RI* 20). There is a sense in which belief in God is natural.

discern God, albeit partially and imperfectly," (*OS* 4587; cf. also *FT* 76).[6] Augustine developed this further, drawing a comparison between the triune being of God and a tripartite analysis of the human mind. That is, the human image of God manifests in part in the very structure of the human mind (*FT* 76).[7] So, the fact that humans are able to make sense of nature "is to be explained by the rationality of God as creator of both the fundamental ordering of nature and the human observer of nature," (*FT* 77). Part of God's ordering of the human observer's mind is to grant the human mind its own agency, comparable to God's creative agency, to construct its perception of significance in nature (*OS* 4683). That is, the imagination works with the God-given rationality. McGrath writes, "the human imagination is part of our endowment as those who bear the 'image of God,' enabling us to 'see' the fundamental interconnectedness of the world, no matter how difficult this may be to express in words," (*RI* 48-49). However, CNT also holds that this divine image in the mind of humankind is marred by sin. The healing of the faculty of perception comes not from the proper selection of natural facts to interpret, but "by the enhancement of the human capacity to discern," (*OS* 4700).[8] It is not just the data that his mind is working with that is problematic. The human mind itself needs healing, a recalibration by the true knowledge of the creator. Therefore, without some way to correct the sin-biased faculty of

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[6] However, Gunton, *Triune Creator*, 12, "The traditional tendency to locate the image of God in reason or some other human endowment or quality is now much disputed in favour of a conception of the whole of human being as existing in relation to God, other human beings and the rest of the created order. The latter relation is described in Genesis as 'dominion', which means...a calling to be and to act in such a way as to enable the created order to be itself as a response of praise to its maker."

[7] McGrath cites Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 9.12.18, regarding the concept of "vestiges of the Trinity," or "footprints." Specifically, Augustine describes what Peirce would call a triadic relation constituting a mind as such among the mind's self, its knowledge of itself, and its love of itself. Also, McGrath cites Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 16.4.6, regarding the rational or intellectual soul. Presumably book 16 is a typographical error, since this work goes only to fifteen books. At 15.4.6, Augustine argues that natural signs can yield knowledge of God's attributes due to the rational nature given by God.

[8] McGrath compares this problem to "visual agnosia," a disease in which one sees every detail as normal but has no ability to make sense of the whole, to conceive of the meaning of what one sees (*OS* 4719). This lends to the programmatic claim of CNT as such, that Christian natural theology will be persuasive through the ability to see nature according to its creator, as informed by basic Christian theology.

perception, human observers cannot have great confidence in their ability to know God truly through nature (*OS* 4790).

This third theological belief of CNT clearly pertains to epistemology. As such, it lies beyond the scope of CT's ontological focus. Even so, correlations to CT principles are evident. This belief bears an implied correlation to the belief that God is self-revealing, which, in turn, arguably relates to the CT principle of the Relation of Others. More immediately evident, however, the concept of the image of God in humankind relates theologically and conceptually to the CT principle of the Maker Analogy. The doctrine of the *imago Dei* is grounded in the biblical testimony that God chose to "make man in our image," (Gen 1:26). This is one way that the Creator imprinted the work of his hands with his own signature style, as it were. In humankind, at least, God purposely imparted something of his own personality into his work. Again, this continues to attest to the thoroughgoing otherness of the creature from the Creator. Humankind does not bear the image of God as the result of ontological continuity with God, but precisely because the Creator, in his freedom, granted such image to humankind. Finally, since the CNT belief includes the problem of sin, marring the endowed image, there is a theological connection to the CT principle of the Redemption Economy. "Redemption" has to do, of course, with overcoming the imperfection of the creation, especially in its bondage to sin. This common ground between CNT and CT becomes explicit rather than implied in the next CNT belief.

The fourth core theological belief of CNT is The Economy of Salvation. This refers to the narrative schema in which the natural world is currently subject to the "fall," but its restoration is anticipated according to God's plan: the narrative structure of "creation, fall, redemption, and consummation," (*OS* 4423, 4772). As created, the cosmos was perfectly ordered, but in its fallen state is now marked by disorder and chaos in spite of a fundamental orderedness that remains

(*OS* 4824). Therefore, natural theology necessarily occurs within the unfolding of this plot (*FT* 78). Regarding the fall, the apostle Paul wrote that "creation [is] the basis of a knowledge of God," even as creation is now "'groaning,'" (*OS* 4772, in reference to Rom. 1:20; 8:22). That is, creation itself does not yet manifest God's full intention for what it will be in its perfect goodness. This bears directly on the possibility of a natural theology. McGrath writes, "it cannot be assumed that the 'nature' which is observed directly corresponds to the state of nature which might be thought to bear the imprint of its creator," (*OS* 4790). In light of the effects of sin on the image of God, then, "a fallen humanity reflects on a fallen nature," (*FT* 78). This means that natural theology constantly faces the hazard that "[T]heological reflection on fallen nature "may lead to idolatry, heterodoxy, or some form of paganism," (*FT* 79). Regarding restoration, the cross of Jesus is obviously the central element of this economy, relating to both the fallen state of things and to their restoration through the redeeming work of God in Jesus Christ (*FT* 80). Yet, CNT holds also that beyond the cross there is other redemptive work being done. There is the continuing, providential work of the Spirit sanctifying and perfecting according to the plan of redemption. Accordingly, "there is a profoundly eschatological dimension to an authentically Christian natural theology, in that it is to be interpreted in the light of its goal, not merely of its origin," (*OS* 4860). That is, "nature is thus to be seen as a continual reminder and symbol of a renewed creation, a world which we do not yet know but believe to lie over the horizons of our human existence," (*OS* 4879).

The CNT parallel with CT is obvious in this fourth theological belief. The first ontological principle of CT is the Redemption Economy. The basic claims are the same: the creation is an ages long project that God had always planned to redeem through the person of Jesus Christ. CT is not as specific about the reason there is sin and evil in the cosmos. The language of "fall" is

not inconsistent with CT, but CT shies away from claiming that the creation was initially perfect in the sense of God's ultimate purpose. It is a project, the beginning of which was perfect with respect to what needed to be done for that stage of the entire plan of redemption. There is no doubt that CT and CNT agree that redemption has specifically to do with overcoming the effects of sin and evil in the world, and that this is done by God's "two hands," as Irenaeus taught. This aspect of CT is made especially clear in its final principle, Relation of Others.

Fifth, CNT holds The Incarnation as a core theological belief. This belief states that God entered the natural order by entering a certain "place" in history. By the use of the term "place," McGrath means the cultural location of being a Jewish male from Nazareth in Galilee in the first century (*OS* 4950). McGrath associates the incarnation expressly with the Economy of Salvation, writing "that God entered into the natural order in Christ, in order to transform and redeem it," (*OS* 4423). As a distinct theological belief comprising CNT, then, it supplies the interpretive key by which the others are to be understood. Specifically, belief in the incarnation points directly to the cross of Jesus Christ. That cross entails the redemptive aspect, by which nature is seen according to the promise of eschatological perfection (*RI* 99). Also, the cross entails the redemption of the fallen human mind, and its healing to see nature and God correctly (*RI* 100). Therefore, the cross is a poignant symbol in Christian theology called the *signum crucis*. "The *signum crucis* affirms that the one 'through whom all things were made' is also the one who suffered and died on the cross." The cross is thus God's definitive self-revelation, and therefore provides the definitive framework that is able to bring forth theological insight even from the darkness of evil and suffering in the world (*RI* 98). As God's definitive self-revelation, the incarnation also answers the modern question of metaphysical dualism, "how [can] a transcendent God...be known" through the natural order[?]" (*OS* 4443; cf., *OS* 1848). In light of the incarnation, McGrath

"affirms the capacity of the natural to disclose the divine, both on account of its status as the *divine creation*, and as the object of God's *habitation*," (*OS* 424, 1869; also, 4498). Therefore, "Implicit within a Christian natural theology is a semiotics of nature, in which nature is understood as a system of natural signs—such as a sense of wonder—intimating the existence of some transcendent reality," (*RI* 112).

For CNT, the belief in the Incarnation is central to and definitive of the other theological beliefs. This is similar to claims regarding the ontological principles of CT. Whereas, CNT focuses on the way the Incarnation informs God's work of redemption and revelation with and within the creation, CT focuses more on the way the Incarnation demonstrates how the infinite God relates to the finite order of his creation. Of course, redemption is a distinct element of CT with respect to God's purpose in creating and sustaining the creation. CT's ontological interest complements the epistemological interest of CNT. That is, CNT (*Analogia Entis*) understands from the Incarnation that the creation has the "capacity" as a medium of divine communication. CT understands this in terms of the Freedom of Divine Action evident in the incarnation of the Son. God is able to use the creation in whatever ways and for whatever purposes he wants to. Further, the Incarnation affirms the ontological dualism of the Two Orders of Being. So, McGrath and CT agree that the Incarnation demonstrates God's power and will to reveal himself through that which is not himself.

## Appendix C: Peirce's Architectonic

The Classification of Sciences of Charles Peirce[1]

I. Sciences of Discovery

A. **Mathematics**
"what is and what is not logically possible," whether or not it actually exists (259).

**1. Mathematics of Logic**

2. Mathematics of Discrete Series

3. Mathematics of Continua and Pseudo-continua

B. **Philosophy**
"*positive science*…discovering what really is true; but it limits itself to so much of truth as can be inferred from common experience (259).

1. **Phenomenology**
"the kinds of elements universally present in…whatever is present at any time to the mind in any way" (259).

2. **Normative Science**
"distinguishes what ought to be from what ought not to be," (259).

a. Esthetics
"the science of ideals…that which is objectively admirable without any ulterior reason," (260).

b. Ethics
"the science of right and wrong," as per "the *summum bonum*. It is the theory of self-controlled, or deliberate, conduct," (260).

c. **Logic**
"the theory of self-controlled, or deliberate thought…All thought being performed by means of signs, Logic may be regarded as the science of the general laws of signs," (260).

i. **Speculative Grammar**
"the general theory of the nature and meaning of signs," (260).

ii. Critic
"classifies arguments and determines the validity and degree of force of each kind," (260).

[1] From the syllabus to the Lowell Lectures, 1903; cf. the text in EP2:258-62. Peirce orders the "sciences in their present condition," (258). Also, "one science depends upon another for fundamental principles," in ascending (Z – A) order, (258). Also, "in most cases the divisions are trichotomic," (258). "Trichotomic" is a word Pierce uses of tripartite analysis according to the Universal Categories (EP2:162). All terms are taken from Peirce's text. Bold text is used to indicate areas mentioned in the discussion of Peirce's metaphysics in chapter three above.

iii. Methodeutic
"the methods that ought to be pursued in the investigation, in the exposition, and in the application of truth," (260).

3. **Metaphysics**
"to give an account of the universe of mind and matter," (259).

a. General Metaphysics/Ontology

b. Psychical/Religious Metaphysics

i. God

ii. Freedom

iii. Immortality

c. Physical Metaphysics
"the real nature of Time, Space, Laws of Nature, Matter, etc."

C. Idioscopy
"all the special sciences…occupied with the accumulation of new facts," (259).

1. Physical Sciences

a. Nomological/General Physics
"discovers ubiquitous phenomena of the physical universe, formulates their laws, and measures their constants," (259).

i. Molar Physics (260) (Dynamics and Graviatation)

ii. Molecular Physics (Elaterics ["theory of elasticity," EP2:335n5] and Thermodynamics)

iii. Ethereal Physics (Optics and Electrics)

b. Classificatory Physics
"describes and classifies physical forms and seeks to explain them by the laws of nomological Physics," (259).

i. Crystallography (260)

ii. Chemistry

One. Physical Chemistry

Two. Organic Chemistry

Three. Inorganic Chemistry

iii. Biology

One. Physiology

Two. Anatomy

c. Descriptive Phyiscs
"describes individual objects…endeavors to explain their phenomena" in accordance with nomological and classificatory physics, (259).

i. Geognosy

ii. Astronomy

2. Psychical/Human Sciences

a. Nomological Psychics/Psychology
"general elements and laws of mental phenomena," (259).

i. Introspective Psychology (261)

ii. Experimental Psychology

iii. Physiological Psychology

iv. Child Psychology

b. Classificatory Psychics/Ethnology
"classifies products of mind and endeavors to explain them," (259).

i. Special Psychology

One. Individual Psychology (261)

Two. Psychical Heredity

Three. Abnormal Psychology

Four. Mob Psychology

Five. Race Psychology

Six. Animal Psychology

ii. Linguistics

One. Word Linguistics

Two. Grammar

iii. Ethnology

One. Social Developments (customs, laws, religion, and traditions)

Two. Technology

c. Descriptive Psychics/History
"describes individual manifestations of mind," (259).

i. History proper (261)

One. Monumental

Two. Ancient

Three. Modern

Four. First cross-division (Political, Science, Social Developments)

Five. Second cross-division (per geography and ethnicity)

ii. Biography

iii. Criticism

One. Literary (262)

Two. Art

II. Sciences of Review

"arranging the results of discovery, beginning with digests and going on to endeavor to form a philosophy of science," (258-59). E.g., Peirce's own classification of sciences. As of 1903, Peirce had not developed a classification of these sciences (262).

III. Practical Sciences

As per EP2:535n6, see MS 1343 "Of the Classification of the Sciences. Second Paper. Of the Practical Sciences" (1902). This manuscript may be found on the web at https://www.fromthepage.com/jeffdown1/c-s-peirce-manuscripts/ms-1343-1902-of-the-classification-of-the-sciences?page=1 (accessed 3/4/21)

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