

A SEMIOTIC THEORY OF
THEOLOGY AND
PHILOSOPHY



ROBERT S. CORRINGTON

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The concern of this work is with developing an alternative to standard categories in theology and philosophy, especially in terms of how they deal with nature. Avoiding the polemics of much contemporary reflection on nature, it shows how we are connected to nature through the unconscious and its unique way of reading and processing signs. Spinoza's key distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* serves as the governing framework for the book. Suggestions are made for a post-Christian way of understanding religion.

Robert S. Corrington's work represents the first sustained attempt to bring together the fields of semiotics, depth-psychology, pragmatism, and a postmonotheistic theology of nature. Its focus is on how signification functions in human and nonhuman orders of infinite nature. Our connection with the infinite is described in detail, especially as it relates to the use of sign systems.

ROBERT S. CORRINGTON is Professor of Philosophical Theology in the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies at Drew University. He has written fifty articles in the areas of American philosophy, semiotics, theology, and metaphysics and has authored six other book-length studies: *The Community of Interpreters* (1987, second edition in 1995), *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* (1992), *An Introduction to C. S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (1993), *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World* (1994), *Nature's Self: Our Journey from Origin to Spirit* (1996), and *Nature's Religion* (1997). He was the coeditor of *Pragmatism Considers Phenomenology* (1987), Justus Buchler's *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, second expanded edition (1989), *Nature's Perspectives: Prospects for Ordinal Metaphysics* (1991), and *Semiotics* 1993 (1995). He has also written a full-length play, *Black Hole Sonata*, and a one-act play, 1, 2, 3. Past president of the Karl Jaspers Society of North America, Professor Corrington has also served on the executive boards of the Semiotic Society of America and the Highlands Institute for American Religious Thought. Professor Corrington is an active member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

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ROBERT S. CORRINGTON

Drew University



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This work is dedicated to the memory
of two former graduate students
whose untimely deaths have
deprived philosophy and theology
of part of their actualization:

Todd A. Driskill
and
Roger A. Badham

By means of the Higher Knowledge the wise behold everywhere Brahman, which otherwise cannot be seen or seized, which has no root or attributes, no eyes or ears, no hands or feet; which is eternal and omnipresent, all-pervading and extremely subtle; which is imperishable and the source of all beings.

Mundaka Upanishad I.i.6
as translated by Swami Nikhilananda

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Preface

The immodest proposal in this book is that the interdisciplinary science and art of semiotics can transform philosophy and theology and pave the way for a new metaphysics. To frame a problematic semiotically is to focus on those elements in the world that signify in some respect, no matter how primitive or complex. Closure marks both ends of the human journey, but profound traces of the *whence* and the lure of the *whither* enter into and shape everything that the human process contrives, thinks, and assimilates. Semiotic reflection can evoke and describe these traces as well as enter into and articulate the more manifest meanings that we can communicate with each other.

Yet on a deeper level, semiotic theory remains itself provincial insofar as it refuses to enter into the much more capacious horizon of a metaphysics of nature, a metaphysics that refuses to let anxiety or narcissism divert its native generic drive toward an encompassing perspective. The failure to develop an adequate and compelling conception of nature has haunted thought down through the centuries, but we are now at a historical nexus in which our categorial framework can be broadened through a semiotic cosmology that probes into the ultimate texture of meaning in an evolutionary world. This is not to equate semiotic cosmology with the cosmology that is experiencing such a profound revival in astrophysics, although, as will emerge, there are striking points of convergence between the two enterprises. The “object” of semiotic cosmology is broader in scope than the worlds of energy and matter, and includes anything that is an order in any respect whatsoever, whether discriminated by human sign users or not.

The convergent streams that support and nourish semiotic cosmology are ready to enter into a creative intersection in which they can both enhance and challenge each other. Among the more important streams are: (1) a transformed philosophical naturalism that is open to the depth-dimension of nature, (2) a more generic psychoanalysis that

honors the insights of Freud, Jung, Reich, and Kristeva, but moves toward the depth-fields that undercut the narcissistic frameworks of Western psychology, (3) a genuine paleopragmatism that honors the spirit of Peirce and Dewey while avoiding the subjectivism and historicism of neopragmatism, and (4) a truly universalistic religious consciousness that can move thought beyond the patriarchal tyranny of the three Western monotheisms. Needless to say, these are each complex threads in their own right, but it is possible to weave them together into a tapestry with some contour that can provide a map for the future work of semiotic cosmology.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to envision in such an enterprise is the true depth-dimension of nature, a dimension that lies just beyond our categorial frameworks, no matter how robust. In a fine unpublished manuscript on my work, Catholic theologian Guy Woodward pluralizes the notion of *natura naturans* (*nature naturing*) that continues to play such a large role in my still-evolving perspective:

Natura naturans are at once in these chaoses the self-fissuring, thus the rending. Differences crackle through them, like lightnings through a night, quartering the darkness. Differences thus fissure (ceaselessly) *natura naturans* in all their magnitudes, and, thus fissured, constitute them as domains (as mappings constitute once “uncharted” lands into domains, realms); these same fissurings are as plowings, cultivating *natura naturans* by rending them (as the plough blades did the prairies), thus rend-erring them seed beds, *seminaria*. (Woodward 1998)

He has clearly grasped my intent; namely, to evoke or show those fissures that open up beneath both thought and the innumerable orders of the world. This depth-dimension is presemiotic yet finds its way into the life of signs. Each of the four conceptual horizons noted above contributes in its own way to a much broader understanding of an inexhaustible nature and its depth-dimension that can appear to finite and horizon-bound experience when the lightning-like potencies of *nature naturing* punctuate the world of signs and objects.

This work is the natural outgrowth of my previous six books. Yet the present work also struggles to advance into new territory, especially around the phenomena associated with infinite semiosis, sacred folds, the ontology of signs, and the depth-field that is linked to the underconscious of nature. Theologically, this work has been influenced by both the universalist criteria of contemporary Unitarianism and the Westernized form of Hinduism known as Vedanta. But these twin sources

operate in the wings, as it were, providing a sense of the sheer scope of the matter of religion rather than presenting particular doctrines.

As Heidegger knew so well, no way station can still that hunger that sign users have to get closer to the ultimate origins and goals of the elusive world of meaning. Any linguistic contrivance such as this one can satisfy the hunger only for a brief time, but it represents a necessary concrescence of those energies that propel us forward.

CHAPTER I

The paradox of “nature” and psychosemiosis

Meaning is the genus of which conscious meaning is a species. Its specific differences from meaning per se must be shaped and delineated with care. This entails that the concept of consciousness will be rotated through different axes of reflection, each of which will serve to undermine the centrality of the concept in a generic semiotics of meaning. The inversion of the accepted genus/species relation, which affirms that meaning is exclusively within the provenance of consciousness, requires a painstaking search for an adequate language that can reflect a genus (meaning) that is fully encompassing and yet incarnated in specific moments of meaning in specific orders of relevance. The principles of such an inversion are the principles of the semiotics of nature, the most generic perspective from/within which to participate in the panoply of meaning. The fact that such a generic perspective has eluded philosophy and theology is more the function of failed attempts to unfold a nonpolemical understanding of nature than of any structural weakness in the internal equipment of semiotic theory itself. Hence the success of such an enterprise rests on the prior delineations of nature, the most elusive and yet the most essential category within thought itself. On the deepest level, the concept of “nature” functions as both a category and a precategory, but in *very* different respects.

A richer conceptualization of nature puts creative pressure on those specific semiotic theories that reinforce the provincial views of only one sign user in the known universe. Purging any perspective of anthropomorphisms is profoundly difficult. Metaphors elide quickly into the human spheres of relevance and derive their seeming efficacy from this rootedness in the familiar territory of consciousness. There is a warmth in such metaphors and analogies that commends them over and over again. Meaning is reductively seen as that which enhances the sense of self, the sense of centered awareness, and the sense of place in the semiotic world. What is being called for here is a different and more

radical kind of Copernican revolution than that enacted by Kant, which merely served to relocate (a priori) meaning within the sovereign sphere of the judging self, while failing to locate that self in nature.

This revolution moves from a heliocentric universe to one of rapidly shifting foci that have their own evolutionary and internal principles, come what may for the prospects of the self. Kant's Copernican revolution forced him into a deadly dualism between a Newtonian universe of causal action and a noncausal noumenal (mental) domain of freedom that could find only a bare analogical connection to the kingdom of nature. His nature was thus too small and his self too large. The more radical Copernican revolution will reverse this heliocentric triumphalism for one more somber yet more attuned to the rhythms of the universes of signs, entailing a semiotic cosmology that has a humbled place for the human. This completes the process of the self-limitation of reason set out by Kant in his *Critiques* by devolving consciousness and its capacities into the self-shaping of nature, the ultimate measure of all signification for any order of relevance whatsoever. This devolution is not so much a critique of all pure signs as it is an affirmation of signification in its infinite varieties. Criticism is a subaltern process within the larger enterprise of the movement of categorial encompassing.

Historically this places the current work within the Hegelian aspiration of a dialectic disclosure of the primal structures of the world. Currently, philosophy has falsely let go of the rhythms of the world for the alleged free-space of projection and willful sign manipulation; a species of narcissism. But is this contemporary view an adequate gauge of the powers of a renewed philosophical and theological probing of nature? It is ironic that astronomy and physics have regained a categorial boldness to probe into the origin and destiny of space-time, while philosophy and theology have settled for cold porridge and a mock humility that actually masks a frustrated will to power. It is far more compelling to take some metaphysical hope from the fact that nature's disclosure, in one of its dimensions (energy/matter), is a signpost that other parallel, but not identical, enterprises can also delineate the features of nature. The image of nature is not the patriarchal one of Nietzsche's "coy mistress" so much as it is an infinite vine of growing and dying significations. These significations are: (1) preconscious, (2) conscious, and (3) postconscious, in ways to be unfolded. No given meaning, or vine leaf, would be at all if it were not effective in the larger world of meanings.

The situation of meaning in the world is far more like that of analyst to analysand than that of would-be seducer to a mocking and reticent conquest. In the former analogy, nature serves as the analyst who opens out the depth-structures of signification, but without guile or intention. The semiotic cosmologist is the analysand whose dreams are rooted in the depth-dreams of nature.

Nature's dreams are no more arbitrary than our own. Nor are they somehow in the domain of the “unreal,” a concept that has no meaning within any perspective that has a more refined sense of the innumerable types and forms of the “real.” As formulated by Justus Buchler, the metaphysical tone of this enterprise is one that affirms “ontological parity”; namely, the view that everything whatsoever is real in the way that it is and that it makes no sense to say that something privileged, such as matter, is more real than something else. The opposite view is that of “ontological priority,” which asserts, or at least implies, that the paradigmatic order is the measure for the really real. In the current horizon, textuality has assumed the role of the really real and has pushed all other contenders into mere cameo roles on the stage of thought. One of the more successful definitions goes, “The word *text* ... means something very specific. It is, literally, a ‘putting together’ of signifiers to produce a message, consciously or unconsciously, osmotically or mimetically. The text can be either verbal or nonverbal. In order for a text to signify or to be decoded, one must know the code to which the signifiers belong” (Danesi 1993: 44). As a more generic definition than many, this implied ontological frame at least allows textuality to enter into the unconscious and the nonverbal. But we are left with an uneasiness about the natural locatedness of texts in something pretextual.

And pity the poor referent of the text that is a mere shadow of the lead actor – a kind of frustrated understudy that never gets a chance to strut and fret across the stage of life! And pity the even poorer playwright (nature) that doesn't even get top billing. Diagnosis is called for.

Sweeping pseudo-categories like “modernism” and “postmodernism” reveal little of the historical situation in which thought finds itself. Such alleged historical markers cling to a repressed, but fully operative, Christian eschatology (doctrine of the history of the self-disclosure and consummation of the divine). Consciousness is held to be in the grip of dispensations that come from the mysterious momentum of history, as if history were a kind of cosmic player that is larger in scope and power than nature. Nature is reduced to a stage upon which the external unfolding of the shapes of consciousness get worked out by an inner

logic known only to the privileged few. The so-called modernist self is enframed by mathematical structures of static space and time and has an unbroken center of awareness that moves outward from a secure and known foundation, while the so-called postmodern self is empty of any traces of internal inertia or resistance that would mark a trajectory in time and space. Yet the question remains: how many members of the human community actually relate to self and world in either of these ways? In what sense is either model of the self rooted in the phenomenological data? In spite of the rhetorical bravado of the postmodern horizon, the travails of the self remain indifferent to these ironically grand historical narratives. The self in its fitful unfolding is neither modernist nor postmodern, but something at once more simple and more tragic.

The simplicity of the self lies in its almost blind movement to gather signs and meanings together around some dimly lit project that is being reshaped by the already attained signs of nature. The tragedy of the self lies in a kind of primal opacity to both its various histories and its ultimate meaning horizon, should one even exist. Nature is the genus of which innumerable histories are subspecies. There is only “one” nature (an inept and too “knowledgeable” a formulation), but uncountable histories. The self moves into and out of histories of varying scope, while it cannot move into or out of nature, for the stated reason that there is nothing whatsoever that is not continuous with at least one other order of relevance “within” nature.

With an astonishing self-delusion, postmodern perspectives have severed all ties from genuine and effective forms of history, while masking the ultimate precategorical relation to the innumerable orders of the world. It is as if each so-called historical actor writes his or her own lines as they are spoken, assuming that the cumulative effect, where even desired, amounts to something like a cultural and social narrative. Caution must be exerted with this analogy, however, lest it is assumed that nature is a playwright in the human sense; namely, a person with a specific narrative that only has to be read like the medieval book of nature. Nature *is* like a playwright, in senses to be disclosed later, but only insofar as intentionality and singularity are stripped away by thought.

Until thought *finally* frees itself from the subterranean presence of the patriarchal categories of the three Western monotheisms, which only reinforce grand historical narratives and the abjection (unconscious fear, denial, and repression) of nature, any hopes for an emancipated

and generic perspective will be thwarted. Yet there are universalist momenta within these theologies that provide some hope that a clearing can be found outside of the manic delusions of a grand and consummating history. Philosophy remains in hidden bondage to theology, especially in those places where it has felt itself to be most liberated; namely, when it thinks it has unbound Isaac from the knife threatened from above by Abraham (Genesis 22). The bonds still hold, both in a lingering patriarchal sense of sacrifice, which produces an allegedly emptying self, and in an inverse belief that bonds can be stripped away by a kind of semiotic *jouissance* (an ecstatic freedom from the so-called “name of the Father” as denoted by Julia Kristeva). But these bonds, rarely acknowledged as such, still hold consciousness within itself even when it thinks that it has walked away from the mountain of despair and closure. What if there is a different and more natural starting point, one which asserts that Isaac (philosophy) has unconsciously bound and freed itself over and over again without understanding the cunning which links it to patriarchal forms of theology and its monolithic history of histories? In this rotation of thought toward the experience of the plane, there is no antecedent binding and unbinding, only the more prosaic process of continual transformation within shifting orders that know absolutely nothing of Abraham’s knife and its alleged divine compulsion. Mountain-top experiences can prove to be dangerous in more than one way, and must always be looked at with some suspicion. Philosophers from Plato to Heidegger have continued to elevate and make normative experiences that shadow the overwhelming majority of our semiotic transactions. And the patriarchal form of theology rarely ventures into the planes at all, unless in the guise of a mendicant pointing toward the lost paradise above.

Is theology more anthropomorphic than philosophy? No. Yet philosophy continues to borrow much of its power from those human projections that have a privileged place within theories of the divine and its alleged role in history. Changing language games does not necessarily change the depth-grammar which they struggle to show. Talking of the postmodern self is but another surface grammar framing the presumed act of god’s liberation of Isaac from death on the paradigmatic peak experience of the mountain. Talking of the resultant free-play of signs within the liberated self is still to talk of an opened clearing provided (only) by the elusive god of history.

Freud’s theory of dream interpretation is appropriate in this narrow sphere of depth to surface grammar correlation. The cunning and

unconscious dream work takes the original depth-narrative, emergent from a wish, and renders it more palatable to the self, but without changing its essence when it goes from its latent to its manifest stage. The latent content here is the already-projected sense of being held by the powers that emerge out of (divine) history rather than nature. The dream work moves this offense to our narcissism into the more flattering view that the self is actually self-liberating and fully autonomous within the flow of history that now carries its innumerable personal signs. The patriarchal drama of a wish for world mastery *or* for blissful semiotic annihilation continues to operate in a hidden way in the surface grammar of the narrative. The self is trapped in the depth-grammar which is denied, while the manifest content of the waking dream becomes detached and allegedly self-grounding.

The so-called postmodern horizon is still deeply ensnared within the monotheistic rage for order and control, even while masking that control through the shifting play of surface grammars. Isaac always carries the scars of his experience no matter how it is retold from the plane of recovery and so-called liberation. His bonds and their unraveling are hidden images that enter into philosophy where and when they are least expected. In a more radical naturalism, bonds are seen for what they are, finite products of a nature that has no divine agent who could command that the self be bound. This anti-naturalist form of the theological narrative is thus a closed feedback loop that only reinforces its own ignorance of the actual rhythms of the real within which awareness unfolds.

For an emancipated philosophy there are no Abrahams and no Isaacs, no men of the mountain who wrestle with a counter-measure that remains hidden in utter darkness. There is no inheritance and no providence, only goods and provisions that remain fitful at best. Mystery does exist, but not within the confines of the patriarchal monotheisms, where all mysteries are self-generated to protect and reinforce antecedent commitments. The true locus of mystery, which has no *locus* at all, is in the depth-dimension of nature as encountered in the paradox of the precategorical. The concept of “nature” lies on the volatile cusp between the categorial, where generic categories are framed in language, and the precategorical, where all such categories are pulled back into the abyss that has no contour and no history. The burden of any sustained reflection on this paradox is great. On the categorial side, outmoded or simply impoverished conceptual structures need to be continually reconstructed to accommodate the sheer complexity of the innumerable

orders of the world better. This can only be done in dialogue with the histories of philosophy and theology. On the precategorical side, which has no *side* at all, language is left in suspension yet continually drawn into a dialectic with the categorial. This paradox has presented itself to thought over and over again, but has rarely attained a level of self-transparency concerning the enabling fore-structure of the categorial. Honorific and inflated theological categories are usually imported into the paradox in order to render it more innocuous, even when the rhetorical machinery of a perspective moves in the opposite direction. Heidegger’s astonishing failure to honor his own intent in this regard is the most dramatic and sustained in the contemporary period, precisely when his delineations of *Sein* or *Seyn* bring in the third bridging term between Being and the thing in being through such politically charged images as the gods or the escort who announces the appropriating and gathering event that ironically blunts the sheer magnitude of the paradox of nature’s self-fissure into the categorial and the precategorical.

Is there, then, only the mocking “tone” of utter silence when confronting the precategorical aspect of nature, or is there some way of bringing it into the provenance of thought that does not violate its own fore-structure? Is the shift to a kind of liturgical or poetic language appropriate, so that the nature of assertion is broken open by a preassertive giving of language? Or is this movement to and within the poetic a mask for a deeper poverty of thought? What about following the early Wittgenstein and pushing assertive language to its outer limits so that something not said (*gesagt*) can show (*zeigen*) itself; or in yet another strategy, making a frontal assault with analogical bridges that push the missing fourth term forward in a direct way; or, in perhaps the most daring strategy of all, following the Zen master and simply pointing toward suchness, thus rendering any linguistic enterprise or prolegomenon worthless?

In the current enterprise all such strategies are rejected so that thought can reassert itself on the categorial side, reawakening Hegel’s enterprise through an *emancipatory reenactment* of the sheer breadth of his conceptual strategy, while burrowing down into the self-fissuring within nature through robust categorial structures that have proven their worth in exhibiting the manifest orders of the world. Poetic contrivance has its own astonishing lucidity and mystery, but represents a kind of fool’s gold to philosophy, a glittering presence that says far too little while seeming to say just the right amount at the right time. Analogical bridges are club-footed at best, merely stretching lazy connections that

limp toward an elusive goal. The Wittgensteinian approach, in spite of a compelling crystalline clarity, represents the most extreme form of fatigue of all, a kind of letting go of the “strenuousness of the concept” so that a but partially paid-for mystery can envelop language and leave it suspended in its own rotations. The Zen approach leaves the categorial side completely unattended, and makes any prospect of a semiotic cosmology impossible. This last alternative represents anything other than fatigue, but does isolate the sign-using self from those forms of natural and cultural signs that are always and everywhere compelling in their own evolutionary terms. The self must traffic in the categorial (the domain of signs) and the precategorial (the presemiotic), regardless of the prospect of an ultimate Zen-like escape hatch.

Let us be clear why this generic enterprise is held to have a burdensome dimension. There are two aspects that compel thought to its edges and which, each in its own way, require a kind of resourcefulness that must make do with natural language rather than with a technical language such as mathematics. It may seem that an analysis or description of the categorial is easier in all respects than an effort to open up the precategorial through language. But this optimism vanishes once the very first conceptual moves are made and the sheer regionality of language shows itself. Wittgenstein was not completely wrong in his so-called “later” philosophy when he engaged in a phenomenology of finite life-forms and their attendant language games. His sensitivity to disanalogy represents a cautionary note that must often be sounded within any generic probing of the traits of the world. Yet even within the confines of his methodological and metaphysical pluralism there are hidden generic moves that operate behind the scenes in a variety of ways. Like Heidegger he argues that language is revelatory of structures not of its own making. Language discloses regional ontologies that are normative and even humbling for philosophy.

It is impossible to avoid the paradox of importing or implying generic moves even when the concepts of difference or regionality are privileged. Language is itself caught in this bifurcation insofar as it has terms that seem generic yet admit of their opposite, such as that primal pairing of “being” and “nonbeing.” Regional terms such as “textuality” have their own generic intent insofar as they are implicitly held to cover anything whatsoever in whatever way it is manifest to the self who is *also* defined as a text in its own right. Few things are more embarrassing within philosophy than watching a self-styled regional perspective struggle to mask its own hidden Napoleonic ambitions behind a rhetoric

that serves the needs of a political agenda while utterly failing to deliver self-conscious categories that do unveil the structures and traits of nature. How many of the champions of difference over and against identity understand that they have already met their Waterloo, long before the rhetorical splendor of their linguistic charge was displayed on the battlefield?

Military metaphors represent the height of the “incorrect” in our era, even though as gentle a soul as Kant used them to great effect in his first *Critique*. Kant’s language can often be as muscular as that of William James, as when Kant argues: “it [metaphysics] is rather a battlefield, and indeed one that appears to be especially determined for testing one’s powers in mock combat; on this battlefield no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory” (Cambridge edition Bxv). Kant’s intent is to develop a military strategy that will radically shift the scene of battle to one in which he has the high ground of the *synthetic a priori* which will remain safe from any fusillades of the empirical or phenomenal forces of his opponents. It would be naive to assume that he didn’t take this image of a philosophical war of attrition to heart. Add to this his repeated images of the law court in which the stern judge brings nonexperiential uses of reason to book for misdeeds against the heart and soul, and it is easy to see that Kant saw himself as playing for very high stakes indeed.

For good or ill, philosophers rarely take prisoners, and assume that their own categorial array is exhaustive of whatever is. To admit this in public would be the epitome of indiscretion, yet such a belief animates the enterprise and its practitioners. To put the point in the form of an only half-humorous question: can there be more than one philosopher? In a sense there cannot be. Yet there are innumerable ways in which even a perspective that openly wants to be generic and capacious can become permeable to other horizons and other forms of linguistic contrivance that have their own, not necessary merely subaltern, power. Each philosophical perspective is generic in its own way, and there are no good arguments for proceeding as if this were not so. Unconsciousness is a sin in therapy and in philosophy, precisely where the unconscious aspect gains power and disrupts otherwise healthy features of the self and its perspective(s). By the same token what were thought to be generic categories were often regional or even tribal in dangerous ways. For example, the Western concept of “ego,” held to be a centered identity at the heart of the field of consciousness, may be a regional concept that is neither generic nor normative for all members of the

species. And even the seemingly innocent concept of “species” may contain destructive seeds insofar as it may entail a predicate cluster that effaces key features of the human process.

The answer to the difficulty posed by the first part of thought’s dilemma, namely, the inevitable tension between the generic and the regional in language, is clear. The philosophical use of language must be as conscious as possible of the generic momentum within regional language, while also showing how each generic move can mask regional and tribal structures that blunt the momentum of thought. Dewey put it most succinctly when he wrote of metaphysics, the heart of philosophy, as dealing with the “generic traits of existence.” The point is to frame a metaphysics well and to work and rework each linguistic contrivance so that it is not asked to carry a load it is not suited for, if such be the case, or to let a given linguistic array unfold its own internal power without hindrance from hidden political agendas. There is no such thing as the “end of metaphysics,” only more or less adequate categorial frameworks that have varying degrees of opening power to disclose the traits of the world on roughly their own terms.

NATURE, ARCHITECTONIC, AND HORIZONS

A semiotic cosmology must be developed within the framework of a radical naturalism that honors the utter ubiquity of nature and its lack of any “outside” contour or shape. The discipline of semiotics is primarily concerned with the structure and dynamics of signification as manifest in any order whatsoever. The discipline of metaphysics is concerned with a slightly larger use of categories to evoke, describe, and show the innumerable ties between signification and nature. The two disciplines need each other if each is to fulfill its own self-chosen tasks. To talk of signification is ultimately to talk of the enabling context of signs and their involvements, while to talk of nature is to talk of nature as signifying, although it is much more than the “sum” of actual and possible forms of signification. The latter clause points to the other side of the categorial and precategorial paradox of thought.

If the domain of the categorial deals with concepts that admit of their opposites, such as the arch pairing of “being” and “nonbeing,” then the realm of the precategorial deals with the one and only term that has no opposite. That term is “nature.” There is no such thing as the nonnatural, nor is there anything that can even be envisioned as outside of that which has no outside. These assertions are rather stark at this juncture,

but they will show their force in the unfolding of the inner rhythms of the paradox of the precategorical. Yet here the plot thickens, for the term “nature” has almost always functioned as a categorical term in which it is contrasted with something else. In colloquial speech we get such phrases as “wood is natural while Formica is not” or “trees are natural while chrome is not.” In this use, the natural, and hence that which is truly nature in its own form, is untouched by human hands, except in the very limited sense of being shaped for human ends. While trees can be planted and genetically manipulated, they become what they are through processes that are fully natural. Here we see how an honorific use of the term “natural” has clouded the issue and has covered over the fact that Formica and chrome are as much a part of nature as anything that can be pointed to or thought about in any way. An exploding supernova is thus no more or less natural than a purely internal thought of wanting to eat a dish of ice cream. Each is natural in the *way* that it is natural, another implication of ontological parity.

The concept of the “natural” has become almost equivalent to the concept of the “good.” In certain forms of discourse this is appropriate, especially where the current ecological tragedy needs to be brought into focus against the ubiquity of a technology that effaces the very domain that it has plundered. But this use of the term should never be confused with the metaphysical use, which is infinitely generic in scope. In the latter use, although the concept of “use” is pushed to its limits, there is nothing that could in any way be nonnatural. Even the divine, however shaped by a metaphysics, is an order *of* nature, not a creator *ex nihilo*. Creation is a trait within nature, not a trait that could be lifted out of nature as its alleged generative source. Every metaphysical term *other* than the term “nature” must be recognized to have a finite provenance of meaning within certain orders and not others. This may be the hardest lesson to integrate from a radical naturalism that finally wants to let nature *per se* remain free from predicates of any kind. Is this possible? We must be prepared to accept degrees of failure rather than insist on absolute methodological and conceptual purity. Does this mean that we are to abandon the Hegelian dynamics of semiotic cosmology? No. Like astrophysics, which wants to know what happened at the very origins of the universe, *semiotic* cosmology must continue to use the most robust tools at its disposal in order to get closer to what it seeks. Metaphysics thus lives out of its own paradox: a certain confidence in its categorical array combined with an absolute humility that nature gets the final vote and that mystery will envelop even the most complex and judicious

framework. But there are types of envelopment that are internally related to what is enveloped. The envelopment of a weak metaphysics teaches us little, while a robust and capacious metaphysics that is, per necessity, encompassed by the ultimate mystery of nature may teach us much.

There is a dialectical compensation always taking place between the stretch of the categorial and the opening power of the precategorial. Metaphysics, insofar as it is attuned to this dialectic, will let the mystery of nature continue both to humble and to reinforce its categorial choices. The better of the regional categories will be pulled into larger spheres of relevance by the opening sustained by the mystery of nature, while the weaker categories will be shown their limits. Only the detailed unfolding of a conceptual array will show this process at work. As a preliminary hint, the spirit of Leibniz can be invoked to argue that his concept of the “monad” proves to be rather weak in generic scope, while his concept of “original activity,” held to lie within the heart of the internal self-shaping of the identity of the monad, will have greater evocative and generic power. An emancipatory reenactment of Leibniz will use the stronger category against the weaker and both destructure and reconstruct the monad theory where, and if, needed.

The strategy of emancipatory reenactment combines a judicious (but nonglobal) use of the hermeneutics of suspicion, with a robust architectonic move to find new use for a building material that has not been fully understood or utilized by the original architect.

Peirce was quite fond of architectural metaphors and analogies, which he used in his technical writings during the period when he was making additions to his house in Milford, Pennsylvania:

When a man is about to build a house, what a power of thinking he has to do before he can safely break ground! With what pains he has to excogitate the precise wants that are to be supplied! What a study to ascertain the most available and suitable materials, to determine the mode of construction to which those materials are best adapted, and to answer a hundred such questions! Now without riding the metaphor too far, I think we may safely say that the studies preliminary to the construction of a great theory should be at least as deliberate and thorough as those that are preliminary to the building of a dwelling house. (1891 *CP* vi.8)

The historical source for these images, well known to Peirce, comes from the final chapters of Kant’s first *Critique*, where the nonexperiential and metaphysical use of reason was cautiously reintroduced into thought in the form of regulative ideals that were necessary for a generic

enframing of self-limiting reason. Yet there are ambiguities hidden in this affirmation of architecture as the primary metaphor or analogy for categorial construction, not to mention the deeper complexities of applying architectural images to the precategoryal.

Schopenhauer did not give high metaphysical marks to architecture because it failed to illuminate the utterly elusive domain of the will. For him music came closer to expressing the churning and chaotic quality of the knowable thing in itself, precisely because it did not have the static tri-dimensionality of a building: “In the series of arts furnished by me, *architecture* and *music* form the two extremes . . . architecture is in *space* alone, without any reference to time, and music is in *time* alone without any reference to space . . . architecture is frozen music” (Schopenhauer 1844: 453–454). Schopenhauer is both right and wrong in his privileging of music over architecture in the domain of the precategoryal (his Will). Music obviously has a strong architectonic, while great architectural contrivances are hardly static or atemporal, especially insofar as they gather together the regional contours of their location as part of their means of expression. What the current enterprise thus seeks is a sense of animated architectonic, following Peirce, with a parallel sense of the underlying chaos and sheer heterogeneity of the music-like unconscious of nature. There is an especially cunning way in which a form of ontological priority drives Schopenhauer’s otherwise profound perspective. Since the will to existence is the “really real,” it follows that that art which allegedly comes closest to imitating it is more real than its competitors. Would it not be equally compelling to assert that music is moving architecture? A more judicious approach would describe the various ways in which music and architecture have their own revelatory power of some of the key traits of the world, and that neither alone can somehow get closer to the depth-dimension of nature. In a generic perspective, pragmatic considerations may compel a momentary privileging of one set of correlations over another, but a further conceptual rotation will invert that set for something else. Only the cumulative and continuing series of open-ended correlations will be sufficient to provide the phenomenological data necessary to give flesh to a metaphysical perspective.

For Hegel, dialectic is teleological in that it has an internal tension that is pregenerated by the buried goal that is struggling to emerge. His image is that of the fruit that is already contained in the bud and that serves as something like Leibniz’s original activity, giving shape and dynamism to antecedent forms of the consummated moment. From the

perspective of a humbler form of naturalism, where spirit is an order within nature rather than its foundation, there is no grand teleology within nature itself or within the dialectic of the categorial and the precategorial. Beginning points in the dialectic are somewhat arbitrary. If Hegel starts with immediate sense certainty (*Phenomenology of Spirit*) or with the utter simplicity of Being (*Logic*), radical naturalism starts *in medias res* where the ultimate whence and the ultimate whither of nature are clouded in mist. Some of these mists will be cleared away in the dialectic of thought, and some alleged clarities will have to release their internal ambiguities, but the concept of absolute origin, when tied to that of the principle of sufficient reason, must be let go. The categorial gives rise to a larger and more encompassing clearing on the world, rather than unveiling an unambiguous starting point. While anti-foundationalism is eminently fashionable on the contemporary scene, it is imperative that this healthy stance not be allowed to eclipse the necessity of categorial encompassment. The issue is not between “modernist” foundations and a “postmodern” hovering over the abyss, but between an aesthetic solipsism that blocks inquiry and a sensitivity to the self-revealing patterns of the world in its evolutionary semiotic ramifications. The latter prospect is the only one worthy of the name “philosophy,” while the former is a species of asocial criticism (appropriate to a Mandarin class) blind to its own hubris.

What is the nature of the dialectic between these two different aspects of the paradox? How do the categorial and the precategorial interpenetrate if the rights of a generic perspective are to be affirmed against the eternal night of the *via negativa*? The categorial itself exists within a dialectic of the regional and the generic in which categories carry the dual burden of opening out specific ontologies while also containing internal impulses toward a disclosure of *whatever* is. In the heart of *this* dialectic is the hidden presence of the unconscious of nature (the precategorial), which evokes restlessness for any category that remains “satisfied” with its generic scope. In less anthropomorphic terms, the inexhaustible abyss of nature opens up within any category or categorial array to show its radical incompleteness, while also showing its potential promise as a means for rendering the traits of the world more available to the human process.

A classic instance of the latter dialectic is in the role that the concept of “matter” has played in the history of naturalism. No single term has done as much damage to the aspirations of a healthy naturalism as this one, precisely because it privileges the alleged trait ontology of one order

and makes it normative for any other order that might contend for inclusion in the grand inventory of thought. The facile equation of materialism and naturalism has historical roots that must be dug out and exposed to the light of a more circumspect vision. The role that the precategorical plays here is internally related to the role that categorial reconstruction plays on the “other” side of the paradox. The precategorical presence within materialism, insofar as it is allowed to enter into the rhythm of thought, shows that *no* trait, no matter how foundational, or how powerful in an explanatory scheme, can envelop that which has no outer boundary. Within the momentum of the categorial, innumerable orders keep intruding *their* defiant trait structures into the phenomenology of materialism, thus encircling and humbling its claims at every turn. Nature has no single universal trait or order of orders than can be enveloping in every sense.

The Hegelian dialectic gives way to something that seems more erratic, more chaotic, as it wends its way into and out of categorial structures and the precategorical abyss that both humbles and empowers thought. Heidegger’s image of the *Holzwege*, of forest paths that often end nowhere, is too extreme, for it privileges questioning over architectonic, but it captures some of the flavor of an enterprise that moves outward from a shifting center toward an elusive whence and whither that are felt, but never fully known. A better image is that of a series of sign-posts on the foot hills and the plains that have a cumulative directionality for thought but do not add up to a grand sign of all signs. Many of these sign-posts are as ancient as the world itself, while many seem to evaporate with the burning off of the morning mists. But the enduring sign-posts form the living skeletal structure for the sign-using communities that the self inhabits and have proven their worth over time and within the context of often fierce evolutionary struggle. A less naturalistic expression of this is found in Wittgenstein: “a person goes by a sign-post only in so far as there exists a regular use of sign-posts, a custom” (Wittgenstein 1953: 80). In the current perspective, the word “custom” would be replaced by the phrase “evolutionary habit.”

The well-worn image of the hermeneutic circle captures part of the dialectic of thought as it struggles against its own sheer drift and opacity; that is, its native tendency toward an unhealthy and habit-filled provincialism. There is an obvious sense in which philosophical reflection requires a semiotic surplus value beyond instrumental uses of reason. Yet this sense must be augmented by a complementary realization that the quest for the generic has its own depth-logic tied to evolutionary

ramification of available orders of interaction. To frame and experience larger horizons of meaning is to free the organism for a more flexible and capacious configuration of its worlds. Animals inhabit a species-specific *umwelt* (a translucent but largely closed meaning horizon), while the human process can enter into a more transparent self-critical *Lebenswelt* (a life world that is a categorial clearing with shifting parameters). Habit and opacity often devolve a life world into a mere animal environment, or to something at least partially analogous, and this inertial momentum is part of the process denoted by the theological term “estrangement,” which entails the loss of depth-meaning and a luminous semiotic center, however shifting.

The hermeneutic circle has two components; that of the regional/generic tension within the categorial and that of the tension between the categorial and the precategorial. In either case the statistical probability is that closure will envelop the frozen outward movement of the dialectic. A meaning horizon is never an intentional object. It is the enabling condition for the self/world transaction. Yet a transformation of the dialectic of thought can open out the circumference of the horizon even as, per definition, the horizon recedes from view. The traits of the horizon can be *elliptically* encountered in several ways: (a) When it encounters an alien horizon and is compelled to modify its contour, (b) When it “feels” the seismic tremors that come from its own internal contradictions, (c) When it waxes or wanes according to the health of its “carrier,” and (d) When melancholy or ecstasy transfigures its inner momentum in a totalizing way. Each must be explicated in turn. A horizon is usually unaware that it *is* a horizon. This is part of the logic of the human process, not a failure per se. When a meaning horizon encounters an alien horizon, its internal sign systems collide with sign series not of its own making. They are alien to its own enframing of semiotic possibilities and actualities. From the perspective of the self, its horizon *is* world, not a way of encountering something other. Intersubjectivity is marked by social contrast in which at least one regnant sign system is felt to be partially or totally incompatible with another that invades it from a place just beyond the reach of the originating horizon. The not-horizon suddenly constricts the allegedly generic reach of the first horizon, compelling a sense of finitude that is often deeply humbling to the self that blindly maintained the horizon = world equation. What is to be done? The alien sign series can be abjected and thrown back into the night time of the semiotic unconscious, or they can be translated into more palatable forms (through the mechanisms of pro-

jection and misreading), or they can be allowed to augment the scope and reach of the original horizon. The last possibility does not entail assent, only recognition of the new sign system on roughly its own terms. The struggle among these three possibilities represents the heart beat of the moral life.

There is a continual abjection of internal contradiction. Each horizon has a mechanism for submerging semiotic impossibles within its depths so that they are not forced into the sphere of moral conflict. The classic and perennial form of this contradiction is the tension between public and private moral values. Need they always be in consort, and if so, in what ways? Can certain forms of contradiction actually empower the creation of great human products, such as aesthetic contrivances or political actions? Can there even be a moral life without internal horizontal contradictions that compel continuing adjustments and re-configurations? Is it not possible that great theological or philosophical systems could only come into being because of overdetermined motives and contradictions crying out for amelioration? In this sense, the greater the horizontal/internal contradiction, the greater the prospects for great gains or great tears within the social fabric. Part of the wisdom of horizontal growth in this second sense would be to encounter fully the semiotic earthquakes that ripple through the seeming wholeness of the meaning horizon that otherwise walks confidently on smooth and stable ground.

No horizon is free floating. It is always incarnate in an organism that traffics in sign series that have neither absolute beginnings nor absolute endings. The tension is straightforward; finite meaning horizons have infinite content, but only in the special sense that further interpretations and unfolding are always possible. Each horizon is held into the world by a being that is vulnerable to vast forces of entropy and decay. The analogy is to bacteria and viruses that buffet the organism at every turn. There are horizontal bacteria and viruses that sap the strength of the meaning field, just as there are defensive systems that can expunge these same semiotic interlopers. It does not help to envision horizons as products of consciousness, as if they were somehow extruded outward by this “nothingness” called awareness. A horizon is actually in the space between self and world, making each transparent, but in different respects. When one of the relata, the self, is under assault, the other relatum, the world, is partially closed off. When the relation is reversed, as when worldly possibilities become restricted, the self may also experience a loss of its horizontal prospects, say, for example, in imprisonment.

In both cases, there is a transaction in the “between” that sustains the waxing or waning, or the waxing in some respects and waning in others. The only absolute waning is death, although there may be another structure of horizontality beyond bodily annihilation.

Melancholy and ecstasy are the two most extreme and foundational moods of the horizon-bound self. Melancholy emerges when the horizon shrinks back from its generic prospects and longs for some “lost object” (perhaps in the psychoanalytic sense of the maternal), while becoming disenamored of semiotic plenitude. Ecstasy emerges when this same momentum radically inverts itself to give birth to a lightning-like clearing in which the shell of melancholy is shattered into quickly forgotten fragments. This inner dynamism lies at the heart of the religious life, which, contra Kant, is more fundamental to horizontal structures than the ethical. A fuller treatment of this dialectic must be postponed until more primary delineations are made.

All of the four forms of horizontal encounter, the invasion of the *external* other, the pressure of internal contradiction (the *internal* other), the health of the carrier, and the fierce dialectic of melancholy and ecstasy, often find themselves entangled with one or more of the other forms of engagement. A profound religious crisis, in which the issue of worldhood (that is, the “sum” of the orders of the world) becomes thematic, involves a sustained interpenetration of all forms of horizontal transfiguration. This is not so much a patriarchal mountain-top experience as it is a shattering of the depths of semiosis from a place that has no location whatsoever. As this process is described, both sides of the great abyss within nature will be brought into play.

Horizons can never be exhausted by their occupants, even when, during those rare moments of existential lucidity, they are finally seen *as* horizons. Horizontality is broken open by the four forms described. There can be a concatenated effect when one form, by a fierce inner logic, breaks into another and compels it toward its own depth-logic. If this process continues through the four possibilities, and drives each to its own depths in turn, then the self is brought into the unique position of living on the volcanic crest where the categorial and the precategorial come into the sphere of human awareness. The volcanic cone provides a receding and open clearing within which the magma traverses the domain of the great between; namely, from the forever hidden recesses of the unconscious (better, underconscious [Coleridge 1811]) of nature, to the fitful light of the categorial (where horizons are articulated and potentially shared). The magma remains unshaped until its power and

energy are stilled by the loss of semiotic heat and momentum that makes horizontal encounter possible.

The underconscious of nature is the ultimate shaking event within each and every of the four forms of horizontal transformation. The *how* of this process is especially elusive, but philosophy is not left mute by the prospect of probing into the various axes of intersection that occur on the cusp between the world and the underconscious of nature. The logic is becoming clearer: whenever there is a generic move within the categorial, there is a hidden (but partially knowable) goad from the underconscious of nature that provides the “heat” for loosening up horizontal constriction. From a radicalized theological perspective this can be seen as a form of natural grace, a concept which is beyond good and evil as its moral upshot may be genuinely ambiguous from the standpoint of human goods and values. To put the point as sharply as possible: grace gives the space for horizons; it does not guarantee them salvation from their own opacity and entropy. Each of the four forms of the *how* of the hermeneutic circle must now be rotated once again through a different axis of thought.

When a prethematic horizon encounters an external other, namely, a horizon that seems to invade it from a point that recedes in mist, it receives a shock to its own imperial intent. The very difference between horizon and world, not to mention the difference between self and horizon, is suddenly thrust upon awareness with great force (assuming that the sign series involved have intrinsic vector powers). The unconscious rhythms of the prethematic give way to the partially thematic. The first horizon is seized by its finitude, even while swimming always and everywhere in infinite sign series not of its own making. In Freudian terms there is a child-like omnipotence of thought that is rudely awakened by the competing, not to mention threatening, horizon. It is rarely understood that the inner logic of prethematic horizons allows for the delusion of semiotic omnipotence in the form “I, the horizon, am the world and all therein contained.”

What happens when this unconscious bid for omnipotence and omniscience is undercut by an infuriating counter-claim from the external other? As noted, several responses are possible. Yet there is another turn in the depth-logic that unfolds at this juncture. The underconscious of nature (different in scope and its *how* from the unconscious of the self) transfigures the logic of finitude so that both horizons are brought into a pulsating space of betweenness in which their respective sign series hover, however briefly, over an abyss that cannot be filled in by the

omnipotence of thought. The opening wedge of this transformation is brought about by social contrast in which a “smaller” form of the space of betweenness is created by that which is not a sign or sign series. A nascent self is negated in its horizontal momentum by another self (with its contrary momentum), and this sets up the classic self/other dialectic that only intensifies with growth. In the fullest sense, betweenness is a presemiotic momentum that enables the underconscious of nature to emerge in varying ways and with diverse forms of decentering and recentering. The first horizon is decentered and shown that it does not rest on itself, while the second horizon, insofar as it is brought into this process by its occupant, experiences its own version of the decentering/recentering dialectic. This is a presemiotic momentum with direct semiotic implications.

The underconscious of nature works in a similar way to transfigure the internal other that is experienced through painful contradictions among various sign series. It is not so much that the underconscious has a grand synthesis “in mind” (if it is a mind at all), so much as that “it” goads contradiction into an intensification of nascent possibilities of greater encompassment. Each sign series has its own provenance of power and meaning and is jealous of its semiotic stock. Contradictions are tolerated so long as the offending contraries remain in the unconscious of the self, where they seem to do no damage (a delusion). By a cunning that remains partially wrapped in mystery, the underconscious of nature propels the unconscious contraries into consciousness so that their energy is intensified and their competing claims abruptly presented to the often stunned self. They must be either dealt with or repressed back into the internal abyss from which they have come. The energy consumption is greater in the latter maneuver (which is not always a conscious choice), which means that the integrating skills of the self are weakened in the long run.

Insofar as the underconscious of nature has something remotely analogous to teleology, it is in the compensatory momentum in which contraries are heightened and rendered at least partially conscious. The act of integration, however, remains in the hands of nature’s estranged foundling, the self. The internal other can, under the right conditions, become part of the cumulative directionality of the self, and the dynamism of the contraries can goad the horizon of the self into products and actions that enhance its own scope and the scope and richness of its surrounding communities.

Horizons are incarnate. In the known semiotic universe such incarna-

tion takes place in those creatures which have emerged from, while still being partially dependent upon, animal *Umwelten*. If the *Umwelt* represents a type of semiotic repetition and closure, then the life world of the self is open ended and continuing in its restructuring of semiotic actualities and possibilities. Within the parameters of an animal *Umwelt* there are sign transactions, but they are not understood to *be* sign transactions, while in the life world of the self, there is at least the prospect that any given sign can be separated from its referent or sign series and made the object of a thematic and circumspect analysis. Heidegger's image of the broken hammer (Heidegger 1927: 69–70), which becomes a thematic sign only when its brokenness pulls it out of its prethematic context of involvements, tells only part of the story. On a deeper level, there is a continual movement backward and forward into and out of the power of signification as it is bound to the physicality of the horizon. Of course, the concept of “physicality” is hardly exhaustive of the metaphorically dense concept of “incarnationality,” but it often stands duty for it in pragmatic contexts. Peirce, for example, made the not so absurd claim that feelings and thoughts were extended in space, thus exhibiting a larger sensitivity to the ways in which the structures of horizons could play themselves out in the world.

The concept of “incarnationality” is not applicable to the underconscious of nature. The concept of “incarnationality” entails that of location, of some place within which to manifest specific signs and meanings in particular ways. There are neither signs nor locations within the underconscious of nature, only a heterogeneous momentum that may or may not spawn signification through its own other, namely, the innumerable orders of the world. Incarnationality is always in and of orders of relevance. The underconscious of nature, which has no relevance (or irrelevance) *per se*, provides the ever-receding clearing within which meanings can be embodied in whatever way their measure dictates, suggests, or compels. There are degrees of incarnationality, of semiotic saturation and density, and the underconscious of nature provides the ultimate hermeneutic space for this unfolding. These degrees of semiotic density do not entail degrees of reality or being.

Where do melancholy and ecstasy come from? Are they finite human constructs that course through horizons because of purely intra-horizonal tensions? Or are these two most primal of moods emergent from a source that is not locatable in any straightforward way? By now only the latter prospect should be taken seriously. Melancholy does not have its origin in specific unconscious conflicts. Insofar as it emerges in

full flower it does so because a crack opens within the seeming stability of the world, and the underconscious of nature announces its uncanny presence in a totalizing way. The “object” of melancholy is impossible to render into any one image, analogy, or metaphor. Even when several such finite signs are placed together, they only reveal an infinitesimal fragment of the receding abyss that underlies the melancholy self. Some symbols (religiously charged signs) can be mentioned: the lost object, the maternal, the paradise before the fall, the state before the ego arose, dreaming innocence, oceanic bliss, and the encompassing.

Ecstasy follows the same logic, but in the “other” direction. It cannot arise from finite conflicts within the human unconscious, nor does it have an object. It is not “ecstasy about x or y,” but represents a total seizure of the self and its horizon. Who or what does the seizing? No order of relevance, whether human or not. As in the totalizing mood of melancholy, the self is grasped by the underconscious of nature. Only the barest hints can be given of this process. One key comes from the concept of time. If melancholy harks back to a great *no longer*, then ecstasy opens to a great *not yet*. Neither the no longer nor the not yet has specific content. The hopelessly inept term “idolatry” attempts to illuminate the process whereby finite content is projected onto the no longer and the not yet. A far more helpful and more neutral language would speak instead of the inevitable transaction of finite to infinite and infinite to finite signification on the edges of melancholic and ecstatic horizons. Oscillations and inversions mark this transaction, making it a prime example of a phase transition (as when, for example, water turns to steam). Classic symbols of this not yet have been: the kingdom, enlightenment, spirit intoxication, sexual union, homecoming, and immortality.

FOUR NATURALISMS

It has become the height of fashion to talk about nature, as if philosophy and theology ever had a different subject matter. Of course, what is being introduced into thought is those very honorific categories that severely limit the reach of metaphysics and tie it to some privileged notion of the good. The underlying narrative is quite obvious and rather precious in its simplicity: nature, who was once the great mother or queen, has been betrayed by her subjects and imprisoned in a dungeon of language, technology, and a culture driven by addiction and consumption. There must be a savior who will ride through the gates of the castle on a great horse (the patriarchal form), or a community of

maternal spirits who will cast a counter spell on the prison guards and allow the queen to emerge into the light of the new pristine world (the neopagan or ecofeminist forms). Such a narrative is not without warrant, since it *does* rest upon accurate observations of the social history of certain theories about the self/nature dialectic, but it does not even begin to address deeper threads in the history of thought that are far more ambiguous and textured than the current highly politicized environment allows. For good and ill, the history of thought is the history of naturalism, even though naturalism takes many forms, both as a theory cluster and as a structure of behavior. Can a radicalized naturalism free itself from polemic and rethink its own ancestry?

In the largest sense, any use of language, even when it tries to confine itself to discourse *about* language, describes, evokes, or adumbrates some order within the world other than itself. Even the narrow focus of structuralist theories, where any given term within a language is tied to its binary negations with other terms, allows for an independent concept that is the denotation of the term itself. Thus the word “tree” refers to the mental concept of “tree,” even if the space-time referent is put under strategic erasure. The concept is, by definition, an order of nature, an order that is encountered within a human horizon. To put it sharply, there cannot be a concept about something that is not “part” of nature. The concept is always a *way* of framing a given aspect of nature in a given respect. If the pre- or postpatriarchal aspects of our concepts of nature are privileged, itself a strategy to be commended, thought is still working within its perennial dialectic of the tension between the regional and generic and the categorial and precategorial.

Justus Buchler has given us an important hint when he gives his minimalist understanding of nature as the “availability of orders.” Even this may be saying too much, but it has the strategic advantage that it clears the ground for an indefinite number of maneuvers that can free the task of thought for more sustained and reliable encounters with this perennial unfolding. The genius of such a minimalist starting point is that it actually allows for a maximal density in semiotic theory by allowing each and every sign to unfold in roughly its own terms and within its relevant and dense sign series. Radicalizing Buchler even further, the current perspective must also assert that nature is the sheer *unavailability* of orders, namely, in its dimension as the underconscious of the world. Naturalism, as a formalized linguistic contrivance, needs to reawaken its own lost prospects to make this stretch into the other side of an abjected nature.

Several theoretical forms of naturalism have become more self-

conscious in the past century. Each has its roots in concepts that often stretch back to the pre-Socratics, or even into the prepatriarchal forms of thought. It is even possible to talk of a Paleolithic form of naturalism which has its own thought rhythms tied to the hunt and to the numinous powers of a nature that is fully encompassing to a creature with a nascent horizon struggling to emerge from its *Umwelt*. We shall never penetrate into the full texture of these horizons and there will always be a sense of mourning for those of our ancestors whose lineage has become extinct, such as the line of *Australopithecus afarensis* (3 million years ago) or *Homo habilis* (1.6 million years ago). Looking at their fossil remains we ask: what was the perspective animating their nascent life world? What was the texture of their naturalism (in the preformal sense of the term)? And, what was this life like before the radical ruptures in being known as self-consciousness and linguistic contrivance? Contemporary forms of naturalism must remain haunted by those empty eye sockets that stare at us from their reconstructed craniums. What price have we paid for occupying our fragile branch of this particular evolutionary tree?

Naturalism has deep roots in prehistory and must always cast a glance backward into what appears as a night time of closure and blindness. Yet this may be a prejudice of highly differentiated and alienated forms of consciousness, a failure to recognize that awareness has always had a history and a precarious tenure in the world.

Philosophers like Sartre do not help the issue when they attempt to describe the alleged traits of intentional consciousness as if it sprang fully animated from the bosom of nature:

The first procedure of a philosophy ought to be to expel things from consciousness and to reestablish its true connection with the world, to know that consciousness is a positional consciousness *of* the world. All consciousness is positional in that it transcends itself in order to reach an object, and it exhausts itself in this same positing. All that there is of *intention* in my actual consciousness is directed toward the outside, toward the table; all my judgments or practical activities, all my present inclinations transcend themselves; they aim at the table and are absorbed in it. (Sartre 1943: li–lii)

Intentionality is equivalent to self-emptying in which the for-itself of consciousness becomes the mirror upon which objects reflect their own in-itself, a kind of ontological opacity. Yet this remains a pre-evolutionary perspective that utterly fails to understand the history and ambiguity of consciousness within all of the innumerable orders of the world.

What *can* recent forms of naturalism say about nature and awareness in the light of the history and prehistory of our singular species? More pointedly, what are the most important threads within the recent history of naturalism as a formal perspective on nature and its innumerable orders, whether semiotic or not?

The Euro-American tradition has been among the more attentive to developing forms of naturalism that reflect the greater scope of nature over such orders as history, time, the self, and the Earth. The particular coloring of a major strand of this tradition can be denoted by the term “descriptive naturalism,” where the stress is on the utter indifference of nature to human aspiration and need. This is a mid-twentieth-century expression, deeply congenial to scientific inquiry, which makes efficient causality the explanatory norm for making what Dewey called “warranted assertions” about states of affairs in the world. From the standpoint of a self-conscious metaphysics, the three most important figures are Dewey, Santayana, and Buchler. Yet tensions remain within this still unfolding trajectory.

Dewey placed his stress on the instrumental foreground where the organism/environment transaction, rooted in the neurological structure of an open-ended reflex arc, produces finite goods that can stabilize the organism in a precarious environment. His naturalism has a local and regional horizon, where control is the means for social advance and the eventual taming of nature. For Santayana, one of Dewey’s sharpest critics, there is no foreground, and little prospect for instrumental control of what he called the “realm of matter.” Ironically, in Santayana’s form of descriptive naturalism, that which supports us most pervasively is least known: “The realm of matter can never be disclosed either to hypothesis or to sensation in its presumable inmost structure and ultimate extent: the garment of appearance must always fit it loosely and drape it in alien folds, because appearance is essentially an adaptation of facts to the scale and faculty of the observer” (Santayana 1942: xii).

The human spirit is more akin to a dreaming narcissist than to an organism wresting control from a precarious set of local circumstances. For Santayana, pessimism and naturalism emerge together in the fabric of thought, always reminding the self that stoicism is the only lasting attitude in a world that knows nothing of its most “tethered” creature: “My eclecticism is not helplessness before sundry influences; it is detachment and firmness in taking each thing simply for what it is. Openness, too, is a form of architecture” (Santayana 1942: xvii). This may be naturalism at its most resigned moment, an acceptance of cosmic

structures that swirl into and out of our shadowy perspectives, leaving tragic and comic effects that must be endured during our brief time in the realm of spirit.

Buchler, whose thought emerged out of a sustained dialogue with the work of Dewey and Santayana, stressed a naturalism that could allow for making and shaping in an utterly vast nature, while also emphasizing the often overwhelming rhythms of a nature that could be understood far better than it could be controlled. Like Santayana, his architecture stresses openness to taking things as they come. While this may sound naive to the epistemologically driven temperament, Buchler acknowledges just how difficult this task is, while also providing robust and generic categories (such as prevalence, alescence, and ordinality) that do provide a categorial clearing for the *how* of the world.

Descriptive naturalism has always made the finitude of the self central to its delineations, rarely using the anthropocentric perspective, except where inevitable, in its framing of an indifferent and nonconscious nature. Insofar as the word “consciousness” appears in such a perspective, it is limited to one creature in the known universe which is “the animal that has stumbled fantastically among the peaks and troughs” (Buchler 1966/1989: 23). The “stumbling” creature is a far cry from the inflated consciousness that imperially intends its own objects and carves them out of the great mountain of being.

There is little or no place for religion, at least in fairly traditional senses, in descriptive naturalism. At the most there is an aesthetic sense, tied to a highly muted form of Kantianism in Dewey, that the term “god” denotes a social value that can unify other values of lesser scope (a sort of regulative ideal or “as if”). The correlation of naturalism and humanism is most pronounced in this form of naturalism, where the human is seen as the sole source of the religious. Descriptive naturalism is the inheritor of the philosophy of Feuerbach as it has been deepened by social theory and a gentle form of the hermeneutics of suspicion. But this trajectory does not exhaust the possibilities of naturalism. When naturalism and theism are contrasted, it is the descriptive form of naturalism that is being denoted, not the forms below.

A second form of naturalism is the “honorific,” where there is still the attempt to frame categories of the most capacious kind but within the context of a crypto-theism that privileges some first term or genus as being either ultimate or generative. The usual term is “spirit,” which is understood either to have consciousness or to be a creative source for the latent consciousness in all orders of the world. Panpsychism, the

doctrine that all matter is partially frozen mind, lurks behind the scenes, bringing a primitive animism to nature that deprivileges the human in different way from its descriptive step-sister. The discontinuities between consciousness and other orders are downplayed so that a continuity is envisioned from the simplest protoplasm to the sphere of self-consciousness, whereas with descriptive naturalism some of the unique features of consciousness are downplayed.

Emerson and Peirce represent extreme versions of honorific naturalism in the Euro-American tradition, although Peirce points toward more complex forms of naturalism that have only now begun to emerge into some clarity (as will unfold in the fuller context of this book). For each thinker there is a fundamental feature of the world that is the guarantor of human fulfillment. Peirce develops a quasi-Darwinian cosmology (with lingering Lamarckian components) of evolutionary love in which nature itself moves toward an ideal consummation in the infinite long run. Emerson rides on the pulsations of spirit in the immediate present, replacing the Christian mythical system with a robust naturalism that makes even the sacred an eject of nature. Both thinkers privilege final and formal causality, although Emerson does so more than Peirce.

Honorific naturalism remains monistic in the sense that its singular genus (usually spirit or some form of evolutionary reason) is the motor force within nature, compelling all that lives toward its own inwardness and wholeness. This distinctive form of naturalism is, of course, deeply friendly to religion, but in the special sense that the religious sphere is emergent from nature, not from a divine agent. Peirce's views on god are notoriously truncated and vague ("vagueness" being an honorific term in his philosophical theology), and seem to vacillate between a more traditional affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo* and a fully evolutionary god emergent from otherwise natural processes (cf. Orange 1984 and Raposa 1989).

It is no surprise that when other forms of naturalism appropriated the honorific naturalism of Peirce (for example, Dewey, Nagel, Buchler, and Hartshorne), they privileged his earlier essays (1860s), where his work is most descriptive. The writings of the later Peirce (1880s to 1914) were written off as an aberrant transcendentalizing by a lonely thinker who had lost his rigor and his metaphysical way (for example, Goudge 1950). While there is some warrant for this attitude, it fails to grasp the inner logic of honorific forms of naturalism that rely on a form of evolutionary panpsychism to understand the innumerable orders of the world.

A third form of naturalism, closer to the honorific than to the descriptive, is "process naturalism," where the focus is on plural centers of awareness that cumulatively enhance each other in a cosmic context that is evolutionary, but in a less Lamarckian way than in the later Peirce. Emerson and Peirce were monists in the sense that they envisioned a grounding category ("spirit" for Emerson, "firstness" for Peirce) that could generate plurality, but was not plural itself. In the unfolding of naturalism in the twentieth century, the monistic forms (as also developed in a muted way by Dewey and Santayana) have been in tension with the pluralistic forms that rest on ultimate atomic structures that, unlike Wittgenstein's "objects" or Leibniz's "monads," have windows. Indeed, for Whitehead and Hartshorne in particular, the atoms of the world (actual occasions) are *all* windows, even if the windows are tinted in specific ways, i.e., have perspectives.

While Dewey, Santayana, and Buchler would find any concept of a divine being uncongenial, the process forms of naturalism almost *entail* such a complex in order to justify some of its other regnant categorial structures. The god complex becomes especially relevant when efforts are made to describe: (1) what *happens* to actual occasions when they cease to experience and (2) how actual occasions find the relevant essences (eternal entities) to take into their becoming. To put it simply: god remembers (in its consequent nature), and god enables relevant choices of appropriate essences (in its primordial nature).

Hartshorne diverges from Whitehead on several key points, particularly on the nature of eternal entities and the inner structure of god:

My rejection of *eternal objects* is only partial . . . Qualitative definiteness is the final product of creativity, not its timeless storehouse. I follow Peirce here more than Whitehead . . . Two important differences between my psychicalism [panpsychism] and Whitehead's are that I conceive God as analogous to a "personally ordered society" rather than to a single actuality, and distinguish between God's Consequent Nature (CN), capturable in a concept, and the contingent states or instantiations of that nature. (Hartshorne 1991: 645, 700)

There is thus a deeper evolutionary tone in Hartshorne's process form of naturalism, insofar as eternal objects are emergent from antecedent states. The nature of god is also more plural and more directly analogous to the structure of the human self.

Theologically, the advantages of this categorial architecture are obvious. God becomes deeply relevant to the human self (which is a society of actual occasions dominated by a primary occasion), both internally as a felt actuality and as the guarantor of objective immortality; a form of

everlastingness that does not entail the survival of personal subjectivity, but does guarantee that each personal occasion will be physically prehended and remembered by god. Thus nothing is lost in the universe, a far cry from the tragic sense of Santayana or the more somber sense of Buchler, where losses can be genuine and, in their own way, eternal.

This is not to say that process naturalisms have a simple-minded teleology. Darwin's lessons have been taken seriously. But it is to say that the universe is growing in value as creatures emerge who can *entertain* more value in more complex and contrasting ways. There is a form of ontological priority here (as noted by Buchler in his critique of Whitehead: cf. Buchler 1969) in which eternal entities are more real than actual occasions, and creatures with more differentiated consciousness have more value (a code word for "reality") than those with less consciousness or complexity.

Perhaps a more satisfactory form of process naturalism, with strong semiotic components, is that of Robert Neville, who makes a sharp distinction between the value of process metaphysics as a cosmological theory (about the created order and its constituents) and a classical, somewhat Calvinistic ontological theory about the creator of the world. In his naturalism, god is both indeterminate being itself and the creator who creates both itself and the world in an eternal act. Again the image of the phase transition suggests itself. It is as if god is pure unencompassed water in one dimension, while simultaneously being solid ice in another. The analogy has to be stretched (as all must) because this is not a transition in time, nor is god's "solidification" simply in space. But Neville's god is a far cry from the process companion who marches with us toward our and its fulfillment. Like Calvin, he insists on the utter majesty, goodness, and sovereignty of god, against any attempt to finitize the divine to wrap it around finite evolutionary structures.

As to nature (the created orders), Neville distances himself from panpsychism: "Thus, rather than claiming, with Hartshorne, to be a pan-psychist for whom material nature is a special case, I would claim to be a pan-naturalist for whom cases run from mere matter with no psychic developments to psychically subtle nature in which matter is no longer 'mere'" (Hartshorne 1991: 384). Pan-naturalism is less vulnerable to critique on the issue of mentality precisely in its ordinal sensitivity to genuine discontinuity within nature. Mind is an evolutionary emergent, not a foundational genus. Further, the pluralism in Neville is muted in both Whitehead and Hartshorne and reduced in its radicality by a

longing for an underlying continuum of occasions and cosmic epochs that can be encountered in microcosm in felt continuities of experience. Neville *would* locate a form of continuity in god, but not in some overarching sense of unity in nature.

Descriptive, honorific, and process forms of naturalism all share the fundamental commitment to the idea that nature is the genus (or *pregenus*) of which any other order is a species. As noted by Buchler, the "genus" is located in each of its species, while each species is located within the "genus." Yet within these three trajectories are forms of ontological priority that blunt their generic scope. *Some* species will be lifted out for special treatment and quietly assume the status of the most real, or most foundational, or most encompassing. For descriptive naturalism this species is often the material or the spatio-temporal. For honorific naturalism this species is often the spirit, or the most conscious order within the world. For process naturalism this species is either eternal entities (whether evolutionary [Hartshorne] or not [Whitehead]), or those drops of experience that form the atomic constituents of the world. From each categorical choice, whether fully self-conscious or not, other choices inevitably follow. Descriptive naturalism will privilege efficient causality and remain less open to formal and final causes. Honorific naturalism will err in the opposite direction by downplaying efficient causes. Process thought will privilege mentality (Neville excepted), thus ignoring the sheer inertia of nonmental aspects of nature. Buchler's and Neville's systems remain the most successfully generic and open, although they differ profoundly on the issue of the divine and religious experience. Here, Neville's perspective has strong advantages in at least framing a powerful philosophical theology worthy of ramification. Buchler's underlying humanism ties him too closely to the less capacious descriptive naturalisms, where the humanistic stance is more clearly affirmed. Insofar as he addresses the issue of a divine being, it is in the context of complexes framed by humans, while Neville places the eternal sovereignty of god at the heart of his perspective. Yet both systems remain reluctant to probe into the underconscious of nature and its heterogeneous features, although for different reasons. Like Peirce, Buchler remains suspicious of any appeal to what he would see as the inexplicable. For Neville, ultimately there can be nothing hidden from god. In order to probe into the underconscious of the world, then, another naturalism is called for.

Within this intense cross-fertilization of naturalisms another prospect has been slowly emerging into self-consciousness that struggles (1) to

honor the stern requirements of ontological parity, (2) to allow full scope for the underconscious of nature (3) radically to deprivilege the human, and (4) to unfold a fully generic semiotics that deals with signs, sign unfolding, infinite semiosis, and the evolution of meaning (the heart of semiotic cosmology). Above, a call was made for a *radicalized* naturalism that could transfigure key features of the earlier forms and quicken the latent potencies within them. While the phrase “radical naturalism” is appropriate, it lacks the descriptive force necessary to convey the unique features of this new naturalism. A more adequate phrase will be substituted: *ecstatic naturalism*.

It is tempting to start with a definition of ecstatic naturalism so that its categorial commitments can be lined up in a clear configuration. Yet such an approach would utterly betray the way a generic perspective must move between and among the orders that it wishes to exhibit. The logic is similar to that examined in denying that nature could be defined by some specific difference. The question was: difference from *what*? A framework that struggles to be roughly commensurate with its subject matter, in this case, nature, hopes to be in the same position (although the temptations to grandiosity must be scrupulously examined) by encompassing other perspectives. Again it is noted that all perspectives *think* that this is possible, even while covering this aspiration with a counter rhetoric that veils their imperial intent. How is the Napoleonic curse to be lifted? The answer lies in a correlation between metaphysical construction and psychoanalytical engagement. This pairing is anathema to philosophers and theologians for whom psychoanalysis represents a reductive strategy that conflates motive with validation. How fair is this critique?

MOTIVES, VALIDATION, AND METAPHYSICS

Categories are generated by creatures who have overdetermined motives, forcing the privileging of some order(s) (tied to personal and unconscious complexes) over others. Further, specific political agendas will intrude themselves in a generic portrayal because of the perennial conflation of the descriptive (the task of metaphysics) and the evaluative (the task of politics). Personal projections and political utopias seem to punctuate the descriptive task at every turn. In the contemporary scene it is even a “sin” to fail to make these finite locations normative for any linguistic contrivance. This takes the form: “my personal and political location is as an ‘X’ or ‘Y’ and that means that what I say is only directly

relevant to the members of that class.” To think otherwise is to bring down the wrath of the reigning cultural elite for whom location is self-encapsulating, and hence, ironically, self-justifying. Has depth-psychology taught us nothing about the ability to peer into unconscious complexes and motives; to render them more open to circumspection and repositioning? And are all political agendas mere expressions of power, in the form of either unconscious privilege or conscious aspiration (as in liberation theology)?

The situation cries out for amelioration and a readjustment of strategies. Historically, it is no longer possible to ply the trade of the metaphysician without also being engaged in depth-psychological work, both personal and social. But this is never to assert that the value of a categorial framework is parasitic on the motives that generated it. This assertion is taken for granted in other disciplines. Newton suffered from manic-depressive disorder, while also abjecting the so-called normal life of sexuality (Hershman and Lieb 1988). Are his delineations of universal gravitation and celestial mechanics reducible to the twists and turns within his psyche? Suppose that his entire enterprise is motivated by a will to power and a desire to replace his mother (Manuel 1968), a view that has much to commend it? How does this affect what he has to say about the quadratures of curvilinear figures? The analysis of motives tells us about his fierce determination to create, not about the validity of his mathematical physics.

The situation in metaphysics is different, for the obvious reason that the structures of validation are far more complex and open ended. The “test” of a generic categorial array involves an indefinite series of tactical and strategic moves that have a cumulative force (if at all) that can only produce a relatively long-lasting *sense* of adequacy. There are no perfect analogies in this sphere, but it is *somewhat* akin to the process of mental construction in a game of chess. A Master, as opposed to a *potzer* (semi-talented player with delusions of grandeur), will envision an indefinite number of moves for any given situation, thus testing the adequacy of each in turn, although this can also be done through intuitive pattern recognition. Less compelling moves (with less generic force in a finite context) fall away quickly as the overall strategy emerges from the counter-structures of the opponent. Nature stands to metaphysics as the opponent stands to the governing strategy. When nature makes a move, there is a response. When the opponent makes a move, the Master will have at his or her command a significant part of the history of possible (effective and ineffective) counter-moves. To return to

Kant: if chess is a war of attrition, so too is metaphysics, but in the special sense that a categorial array will exhaust its resources trying to exhibit the innumerable orders of the world. However, nature is not an opponent but a generative source, thus limiting the scope of this aspect of the analogy.

Where do motives stand in this analogy? Clearly, Oedipal or other complexes have no effect on the validity of particular chess strategies. Yet there *is* a sense in which the style of play, or the understanding of a particular piece (especially the Queen) has effects that are more subtle. How is the Queen exposed or protected? Are Bishops privileged unconsciously over Knights? Which opening gambits have recurrent appeal and an intrinsic psychological compulsion? How is the endgame played out? How is space understood on the board? These and a host of other questions can be traced back to psychological complexes that have some chance of being known. There is no intrinsic reason why there cannot be a psychoanalysis of chess, not only in terms of the motive *for* playing, but for playing in a certain way. Can this further deepening of the analogy be extended to the strategies and motives of metaphysical construction?

Like the almost manic drive behind Master-level chess playing, the motives for constructing a metaphysics or a theology are overdetermined. On one level, any language user will have both a reasonably generic categorial array and a sense of the sacred or lack thereof. But what happens when there grows a felt urgency behind the very notion of thinking generically, of moving past and through provincial perspectives that close off aspects of the world, or put nature into eclipse? What fuels this drive? Is it the will to power (the contemporary view), or could it be a species of wonder combined with a need for aesthetic contrivance with the special medium of language? How can the latter motive be distinguished from the former, or is there an inevitable blending of the two? For finite creatures the answer should be obvious, namely, that power and wonder often combine in deeply ambiguous ways and that power itself has internal ambiguities that run the gamut from sadistic control to a sense of healthy growth and expansion, while wonder can also run its own gamut from voyeurism to astonishment over the sheer splendor of infinitely ramified nature. Part of the secret behind the transition from the former motives to the latter can be found in the role that anthropomorphism plays in a categorial array, whether philosophical or theological.

There is often an irony in the process of decentering the self in a

categorical array. The case of Schopenhauer is one of the more dramatic instances of a thinker working toward a total annihilation of the anthropocentric and anthropomorphic structures of metaphysics for deeply Oedipal reasons (Scharfstein 1980 and Safranski 1987). In removing the self from the center of the universe was he: (1) destroying father Kant for whom the self is the framer of the world, (2) abjecting his biological father, who trained him for a life in business, or (3) abjecting his biological mother for her withholding of maternal affection? Strong arguments have been made for all three of these claims. This tells us something about his understanding of the final stage in human development, in which the human will shatters its autonomy when it encounters the Will in nature: “Now if we consider the will-to-live as a whole and objectively, we have to think of it, according to what has been said, as involved in a *delusion*. To return from this, and hence to deny its whole present endeavour, is what religions describe as self-denial or self-renunciation, *abnegatio sui ipsius* [denial of one’s own self]” (Schopenhauer 1844: 606). Hence any personal attachments are in the realm of delusion and represent part of the cunning of the will-to-live which actually works against the true interests of the self, which must become a not-self. The question can now assume a sharper focus: does Schopenhauer’s Oedipal complex, in its three orders of relation, invalidate his conception of the self? The answer should be obvious. His motives tell us something about the dialectic of his conscious and unconscious struggles, but they do not tell us if his anti-anthropomorphism is valid or not on its own terms. His metaphysics may well have been a creative way of *dealing* with his pathology rather than a mere expression of it.

Naturalism at its best shares with Schopenhauer this desire to overcome the privileging of the human, arriving at its own rendering through its own motives, both personal and social. Here pragmatic criteria assume some force. Motives are necessary agents, in terms of both efficient and final causality, and they will always flavor the resultant conceptual structure. But the success of the structure, that is, its ability to devolve imperial consciousness into the infinite processes of nature, must be measured by pragmatic criteria; specifically, criteria pointing to scope, interpretive richness, the ability to frame connections *and* discontinuities, and openness to novel orders of relevance.

Any high-order aesthetic and conceptual contrivance will be made possible by a semiotic energy that is both (1) a pure surplus value left over after instrumental needs are momentarily met and (2) an intrinsic energy that is so intense in certain individuals that it can usurp instrumental needs. Both forces are usually present in those for whom creativ-

ity is a primary hunger that, by definition, can never be exhausted by any set of products emergent from the self. The overdetermined motives behind high creativity are structurally incompatible with a sense of satisfaction. Even the product itself, whether in language, pigment, sound, electronic image, film, or shape, will soon “announce” its own incompleteness and restlessness, thus goading its creator further along the frustrating path of endless shaping. Is the process of high-level creativity tied to the cunning of nature?

Consider the role of psychopathology in creativity. It has now become clearer (Jamison 1993) that nature “uses” certain forms of so-called illness to advance species interests, while placing the individual carrier of that illness into a radical decentering that can either spell disaster or generate a new self-ordering on the edge of chaos. The most intimate statistical correlation is between genius and manic-depressive disorder (for example, Newton). There is a tendency for this illness to cluster at the top of the intellectual and social scale because of a sexual selection process that has worked itself out for millennia. The cunning of nature seems to “favor” this self-selection so that the genetic material behind manic-depressive disorder can be passed on (there is a dramatic increase in the probability of passing on the gene[s] if both biological parents are carriers). For the offspring, this inheritance can often be a tragedy, but for a subset within this group, the pathology is a necessary condition for genius-level productivity. It can never be a sufficient condition. Other necessary conditions are: (1) some form of minimal social stability, (2) intense training in a craft, (3) perhaps pharmacological intervention, and (4) a potential community to receive the work over time (Eysenck 1995 and Gardner 1997). An individual (for example, Van Gogh) may be pulled under by the illness before the fourth criterion is met, but the work must have the semiotic scope and density to make such communal assimilation and ramification possible.

There are many twists and turns in the threads linking motives, psychopathology, creativity, and validity. Is there a species interest in the production of metaphysical systems? If so, how can these gains be measured? Are the fruits less ambiguous than the roots that have nourished them? Can the cunning of nature produce anything that *isn't* ambiguous, both ontologically and morally? While it is customary to talk of the pathology of artists or even chess players, it shocks normal usage to apply such a predicate to professional philosophers and theologians. But have the concepts of “pathology” and “normalcy” been both overexposed and, in a different way, underutilized?

Abandoning the distinction between psychopathology and normalcy

is a mockery to those who suffer from psychic illnesses over which they have limited or no control. This is not a sphere for form-shattering *jouissance* that can liberate the self from bourgeois constrictions. It is a domain of disintegration calling for reintegration. But what of less extreme forms of pathology, where very subtle motives intrude themselves again and again in the various forms of contrivance? Might not a different pairing of terms be appropriate?

Instead of trotting out the old grammar of pathology and normalcy, it is far more illuminating to talk of a dialectic involving closure and selving. The former term refers to the perhaps innate need to freeze meaning horizons where they stand so that the functioning of the self is not brought into thematic awareness. Forms of local control and the tribal assume priority. The concept of “selving,” on the other hand, denotes a much more complex process of living in the spaces where awareness encounters the unconscious of the self and the underconscious of nature. Jung’s concept of “individuation,” while somewhat heroic and narrow, provides an analogue to the selving process. Selving lies at the heart of the human process and, while deeply ambiguous, is a force leading to species enhancement.

Selving has no built-in entelechy, which would entail the sheer unfolding of a fully developed antecedent plan (Aristotle’s acorn-to-oak-tree blueprint fails to apply to the self, but his triad of formal, efficient, and final causality [*De Anima*], when reconstructed within naturalism, is pertinent, especially when the dynamism of the “soul” is stressed). The final cause of the self, within the context of ecstatic naturalism, is to maximize the selving process, insofar as it can be done without brooking an irruption from the unconscious that would permanently damage its trajectory. Since there is no omniscience in nature, not even for the sacred orders, there is no perspective from which, or by the aid of which, the self could know when the unconscious is about to emerge in a disruptive pattern than can be rewoven, or whether there will be a shattering of final cause.

The formal cause of selving is manifest in the self-shaping that allows as much unconscious material into awareness as possible, while giving the dialectic of conscious and unconscious a personal and social gestalt that will enhance communication and the unifying traits of the self. The formal cause of a given self rarely becomes the object of a circumspect analysis, yet it is clearly manifest in signs and sign systems that trained observers can articulate and render public or at least available to the other self. Phylogenetic formal causes (as manifest in archetypal images

and innate release mechanisms) have their own unconscious sweep, but their genetic capsules are subject to pathology and breakdown. Ontogenetic formal causes function more chaotically, with their own forms of potential pathology. The adjustments required between vast formal causes are immense, and there is absolutely no guarantee in any given case that the negotiations will be successful, although the cunning of nature assures that they will be so on some minimal level for most cases. It is an important social fact, however, that our species creates special social and architectural structures for hiding away physical and psychic forms of “pathology” so that they do not have to be encountered.

The efficient cause correlated with selving pertains to the hidden dialectic between sheer inertia and drift, on the one side, and what could almost be called the choice of causes on the other. Here Sartre *does* have a sagacious perspective; namely, that consciousness will place itself where it knows that certain triggers will operate in certain ways, even while masking this self-conspiracy behind the veil of bad faith. The alcoholic will continue to find himself or herself where others who have made the same “choice” regularly appear. Once in place, the inner logic sweeps the self along and the pattern of efficient causality will sharpen. This process can also take place in growth patterns where forms of self-transfiguration are gathered up into efficient causality.

To diverge from Aristotle’s delineations in *De Anima*, it might be more appropriate to place the first form of the dialectic of efficient causality in the category of material cause. “Sheer inertia and drift” can be understood in material terms if Aristotle’s correlation of the material and the potential is rejected. In this reconstruction, material cause is fully actual and actualizing, not a mere potentiality or possibility awaiting the quickening pulse of form that could set it alight with meaning. Dualisms remain even in Aristotle’s rethinking of Plato’s theory of the self, primarily in his refusal to abandon a form of ontological priority that privileges dynamic form over its other in mere potential matter. Nondialectical dualisms often manifest a similar form of ontological priority, rarely giving each partner equal billing.

With the Aristotelian background in mind, it is clear that selving may or may not succeed, but it will be manifest and be strongly relevant to the overall trajectory of the individual. “Strongly relevant” (in Buchler’s sense) means that selving will affect the basic integrity of the self over time and place, even if significant portions of this momentum remain unconscious. Is the concept of “selving” hopelessly aristocratic? Given the vast number of persons who will die in the decades to come from

tuberculosis, viruses yet unknown, genocidal madness, malnutrition, political instability, and pollution, it seems the height of Euro-American arrogance to speak of something as “romantic” as a selving process that can fulfill meaning in well-adjusted and prosperous lives. As noted, the tone of a radical naturalism is a somber one, well aware that even its own muted utopian expectations can be brutally severed by an indifferent nature and by a “species” of creature that may be incapable of intra-historical redemption. The great “not yet” that animates generic-level inquiry has its own ambiguities that must be endured. How is the analysis of selving protected from romantic projection and longing, while allowed to show the power it does have, even in those numerous cases where it is cut short or twisted out of recognition?

The force of this dilemma has another side that can propel analysis in its own way. How ethical is it to move from ontological sadness (a key trait Buddhism shares with ecstatic naturalism) to resignation and despair? In other words: what is the evolutionary value of ontological or existential sadness? The answer: only as a propaedeutic to the task of selving which is itself an archetypal momentum within the human process, and hence necessary. Without a thoroughgoing understanding of the indifference of nature to its most complex (currently known) offspring, there can be no understanding of how awareness has struggled to emerge from the night time of the unconscious of nature and to sustain its fragile claims against its *own* inertia and entropy. Awareness has to be paid for, and there is no cosmic cost-benefit analysis that can prove that the world, or even our world, has attained benefits from “consciousness” that outweigh the costs. What, after all, were its ultimate benefits for those of our ancestors who are now forever extinct? Should we even speak of “ultimate benefits,” or is it more pertinent to say “benefits in certain respects?” It is not clear that there is an absolute consciousness-to-survival equation that can be relied upon to further our interests. Consciousness has been a key feature in aspects of evolution, but it has also generated a host of problems that grow more and more involuted as it continues to differentiate itself from the unconscious of nature. Freud was surely right when he returned again and again to the irresolvable tension between libidinal need (or expression) and the equally strong need for communal shaping and control. Without the deeply ambiguous gift of consciousness, this dilemma would not have the sharpness that it has. And if the issue of justice is brought to the fore, the problems surrounding the dialectic among consciousness, the unconscious, and the unconscious of nature become more bleakly

evident. Is the selving process more like a fragile boat tossed on the high seas of great unconscious powers than like a fitful, but grand, unfolding of meaning?

Naturalism becomes *ecstatic* when it probes into its own somber tone to find an even deeper momentum within nature and, in consequence, its own categorial array. World melancholy, which is far more stoic than a romantic *Weltschmerz*, is the necessary fore-structure for a participation in the ecstatic potencies that are emergent from the underconscious of nature, as mediated through the unconscious of the self. This may be the least phenomenological claim made in this book, especially in that it seems to posit, via a transcendental argument, unseen conditions as explananda for what we do know of the location of the self in nature. And it is precisely such claims that have come under attack by post-modern and neopragmatic frameworks in the contemporary era. Since there is no Archimedian point from which to lift nature outside of itself to peer into its real or alleged underconscious dimension, the validation structures of ecstatic naturalism seem to stand on quicksand. But the enterprise itself is neither impossible nor precipitous. In this domain, phenomenological and transcendental strategies require each other, but extreme precision and care are called for. Motives and potential categorial powers will unfold only in the telling of the metaphysical tale.

Melancholy and ecstasy are horizon-transforming basic moods that open the self to the basic fact *that* horizons exist and that they rest precariously on some kind of “lost object” while pointing toward an elusive “not yet.” These moods have no local or regional referents; indeed, they do not *refer* at all. The Heideggerian stress on anxiety privileges the present (the moment of vision) in which the world is felt to recede as a totality qua nothingness. Melancholy and ecstasy are more deeply revelative of worldhood, the sheer availability of horizons for the human process, precisely because they open out the pretemporal (melancholy and its lost object), the posttemporal (ecstasy and its hope), and the temporal (in the *dialectic* of melancholy and ecstasy). In primal melancholy the self is shriven of its self-encapsulation and opened to the task of selving. In ecstasy, this process is inverted so that a reweaving of the fabric of the self can transform melancholy into expectation. In the flow of time (temporality in its asymmetrical and entropic passage from past to present to future), the two primal moods color and condition how each horizon and its subaltern signs are encountered and rendered into structures of meaning. Neither melancholy nor ecstasy in its “pure” form is a worldly product with a specific history. Rather, the two emerge

from the other side of horizons, the other side of worldhood. This “other side” is the underconscious of nature.

The underconscious of nature has no where or when, no here or there that could be mapped semiotically. Yet it is not enough to say simply that “it gives (*es gibt*),” as if this oracular saying brings us closer to the how of nature, to its innumerable potencies and their concrescence into the innumerable orders of the world. To transform a distinction dear to Averroes, Aquinas, Spinoza, and Emerson (among others), melancholy and ecstasy open the self to *natura naturans* (nature naturing), while their complex dialectic *within* any given horizon colors the articulation and encounter with *natura naturata* (nature natured). This distinction of medieval vintage is absolutely foundational for any naturalism that wants to meet the four criteria stated above (i.e., a sense of ontological parity, a grasp of the underconscious of nature, a deprivileging of the human, and a generic semiotics). Without this distinction, naturalism, as will emerge, is bereft of an ethics that is beyond ethics, namely, an ethics that can empower the self into, through, and beyond melancholy into an ecstasy-driven momentum that struggles toward a strong utopian realism, compatible with the finitude of the human process.

The pretemporal and the posttemporal are not the eternal (contra Neville), but represent qualitative transfigurations of time for finite creatures who must also endure the relentless sweep of the thermodynamic arrow of time (the movement from more to less order). In the temporal order, entropy eats away at the just and the unjust, the sagacious and the blind, at nascent and declining processes, and always functions by theft. Shakespeare said it best: “Nativity, once in the main of light, Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown’d, Crooked eclipses ’gainst his glory fight” (Sonnet 60). It is no accident that Buchler chose the title *The Main of Light* for his culminating work on his form of naturalism.

My order is sustained by destroying something else’s order (or existence). A virus may sustain *its* order by the theft of my resources. There is absolutely no escape hatch from the thermodynamic arrow of time, although various strategies have evolved for masking this fact. It is within the recognition of the overwhelming power of entropic time that melancholy may emerge to point toward a pretemporal dimension of nature that is nonentropic (at least in some respects). Without passing through the fiery gate of melancholy, there is no way to gain access to at least the outer edges of *natura naturans*. Within melancholy is a deepening, a turning, that by its own logic and cunning transforms itself into

ecstasy. If melancholy is the ultimate sign-post of finitude in its deepest ramifications, then ecstasy is the ultimate sign-post of fitful transcendence. The second sign is buried within the first, and springs forth with a power that overwhelms the self. The springing forth of the pre- and posttemporal sends shock waves into the temporal, never conquering it, but transfiguring it in indelible ways. Shakespeare concludes his sonnet with his own affirmation of this counter-tendency: "And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand, Praising thy worth, despite his [i.e., nature's and time's] cruel hand."

Myths of resurrection, or of subjective or objective immortality (and their various permutations), straddle the great divide between the temporal and the posttemporal. Myths of magical birth, divine origin, or a pristine state prior to the emergence of the orders of *nature naturing* stand on both sides of the temporal and pretemporal abyss. It is inevitable that the primal moods of melancholy and ecstasy conalesce into finite analogies or metaphors that try to hold *nature naturing* and *nature natured* together. In their depth-structures, neither mood can give birth to speech, nor can either shape any order of the world into a perfect cipher of this greatest divide within nature. Yet finitude always reasserts itself, and some contrivance emerges that carries traces within itself of its inaugural vision. One of the central tasks of semiotic cosmology is to describe or evoke the traces within the products of the self to gauge how they may, or may not, point to the ever-receding, yet ever-spawning, abyss of *nature naturing*.

Of course, the products of the self are as ambiguous as their creator. Most do not require conscious planning, and many are random ejects from the cumulative inertia of the self as it blindly follows the unconscious logic of its selving process. A semiotics of nature's self can run on the parallel tracks of an internal analysis of complexes, projections, and ideations, as well as on the track of its external products. The distinction between internal and external should always be used with great care, as the self is not merely a container and has a very complex relation to space. There is a natural symmetry between the triads of the pretemporal, temporal, and posttemporal and of the prespatial, spatial, and postspatial. Strictly, one part of the pair immediately calls for the other. The pretemporal is the prespatial (while both are also the presemiotic). It is customary to talk of spatio-temporal structures in a pluralistic ontology of events. These events are semiotic, although it will be necessary to talk of the virtually semiotic when dealing with the divide between *nature naturing* (presemiotic) and *nature natured* (semiotic). The

postspatial and the posttemporal emerge *within* the innumerable orders of *nature natured*, but in very special ways.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

The psychoanalytical trajectory to be integrated into naturalism probes into aspects of the pretemporal and prespatial. In its terms, this is the domain of the lost object or the “material maternal” (Kristeva 1974). In the broadest perspectives, the lost object need not be fully tied to the biological mother (or substituted father). For Jung, at the very beginning of the rise of the fragile ego out of the abyss of the unconscious, the biological parents are clothed with archetypal projections that they cannot sustain or fulfill. In his understanding of psychogenesis, the cunning of nature bypasses the literal parents so that the depth-structures of the psyche can become open to what is here termed *nature naturing*. In the same way that the genetic code “uses” its material carrier to pass on its traits, nature “uses” the finite ego to abject its own biological antecedents so that they are deprived in the drama of separation and selving.

Yet the psychoanalytical perspective(s) remains, by definition, too anthropomorphic and anthropocentric in its refusal to probe more deeply into the natural enabling conditions that empower the intense dialectic of consciousness and its own unconscious traces. Pulsating through the unconscious of the self is the underconscious of nature, which seems to be little more than self-othering heterogeneity. Were a motive to be assigned to the very existence of this self-imposed boundary of psychoanalysis, it would lie in a narcissism that refuses to lift its gaze up from the surface of the pond upon which it is reflected so that it could become open to the location of the pond itself within a natural topography that has no outer edges. It is a wonderful historical irony that at least the Freudian forms of psychoanalysis set about the deconstruction of grand self-delusions, while fostering the greatest delusion of all; namely, that the human process is what it is without any relation to the pretemporal, prespatial, and presemiotic conditions that make it possible in the first place. When ecstatic naturalism gathers psychoanalysis within its own provenance, it is compelled to release its narcissism and to serve a more capacious framework in which anything that takes place in the self is an infinitesimal corollary to the perennial dialectic of *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. The lost object (or material maternal) becomes transfigured into the underconscious of nature, which seems to mock the self

in its icy indifference to the tenuous structures of awareness that play themselves out in the continuing evolutionary drama of the human process.

Within the regrounding of psychoanalysis, a number of its concepts stand out as being the most powerful and the most amenable to a categorial stretching: (1) projection, (2) unconscious complexes, (3) transference and its corollary countertransference, (4) the dream work, (5) the interactive field, and (6) the unconscious, both personal and collective. In the following emancipatory reenactment, each will be delineated in terms of its usual conceptual habitat, and then transformed into a structure that exhibits more scope and density.

Projection

By definition, projection is always unconscious. Like a horizon that does not know *that* it is a horizon until there is some kind of transforming event (within it or between it and another), a projection moves silently to externalize internal content onto some order of relevance that will have triggered it. The external order may be innocent or may, if it is another human order, have its own guile in casting forth a counter-projection (a process that is also unconscious). When two projections collide in this latter sense, there is an intensification of semiosis that can decenter the selving process in dramatic ways. The classic example in more patriarchal forms of psychoanalysis is the conjunction of the *femme fatale* and the anima-starved male. The concept of the “anima” refers to the psychological “feminine” component that Jung believed was housed in the biological male. When the vulnerable male psyche encounters the projection coming from the female, it is caught in a relational structure that is the more powerful the less it is amenable to some kind of conscious rendering. As with all such gendered structures, the ratio between the enculturated and the biological is extremely difficult to map. If Jung erred in privileging the biological, the contemporary horizon has often erred in privileging the constructed and contextual dimensions of these projective fields. Regardless of how this perennial debate is resolved (if at all), the power and sweep of projections punctuate every aspect of the human process.

An unconscious projection is always intentional (in Husserl’s sense), that is, it is related to a specific order other than itself in a specific respect. Projections ply the great between, located in the matrix where the unconscious has its own horizon that enters into orders of relevance

that surround it in the domain of *nature natures*. This is a finite-to-finite correlation, as long as it is noted that for the current perspective the distinction between “finite” and “infinite” is pragmatic in that there are no *totally* finite orders. Here the term “finite” denotes that projection’s object is separable from other such objects and that it has a specific focus. In Husserl’s language, this is the correlation of *noesis* (act) and *noema* (object). While it is jarring to normal linguistic usage to speak of an unconscious noetic or intentional act, depth-psychology has shown that these phenomenological structures do work themselves out “below” the momentum of the intentional field of consciousness. It does not follow that projections are not endlessly ramifiable in an indefinite number of actual and possible orders. Yet any given projection will have a point of origin (the unconscious complex) and will have a specific trigger that represents its “other.”

The concept of “intentionality,” when freed from an exclusive relation to consciousness, points to the link between the outward movement of a complex, via its projection, and an order of relevance that has at least one regnant trait in common with the structure of the projection. The problem that emerges here has tragic overtones. How is it possible to know if this “common” trait is part of the order of relevance seized by the projection? How is it possible to know if the projection being seized by the external order is primarily responding to a distorted version of itself? Consider the extreme case of paranoia, where a projection correlates to an object that most outside observers would say has no genuine trait in common with the projection. Social paranoia has been deeply embedded in almost all forms of genocide, and involves the same unconscious logic of *noesis* to *noema* as the more innocent forms of eroticized connection or idealization of the other. There may be no qualitative distinction between late-night conversations in bars and a genocidal rage that has no check on its projections.

Can the human process exist without projections? Are projections in their overall structure part of a species-need that for the most part functions to enhance survivability? In Zen Buddhism, a nonprojective state is envisioned, but only insofar as the ego is annihilated through a vigorous series of deconstructions that almost always fail in any given case. If this enlightenment is of such extreme rarity in our “species,” what value is it as a normative criterion?

It can be assumed that projections will almost always exist in some form to connect one self with another, and/or with orders of relevance that impact on the self. Peirce argued that all perception is already and

always shaped by a perceptual judgment that “applies” itself automatically to a percept that is other to the self. It is nearly impossible to pry the one loose from the other in a distinct phenomenological act. He gives the example of seeing a chair *as* yellow, an ascription of a predicate to a subject that has the force of compulsion (related to his category of secondness as it attains thirdness/meaning). Yet this application of the predicate is also a judgment involving what could be called an unconscious inference. Peirce generalized the concept of inference to cover any judgment or any manipulation of signs. There is an evolutionary continuum moving from the unconscious predication of a quality to an object, to the interpretive musement that lets signification unfold on the edges of pragmatic tests and needs. It would not be violating Peirce’s categorial structure to say that anything organic infers in some sense (an implication of his panpsychism).

When moving toward the unconscious, about which Peirce remains reticent, the inferential processes are much more compulsive and ambiguous. There is a world of difference between applying a quality to an object and projecting a trait onto another self (insofar as that projected trait refers, unconsciously, to a hidden psychic structure of the other self). Projecting a power complex onto another, whether the object (self) deserves it or not, is certainly an unconscious inference, but its compulsive quality comes from an unconscious complex rather than from a percept that has its own external features. Only the most extreme postmodernism would confuse color predication with unconscious projection. While there are testing procedures available for either case, they become vastly more difficult in the latter, where the alleged (power) complex in the other self can only be validated by forms of social comparison that remain open ended and subject to forms of resistance and denial. It is a mark of basic sanity to accept a correction to a color predication, say when lighting or internal disease may distort the reception of light waves. But it is also a mark of statistical “normalcy” to deny that projections are taking place, and that any given projection has been seen through by another. The power complex remains stubbornly projected onto the other self, not owned by the originating self, whose internal conscious imagery negates the imagery of its own unconscious projection.

Here Peirce comes to the rescue with his category of secondness. His founding category of firstness refers to undifferentiated quality and potentiality prior to any stain of the actual (an Augustinian sense of the world prior to its ontological fall). The category of thirdness refers to the

rational and law-like habits that govern the world and which make meaning possible. The category of secondness, as the name implies, refers to brute dyadic interaction that is prior to signification or fulfilled meaning. His arch example, in the human order, is that of muscular effort against a resistant object. There is an immediate sense of resistance that thwarts the growth or sheer maneuvering room of the agent. Projections encounter resistances in a variety of ways, primarily from the object and from internal contradictions. In the former case the opposing self may confront the projection and reject its colonial claims. This is especially evident in the search for the so-called “magical other” who is held to fulfill all of the needs of the self. The hapless recipient of the projection will use a variety of tactics, often themselves unconscious, to thwart the claims of the projection.

Needless to say, the other self may find the projection deeply congenial and exhibit an ambivalence about its demands that may be profoundly confusing to the original self. Here there is an overdetermined meaning situation that represents a semiotic overload, thus brooking confusion and even a sense of betrayal. Resistance (a form of secondness) in the human order is rarely fully self-conscious, and part of the endless comedy and tragedy of the human process can be seen in our struggles to find clarity out of the sea of projections that emerge from us and that return to us.

Internal resistance can take place when one complex is struggling for supremacy against another. There could be a battle between a power complex and an inverse masochistic complex that wishes to place the ego in an abject or abjected state. The scope of each unconscious complex limits the scope of the other. Moral and interpersonal ambiguity result, leaving the originating self exhausted and surrounded by its own semiotic debris. By definition, outward and inward resistance occur together (assuming an immediate interpersonal nexus). As noted, in a semiotic theory of the self, the distinction between inner and outer functions more pragmatically than spatially, that is, we must always speak of “inner in certain respects and for certain purposes of analysis.”

How can this analysis of projection be rendered more generic, more suitable to its setting within the innumerable orders of nature, and within the draft opened up by the ontological difference of *nature naturing* and *nature natured*? A preliminary question has already been asked: what is the species-value of projection for a sign-using creature that so often misreads the signs? Why is the human life world so infused with signification, so awash in both convergent and contradictory signs that

rarely have a decisive and clear contour? Why has misreading been “allowed” to enter into the process in such dramatic ways, from mistakes in visual or auditory cues to apocalyptic projections that can destroy whole peoples? On the other hand, what would human community be like without shared projections that may have liberating powers and potentials? Myths of origin can function to stabilize a community, and these projections can be woven into more complex and subaltern narratives. Yet ambiguities *always* remain. Just what *was* Johnny Appleseed sowing in his Westward movement? Was he planting mere apple trees, or something less innocent, both ecologically and politically? And yet, how churlish must we become if all myths of origin are placed on the rack of suspicion?

What is being sought is the depth-dimension, the whence that propels projections outward into the world. The immediate agency is the unconscious complex, a complex that will have both personal and social dimensions. All complexes are self-othering. They rarely remain static, even when they seem most dormant. Freud was among the first to thematize these unconscious complexes and their projections with his concept of the “parapraxes,” the slips of the tongue that betray an unconscious wish that finds a means of expression through an unconscious linguistic contrivance. Jung gives as an example someone at a funeral who says: “I *congratulate* you on your loss.” From his own perspective, Jung was able to disclose the correlation of projections and complexes through the word association test in which a list of words was read in sequence. Each response was gauged in terms of its displacement from a more appropriate response and its delay. By administering the test Jung claimed that he was able to get a preliminary road map of the unconscious complexes of the individual patient. Thus if someone is asked to respond to the word “house” and they respond with the word “home,” Jung assumes that there is no great displacement or projection involved. But if someone is read the word “mother” and responds with the word “knife,” the assumption is clear that a complex has been touched and that it carries with it a full panoply of projections that can provide one of the touch stones of analysis. The unconscious complex *must* externalize itself through projections, and thereby become at least potentially knowable. With this last assertion we begin to open the door to the cunning of nature that lies underneath projections.

Projections occupy space and time in their own way, that is, they ply into and through meaning horizons that have a public aspect. One of the strongest links between self and self in nature is through projection

(of which, as we shall see, the transference is a species). Any given projection will make its intentional object both more and less than it is. It will make the other self “more” in that it will add a trait cluster that overshoots the second self and that fills it with a contour that is only partially available. It will make the same self “less” in that the structures of resistance that say “no” to the projection will be ignored, at least in the preliminary stage of projection. The genius of our communicative strategies is that at least part of the genuine self (a precarious concept) will emerge from the dialectical interchange of signs. Why, then, is the “genuine” self surrounded with so much semiotic noise? Why is the signal to noise ratio often so biased away from the signals, however ambiguous, that are moving into and out of the intersubjective horizontal fields? The answer has to do with the curious relationship between the human process and evolutionary ramification of signs in an indifferent nature.

In the transaction between two animal *Umwelten*, say a predator to prey relationship, the signal to noise ratio is much more carefully circumscribed. If there is too much noise, one species may starve, while another may be allowed to reproduce too prolifically, thus impacting on other surrounding structures. The potential food source must be able to determine a signal in an instant, while the predator must quickly sort out worthless signs that will only produce fatigue and the loss of any momentary surplus energy in the system. But when a human life world emerges from its own ancient *Umwelt*, there is a distinct increase in the amount of semiotic noise in the system. While critical common sense (Peirce) makes its way with some assurance through this semiotic field, potentials emerge that may have no direct antecedent histories; i.e., the realm of efficient causality is augmented by nascent forms of final cause. In the human order, final cause is always somewhat rare and *very* unstable, but it will be manifest in at least degenerate forms. It is here that the cunning of nature becomes a little clearer.

Discussion of final causality has been thwarted by misuses of the concept that do not grasp the sobering implications of the neo-Darwinian synthesis in biology. For almost all biologists, there is no evidence that suggests that a purpose exists for organic evolution as a whole, nor is there evidence that goals are operative in the perennial nexus of random variation and natural selection. Why, then, speak of final cause in the human order when there are no antecedent structures that would warrant such an overly generous concept? Is the situation as stark as it would seem, or have some preliminary delineations opened a door to a different *kind* of developmental teleology?

Two concepts reinforce each other in the rethinking of final cause required by ecstatic naturalism. The first is that of surplus semiotic value, while the second is that of selving. Insofar as the instrumental needs of the human process have been met, habit being a form of energy preservation against wasted and unnecessary experimentation, a clearing emerges in the life world (horizon) that can admit novel and/or augmenting signs. While there are structures of resistance and habit even here, they are more attenuated and more amenable to the propulsion of selving. The selving process emerges more fully when this freedom from the powers of origin (antecedent and causal realms) provides a space within which a new contour for the self can emerge. There is a fitful transcendence of the opacity of the ancient *Umwelt* and from the habit-bound aspect of the life world. Without the surplus value, there would be little selving, yet without the energy of selving, the surplus value would be strongly effervescent. Purposes emerge within this dialectic of semiotic surplus value and the selving process. And it is into this space that the momentum of projection takes on another semiotic fold, another dimension that makes it overdetermined and which transforms all personal and communal relations.

In the clearing provided by surplus semiotic value, in which signs can operate without being fully embedded in opaque conditions of origin, projections have the scope to arch out into the larger horizontal field and color other selves with the textures emergent from the originating unconscious complexes. As noted, the emergence of conscious awareness on the evolutionary scene is ontologically ambiguous. It follows that the chief instruments of this awareness, namely, unconscious projections, are equally ambiguous. What do these projections now do within the context of semiotic surplus value (and selving) that was not possible before? The answer is surprisingly straightforward: they enable the self to externalize an expanded universe of signs and sign systems that provide a potential fertile field for a reshaping of the self beyond the conditions of origin. In simple terms, the power of the unconscious projection is found in its ability to hold a possible self into being against the backdrop of a similar creature. This is the dialectic that Hegel attempted to describe in the master/slave relationship in which projections shape the otherness and the sameness of the partners. His idealization of this tragic process aside, the logic remains. Surplus semiotic value provides the space within which projections *can*, under the right conditions, aid the selving process.

Ultimately, then, nature enriches its semiotic possibilities through the projections that “it” made possible through the fragile sphere of

semiotic surplus value. These projections, with all of their comic, tragic, healing, and rending prospects, are part of the *how* of nature in an ordinal world. The unconscious must struggle toward consciousness in order to fulfill its own developmental teleology. Without projection, emergent from complexes, the unconscious would remain mute. But here the plot thickens. For the unconscious of the self is also the servant of the underconscious of nature. Perhaps a better image than servant would be that of Jacob wrestling with the stranger (divine being) from whom he demands a name (Genesis 32: 24–32). He is deeply wounded in this heroic struggle, but receives a blessing before sunrise. This narrative represents a profound insight into the dialectic between the unconscious and the underconscious of nature. Jacob refuses to let the stranger (unconscious and numinous power of the place beside the stream) eclipse him. The strength of his consciousness wins him the right to be called “Israel” because “you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed” (NRSV). To name something (or to receive a name) is to convert an indeterminate complex into one bearing knowable and differentiated traits. It emerges from the background of origin and assumes a role within those developmental teleological processes that mark the specific difference between the human process and all other known orders. Pushing the analogy we can say that the divine being is a potency of *nature naturing* that enters into the psyche of Jacob through the figure of the stranger with whom he must wrestle. His subsequent limping is his mark of this conquest of the night time of the unconscious.

Of all of the images in Hebrew scripture, the wrestling match between Jacob and the mysterious divine being remains the most compelling for a naturalism that wishes to honor both the numinous sacred folds within nature and the taciturn underconscious of the world. It would be a mistake to see the Jacob narrative as a mere patriarchal story of control and domination, although those elements are certainly present in the overall family saga. Jacob has gained insight into the numinous, and has refused to sell his precious birthright, consciousness. To be conscious is to carry an ontological wound that reaches right down into the heart of nature; namely, into the eternal fissure between *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. In a striking sense, we are all inheritors of Jacob’s wound, even though it is manifest differently for the two genders and the many races. Yet even within the vast historical shifts of power and domination over the millennia, the ontological wound appears in each self in its own way. And were the community of justice finally to

arrive, as per impossibility, the wound would remain, haunting each finite self in its trajectory through the infinite worlds of semiosis.

Unconscious complexes

Projections are products of unconscious complexes. Neither can exist alone. The projection is the *how* of the complex, while the complex is the *whence* of the projection. If the preceding argument is accepted as to the logic behind projections within human evolution, then it is easier to understand the logic behind those powerful and autonomous complexes that live their own lives within the depth-structures of the human process. An initial stipulation is important: complexes are not always, or even necessarily, the result of trauma or of genetically induced psychopathology. Complexes grow within the unconscious regardless of what the self undergoes or does in the world. Some of them are, of course, deeply pathological in force and direction, and can even assume a social dimension. Social pathology is to some extent the result of the “linking” of personal complexes insofar as they have a collective dimension. It is as if a pathological complex seeks out its cousins in an underground drama that has destructive above-ground consequences. But the species is not the genus. Complexes are a natural part of the human process, and the self that fails to account for them may suffer shipwreck in both personal and social orders.

How is it possible to delineate or describe an unconscious component? Phenomenology seems to stand dumb before the domain that is not part of the alleged lucidity of consciousness and its intentional acts. The species of transcendental argument favored by Kant has been looked upon with some suspicion, although no system can function without at least a muted version of the argument that moves from the observed to posited conditions in the unobserved. Everything from Wittgenstein’s “objects,” to Royce’s “self-representative series,” to Husserl’s “transcendental ego,” to Kristeva’s “chora,” to Irigaray’s “Other,” emerges into philosophical discourse through some version of a highly compelling (within their framework) transcendental argument. In theology the distinction between the immanent (eternal) and economic (historical) trinities rests on a nonphenomenological argument, but no orthodox theology could long function without it.

Rather than seek a pure realm of description that would *never* step beyond the bounds of the “given,” thought must accept that only a cumulative series of reinforcing strategies will ever be able to honor the

sheer complexity, heterogeneity, and abysmal quality of the world. And, after all, no system ever *quite* frees itself from a transcendental move at one of its key junctures. If C. I. Lewis can speak of a “pragmatic a priori,” ecstatic naturalism can invoke something like a natural a priori that is dynamically (if incompletely) manifest in the joists of its architectonic. These floor braces are successful not because they satisfy the needs of a self-validating and imperial consciousness, but because they do effective linguistic work in an unforgiving context that would crush inadequate architectural elements.

In describing the various ways in which unconscious complexes obtain in the human order, both phenomenological and transcendental strategies will be necessary. In addition, comparative and inductive approaches have already brought great insight into the ubiquity and sheer strength of these autonomous complexes that represent underground semiotic systems in their own right. Freud and Jung, to name no others, both acknowledged that the complex theory was at the heart of their respective versions of depth-psychology. While Jung developed the complex theory years before Freud (Kerr 1993), the classical Oedipal structures would make no sense if they were not grafted onto a full-blown theory of autonomous and inherited complexes. And even Freud acknowledged something remotely akin to an archetypal core for complexes in his later writings in cultural anthropology and religion. The complex theory is thus the draft horse of psychoanalysis, pulling by far the heaviest conceptual load in the system.

From the perspective of an ordinal phenomenology, which rotates any self-showing order through its actual and possible orders of relevance, the complex of the unconscious is manifest through its ability to generate projections that can be read in intersubjective space. Immediately, a transcendental strategy is brought into focus because the projection, as a kind of outer shell of the complex, has to be read backward into its originating source. The transcendental strategy takes on another layer when the complex is also seen operating to deflect structures of consciousness away from their allegedly self-chosen path. The classic example, as noted, is that of the “parapraxes” or slips of the tongue that betray the presence of the complex. A near-perfect analogy here is that between the deflection of consciousness by the complex and the Einstein lensing effect whereby the light from a galaxy is converted into a ring by an intervening astronomical body of sufficient gravitational mass to bend the light waves around it. The complex is analogous to the intervening body that bends the light of consciousness. Interestingly, this

analogy can be turned around so that the complex can also be seen as the radiating galaxy that is itself bent by the intervening object (consciousness). This is a symmetrical relation in the fullest sense, although in terms of strength, the complex will have greater power than that within which it is deflected.

The empirical and inductive evidence for the existence of unconscious complexes is fairly strong, so that no other model seems to do as well in accounting for how the path of consciousness is punctuated with forms of resistance that simply cannot be ignored. Of course, there will always remain disagreement as to the precise framing of these complexes, with the most controversial being the real or alleged Oedipal complex. How can the complex theory be made more generic to serve the needs of a capacious metaphysics that is always on the lookout for the cunning of nature that lies behind the structures that are most strongly relevant to the human process?

While it is impossible to develop a full topology of unconscious complexes, and thus to give a finite list of what they are, they can be seen in fairly sharp outline insofar as their semiotic structures intersect with the sign series of the self in its personal and more generically social horizons. Peirce only made a few tentative moves into the sphere of the unconscious, but came to the conclusion that semiosis was partially shaped by what he called “skeletal sets” within the “bottomless lake” that lies beneath the light of consciousness (*CP* vii.547). He failed to grasp the sheer otherness of the unconscious, even if he had a partial sense of the underconscious of nature with his primal category of “firstness.” His doctrine of panpsychism made the unconscious too conscious in the sense that mentality is a trait found throughout nature in a vast continuum admitting only of degrees of instantiation.

Hence the qualitative abyss separating consciousness from the unconscious remained inaccessible to him. As a consequence he also failed to understand the intensity of the intersection points between his skeletal sets and conscious sign series. Semiotic cosmology must continue to emancipate itself from Peirce’s own deep abjections of the most substantial dimensions of the world. By analogy, he can be seen as the Newton of semiotics, whose grasp of conscious and three-dimensional semiosis is reasonably normative for semiotic theory. But it represents only a subaltern perspective within a larger semiotic cosmology and a corollary theory of nature’s self.

Unconscious complexes are more than underground Peircean “skeletal sets.” They are far more akin to intense gravitational fields that pull

new matter into their internal structure. A mother complex, for example, will actively ingest any conscious experience that has any traits at all relevant to its own structures. At the same time, the personal unconscious will register subtle cues in the horizontal field that are pertinent to the mother complex but that may be missed by consciousness. In the analytic context (analyst to analysand) this unconscious ingression can often be seen in subtle changes in the level of blood flow to the skin surfaces of the face. A facial flush will be a good indicator (Peirce's indexical sign) that something has triggered an unconscious complex. The unconscious complex cannot *help* becoming manifest in signs. In other words, there is no such thing as a nonmanifesting unconscious complex. Latency is only apparent, as the unconscious itself is a highly active scanning system that has its own interest in sorting through the signal/noise ratio in the horizontal fields of the host self. Each complex will seek its own cluster of traits in its intentional objects. One of the hardest prejudices to overcome is that only consciousness can be intentional. The unconscious complex is intentional in its *own* unique way by vibrating in response to an external trait that sets its internal music in motion. To keep with this image, it must still be denied that there is an overall harmonious musical structure playing gently in the unconscious. Rather, there are competing and even clashing harmonic resonances and chords that can only be brought into partial convergence by the strenuous efforts of awareness.

Two analogies have helped unfold the structure of unconscious complexes: that of an intense gravitational field and that of a harmonic structure that may or may not be congruent with other harmonic structures in other unconscious complexes. In this second analogy, disharmony can be a powerful trait within a harmonic structure and can add to its contour in novel ways. Aesthetically driven semiotic anthropologies (often allied to process forms of naturalism) overstress the convergent and cumulative harmonics within complexes, while post-modern perspectives will see atonal and clashing structures everywhere. Neither extreme even comes close to responding to the phenomenological data. Each complex has its own depth-logic that can be reliably mapped by the tools available to semiotic anthropology and psychoanalysis.

It even makes sense to speak of prediction in this realm, as, for example, when a person is placed in a situation in which known triggers will be available. The complex will be activated and will have *some* manifestation, however attenuated. Further, any lowering of the

threshold of consciousness, such as in the use of alcohol, will give the unconscious complex more scope within which to operate, as the carefully built-up structures of resistance and denial in consciousness will be stunned or otherwise put out of commission. If a known trigger and a lowering of the protective threshold of consciousness are combined, often behind the veil of Sartrean bad faith, the complex(es) will more likely than not move into public semiotic space in a dramatic way. Does the unconscious complex conspire in its own rapid self-disclosure in alien horizons?

It would be a profound mistake to personify unconscious complexes as if they were intentional agents in the same way that consciousness is such an agent. A more judicious approach would be to see them as more akin to a moving gravitational and harmonic field that has an inner propulsion or centrifugal force to move outward from the recesses of the unconscious. If the complex bumps into the resistance of what might be called the penumbra of consciousness, it will remain within a more closed orbit within the self. But should a tear be rent in that boundary, by a trigger or a weakening of the border, then its own momentum, not that of an extra-natural agent or hidden *deus ex machina*, will accelerate it into the outer semiotic world.

Unconscious complexes thus do not “want” to enter inter-horizonal space, but they will (and must) do so under certain well-known conditions. To combine images: if the complex is like the Queen in chess, then its projections are like the pawns that surround it. Consciousness is more like the weak King who must be protected at all times, but whose own actual powers, except in the endgame, are limited. In the selving process, the endgame is analogous to the movement to integrate (rather than check) the complexes. The analogy has to be stretched to account for a blending of the black and white chess pieces within the semiotic model of the self.

The relative autonomy of unconscious complexes can be seen in the rare and extreme phenomenon of multiple personality disorder, in which split-off complexes *will* become personified by the cunning of the unconscious. Known technically (DSM-IV 300.14) as Dissociative Identity Disorder, this astonishing fragmentation of the self is manifest when two or more “distinct identities or personality states” have emerged with their own ways of perceiving and processing sign systems. While there may be a dominant complex, others will move into and out of prominence as often dictated by external situations. Each unconscious complex will be like a person with a name and a specific memory. Overall,

however, there will be memory gaps for the self as a whole, leading to speculation that this phenomenon exists as a way of dissociating consciousness from traumatic memories that would otherwise destabilize the self.

It is as if the unconscious makes a cost-benefit analysis as to the best way to render the self functional, even if that entails allowing for a splintering of autonomous complexes through the powerful process of naming. To name a complex is to separate it off from others (at least partially). Interestingly, some of the personalities may be aware of only one or more of the others, while another one may have more scope for interaction, thus brooking conflict. Should any doubt remain about the centrality of the complex theory in depth-psychology, the extreme phenomenon of Dissociative Identity Disorder (a subaltern species of the genus) should show its power as both a descriptive *and* explanatory theory within the context of semiotic anthropology. How does the complex theory within this anthropology aid a semiotic cosmology to find its understanding of this central phenomenon within the innumerable orders of the world?

At this juncture, the psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious complex is taken one step further into the unconscious structures which encompass it. The unconscious complex clearly exists in the personal sphere of semiotic interaction in which its projections arch outward to color the world of selves and objects with a panoply of signs that are made possible by surplus semiotic value (as allied to the serving process). The question naturally emerges: why do unconscious complexes exist (a version of the previous question about the structure of projections)? Two divergent categorial frameworks can be appealed to. One such framework is that of the “lottery” model of evolution, which argues that the human process and its constituent traits are random products of non-teleological forces that could, in principle, have produced something else. The other framework could be called the “opening” model (as worked out theologically by Karl Rahner) which also remains reluctant to talk of purpose, but argues for a momentum of clearing within which the human process leaps beyond its ancient *Umwelt* by means that are not obviously tied to random variation and natural selection (although these twin forces will certainly be present in innumerable ways).

Is there a way of asserting that both models are true? Within the context of ecstatic naturalism, a place must be found for the lottery model, especially insofar as there is absolutely no guarantee that our species will survive, and insofar as there is no evidence that creation has

been somehow “groaning” to produce creatures like us. Yet there are unique differentia to the human process that are most clearly marked by the opening model, especially when it points to the power of horizons to contract and expand through the rhythms of unconscious complexes. Perhaps philosophy and theology *do* need to remain silent about the evolutionary *why* behind unconscious complexes, but it does not follow that they cannot probe into the *way* or *how* of these absolutely crucial determinants of the selving process. In the latter type of probe (combining ordinal phenomenology with a judicious array of transcendental arguments) something of the cunning of nature can show itself as it underlies the human process and its own unconscious momenta.

The centrifugal force within the creation and preservation of both semiotic surplus value and the selving process is itself a product of the opening power of the unconscious complexes. Each such complex is fully natural, as per definition, and only works itself out within the context of the innumerable orders of the world, which themselves have no overall shape or contour. Again, to invoke Buchler, “Nature is not an order.” Yet unconscious complexes are unique among the orders encountered in nature. They represent what could be called a “fold” within the fabric of the self; namely, an intensification of unconscious semiotic scope and density in which signs seem to fold back in on themselves again and again until there is a heating up of the sign series involved. Like molecules interacting in a closed space in which speed and heat are correlated, the semiotic folds of the unconscious heat up over time and become more and more rapid in their manifestation. This is not to say that other folds or other growth patterns might not steal some of the heat from a given unconscious complex and thus cool it off in another way. And analytic intervention, say through a close study of dream work, can also take away some of the fury of unconscious complexes.

The concept of “fold” is larger in scope than the concept of the “unconscious complex.” As will emerge, folds punctuate nature in a number of ways, but need not be confined to human agents. At this point, what can be said is that unconscious folds exist within each self and manifest themselves in a variety of ways, but primarily (in this context) through the creation and preservation of projective space that enhances and/or threatens the human orders.

Transference and countertransference

Unconscious complexes exist to sustain the human life world against its collapse back into an *Umwelt*. The *Umwelt* or *Umwelten* in which the self exists can never be overcome as they are part of the very tissue of finitude, but unconscious complexes push past them by their vector force, which is outward moving. This process is neither good nor evil per se, although its moral implications must remain central to everything that the self does or contrives. The way the unconscious complex functions is through its projections, but are all projections equal? Above it was noted that the psychoanalytical concept of the “transference” is a species of the genus projection. However, as is often the case, the species can have more impact on the human process than the genus, at least in the sphere of serving, where especially powerful structures impact on conscious and unconscious spheres. In the transference relation, the unconscious complex becomes most “heated” and most charged with meaning. Traditionally, this concept has been confined to the analytic relationship in which the analysand (patient) projects childhood parental material onto the analyst, thus linking the two projective fields in such a way that the analyst may respond with a countertransference in which the patient is almost divinized in his or her own way. The countertransference can become known to the analyst through dream material in which the analysand appears in striking ways, or in emotive fields that are invoked in the analytic session. As before, the strategy of a semiotic cosmology is to explicate a concept briefly in its usual setting while rotating it into and through a more capacious horizon in which its generic power can be revealed.

Neither Freud nor Jung was fully satisfied with the role that he seemed compelled to give to the transference in analysis. While Freud was a bit more steadfast in his affirmation of this key ingredient involving childhood material, Jung repeatedly expressed ambivalence about a phenomenon that he may have felt more intensely than Freud. To put it another way, Jung was more vulnerable to the power of the countertransference and often felt helpless against its ability to blind side consciousness and its intentional plans. Whatever the reasons for the differences between these two thinkers, they are united in the belief that without *some* form of transference, the analytic work would never get fully beyond the social persona or super-ego. In the transference relationship the normal boundaries of consciousness are broken open by a numinous core that allows repressed or abjected material to enter into

the semiotic space between analyst and analysand. Normal projections take on an entirely differently level of power and density (a semiotic fold) as some of them ripen into a transference (which is still, of course, a projection). The pathological forms of transference are well known, especially in the phenomenon of so-called cults. But the nonpathological forms are often ignored because of a fear of becoming open to depth-material that can only come out in this special way. There is clearly a resistance to entering into a transference relationship, whether within the analytic vessel or in nonanalytic relationships.

More specifically: what does the transference do in the classical psychoanalytical model? As noted, it compels (or allows) the analysand to bring forth abjected and unconscious material from childhood that gets projected onto the analyst. In the classical period of theory (1900–1950s), the standard transference model was that between an older male analyst and a younger female analysand, almost always raising the “erotic equation” for the analyst. In the writings of Freud and Jung, the analyst is almost always the father/lover who both generates conflict and, under the right conditions, provides a sublimated means of escape. But is the transference always about libido or psycho-sexual energy? Jung argued, perhaps in the spirit of his own personal abjections, that the transference was essentially religious, namely, that the father/lover imaged by the analysand was actually an image of god in the unconscious that could only emerge if it *first* projected itself onto a human form. And what better form than the analyst who opens out (or invades) the psyche several times a week? Was Freud wiser in not taking this tack, or did he cut off the depth-dimension of the transference because of abjections of his own?

The erotic components in the transference (and the countertransference) are almost always present, and here Freud’s Oedipal theory, in spite of lacking full generic scope, at least points in the right direction. Intense semiotic energy (where power and meaning combine) is eroticized at its heart, regardless of any real or imagined genital sexuality in the equation. Yet even here, the question of eros takes on another fold, another structure of meaning that Freud himself was willing to explore in his 1920 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The inner propulsion of eros is toward connection, and thus it finds itself moving in the opposite direction from the death drive, which moves toward stasis or oblivion. Freud’s modern-day Platonism (that is, the Plato of the *Symposium*) is evident in his belief that eros holds the world together in some fundamental way, and that it is not reducible to human genital sexuality.

Because of the hopelessly polemical tone of the debates between Freudians and Jungians, it is not often realized that both thinkers tried to develop a concept of eros that would help to illuminate the transference relationship. In the end, neither thinker would say that transference is only about the biological mother or father, or that at its core is the desire for sexual union with the analyst. The image or fantasy of sexual bliss is actually a symbol for a deeper structure that takes that sexual energy in a more generic direction. The true object of the transference energy is the self that is longed for in the selving process. The analyst represents not so much the "magical other" as the "magical same" who has already embodied the self to be attained. Here it is easier to see the power behind the countertransference; namely, that one has been given this exalted status by another person, whether that person is primarily vulnerable or merely cunning in the context of the analytic work.

Several insights have emerged concerning the logic of the transference: (1) it is a means for allowing otherwise abjected childhood material to enter into the semiotic space between analyst and analysand, (2) it makes it possible to work past and through the biological parents toward a more generic image of origin, and (3) it transforms eros so that it is not confined to genital sexuality (although its purpose is not to abject such sexual connections completely). Without the transference relation, these three desiderata would not emerge in the selving process, and the unconscious would lose one of its primary tools of self-disclosure. To lift this concept out of its immediate psychoanalytical context, the question emerges: what is its role in nature, as that "nature" is understood by ecstatic naturalism?

Within pre- or extra-feminist forms of Protestant theology of the twentieth century, one of the classical debates has been between those theologies that derived their motive force from a more or less direct concept of revelation and those that have worked within a more naturalistic concept of "the holy." The former perspective has been most forcefully exemplified by the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth, for whom philosophy and naturalistic theology are human constructs that cover over the direct address that god makes to the human process in "his" Word. A modified form of this so-called neo-orthodox approach is found in the German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg, for whom god's revelation is still distinct from any subjective experience of the holy or numinous, but remains confined to a progressive self-disclosure within history (via the history of religions culminating in Christianity). For both

Barth and Pannenberg, any psychologizing or any attempt (partially or fully) to locate religion (or Christianity) in the unconscious is doomed to failure.

Ecstatic naturalism clearly sides with the second trajectory, that which speaks of the holy or numinous that represents a fully natural process of sacred semiotic folds impacting on the human unconscious. Further, ecstatic naturalism remains friendly to those feminist theologies that also want to become free from vertical patriarchal language and to probe into the ways in which nature's own pulsations contain religious seeds. The deconstruction of the male language of neo-orthodoxy, where god is envisioned as speaking *von oben* (from above) to sinful humankind, is absolutely essential to a renewed semiotic cosmology in its religious dimension. However, this process of deconstruction, which certainly has its brilliant forms of reconstruction, represents only one strategy, and only one way of providing a clearing for the numinous to reemerge on the other side of patriarchal distortions.

Of equal import is the need to transform the languages of depth-psychology and theology into a capacious semiotic cosmology that refuses to romanticize nature or to privilege the Earth and its current ecological distress. While the latter concern is, of course, of extreme practical (and theoretical) urgency, there is a demonstrable sense in which such an agenda is helped rather than hindered by a generic perspective that sees the Earth as but one infinitesimal aspect of the innumerable orders of nature. Circling around again: what of the transference relationship in the context of these tensions within (at least) Protestant theology?

Inverting Kant, while also moving away from neo-orthodox Protestant theology, ecstatic naturalism asserts that the transference relation is the form of projection that can move the self from the ethical to the religious sphere. Here the ethical sphere is defined as: (1) the domain of imperatives, (2) social norms (which may or may not devolve into the super-ego), (3) pragmatic criteria of social goods, and (4) self-realization in its prereligious forms. While all of these four forms are important to the human process, singly or in consort, they do not move the self into the numinous sphere where meaning is joined with power (via sacred folds in nature) in a way that can at least partially overcome the ontological wound at the heart of the self. In entering into the full momentum of the transference relation, the self moves into the space where an ethics beyond ethics can unfold; namely, an ethics that is religious, but without a patriarchal object.

The question of the status of specific imagery is crucial here. It may be a historical necessity that some form of “female” imagery must occupy the religious horizon as a form of empowerment for women, and differently, for men. Both “gods” and “goddesses” eventually die and return to the underconscious of nature, but their specific histories may be *partially* necessary for a creature that has no direct access to *nature naturing*. But this is *never* to assert that *nature naturing* is a goddess, or must be assigned “feminine” predicates. Paradoxically, to fail to assign such predicates in a limited way for specific cultural purposes could represent the height of arrogance or indifference. But a fully generic semiotic cosmology must understand that this historical counter balance is not the same thing as a theory of the underconscious of the world.

The transference relation involves more than the personal, more than the human. It is one of the ways which nature has of bringing the self into connection with sacred folds that have their own history and power outside of finite projections. There is a creative spiral in operation here. The self is inundated with childhood material that gets projected onto the analyst (or any other person outside of the specific and statistically rare analytic relationship). Under the right conditions, the circle turns and widens into a projection in which the “magical sameness” of the other person becomes something more than personal. The divinization of the other prepares the way for an “internal” transfiguration in which the magical same becomes normative for the selving process. But what, ultimately, is the selving process about? Is it about self-realization in the fashionable sense in which a self discovers its own latent possibilities (which are given something akin to Aristotle’s final and formal cause)? Or is this process, tied to semiotic surplus value, about the self/world dialectic in which the object of transference lets go of its human antecedents and reveals something posthuman?

The transference spiral moves into the posthuman when its human object is finally seen to be a cipher (open clearing) for both the unconscious of the self and the underconscious of nature. The initial object of the transference need not be another person at all, as texts, other forms of human contrivance, or orders of nature that are not marked by human features (for example, a powerful geological configuration) can function as forms of the magical same. It was a commonplace for Romantic philosophers and poets to see mountain cataracts as almost complete symbols of the underconscious of nature, and it is clear that their encounter with these intrinsically powerful orders was suffused with strong transference energies.

The term “posthuman” has been used to signal the fact that the true goal of any transference is not to bypass the human order but to go *through* it to its own enabling conditions within both the innumerable orders of the world and the underconscious of nature. There can be no religious life outside of the transference, but it is almost always the case that the transference remains frozen on some finite image or power that is allowed to stop its own inner momentum. This is the main reason why religious fanaticism is the most dangerous form of obsession within human communities, precisely because the powers and meanings experienced seem to transcend any need for validation or even restraint. The spiral is frozen and is compelled to return again and again to its centripetal center.

The dream work

While there are many markers of the emergence of the transference (as the potentially religious form of projection), the most celebrated and most telling is that of the dream work. For Freud, the dream is the “royal road to the unconscious” in the sense that it represents an unprejudiced semiotic narrative emergent from the working of the human unconscious. His own model is closely allied to a model of semiotic detection, or the reading of symptoms insofar as the manifest dream (that which is told to the analyst) is but the surface phenomenon of something that must be read through its coding or masking process. Here the analyst has the semiotic key that is unavailable to the analysand, especially because the analysand is driven by resistance and denial in the very production of the dream material. This process was briefly adumbrated in relation to the religious narrative of Abraham and Isaac insofar as it could be seen as a public dream that remained trapped in a destructive logic. A so-called “strict” Freudian reading of this mountain-top experience would focus on the unconscious Oedipal rage of Abraham projected onto the tribal deity that would provide him with an excuse to murder his potential usurper. But less strict readings are also possible within even Freudian psychoanalysis, especially insofar as this public dream involves deep transference energies that have to be worked out in both personal and social space.

The ram that gets sacrificed instead of Isaac is a displacement object that can contain the highly charged energy of the negative transference that ties Abraham to his “genuine” son. Patriarchal cults require sacrifice at their generative source, a fact well known to Freud, but must find

a way to displace this destructive energy without utterly rending the fabric of the nascent (or attained) community. The tragedies visited on the animal kingdom rarely get noticed in this displacement, nor is the bankruptcy of its logic often brought into thematic awareness.

Is this public dream inevitable, or is the very concept of dream analysis one of the liberating tools now available to the human process in its struggles to engage the unconscious and its destructive potentials? Wittgenstein argued that Freud’s model of dream interpretation represents one of the great liberating myths of the age, even if it didn’t provide a scientific self-justification (Bouveresse 1991). It is an enveloping hermeneutic strategy that empowers the human will in new ways, ways that can free the self from its most pernicious self-delusions. Wittgenstein was willing to link his concept of philosophy with that of psychoanalysis, although he was profoundly ambivalent about some central aspects of Freud’s perspective, especially the resistance theory. In either case, thought must work against its native tendency toward abjection and denial so as to become enmeshed in problems that must be dissolved through a distasteful process of working backward to the location where the problem(s) emerged.

The dream, whether public (as in biblical narrative) or private, is an expression of the semiotic codes and structures of the unconscious. More specifically it is a product of the mobile field of unconscious complexes as they present themselves in the forms of drama and poetry. What is needed is a dream theory that starts with Freud’s decoding model, while moving past and through a far more generic neo-Jungian approach that shows how the dream work relates to the underconscious of nature in its uncanny self-othering.

Earlier, the concept of “nature’s dreams” was invoked in the context of a discussion of ontological parity; namely, the view that nothing is more or less real than anything else. In what follows, the concept of nature dreaming must be expanded, but pruned of any romantic overtones that would paint nature as some kind of dreamer with a centered awareness. Nor will ecstatic naturalism assert that nature somehow created human beings in order to see into itself through the finite dreams of our species. Rather, the dreams of the self will emerge as gateways into the unconscious of the individual, his or her social order, and the underconscious of nature. Freud’s personalistic decoding model must be amplified by a more generic account of how the semiotic structures pertinent to dream material move in the various forms of

betweenness both to sustain and to articulate a sphere of meaning that envelops and judges the human orders of relevance.

What is it to decode a given sign series? It is to take its constituent elements and to render them (usually by a process of decomposition) into simpler elements that play known roles within agreed-upon codes which have their own rules for translation, transmission, and reading. For Freud, any given dream symbol (specially charged sign) will be a displacement or transformation of some hidden (but knowable) symbol. This model has often been called an archeological model because it moves downward into past strata of buried meaning and brings them to the light of day by a painstaking process of clearing away later impediments. But what if this model proves to be merely one subaltern process within a much larger process of dream hermeneutics? What if decoding is ironically an overly sophisticated process that brings in too much later material precisely where it may do the most covering over?

It is here that the Jungian approach shows its greater hermeneutic fecundity and scope. It is always possible to use some form of decoding model, but it can only do what it tries to do well when it is woven into a strategy that lets dream symbols have their own centrifugal force. Each symbol will certainly have conditions of origin “within” it, always tied to a complex. Yet it will also, and perhaps more importantly, have outward momenta that can never be fully rendered into an antecedent code. In fact, the inner logic of dream material points to the limitations within the very *concept* of a semiotic code (contra Umberto Eco). Semiosis (the movement between and among signs in a fully semiotic world) is far more than the sum of codes that could ever be disclosed. More than this, semiosis is more than all logically possible codes. And of all the material available to phenomenological circumspection, human dreams contain the most code-resistant traits, thus linking them to the pulsations of the underconscious of nature, which are preordinal, pretemporal, and pre-spatial; that is, prior to any spatio-temporal traits that could obtain in an order.

Freudian codes thus represent a subaltern (and ambiguous) component within the semiosis manifest in dream material. There are many cases in which these codes are *partially* revelatory of valid unconscious structures. Yet for the greater realm of dream semiosis, they fail to follow the dream material in its own radical form of developmental teleology.

Throughout the ages, human communities have placed high value upon those of their members who dream the “big dreams” of the tribe.

In the lonely and demanding training of the shaman the centrality of the dream is evident. In the night-time journey into the realm of the spirits, the shaman will work out both his or her dialectic between consciousness and the unconscious and the dialectic of awareness that lies hidden within the group (Torrance 1994). For those few potential shamans who survive the process, the success with the dream work will be a telling discriminandum. Such dream work is not merely concerned with divinization of the future, but with the much larger processes of social validation that can tell a tribe if its chosen path is compatible with the deeper forces of the world. Lest Euro-Americans (and others) find this a precious and discredited process, it must be remembered that the logic buried within it is still fully operative within any given individual, no matter how “differentiated” with the ambiguous gift of consciousness. Approximately every ninety minutes during sleep, the self is visited with symbols that come from the same nexus as that of the shaman’s dreams. Each person still dreams private and public dreams that round out the horizon of the self so that hidden, truncated, fragmented, and blind aspects of awareness can be at least partially repaired or rebuilt. In other words, the self cannot help but dream forward into social space and the “would be” that surrounds the self in process.

Decoding, now understood as a rather limited concept in the sphere of dream semiosis, is gathered up into the forward momentum of the dream as it works out a personal and social would be that is more encompassing than antecedent states. From an evolutionary standpoint, dreams seem to exist to provide even more room and power for horizontal growth and sophistication. Arguments that reduce dreams to random discharges of surplus noise within brain functions fail to see the very clear hermeneutic structures within dream semiosis. Dreams have and evoke meanings that enhance consciousness, even when they have not been fully rendered into conscious awareness. The shaman is merely the extreme case in which the evolutionary value of dreams as a tool of survivability is dramatically evident.

What, then, does it mean to say that nature dreams? Given the negative qualifications above, what is there left to say about human dreams insofar as they participate in something that could be either pre- or posthuman? In answering this question, thought will move past and through the human sphere of dream signification to its enabling conditions (a dialectical strategy combining phenomenological description and a judicious series of transcendental arguments). By the phrase “dream work” will be meant everything that takes place within and

around any given or possible dream of the human self. Note that this is a much larger meaning for the phrase than that given by Freud, who confines its meaning to the process whereby the personal unconscious takes a latent dream wish and translates it into a palatable manifest dream image.

The dream work is the *way* of dream semiosis; its processes and structures render complexes and their latent projections into images that can impinge on the momentum of consciousness. By definition, more dreams are produced than can ever be assimilated by consciousness. Yet unassimilated dreams operate on subsequent dreams by providing vectors (inertial mass and direction) for their own unfolding of dream signs. Each dream is part of a series that inherits meaning vectors from previous analogous dreams. It is important that dreams not be seen as closed meaning packets that emerge, discharge their contents, and then disappear. A better image is that of a growing organism that takes on antecedent powers (semiotic nourishment and momentum) and allows or compels those powers to unfold in yet richer and more complete ways. Insofar as consciousness can integrate those powers, the vector forces are affected and can change directionality in response. This is not, of course, a “conscious” process on the part of dream series, but a natural gradient that responds to openings to its centrifugal momenta.

To put it simply: if a dream is allowed to enter into conscious deliberation and to unfold even part of its depth-structures, it will have some of its momentum altered. In the next dream series that is internally related to it, this change will, by necessity, be registered. The dream work will have one fewer thing to do, one fewer transformation needing to be wrought on consciousness.

A purely isolated dream is a contradiction in terms. No dream will be self-contained or without an extensive series of referents to other sign series within which it is embedded. One of the primary values of long-term analysis is that it allows dream series to unfold and to retell their narrative from a variety of angles as the analysis proceeds. Even the act of keeping a dream journal “encourages” dreams to unfold even further and to struggle to enter into consciousness. Conceptually it is necessary to walk a fine line between an understandable desire to personify the dreaming process as if it comes from a conscious agent and an equally understandable need to deny any hermeneutic structure to dreams (as that would entail a continuing responsibility on the part of consciousness).

Dreams have meaning but do not emerge from a centered self strictly analogous to the field of awareness and its so-called ego. Jung argued that there is a centered field of awareness to dream life in the archetype of the *Self*, but also insisted that this primary archetype was not like an ego in a finite field of intentional objects. It is important that the unconscious be understood as *unconscious*, namely, as that which is other to, and even in opposition to, consciousness. Yet, and here the argument circles again, the unconscious has a *type* of intentionality, and a *form* of awareness, otherwise it would have no relevance at all to the self in process. It is intentional insofar as it responds to the specifics of the given consciousness with which it is correlated. It has awareness insofar as it “senses” the potentials within one-sided consciousness. It could almost be said that the unconscious wants to become as fully manifest as its finite medium consciousness can allow, given the perennial risk of psychopathology and the fracturing of developmental teleological structures.

The dream series, as the “royal road to the unconscious,” participates in vast structures and powers that are pre- and postconscious. What can be said about these powers within the context of ecstatic naturalism? The centuries-old distinction between *natura naturans* (*nature naturing*) and *natura naturata* (*nature natured*) points to the ultimate fissure within the “one” nature that has direct implications for the how of the human process. Dreams occupy an especially privileged place in the self as they participate more fully than other human forms of semiosis in this fissure within nature. It is thus ironic that dreams are often so radically *deprivileged* in semiotic anthropology, but this abjection has its roots in the current obsession with the concept of codes, which, as noted, is unfriendly to any kind of heterogeneous momentum that cannot be safely captured in some kind of information package.

Insofar as dreams emerge from the unconscious of the self, they also participate in the underconscious of nature, namely, the dimension of *nature naturing*. Yet insofar as dreams must be contained in given symbols that can be assimilated by the self in process, they fully participate in the known and knowable world of *nature natured*. Remembering that the distinction between “finite” and “infinite” is pragmatic rather than constitutive (as there are no truly finite orders, that is, orders without endless forms of ramification), it can be said that the infinite aspect of the dream is its rootedness in the self-othering momentum of the underconscious of nature, while its finite aspect is the narrative that surrounds the dream ego in the specific presentation of infinite meaning in a finite tale.

While any order of relevance encountered by the self can also participate in this finite/infinite dialectic, dream material does so as part of its very logic. Augmenting Freud it can here be said: “the dream is the royal road to *nature naturing* through the finite pathways of *nature natured*.”

A direct phenomenological description of some dream material is pertinent here, as it will also show how a judicious transcendental argument can enter into the processes of dream hermeneutics. The linking of dream symbols through time will also show how dreams have a pretemporal component and a posttemporal dimension. Jung argued quite convincingly that the unconscious is rooted in the pretemporal insofar as it has a wisdom that does not devolve itself into the chronological structures of the attending consciousness. This pretemporal dimension or component is manifest to consciousness in two ways: (1) through the sense that the depth-structure of a symbol is itself rooted in something not subject to the thermodynamic arrow of time, and (2) through the augmenting sense that a recurrent symbol may reappear at a moment that is not obviously in consort with the conscious sense of the flow of meaning. The posttemporal dimension of the dream work is manifest in the prospective momenta that point to forms of finite transcendence. The eight dreams to follow will show this dual sense of the pretemporal and their correlation to *nature naturing*, while also pointing toward the not yet at the heart of the dream work. The phenomenological data must be laid out fully before any analysis is rendered.

Eight dreams

Dream one (November 28, 1993): The dream ego is in a large hall used for dining (perhaps the basement of a church). There is a famous film director (Stanley Kubrick?) who asks him to do a sketch and plot outline for a scene on a small island. The dream ego does not do so and is afraid that the director will fire him and send him away. Other workers on the film warn him of his danger if he doesn't complete his assignment. The director comes up to him and asks him about it. He must tell him that the work isn't done. However, he suddenly shows the director his magical powers. There are two seemingly stuffed dinosaurs next to them (about six feet in length). He waves his hands over them and they come alive. One of the dinosaurs runs out of the room and charges around the hallways, perhaps eating an innocent worker or bystander. The director does not seem disturbed. The dream ego also shows his ability to levitate and is pleased with his new powers.

Dream two (June 1, 1994): The dream ego is in some kind of small and intimate theatre, the kind that would be found at a summer resort like Cape Cod. The theatre is in a large, airy Victorian-style house. There are a dozen or so other theatregoers in the living room. The play is a one-person show and its actor arrives to give a lecture on the show about to be performed. He is sinister-looking and makes the dream ego uncomfortable. He has an open white shirt in the nineteenth century style. Around his neck and in another circle lower down on his body he has streaks of dark theatrical blood. He also has gauze around part of his neck. He has an intensity that the dream ego does not like, as if he wants to draw him into his world.

Dream three (August 30, 1994): The dream ego is with the film director Stanley Kubrick on a small stage set. Kubrick is listening to the stage hands describe the technical aspects of the coming scene. He dismisses their particular ideas. With him is an overweight woman who is his main assistant. There is also a younger male. They all get into a car and go to a restaurant for lunch. The dream ego is told that the new film is entitled *Satan's Red Bug*. The dream ego has an image of a bright red field with a red bug in the middle. At lunch the overweight woman says that she wants to lose weight, but the dream ego tells her that it is impossible. Kubrick seems a bit distant, but not too arrogant.

Dream four (November 15, 1994): The dream ego is with some friends at a play. They are sitting on the right side of the stage watching some preliminary part of the play take place. Suddenly an actress appears and the dream ego and a friend shout “the anima!”. They are completely transfixed and cannot take their eyes off her. She quickly dominates the stage. She is tall and muscular, regal in bearing, with dark hair pulled back. She has some kind of crown. In the next scene the dream ego is sitting next to another stage set that is filled with round tables. He starts talking to one of the actors during the scene itself. The actor hands him some change (the scene is part of a dinner). The dream ego accepts the change and the other audience members seem envious of his intimate relationship to the play.

Dream five (January 26, 1997): The dream ego is in a large old town house in a city. He is playing one of the lead roles in a play based on one of his books. He is unsure of his lines but knows that he can improvise. He tries on a garish yellow Hawaiian-style shirt, but is told that he cannot wear it on stage. He puts on another shirt and rushes downstairs only to find a large 15-foot-long woman on a stretcher blocking the front (half-glass) door. The two men carrying her finally move on so he can get to his play.

Dream six (June 3, 1997): The dream ego is in the home of Stanley Kubrick. Kubrick's wife has a painting studio in the home, partly indoors, partly outdoors. She is painting or being painted. The house is in suburbia, although it is rather rural with a large property around it. At first, Kubrick ignores the dream ego and keeps about his business. However, as the dream ego prepares to leave, Kubrick becomes more friendly. They are walking out of the house when they come upon a door that opens up showing two of Kubrick's dogs. They agree about the sorry state of dog breeding and about the need to get back to healthier and more sane forms of breeding. They go outside to their cars and the dream ego fears that he has lost his keys. Kubrick opens the hood of the dream ego's car and starts it magically. The dream ego then notices that his keys are on the seat. He is pleased to be taken seriously by Kubrick as a colleague.

Dream seven (March 5, 1998): The dream ego is in some kind of small theatre that is partly outdoors. It is an interactive play with political overtones, but not too intense. He talks to one of the actors during the scene (as is expected). The actors appreciate this dialogue.

Dream eight (March 14, 1998): The dream ego has been asked to try out as a stage assistant for the famous magician David Copperfield. He has been asked to carry some fake smoke on stage that comes from a round hat-box-sized object, but it is awkward and he is allowed to leave it offstage. He is then assigned the task of working with one of several bears who appear on stage and he is intimidated by its size, yet he gets the job. He is then taken on a tour of the compound, a kind of Copperfield theme park. They pass through Copperfield's large bedroom, which has one-way windows looking down on the outdoor auditorium. They pass outside and there are a number of small shops selling medieval toy models of the solar system and the universe. The dream ego is interested in buying one. The compound is mostly empty as no magic show is on at the moment.

This dream series takes place over a period of approximately four-and-a-half years, and there are no other dreams recorded during this period with the specific themes of theatre and/or film. Hence they stand out as an internally related and self-commenting series that can be detached from the surrounding dream material. Each dream was discussed in an analytic context which evoked personal and transpersonal referents and prospects. It can thus be assumed that the dream work was carefully attended to by consciousness at the time the dream emerged, and that the results of this reflection were in some sense "known" to the unconscious (but not from an intentional center within the unconscious

analogous to the ego). To put it simply, the second dream was already a partial response to the first dream and its, by definition, incomplete assimilation. This is not to assert a simple linear progress from dream one to dream eight, as if the unconscious could unfold without being responsive to changing circumstances. The phenomenological data suggest a much more complex process of circling back and through antecedent material from an equally powerful not yet that is also part of the dream work.

A number of key themes emerge into prominence right away: (1) the structure of the master and the apprentice, (2) the tensions involved in professional and personal validation, (3) the role of the shadow and its powers, (4) the centrality of the so-called "anima," (5) the fluid boundaries between being on and off stage, and (6) the presence of magical and otherworldly powers that dwarf the dream ego. Throughout there is a kind of background anxiety about the role the dream ego must play in contexts that are not easily brought under control by instrumental means. The master/apprentice structure is announced in the first dream, where the dream ego is in an underground hall hoping to enter into the world of the master. However, he has failed to live up to the demands of the work world, the social persona, and fears that the master will cut him off from personal and professional nourishment. It is as if the master assumes the roles of both the paternal and the maternal, at once promising promotion within a patriarchal hierarchy and an enveloping ground within a world of magical powers. Once the dream ego shows that he has mastery over life and death, by bringing the "dead" dinosaurs to life, and has power over gravity, by levitating, the master recognizes his importance to him.

This theme is bypassed in dream two and reemerges in the third dream around nine months later. The master, now fully in the guise of the reclusive film director Stanley Kubrick, allows the dream ego into his inner circle by taking him to lunch, during which the secret of his new film is revealed. The maternal piece is now split off into a specific image of an overweight woman who is the second most important person in the master's world. By breaking bread together, they come even closer to an inner symbiosis in which each player in the drama requires the others in order to succeed.

The master/apprentice theme goes underground again until the sixth dream, taking place around three-and-a-half years after the first dream with this theme. Now the dream ego has been allowed into the "holy of holies," the master's private home, where the master directly empowers

the dream ego by starting his car for him (even though the dream ego almost immediately finds his own keys). The split-off maternal component of the master is now manifest in his wife the painter, who is working both indoors and out, and is either painting or being painted. These dualities of inner and outer, of creating and being created, are central to the logic of the dream work, as the roles of master and apprentice are slowly being reversed.

In the final dream, occurring four-and-a-half years after the first, the embodiment of the master changes from that of the film director to that of the prestidigitator who makes the illusory appear to be the real, and the real to be illusory. The apprentice is even given access to the private bedroom of the master, in which someone can look out on the magical scene without being observed in turn. The inversion that takes place in this eighth dream does not represent a straightforward progression from the sixth dream (in Kubrick's home), but adds another layer to the drama by moving beyond the objective qualities of film to the realm of illusion.

The issue of personal and professional validation is directly tied to the master/apprentice dialectic. At the beginning, the potential apprentice has to prove that he is even worthy of being included in some small way in the workshop of the master. Once he has done so it is clear that the master draws him closer and closer to the inner circle until the master's own father/mother role is split into two distinct elements (overweight woman and wife). In the last dream, the apprentice can now appear on stage working with a powerful animal (bear) from which he can derive some of his own powers.

The role of the shadow in this dream series is especially interesting. In analytic work the shadow is often the first dimension of the unconscious that is encountered, and the effects of this encounter can be both decentering and demoralizing. The shadow can be defined as that aspect of the self that is abjected and denied so that the social persona can live in the world without hindrance. Of course, this is a dangerous delusion as the shadow will always find some way of becoming manifest. The shadow is first encountered in the stuffed dinosaurs that suddenly become infused with life energy and which threaten the people around them. The dream ego has unleashed a power over which he has no momentary control, although the master acts in such a way as to downplay this danger in the larger scheme of things.

The second manifestation of the shadow is even more dramatic. About six months after the first appearance of the shadow, it reappears

in human form as an actor covered with stage blood who obviously has Svengali-like powers over his audience. The dream ego, who unleashed the shadow in the earlier dream, now has come to fear it, especially now that it is in human guise.

The theme of red blood gets transliterated into the theme of *Satan’s Red Bug*, the movie in progress that will distill the master’s unique vision. The image of Satan represents the shadow side of the divine itself, a clear reference to the religious depths of the shadow. The dream work thus has moved from an animal theme, to a human theme, to a posthuman and supernatural theme, all pointing to the centrality of the shadow in the master/apprentice relationship. Yet in the eighth dream the shadow returns in the guise of an only partially tamed bear whose powers must be controlled on stage in front of an audience whose interests are actually in seeing the bear break free from control and perhaps devouring its tamer.

The so-called “anima” theme is entwined with the others, but has its own unique features. The first appearance of the anima is in the guise of the overweight woman who wants to lose weight, that is, to become less of a presence and power in the world. The dream ego tells her that this is impossible, implying that she will always carry a certain weight in the psychic narrative. She is the person closest to the master and must know many of his closely guarded secrets.

The anima becomes transfigured in its second appearance about two-and-a-half months later. In the fourth dream she is now the imperial actress who dominates the stage and draws all male eyes to her. The fact that she wears a crown points toward her larger than human significance, that is, her archetypal status as a symbol of the maternal ground of being for the dream ego.

In an even more dramatic transformation, the anima changes form in the fifth dream and becomes a 15-foot-long woman on a stretcher. This magical quality is a further comment on the crown worn by the anima in the earlier dream. She has now become even more of a strange presence, perhaps even an impediment. She must be removed, at least in this magical form, before the dream ego can perform the play based on one of his own books. It is as if the dream ego is being told that he has not yet grasped what is demanded of him in his struggles to integrate the anima: either she is incorporated internally, or she will block the outward expression of creativity.

Finally, over three years after her first appearance (as the overweight woman) the anima returns to a “normal” shape and size in the guise of

the master's wife. The mystery of the anima is still very much alive as she lives in the inner and outer worlds (her studio) and is both creator and created. The dream seems to be signaling that the dream ego has at least partially integrated this archetypal power and has made it less magical and more human.

The spatial theme of being both on and off stage is also entwined with the other themes. On one level this tension represents the felt ambiguities about being an observer versus being a participant. On another level, it represents the movement from being outside of the craft of the master to being invited to membership of the guild (with the final appearance on the magician's stage). In the second dream the theatre is in a house, thus erasing the normal distinction between a dwelling place and a performing space. In the fourth dream one of the actors even goes so far as to hand the dream ego some money during the performance itself, as if that action is part of the playwright's intention. In the seventh dream the audience is expected to participate in the play, going beyond the script to create something novel and fluid, thus transcending the staged (written) actions of the fourth dream. In the eighth dream the dream ego is shown the bedroom right above the stage and peers out through the one-way windows onto the empty seats below.

Thus throughout the dream series there is a creative transgression of the boundaries separating the observers from the actors. There is an evolution from the placing of the theatre in the house to the duality of inner and outer in the magician's theme park. The dream ego is no longer a mere observer of someone else's play but gets to write his own lines or to move on stage with the great powers that are invoked by the magician.

Finally, there is the continual presence of supernatural powers that intrude on the dream ego in startling ways, from the animated dinosaurs, to the satanic red bug, to the 15-foot-long woman, to medieval models of the solar system and the universe. In each case there is the question of who will master whom. Will the dream ego be conquered by the numinous powers he has unleashed, or will they be eventually integrated so that he can use their energy without being devoured? The final dream in this series does not fully answer this question, as no dream can, but points toward a prospect of transformation in the images of the universe that are small and circumscribed. The dream ego can purchase some of these metal models and place them in his own world, where they will act as microcosmic channels of macrocosmic energy and form.

Where has phenomenological description given over to transcenden-

tal argument? On the simplest level, a transcendental move is made when connections are suggested between certain figures in the dream series, linking them to a common archetypal pattern. Thus the link between the overweight woman, the actress, and the master’s wife, as all being manifestations of the anima, moves beyond the direct data into an unconscious pattern that is held to make the data what it is. How can such a move be legitimated? Here there is the unusual contribution made by the dream series itself. Insofar as consciousness senses a connection between or among dream figures, subsequent dream material will provide an affirmative or negative vote for that sense. If the connection is falsely posited, later dreams will compel the dreamer to look elsewhere. If there is a genuine connection, the later dream material will advance the narrative and bring the common archetype forward.

But is this second-order belief in the veto power of a dream series itself founded on a dubious transcendental argument, or does it have its own form of phenomenological evidence? This skeptical claim can only be maintained if it is assumed that the unconscious is as manipulable as consciousness and its structures. Can consciousness create complexes at will, or create their projections? Can consciousness eliminate a complex by bringing it to some kind of total lucidity? Can consciousness stop a transference relationship by simply withdrawing its energy and distributing that energy democratically throughout the psychic economy? These questions make it clear that the unconscious is not subject to conscious control and that it must respond the way that it does because of internal principles that are partly knowable. One of those principles is that the unconscious is aware (in its own unique way) of how its symbols are interpreted by consciousness. To put it differently, the concept of fooling the unconscious is an absurdity. While it may play the trickster (prestidigitator) with us, we cannot compel it to adopt the illusions of consciousness. Like the magician, the unconscious knows the secrets behind the illusions that appear on the stage of awareness.

The great symbols of the dream series have far more meaning than their potential private referents, although these too will be involved as the necessary manifestation of personal complexes. The overweight woman can be part of a personal complex with chronological antecedents as well as an archetype of cosmic power that is pretemporal. Such an image traverses the space between *nature naturing* and *nature natured* while simultaneously holding both “halves” of nature together. Any form of psychoanalysis that focuses too exclusively on the personal

referent will stunt the growth of the dream series by blocking its own inner momentum toward the depth-structures of the world. At the other extreme, any analytic practice that moves too quickly into an archetypal dimension will sever the necessary personal connection that actually calls the archetype forward as part of its own transformation.

The not yet or prospective dimension of the dream work is manifest less directly in each major image insofar as it hints toward its own possible transformation. Thus the overweight woman, as a manifestation of both the anima and the great mother, emerges as the most important assistant of the master. She is bound to him in a unique way. They share something akin to a metaphorical marriage. In the later unfolding of the dream series, the anima becomes the master's literal wife, thus strengthening the tie between the anima and creativity. To acknowledge this proleptic dimension of the dream is not to impose the kind of imperial hermeneutic practiced, for example, by many Christians when they read the Hebrew scriptures as foreshadowing the Greek texts of the New Testament. Rather, it is to let the inner logic of a symbol emerge more slowly and less violently through the conscious and unconscious feedback loops of dream interpretation. An earlier manifestation of an archetype can recur when the subsequent manifestations need to be drawn back to antecedent conditions so that they can be reworked and enriched. Any analytic procedure that wrestles with this type of dream series will move into and out of both phenomenological and transcendental methods as the dream material becomes clarified. The ideal is for the transcendental structures of intelligibility to become more directly phenomenal, that is, to show forth their inner momentum to circumspect analysis.

Each dream belongs to its own series and also may intersect with other similar series. At the same time, a dream will intersect with personal and social referents that have to be explored (ramified) if the fuller scope of the dream is to unfold. Public images or persons appear in the dream material because, and only because, they touch on some aspect of the personal complexes of the dreamer. The dream ego is like the conscious self struggling to integrate and understand the narrative around it. Like any good work of theatre, the dream involves conflict, objectives, frustrations, secrets, numinous object relations, and twists and turns of plot. Often dialogue assumes a secondary importance so that the symbols can carry the weight of conveying the messages of the unconscious.

The objective of the dream is to widen the scope of consciousness

through the conflict among the characters. The objective of the dream ego, as per our example, may be to seek validation, while the master may have the objective of withholding it until the proper time. Other secondary characters may enter the scene to deepen or complexify the conflict and to shed different light on the objective. Objects are always more than just objects in the dream. To lose car keys in the waking world is to experience frustration, at least, but it is not always to enter into the underground secrets of the master’s workshop or to tap into numinous powers that can enhance creativity. In the waking world, a key may be just a key, but insofar as the waking world is permeable to the unconscious, that same key *can* take on extra folds of meaning, some pretemporal (such as the keys to a lost paradise), and some posttemporal (such as the promise of reconciliation). In fact, there are few objects in the waking world that are as potentially fraught with as much meaning as keys. They may open up secrets, provide a route to escape or protection, close someone or something off, or display a sense (or fact) of power over others.

The decoding model of dream interpretation would drive any given symbol back to personal antecedents that are held to have a causal effect on the manifest dream material. The more capacious model being exhibited in the context of ecstatic naturalism moves both backward and forward in widening circles or spirals of interpretation in which even causal antecedents serve developmental principles and impulses. Hence in the context of the eight dreams listed it is pertinent to ask about personal associations connected with the image of the master, in this case both Stanley Kubrick and David Copperfield, and the social dimensions of their respective forms of contrivance. How does the master serve as the magical other or as the magical same for the dreamer, and how does the master serve this role within his respective art form? Why did the unconscious “choose” a film maker and a magician to represent the would be of the self in process? Is there something about the dreamer’s own work that needs the complementary traits found in these genres?

For Jung, such questions naturally emerge in dream hermeneutics, especially since the self (or analyst) does not have a code within which to translate given symbols. The meaning of the symbols can never, in principle, be exhausted. Instead, the movement of interpretation moves outward into larger and larger circles of connection in which the personal and the social shape each other. Why does the dreamer privilege Kubrick in the first place? Why is the theme of magic, which

may not occupy waking consciousness, suddenly thrust up from the unconscious? Is there a barely understood conflict between external and internal forms of validation? Has the dreamer's world become flattened so that numinous powers (for example, bears) need to be introduced into the dialectic between consciousness and the unconscious? Why does the anima change form over time? Is there a distinction between the anima and the great mother, or has the dream ego only begun to make this differentiation? These and similar questions emerge from the phenomenological data, and are propelled by the depth-logic of the dream work. Genuine dream interpretation does not involve what Eco calls "hermetic drift," in which signs unfold almost randomly according to bizarre analogies and associations, but a form of horizontal growth in which symbols reinforce each other in a cumulative narrative that has the structure of a drama. But this is not to say that there is some grand play written in advance, but that the dialectical permutations of consciousness and the unconscious write a play in progress that becomes what it is to become through "audience" participation.

The interactive field

It is clear that dreams participate in the domain of *nature nutured*, precisely because they contain symbols that are and/or point to worldly orders. But it is harder to see how these same dreams and their symbols participate in the more elusive dimension of *nature naturing*. By speaking of the pretemporal and anti-entropic quality of the dream series, some progress has been made into probing into the underconscious of the world. Now it is necessary to rotate thought through a larger structure to see the *where* of dreams in nature. The concept that will prove to be most helpful here is that of the "interactive field" (Schwartz-Salant 1995) that underlies the transactions between consciousness and the unconscious, and between one dream in a series and the others. The ultimate locus for dream semiosis is in a field phenomenon in which its constituents (condensations) interact cumulatively to produce a self-organizing momentum both in and out of chronological time.

To combine imagery, it can be said in this context that the interactive field beneath the dream work has two fundamental traits: (1) that of an enabling ground relation that sustains and nourishes dream material and (2) that of a vector force that is unique to any given dream series by providing specific forms of energy, direction, and meaning. From this it follows that in certain contexts it is appropriate to stress the unity of the

ground, insofar as it underlies *all* actual and possible dreams in the world, while in other contexts it is appropriate to stress the plurality of interactive fields as they unfold within the context of given dream series. In the most advanced form of dream interpretation, the pluralistic approach is opened to the depth-unity that connects all dream fields to the underconscious of nature, thus providing at least fragmentary access to the heterogeneous momentum of *nature naturing*.

As an enabling ground the interactive field provides the free-space within which dream material may be gathered into specific symbols by the unconscious. Using somewhat anthropomorphic language it can be said that the unconscious has “choices” to make as to which external referents are pertinent to which internal complexes, and vice versa. At the same time, some room must be provided for the prospective aspect of the dream work so that novel possibilities are held in being over time. The interactive field in this unified dimension is like an infinite clearing that enables dreams to be condensed out of the night time of the unconscious of the self and the underconscious of nature. Dreams have no meaning unless they have a specific shape and charge that are pertinent to the dreamer. The interactive field, as the mobile locus that lies underneath the divide between consciousness and the unconscious, provides the *where* for the birth of meaning. Like a dust cloud in space that provides the seed bed for the birth of stars, the interactive field provides the clearing and the “matter” for the condensation of energy into structure and meaning. To use different imagery, the interactive field in its first dimension is like the stage upon which all subsequent dramas must unfold.

Dramas, of course, differ, and one stage can birth many different narratives, and there may be no final curtain for any given dream series. Like a repertoire company, a given dream theatre may present several dramas in sequence, with several waiting in the wings (for months or years) for their respective turns on stage. There is no such thing as down time for those dramas that are in the wings. Improvements are continually being made as the “audience” responds to other dramas and other narratives. The various playwrights are always in residence, ready to augment, transform, cut, or expand their continuing plays. The interactive field in this second, more pluralistic dimension involves a continual dialogue among actors, stage managers, designers, playwrights, critics, and dramaturges. The dramaturge reminds the other participants of the continuing history of the given play, thus providing those links that keep the dream series responsive to its own past. Of all the analogical

structures for both dream semiosis and the interactive field, that of theatre seems the most fecund and encompassing, precisely because of the intense and continuing immediacy of dramatic presentation. The actors in the dream are more alive and more expressive than many in the waking world, while the objectives and conflicts within the dream narrative are much clearer (at least over time) than their analogues in the above-ground universe. The stage itself represents the numinous space of the primary interactive field, while any given production represents one of the many vectors that the field can take.

Lest the interactive field be understood in a purely internal sense, it must be stressed that all plays are always for an audience that has some connection, via its own unconscious complexes, with the world of the drama. Expanding our imagery, we can say that the entire theatre building itself is the interactive field in which audience and players participate in a meaning field that neither could sustain alone. Like the analyst/analysand relationship, the audience/performer relation moves within the interactive field of social semiosis. If we are accustomed to seeing biblical narrative as a form of public dreaming, then it is appropriate to see the even more intense world of literal theatre as another form of public dreaming. The interactive field of dream semiosis is thus larger in scope than the internal field of the dreamer. Yet these two field domains are fully permeable to each other and represent part of one field that flows through the personal and collective dimensions of the unconscious.

The interactive field supporting dream semiosis is not a depository of images per se, as if it merely needs to be opened and have its contents removed. As a field phenomenon it is more like a fluid momentum that can carry specific symbols within it. In its plural modes, the interactive field is more open to certain symbols than others, that is, it seems to encourage a symbol cluster that moves along a vector that is particular. Not any symbol (actor) can walk on the stage at a given moment, but only one that (who) is prepared for in some respect. The unified ground of the interactive field has no particular respects in which it grounds; it is the enabling context of dream semiosis in our known universe. In its plural manifestations, however, its grounding relation always has some respects, some vectors in which and through which the grounding takes place. Were this not so, dream life would be without any pertinent form and direction, and the unconscious would be nothing *other* than pure heterogeneity. A psychoanalytic perspective, like that of Kristeva's, that has failed to recognize the conjunction of power and meaning in dream

semiosis often errs in overplaying the role of otherness in the unconsciousness. While the unconscious is indeed other to consciousness, it is not totally other, but other in certain ways and in certain orders of relevance. Precision in analysis and description is called for.

The unconscious

An understanding of the personal and collective dimensions of the human unconscious has been presupposed in the preceding descriptions of five elements of psychoanalytic theory (i.e., projection, unconscious complexes, transference/countertransference, dream work, and the interactive field). Consequently, less needs to be said about this sixth category as it becomes translated into the larger horizon of ecstatic naturalism. The distinction between the personal and the collective remains controversial, but primarily because of a failure to locate the human process within the ontological difference between *nature natured* and *nature naturing*. Without this basic metaphysical distinction, the self remains cut off from its own enabling conditions and its depth-structures are removed from both phenomenological and transcendental probing. As noted, psychoanalytic theory has often remained within a tight narcissistic mirroring in which the self gazes at its own semiotic structures without gauging their relationship to world semiosis. The more narcissistic psychoanalytic theory becomes, the less likely it is to enter into the fissure of nature’s self-diremption into *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. The narcissistic self is more at home within those orders of the world that mirror its own desires than within an infinite nature that has no concern for its wishes and drives. Only a radical downward turning within psychoanalysis will free the self from the surface reflection of the pond in which its gaze is suspended.

To put it differently, the very thought of a collective unconscious represents a profound threat to the alleged autonomy of consciousness and its personal possession the unconscious. Once it is recognized that the unconscious can never be a possession, and can never be bound by chronological time or finite space, the road to the collective is opened. Unfortunately, certain romantic, perhaps even archaic aspects have crept into theories of the collective unconscious, rendering them suspect.

Jung did some damage to his own categorial structure when he privileged the ancient past and its pre-European forms as normative for a transformation of the modern self. He expanded chronological time

but did not fully grasp the dialectic between *chronos* and the pretemporal. It is thus ironic that he has been accused of a kind of nature mysticism when his real mistake is in privileging the category of history over that of nature. Hence his concept of the collective unconscious as the locus of the archetypes is loaded too much toward historical antecedents that are not necessarily normative for the contemporary horizon of meaning. But it does not follow from this that the concept of the collective unconscious is itself invalid or that it is not amenable to internal reconstruction.

The so-called personal unconscious contains much that is experienced (not always consciously) during the individual's lifetime. It also has creative, destructive, and developmental teleological structures that are correlated to complexes. The collective unconscious is that dimension of the unconscious that reaches down into the underconscious of nature, into the presemiotic momenta that may or may not emerge into signs and sign systems. It is the "place" where the most intense semiotic folds of nature are manifest to the human process. It is appropriate to designate these dense folds as being religious in nature provided it is understood that this term does not denote anything that could be circumscribed by any religious tradition that is, or could be, in the world of signification (*nature nutured*). Any given religion is a condensation of nature's sacred folds and partially betrays them by rendering them into alien doctrinal structures. The religious heart of the self, insofar as it is permeable to the collective unconscious, is anti-doctrinal and has a universalistic vector momentum.

What, specifically, is the collective unconscious? Here again we seem to be at a nexus where a phenomenological description must give way to a transcendental argument. Yet all such transcendental strategies can be judged by pragmatic criteria (at least), and this particular argument has tremendous explanatory and descriptive power. It has explanatory power in that it can make it possible to predict how the generic hearts of personal unconscious complexes will behave under certain known (or knowable) conditions. It has descriptive power in that it links together many of the constituent traits of the self in process under a more capacious categorial structure that serves the needs of a semiotic cosmology.

The collective unconscious is the ever-mobile seed bed for the transmutation of nature's potencies into specific symbols and innate release mechanisms (instincts) that permeate the self and provide it with its outer horizons and inner depths. From the standpoint of consciousness

it has no whence or whither; namely, no place within chronological time. Yet by its own cunning it must enter into *chronos* and affect much of what happens there. It has no center and no circumference, a point made differently by Augustine in his analysis of memory, but does provide means for finding centers of power and meaning within the innumerable orders of the world. In theological terms the collective unconscious is *both* encompassing and incarnational. It is encompassing in that it can never have a contour or shape that could be known by a finite self. Yet it is incarnational in that it fully participates in an almost “material” way in given sign systems. Jung was perhaps too ready to spell out the allegedly necessary condensations of the collective unconscious in specific archetypes, but the basic categorial structure remains valid in spite of his historical prejudices as to its roots in prehistory.

Jung did advance both the phenomenological and transcendental insights into the collective unconscious by always insisting on the fundamental distinction between the archetype and its image as manifest to the attending consciousness. The image, and its correlative image cluster (for example, in the dream series), will be an ejet from the archetype, but the archetype itself will never appear under the conditions of finitude. Ecstatic naturalism remains friendly to a reconstructed form of the archetype theory, especially insofar as it makes the archetype/image distinction central to its own delineations. Images could not even be what they are were they not ejets from the preimagistic realm of the archetypes. This has been shown in the analysis of dream semiosis, where given symbols recur precisely where and when they are most pertinent to the continuing life of awareness. There is strong indirect evidence for a linking archetype within these symbols that “knows” when to send them out of the night time of the unconscious into the waking world of signs and meanings. Peirce argued that no meaning was possible without what he called “thirdness”; namely, the universal habit or law that underlies events in the world. From the perspective of ecstatic naturalism, the archetypes of the collective unconscious are special forms of thirdness, while their ejected images (symbols) are particular thirds.

The archetype theory will return when the depth-structures of world semiosis are described. At this point the correlation between a transformed and extended psychoanalytic theory and the ecstatic form of naturalism must be directly stated before the more specifically semiotic aspects of this semiotic cosmology can be laid bare. The internal connection between psychoanalysis and metaphysics was introduced in

the context of an analysis of motives as they impinge on the origins of categorial structures, but do not have any direct bearing on the resultant validity of those structures. To put it simply, knowing where a structure came from is not the same as knowing if it is true. Overdetermined motives can produce astonishingly accurate results, as in the case of Newton (and, in a different way, Schopenhauer), while a creative process free from such extreme motives may miss the mark entirely.

But the more important issue is with how the human process relates to the ontological difference between *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. There is no direct route into the heart of nature's perennial self-fissuring, but the self does have an indirect passage way through its own personal and collective unconscious structures that gives some hint as to what nature's unconscious potencies may be like. Pre-ecstatic forms of naturalism do not have the requisite experiences or conceptual tools for gaining access to this underground passage into the ultimate heart of nature, even if they have prepared the way by gradually eliminating the worst forms of supernaturalism and ontological priority. Another way of rewriting the history of naturalism is to focus on how each form has or has not integrated the inner logic of depth-psychology in its understanding of the innumerable orders of the world and their underlying unruly ground (Schelling 1809). To move from the other direction, the value of psychoanalytic theories can be judged by their ability to locate the unique sign-using animal within the vast and indefinite orders of relevance that make any subjectivity possible in the first place.

Psychoanalytic practice thus becomes the movement to relink the unconscious of the self to the underconscious of nature without letting nature's unconscious devour the self. Metaphysical practice becomes the drive to move language into more and more encompassing frameworks within which to unfold the travail of the self and the absolute ubiquity of nature. Wittgenstein's partial correlation of philosophy and psychoanalysis, however truncated, represents one of the first steps toward the realignment envisioned in the current perspective. Unfortunately, his curious yes and no to nature made it difficult for him to probe more fully into the unconscious ground of semiosis. His yes to nature is seen in his trust that forms of life will be reasonable indicators of the *where* of the self, while his no to nature is seen in his overreaction to his own earlier work with its insistence on one perfect language, making his anti-foundationalism too extreme. Consequently, his abjection of the one-to-one language/object relation of his *Tractatus* moved him away from a naturalism that is partially available in his perspective toward a

more anthropological framework that still privileges language, qua human artifact, at the expense of nature.

Beyond psychoanalysis

Within the self-defined trajectory of psychoanalysis is another prospect that has remained on the margins of thought but which deserves to move forward into the purview of the current horizon. This is the perspective of the much-derided protégé of Freud, Wilhelm Reich, whose focused investigations of bodily armor and the freezing of what he called “orgiastic potency” provide a means for getting into that nexus where the unconscious of the self intersects with the underconscious of nature. He broke with Freud over the issue of the death drive, insisting instead that the self must move outward into a nexus of connections that enhance rather than diminish the drive of life to overcome itself: “Clinical experience shows that man – as a result of general sexual repression – has lost the capacity for *ultimate vegetative involuntary surrender*. What I mean by ‘orgiastic potency’ is exactly this ultimate, hitherto unrecognized portion of the capacity for excitation and release of tension” (as quoted in Sharaf 1983: 94).

Emotional body armor constricts the self and also cuts off the flow between consciousness and the unconscious. In the state of the fulfilled organism the self reenacts the power of origin to return to what Kristeva, following Plato, calls the *chora* or ontological womb. The energy of the organism is continuous with the energy of the unconscious; indeed, it is the one manifestation of psychic energy that has full credentials in both worlds. Reich’s focus also moves away from the obsession with language found in Freud and Wittgenstein toward literal body work on the musculature and connective tissue. The role of ecstasy is obvious in his perspective, linking the self to the potencies of the underconscious of the world.

Perhaps the word “psychoanalysis” should be abandoned altogether. The word connotes something confined to the human process, something at once private and too linked to a dyadic structure of analyst to analysand. John Deely has coined the term “anthroposemiosis” to denote the unique sphere of human forms of semiosis (Deely 1994), but this term does not connote enough of the self/nature correlation, or of the powers of the unconscious. What is needed is a term that conveys some of the drama of the internal work on the unconscious with a sense of the relationship between human forms of semio-

sis and semiotic cosmology as a whole. If semiosis is the genus of which particular orders of semiotic interaction are species, then what denotes the human order and its unique forms of semiosis? The Greek term *Psyche* has had a long history in depth-psychology because of its mythological antecedents (a beautiful goddess with butterfly wings who was loved by Eros) and its encompassing designation of the whole of the self in process. The natural replacement term for psychoanalysis suggests itself: *psychosemiosis*.

Unlike the stress on analysis, the focus on semiosis locates the self within infinite semiotic processes that shape its trajectories. A psychosemiotic understanding of the self would continue to probe into the dream work, the personal and collective unconscious, and the underconscious of nature, but would always do so in the light of world semiosis (all orders that surround the human) and the generic perspective of semiotic cosmology. Yet this shift in terminology represents part of an even deeper shift in practice. Psychosemiosis involves vast relational connections and infinite depth-structures that actually serve to undermine the perhaps intrinsic tendency of psychoanalysis toward narcissistic involution. By definition, psychosemiosis cannot be narcissistic, as it lives in and through an infinite series of ellipses that flow through the self in process from an indefinite number of originating points just beyond the reach of any finite horizon. The *discipline* or *practice* of psychosemiosis entails a semiotic understanding of the structures of *nature natured* as well as of the potencies of *nature naturing*. Once the six most pertinent categories of classical psychoanalysis have been reconstructed (again, projection, unconscious complexes, transference/countertransference, dream work, the interactive field, and the personal and collective unconscious), they can become located within psychosemiotics and connect this formalization of the selving process to semiotic cosmology. In a sense, Freud and Jung were struggling to articulate the semiosis of the self in process without the requisite language that would free them from their own form of Eurocentric subjectivism. With the semiotic revolution the tools for overcoming theoretical narcissism are now available.

Psychosemiotics has proven to be the most compelling gateway to semiotic cosmology. It starts from the familiar territory of self-consciousness and moves past and through surface structures into the depths that link the unconscious of the self to the underconscious of nature. It also shows how signs and symbols function through structures that are readily available. At the same time, psychosemiotics helps reinforce the

commitment to ontological parity by showing in practical terms that the more elusive objects of the unconscious are as real as anything that is intended by consciousness, or anything that consciousness assimilates in the larger orders of relevance that surround it. And consciousness itself is deprivileged and shown to be but one semiotic process among innumerable others that do not necessarily follow its own laws and principles. This last maneuver is the first step in showing that meaning is the genus of which conscious meaning is a species. What is now needed is a detailed account of the internal and external principles of semiosis per se; namely, a description of the what and how of signs and sign series, whether tied to the human process or not. Once this is done, thought will be compelled to circle back again toward the potencies of *nature naturing* and radically augment the brief hints given above.

CHAPTER 2

The sign vehicle and its pathways

Much thought has been devoted to the ontology of signs, both in terms of the sign vehicle and in terms of the road on which that vehicle must travel. As noted, Peirce stands as the Newton of semiotic theory insofar as he developed a generic semiotic that struggled to show how signs, objects, and new signs (interpretants) work together to generate and sustain meaning. Unfortunately, he remained too tightly bound within the less fruitful aspects of the Kantian project and overly mentalized sign function, even though he made a few tentative steps toward a more robust semiotic naturalism (of the ecstatic variety). In what follows, an alternative model of the sign vehicle and the varieties of sign function will be developed. The analogy here would be to a post-relativistic and post-quantum reading of the Newtonian universe, but with the added qualification that even that “Newtonian” universe would become somewhat different. That is, if in physics Newton’s system can still function quite well under certain conditions, in semiotic cosmology the Peircean system may prove to be inadequate in more damaging ways. That it is far better than its competitors (such as structuralist semiology) is to its credit, but it still rests on an inadequate metaphysics and a series of abjections that have blunted its own generic intent.

The first place to start is with the ontology of the sign itself, although this is rather artificial in that there is no such thing as a pure, simple, or isolated sign. To be a sign is to belong to at least one sign series and to have subaltern configurations within the sign vehicle itself. As the image of “vehicle” suggests, signs are always on the move, always going from a point of (relative) origin to a point of (relative) fulfillment or completion. Signs are self-othering, always permeable to something other than themselves and to prospects, lost and gained, “within” themselves. One conceptual analogy would be to a kind of monad that has an ontology midway between Leibniz’s windowless variety and Whitehead’s open variety. The sign is thus open to other natural orders (i.e., it has

windows), but is not as open as a Whiteheadian actual occasion (i.e., it has shutters over some of its windows). The forms of closure in the sign are not perspectival limitations, a view that only makes sense for a panpsychist perspective, but because signs have ordinal locations within a world that simply does not admit of an ultimate transparency, even, as will emerge, for the divine. The sign is thus a partially open and partially closed vehicle that moves along a trajectory that may or may not intersect with human forms of sign manipulation.

Yet no one analogy would even begin to exhibit the sheer complexity of the ontology of signs, whether that be the analogy of the vehicle or that of the windowed monad. In what follows, a series of augmenting, and even competing, analogies and metaphors will be presented that attempt, in consort, to round out a picture of the mysteries of signification. If signs were simple tools of reference, the task facing semiotic cosmology would be easy. But signs do an infinite variety of things and do so in an infinite variety of ways, two points that Peirce sensed but that he ironically covered over in his vast categorization schemes for sign types.

The ontological tight rope upon which we are forced to walk is very thin. On one side is the abyss that leads to the object that lies “outside” of the sign, while on the other side lies the abyss that swallows up all discriminanda in a pansemioticism that devours objects (a species of postmodernism). Derrida gives an extreme version of the latter prospect:

The substitute [word] does not substitute itself for anything which has somehow existed before it. Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present being, that is was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play... The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and play of signification infinitely. (Derrida 1967: 208)

Remaining bound by the binary logic of Saussure, Derrida stresses the self-eliding and fluid quality of the infinite play of signification within contrast pairing. But this is a far cry from the forms of infinite semiosis that will be exhibited by ecstatic naturalism. How is it possible to know when a sign ends and an object begins? Or is this question only meaningful in the context of a positivism or naive realism that fails to understand the utter ubiquity of semiosis? On the other side, how is it possible to have any world of resistance over and against omnivorous signs if to be is to be part of an infinitely manipulable sign series? Clearly

the concept of resistance, used with such force by Heidegger and Scheler, will help in making some necessary distinctions, but this is only part of the story. What does resistance mean, for example, when dealing with those signs pertinent to psychosemiosis? And what forms of resistance are actually “internal” to the sign itself? That is, can a sign be at war with itself regardless of its real or alleged referent? Virtually all accounts of the ontology of signs fall off the tight rope into either abyss. The balancing act asked of thought is one that calls for intense phenomenological concentration.

THE ONTOLOGY OF SIGNS: ROOTS AND BLOOMS

While a partial quarantine has been placed on the use of analogy in probing into the precategoryal abyss of nature, no such protections are required when probing the ontology of signs. *Nature naturing* (as denoted by the term “precategoryal”) is not a sign, while many signs function both as analogies or through analogies. Intelligibility is semiotic through and through, while the underconscious of nature is presemiotic. In keeping with the tight-rope analogy for the categorial delineations and phenomenological descriptions to follow, analogies must be used to balance, reinforce, and challenge each other so that a cumulative and open passage can emerge that honors the way or how of signs in an infinite world of orders, not all of which are fully semiotic. This last clause is especially problematic and will haunt semiotic cosmology in a way analogous to the real or alleged question of what “happened” before or at the Big Bang. John Deely has provided some relief to this tension with his concept of the “virtually semiotic,” and this categorial structure will return at the appropriate juncture.

Not all vehicles need be mechanical. Many are fully organic, or even as “thin” or unembodied as the air itself. Plant spores are carried on the wind so that a given species can reproduce. A seed can pass through the digestive tract of an animal and be transported to another location. Parasites can ride on their hosts and pass on their own internal semiotic traits to offspring. Hence the analogy of the vehicle is meant to cover any means of going from one location (which need not be obviously spatial) to another. For example, the structure of a logical argument is only derivatively spatial, but it is a vehicle none the less for the signs and functions within it. A gesture is a vehicle just as much as an iconic contrivance. Vehicles can derive their momentum from internal sources, or from external, or from both. More precisely, in an entropic

universe, there are no purely internal energy sources, as all energy comes from theft. Plants derive energy from the sun and soil, and the human process devours organic life-forms at an astonishing rate in order to prop up the dubious gift of consciousness. The same law of thermodynamics applies to sign systems and their vehicles. As in the context of psychosemiotics, the internal/external distinction is fraught with difficulties, although it is inevitable from a pragmatic standpoint.

It is exceedingly difficult to say *what* signs are if what is being asked for is a list of necessary and sufficient conditions for some kind of essence that is unique to signs. This is not to say that there are not strong family resemblances pertinent to the indefinite varieties of signification (vehicles and roadways) in the world, but that semiotic cosmology needs to proceed slowly in allowing differences to emerge. Here the spirit of the “later” Wittgenstein is reinvoked where it is most directly relevant to the current enterprise. Yet underneath his family-resemblance model, which relies in an uncritical way on so-called ordinary forms of understanding, the Hegelian feature of the enterprise remains in evidence. Some contours *will* emerge that will be fairly generic, even if never totalizing. In some sense, signs are the how of the orders of *nature natured* even if something not fully semiotic is left over. Already it should be clear why extreme care is called for in framing the right distinctions at the right time, and in a corollary fashion, in framing the right forms of continuity where pertinent. It cannot be stated often enough that thought must slow down long enough to let the traits of its chosen objects emerge out of their own provenance and into the right conceptual and analogical vessels that will house them in the proper way.

To look more directly at the concept of “vehicle” as it has emerged in the history of the English language, the *Oxford English Dictionary* reminds us that it has had several distinct, but ultimately related, meanings. By vehicle can be meant: (1) a substance, usually a liquid, that can make it easier to introduce a second substance (a kind of enabling condition), (2) a diluting medium in medicine that makes it easier to administer unpalatable substances, (3) a means for communicating ideas, and (4) the means by which something spiritual is conveyed in a nonspiritual setting. Current meanings include forms of material transport that are directly spatial. Clearly, contemporary semiotic theory has privileged the third meaning and has thus overly mentalized the concept of the sign vehicle so that it is tied to human forms of ideation. This is allied to a kind of not so subtle information model in which the sign vehicle contains a packet of information that is carried along a channel to its

destination. In this model, the more novel the subsequent pieces (bits) of information (i.e., the less predictable), the more information is conveyed. While the information model, a necessary appendage to the code model, has certain value in certain orders of relevance, it lacks the generic power needed for semiotic cosmology. Sign transmission often does convey information, but it does many other things as well, in particular, the kind of enabling that is pointed to in the first definition above.

To put it differently, there are semiotic transactions that are not primarily about information at all, but involve forms of betweenness that make subsequent forms of information possible, although not necessarily. Hence, the liquid referred to in the first definition can provide the means (the between) whereby two otherwise nonmixable substances can be brought together and augment or transform their traits. Signs, especially in their depth-structures, can serve as vehicles for other signs to become engaged with each other. The enabling sign may or may not change its *own* traits in the process, but it is certainly functioning in a way that is only derivatively related to a concept of information.

In Husserl's phenomenology, there is a process of shadowing or adumbration (*Abschattung*) in which the phenomenon under investigation is rotated through different axes of self-showing so that its contour can slowly emerge into circumspect sight. To move away from his privileging of vision, ecstatic naturalism (as the enabling metaphysics for semiotic cosmology) will rotate signs through their respective ordinal locations in the world and work through these locations toward some nontotalizing sense of the whatness of signs. It is being assumed here that there are at least forms of whatness behind (or within) the various hews of sign function, and that these can be partially known. Obviously, in any given case, separating the *what* from the *how* may be extremely difficult, but this should not stultify the quest for an understanding of the sign *an sich*. Tactically it is easier to proceed from the how to the what, and this will be the way in which the tight rope is traversed.

Signs are self-othering. To be a sign is to move from a whence to a whither, even if neither extreme is ever realizable in the world of *nature natured*. A sign is not a point that creates its own line in space as it moves along a trajectory, so much as a complex momentum of endless branching in which tangled structures intertwine in an indefinite variety of ways. Purely spatial analogies break down if a tri-dimensional system is forced on semiosis. The movement of a sign is often dimensional in

senses available to common apprehension, but it may also involve extra-dimensional traits, or traits in what could roughly be defined as occupying imaginary time and space. Peirce wanted to preserve some container sense for the movement of the sign vehicle and coined the term “interpretant” to denote the new sign that emerges from the relationship between an original sign (sometimes referred to as the “representamen”) and its object. The interpretant is bound in the same ways as the original sign; it merely adds one or more traits through an interpretive process that is almost always human (although Peirce did open the door to prehuman manifestations of interpretants).

But is Peirce’s language too corpuscular, too atomic in spite of his intentions? Might not another designation be far more pertinent to the actual phenomenological data? Instead of the atomic (and Newtonian) concept of interpretant, the current perspective will use the phrase “sign bloom” in keeping both with the organic imagery above and in moving past any atomic connotations that suggest Kantian-style boundaries for signification. Continuing this reconstruction, we can make a preliminary distinction that replaces Peirce’s sign/interpretant distinction; namely, that between the *sign root* and the *sign bloom*.

The image of the bloom has many layers that are directly pertinent to the what and how of the sign vehicle. In the spirit of the Oxford philosopher J. L. Austin, we can return to the wisdom of the history of language. The *OED* reminds us of the provenance of this term: (1) the blossom of a flower or plant, (2) perfection, (3) the crimson tint on the cheek, (4) the delicate powdery deposit on fruits when freshly gathered (c. 1639), and (5) a mass of iron after undergoing its first hammering. For something to bloom is for it to move into a more fulfilled stage, to manifest its own reproductive structures or to signal an internal transformation (such as the rush of blood to the surfaces of the face). For Hegel, the image of the blooming plant served as a perfect metaphor for the rise of spirit out of its own self-alienation in nature and matter. He of course tied the bloom to consciousness, but this extra layer is not always pertinent in the what or how of signification.

Blooms emerge from a nascent state that contains them as genuine possibilities. Of course, a variety of conditions can thwart the blooming process, and each blooming must wait its season. But it is important to stress that the sign bloom is not a contained interpretant so much as it is a further process of self-othering in which the sign root can perpetuate itself, perhaps through mutations that will affect the quality of subsequent roots.

This is not to say that blooms are more real or more important than roots, but that they do represent the ways in which antecedent conditions can expand and become linked to larger processes of signification. A root in the literal physical order cannot draw a bee, while a bloom can. A root cannot be carried in the wind (except in extreme conditions), while a spore can. Not all signs produce a sign bloom, and many are cut off by the hand of an indifferent nature. Yet it is part of the momentum of signification that blooms emerge when the enabling conditions are present.

In some sense, sign blooms have more scope than sign roots, although this cannot be pushed too far. In common speech it is customary to talk of plants blooming but not always of plants rooting, although a verbal form of the noun can be used. And roots are also self-othering in the sense that they are permeable to a variety of enabling conditions that make their growth and health possible. In fact, signification could not occur at all if the sign root were not fully embedded in, and reactive to, environing conditions. So the literalness of the image (analogy) must be slightly transgressed if the proper focus is to be given to the sign bloom as the unfolding of the sign in world semiosis. The primary point of the phrase “sign bloom” is to move away from an encapsulated and information-driven sense of Peirce’s interpretant. A sign bloom is, by definition, an invitation for forms of fertilization and reproduction that are fully entwined with a host of surrounding conditions.

Even with the image of hammered iron (the fifth *OED* definition), there is a signal that the bloom represents a “higher” stage of development that is moving toward the consummatory phase. To shift to a more verbal sense, blooming entails a growth process or flourishing that redeems antecedent conditions. Calling someone a “late bloomer” is to put them in the honorific category, as if a well-hidden process that emerges after its time will bear stronger fruits. In 1513 the term “blooming” even denoted a kind of shining or brightness. All of these connotations and denotations are pertinent to the concept of the sign bloom in semiotic cosmology.

Many signs certainly do contain information, or at least have traits that can be rendered into information language. Linguistically driven semiotic theories (which do not lend themselves well to the task of semiotic cosmology) feel very much at home in the information/code model. But this privileging of the very late evolutionary product of human language comes at a high price, for it severs the sign from those extra-human orders that made language itself possible, and may, under

unforeseen conditions, remove human language from the known universe. Human language is merely an intensification and transformation of ancient forms of semiosis. And even in the human order this form of semiosis may have severe limitations that other forms of semiosis do not.

In the transformation of psychoanalysis into psychosemiosis it became clear that much of the work of the selving process takes place outside of or prior to language and information models. While a projection is an unconscious “seeing as,” it is not a language. The projection may contain information, but this can only be unpacked through a strenuous process that can be better understood through different models. And in what sense does the unconscious itself contain information? The information model is pertinent to highly abstract systems, not to the rhythms of the unconscious or to the various sign blooms that occur outside of the human process.

The sign bloom is ever mobile, whether in its dimension as a sign vehicle, or in its expanded role as the path on which the sign travels. It has been customary to refer to the sign vehicle as the material aspect of the sign, as if to signal that the sign has a kind of weightiness that carries its own inertial charge and vector force. This general approach is not without warrant, especially insofar as it focuses on the sheer thereness of the sign in the context of other signs and meanings. The so-called material aspect of the sign reinforces the principle of individuation that is important if semiotic cosmology is not to devolve into a pure Leibnizian perspectivalism in which any given sign is “merely” an incomplete perspective on the alleged unified network of signification. While this temptation may seem unlikely, it actually serves as a strong motive force for process forms of naturalism and their consequent semiotic theories. For many thinkers there is a special appeal in the idea that one sign will mirror all other signs, albeit in a particular way, thereby blunting both the material quality of the sign (its own opaqueness and inertia) and the *genuine* (ordinally defined) uniqueness of each and every sign, including its roots and blooms.

Sign blooms have their expanding and contracting spheres of relevance, but it is a form of magical philosophical thinking to assume that any sign can be relevant to all other signs. It is easier to see how a theologically attuned perspective, such as that of Bishop Berkeley, can sustain some doctrine of internal relations among perceptions (signs) because of the infinite spirit of the divine that holds all perceptions into being at all times. From the divine perspective, the principle of individ-

uation is profoundly thwarted, as if a finite and limited sign is guilty of a kind of sin against omniscience. But why must even posttheistic perspectives cling to a narcissistic doctrine of internal relations in which the world is ultimately constituted by one supersign that contains all other subaltern signs? The motives are clearly derived from a sublimated form of the childhood omnipotence of thought that confuses internal ideation with external effect. On the side of validation it remains to be shown that there is anything like a continuum of all continua in the world, or that any order, no matter how great in scope, will be relevant to all other orders. Ecstatic naturalism is ecstatic in the precise sense that it takes the breaks and tears within and between continua seriously, whether semiotic or not. Each break represents a standing out (*ekstasis*) from the surrounding semiotic field. In psychosemiosis, for example, the sudden eruption of a complex represents an intrusion into other sign systems that may break them into components that are not rewoven. This is not a part of some global semiotic process, but a dark and taciturn momentum that ultimately comes from the underconscious of nature. And what kind of internal relations would exist in *nature naturing*? To attempt to answer this question is to fall prey to a major category mistake, or, more precisely, to conflate the categorial with the precategorial.

Hence, neither in the innumerable orders of the world nor in the underconscious of nature is anything like the Leibniz/Whitehead form of mirroring evident. To return to the branching image, it is clear that not all branches are possible in the same space; some will choke out others or stunt their growth by depriving them of nutrients. It is not often noticed that the three evolutionary principles of natural selection, random variation, and self-organization (at least in some orders: see Kauffman 1995) are pertinent to forms of semiosis that lie outside of the sphere of psychosemiosis. If nothing else, the contemporary concept of the material aspect of the sign vehicle keeps semiotic theory on the ground of evolutionary competition where continuities come and go.

Lest this perspective on the sign vehicle become too pessimistic, it must also be stressed that sign blooms after all do succeed in expanding in rich and augmenting ways. They can admit novel traits into their expanding contour, analogous to a new color in the petal of a flower, and can entwine with other dissimilar blooms. There is a kind of lushness to the semiotic universe that the code-driven models fail to make manifest. And blooms involve far more than shape and color. They have scent, position, timing, complex mechanisms of transmission

of traits, and a long evolutionary history. In the orders of botanical contrivance, these traits can be manipulated in an indefinite variety of ways, thus adding to the semiotic prospects of plant species.

To deliteralize the concept of the sign bloom somewhat, it can be said that a sign, in its self-othering, waxes and wanes insofar as it becomes relevant to other sign series and to some of its own, perhaps incomplete, subaltern traits. Consider a gesture on a stage. The actor in shifting a leg and raising an eyebrow may be conveying a vast sign system at one of the dramatic pulses in a play. The shift of weight could signal a profound discomfort with another character's assertion, perhaps known to be a lie. The raised eyebrow could signal the sense that some dangerous revelation is about to occur in spite of the denial of the second actor. In this very subtle body work, the actor is opening out the inner life of the second actor in a way that will be known to the audience, but not to the second actor, who is blind to the fact that his or her lie has been discovered. A sign link has been created without one word being said; namely, between the insight of the protagonist and the still unconscious world of the second actor. On one side there is sudden illumination, while on the other there is a hidden semiotic movement (i.e., the second actor is about to betray himself or herself). Pieces of the semiotic puzzle have been put together, and subaltern configurations have suddenly taken on a deeper meaning. Suppose, for example, that the second actor is also fidgeting with an important stage prop (perhaps a token of an illicit relationship) that suddenly releases its meaning to the protagonist (raised eyebrow). The prop is itself the trigger of portents that will bring about a turning in the drama. Playwrights learn to let objects do much of their linguistic work for them as they can make whole pages of exposition unnecessary. Thus, in several seconds, the sign blooms have rippled in and through the audience, which is always prospective, i.e., is always ahead of the characters in the play (if the play is well written). What were the barest hints in previous scenes now become major signs in their own right. The secrets usually buried in the play are subaltern signs waiting to become fully manifest signs. When the denouement occurs, the sign bloom becomes the dramatic center of the play. Meaning is read backward from the not yet that a well-crafted play will keep in motion and out of the radar scope of an attentive audience.

No two sign blooms are identical in all respects. This follows for two reasons: (1) each sign bloom belongs to a unique (in some respects) ordinal location, and (2) each sign bloom has both antecedent and subaltern traits that are unique (in some respects) to its complex unfold-

ing. No sign root or sign bloom can be unique in *all* respects because that would make it discontinuous with all other actual and possible orders of *nature natured*. Hence a given sign will be unique in one way, have identical traits in another, and commensurate (translatable) traits in yet a third way. Consider an actor about to perform the role of Hedda Gabler from Ibsen's play of that title. There is now a cumulative history of such roles that has been passed on to the nascent performance, each exerting a lure or containing abjections that the actor must deal with. There is a contour, carrying great weight across time. The actor may also want to consult Ibsen's thoughts on the matter so that she can have a kind of *besser verstehen*, a better understanding of the character than the playwright may have had himself. Or, the actor may want to purge herself of antecedent models and do her emotional preparation and object work out of her own experiences of alienation and frustration in a patriarchal hierarchy.

Preparing such a major role can require all of the accumulated tools of the actor's lifetime of stage work. Each gesture on stage, each utterance, each emotional tone, each pulse within the delivery, each movement (blocking), each reaction to other characters, and each object relation (for example, to Hedda's father's pistols) will call forth both commensurate and incommensurate traits from the genre of Ibsen plays. In the end, a successful performance ties together relevant sign roots (in which past blooms are now roots for new blooms) with the new blooming that occurs on stage. Thus the sign vehicles are both new and old, both augmenting and transforming, perhaps even rejecting of antecedent triumphs. How, in a long stage run, are the sign blooms to be kept fresh?

In training actors the first step is known as the "pinch/ouch" exercise (Meisner and Longwell 1987), in which each member of a pair is asked to repeat a simple observation about the other, such as "you are wearing black." This repetition can go on for many minutes and change as swiftly as a new phrase is introduced. The goal of the exercise is to keep each actor on his or her toes so that each line heard is like a pinch to which the only proper response is an "ouch." On stage the payoff is that each actor will be able to hear the other actor's lines as if for the first time, thus enabling the preparation (internal emotional work) to have the right modulation at the right time (Hagen 1991). This is aided by body work which can serve as the trigger for the emotion once the pinch occurs. Thus, for example, an actor can be in a state of elation unaware that some very bad news is about to be delivered (remembering that this

role may already have been performed a hundred nights in a row). How can he or she suddenly turn on the dime and experience all of the real power of the emotion so that it is conveyed to the last row in the balcony? The body work, such as mentally simulating an intense blow to the solar plexus, can trigger the emotion and actually bring about intense physiological changes. This keeps the “ouch” alive night after night, and ensures that a character like Hedda Gabler is reborn every time the curtain rises.

The sign blooms for this character are thus both continuous and discontinuous with antecedent manifestations. Novel traits are introduced, and perhaps highly grooved habits of interpretation are fallen into as a form of self-protection. Different translations from the Norwegian also affect how Hedda will be rendered, and will stress one aspect over another. Few contrivances are as semiotically dense as stage performance, precisely because of the lush confluence of self-interpretation and otherness. Uta Hagen, one of the premier acting teachers in North America, lists six questions that each actor must answer in preparation for a complex stage role: (1) who am I (i.e., as a character)?, (2) what are the circumstances (for example, time, place, and surroundings)?, (3) what are my relationships?, (4) what do I want?, (5) what is my obstacle?, and (6) what do I do to get what I want? (Hagen 1991: 134). In working out the semiosis that will internalize these queries, the actor comes ever closer to the transference relationship that will make the character a numinous presence. This requires focused work with sensations, the body, thought patterns, and a working form of psychosemiotics. To look at the play from the other end, the playwright must write for actors as well as for the audience. To write plays without studying acting is to run the risk that language will overtake gesture and emotional structure, thus giving the actors little to do that would compel them to enhance their assigned roles.

FOUR INFINITIES

If signs can be endlessly ramified, is it possible to delineate some sense of this infinity of relationships and actual or possible configurations? In mathematics it is customary to talk of types or degrees of infinity, such that the set of all whole numbers is differently infinite from the set of all numbers. The former is a “smaller” infinite than the latter. How can the concept of the infinite be unfolded in a semiotic cosmology? To ask the question differently: what do sign blooms grow into? Three types of

infinity emerge as being strongly relevant to the life of sign vehicles and sign interactions, while a fourth type will have a different type of relevance. They are: (1) the actual infinite, (2) the prospective infinite, (3) the open infinite, and (4) the sustaining infinite. Each of these forms of infinity interpenetrates with the others, yet each has some unique features that make it possible to delineate it separately. Any given sign will by necessity participate in all four infinities, but selective emphasis can stress one or more over the others.

The actual infinite

The *actual infinite* can be defined as the sum of all currently operating signs in the world of *nature natured*. The concept of “sum” has to be used with caution as it is impossible to arrive at a set number of such attained signs, since signs are always infinite in their own way. The focus here is not so much on number as it is on actuality; namely, the sheer plenitude and utter thereness of signs in the world. Any given sign is both an actual infinite in itself and a full participant in the actual infinite of all signs that are currently in the world. The “size” and “shape” of the actual infinite is always changing as signs and their series are endlessly transformed in the flow of thermodynamic time. The actual infinite is thus fully within the world of temporality and spatiality (provided that time and space can be configured in extra-dimensional ways as well).

To put it in more dynamic terms, it can be said that the actual infinite is *actualizing* in the sense that it makes signs efficacious within the innumerable orders of the world. There is an astonishing energy within the actual infinite. It is always moving from roots to blooms and back again, ever restless, yet ever embodied in specific foci of meaning. The self-othering quality of the sign vehicle, as it moves along new branchings (pathways), is part of the way or how of the actual infinite. The actual infinite is thus the semiotic thickness and mobility of the world of signs, ever moving to new configurations. Even if any given move is a mere reiteration of past states, it is still a move into a slightly different *location* for the past state. The most simple repetition is still a repetition within a new contour, a new nexus that changes the meaning of that repetition.

The linkage and dynamism among the signs constituting the actual infinite is through topological ramification. Each sign has a place (not necessarily spatial) that is augmented or changed in some way when it is brought into the ramifications of the surrounding semiotic fields of

meaning. This can happen to those signs that are temporal and those, such as formal structures, that are not. This use of a geometric term is meant to point to the incarnationality and thereness of the constituents of the actual infinite; namely, that each sign has a sphere of dominance, a place within and through which to manifest traits. A semiotic topology is a description of that aspect of the actual infinite that may be available for description at any given time and place. In its extreme form such a topology would take a slice from one given moment within the life of the actual infinite and describe the semiotic structures that obtain. Yet it is also possible to bring in temporal thickness so that an aspect of the actual infinite is observed over time. In the former strategy the stress is on what is ramified, while in the latter the stress is on the processes of ramification and their momentary results.

The actual infinite of signs has neither beginning nor end. It has no shape of shapes or ultimate contour. It is far more protean than Proteus himself, always shape-shifting into new configurations, new constellations of meaning, some of which will be at war with others. It is the flesh and blood of the semiotic universe, the locus where power and meaning converge within sign vehicles and their pathways. The *relata* (vehicles) are neither more nor less real than the relations (pathways), and both belong fully to the actual infinite. Insofar as semiotic cosmology focuses on the actual infinite the conclusion will be that the world of signs is infinitely dense, compact, and bursting with new meanings that have their own inertial charge. Here Leibniz's principle of plenitude is pertinent; namely, that there is a tendency for the universe to be as full of realizable essences (signs) as possible. This plenitude is what it is, however, only in the context of other forms of the infinite that have no plenitude. There is an ontological dialectic between the maximization of centers of power and meaning and an emptying momentum that has no semiotic density in the above senses.

Topological ramification may or may not be tied to the human process. Every sign vehicle in the world has its place (*topos*), however precarious or open to novel configurations. If a planet is birthed out of a star or star system, its own semiotic structures will have ordinal locations that will obtain. Its gravitational and magnetic fields will allow some possibilities but not others. Its atmospheric gases will dictate the forms of life, if any, that could come to prevail in their own right. Each identifiable component in the planet is, by definition, an actual infinite, as are the planet and its relations as a whole. It does not follow that every actual infinite has to *be* discriminable by some creature, only that it is available to be so. Human arrogance identifies the real with the identified,

and this prejudice only closes off innumerable prospects that could be attained on the actual infinite and its how.

It does not make sense to ask: just what is the actual infinite? The only answer that *could* be given is that it is everything and anything that does obtain, but this “what” has no one feature that links each of its instances. So many candidates have been paraded across the stages of philosophy and theology that only a taxonomy could do justice to these artificial self-limitations. Consider this rather brief list of contenders: actual occasions, monads, phenomena, sense data, atoms, logical simples, proper names, spirit, matter, beings, forms (both eternal and dynamizing), temporal pulses, energy, fields, stuff, simples, compounds, and even dreams. There is not a single case in which counter examples could not be listed for each allegedly generic claim. Ecstatic naturalism refuses to specify *any* whatness for the world of the actual infinite. In the most colloquial and flattened speech it would be appropriate to use a pared down version of James’ “stuff” and talk of “whats.”

The actual (actualizing) infinite is thus ever mobile, endlessly ramifying in various *topoi*, filled with energy, constituted by innumerable whats but no one what, engaged in evolutionary struggle, universal in scope, indefinitely explorable as the “sum” of all attained traits in the world, and the locus of the conjunction of power and meaning. It is the ontological thickness of the world, the initial object of semiotic cosmology because of its sheer availability. For many semioticians, an analysis of the actual infinite (by whatever name) is the beginning and end of the matter. But this prejudice toward plenitude, which runs through Western thought like a powerful stream, blinds semiotics and metaphysics to the enabling conditions for the stream. Just where does the stream run? How does it find its river bed and how do river beds evolve and change themselves? And the question is rarely asked: how can we even speak of plenitude unless it is plenitude in the context of something else? If the world were nothing but plenitude we would be in the same position as the German philosopher Heinrich Olbers, who pointed out in 1823 that if the physical universe were both infinite and static, then every line of sight would fall upon a star and the night sky would be all light. By showing some of the problems with the static view, Olbers opened up the door to considerations that the universe had a specific beginning and that not all stars are of the same age. And, as we now know, the universe is expanding (Hawking 1996: 11–12). Consequently, by analogy, *semiotic* cosmology can reject the view that the world of signs is a static infinite that would be nothing but semiotic light. But where does semiotic darkness come from? And what is the nature of this darkness?

The prospective infinite

If the actual infinite is represented by the image of the plentiful stream, the *prospective infinite* is represented by the image of the bed within which the stream moves. As we shall see, the open infinite will obtain in yet another way as a kind of presemiotic clearing pertinent to the life of signs. Or, using astronomical comparisons, the actual infinite will be represented by stars, planets, and stellar matter, while the prospective infinite will obtain as a kind of gravitational pull within a specific system. These images are in keeping with the plenitude/emptiness dialectic for semiosis. If gravity is a “thing” (for example, if there are gravity waves), then it is a different type of thing from whatever is affected by it. Note that the prospective infinite is tied to a specific system, that is, it is not a universal emptiness that permeates the semiotic universe, which, by definition, cannot exist as *a* universe. The prospective infinite is always an infinite for a given dimension of the actual infinite. Any given sign series will thus be constituted by its actualizing thickness and its enabling prospective clearing that provides the place for power and meaning to emerge at all.

Just as it makes no sense to talk of a light cone that has no space within which to travel, so too it makes no sense to talk of an actual infinite that is not in some medium that is ontologically other to it. Without a river bed, water would simply disperse and evaporate. With a river bed it can gather and gain momentum across a terrain. Signs need a locus that is not itself fully semiotic, for the obvious reason that if the locus were semiotic there would be an impossible compression of competing forms of plenitude. Thus the prospective infinite is a necessary enabling condition for any given actual infinite.

Prospects are themselves located, that is, any given prospect is always for and of an actual infinite that is to some degree separable from all others. This is, of course, a limit condition, as forms or moments of the actual infinite will interpenetrate. But the implication is not overwhelming for thought as prospective moments of the infinite can also interpenetrate as when two river beds intersect. In the form of an assertion: no actual infinite without its own prospective infinite, no prospective infinite without its own body of signs. This dialectic is as ancient as the world itself and has innumerable forms of manifestation, both temporal and nontemporal.

It is easy to grasp the idea of an actual infinite and the corollary idea that it is somewhat mappable, but what of the more elusive prospective

infinite that does not devolve into a body of signs? Is it a mere shadow of the actual infinite, a kind of semiotic anti-matter that merely says “no” to every “yes” within the actual infinite? Is it the sphere of anti-signs that only occasionally collides with the world of signs? Or is it more like a gap created by the very pressure of the actual infinite?

Again we seem to be on the cusp where phenomenology gives way to a transcendental argument. But as before, this terrain is not as clearly divided as it would seem. There can be a phenomenology of the prospective infinite, certainly in terms of its how, and, with enough care, perhaps in terms of its what. What, then, can be said with some assurance about this elusive form of the infinite that seems to be a mere shadow cast by all of the signs actualizing themselves in the domain of *nature natured*?

Signs do not exist in a vacuum. But this must be understood to assert that signs always have one or more contexts within which they obtain. One dimension of this contextual structure will, of course, be that of the actual infinite itself; namely, that each moment of any actual infinite is what it is in the context of other moments of the “same” or other moments of the actual infinite. In another dimension, however, the actual infinite will be embedded in a context that is a presemiotic enabling condition (analogous to gravity) that provides the forestructure for any and all signs pertinent to that actualizing order.

An actor on the stage is both participating in and generating an actual infinite of signs which conjoin power and meaning. Yet this actualization process is made possible by a clearing that hovers around the actual infinite as a kind of protective barrier *and* empowering condition. Any given play will be an actual infinite in its own right. It will be different from any other play even if it can have commensurate traits with others. We know a play to be Shakespeare’s even if he never wrote the same play twice. This obvious truism points to the fact that any given actual infinite does *not* collapse into another. To change images again, river beds make for distinct rivers, even when they intersect. The prospective infinite is that presemiotic vector force that surrounds the actual infinite and makes its distinctness possible as a sign series. Hence, the prospective infinite is one of the ways in which the principle of individuation is protected in the world.

Peirce struggled to define this aspect of semiosis with his concept of the “ground” relationship, likened by him to the third person of the Christian trinity; namely, the spirit. The ground always grounds in certain respects, but is not itself a sign, object, or interpretant. Some

scholars wish to see Peirce's ground as a fourth term in his system, augmenting his innumerable triads. Whether this is an appropriate move or not, the ground relation is different in *kind* from the others. The prospective infinite is somewhat akin to Peirce's ground, especially when its presemiotic aspects are stressed. It is also akin to Peirce's ground relation in that it has respects that are unique to it. That is, each manifestation of the prospective infinite will have certain unique features that link it to its partially unique partner, the actual infinite. Do the actual and prospective infinities affect each other, or is the prospective infinite a kind of place holder that stands aloof from the actualizing momentum of the actual infinite?

The analogy here is straightforward. Just as the concepts of gravity and mass entail each other, and are affected by each other, so too do the realities of the prospective and actual infinities. The prospective infinite is like gravity in that it provides a specific gravitational nexus for the matter that occurs within it. In the obverse sense, the mass of the actual infinite provides the how of gravity and shapes the provenance of any given gravitational field. Yet it is necessary to push past this analogy to highlight the enabling and protecting aspects of the prospective infinite.

The prospective infinite is far more generative and powerful than a mere shadow. It has its own clearing/opening momentum that makes semiosis possible for the actual infinite. It is an enabling condition for a sign series by sustaining gaps and openings between that series and another. This also, and at the same time, protects the actual infinite from collapsing into one super system of signs. To use more anthropomorphic language, the prospective infinite "invites" the actual infinite into a space where novel and augmenting possibilities can unfold. In a human encounter, for example, one can experience the prospective infinite in those moments in which interpretive horizons suddenly become open to new prospects that did not seem to be available in the antecedent semiotic material. The other person is now seen in a new way, and a new fold within the actual infinite emerges that can enable the further growth of sign blooms.

What makes signs restless? There is a clear sense in which the intrinsic self-othering quality of signs comes from the energy within the actual infinite, but there is another sense in which semiotic restlessness comes from the vibrating space opened out by the prospective infinite. The language of sign verses anti-sign is not without some warrant here, provided that the concept of the anti-sign is understood to denote not a mere one-to-one negation of moments of the actual infinite so much as a presemiotic vector force that keeps signs from total self-closure.

The topological ramification of the actual infinite is protected by that which is both topological and nontopological. The topological dimension of the prospective infinite can be seen in its specificity: one actual infinite, one prospective infinite. The nontopological dimension of the prospective infinite can be seen in its lack of signs, its nonplenitude.

A dream will manifest both the actual and the prospective infinities. The actual infinite dimension is seen as the body of signs and symbols that constitute the dream itself, while the interpretive maneuvering room that is given over to the attending consciousness (via the dream ego) is a gift of the prospective infinite. Any given dream will be its own actual infinite while also belonging to the “larger” actual infinite of its series. By definition, any given dream will be enabled and protected by the vector force of the “lesser” and “larger” forms of the prospective infinite. Again, the dialectic of plenitude and nonplenitude shapes the prospects of semiosis.

Hermeneutically, the prospective infinite can be understood as the “sum” of all pertinent possible interpretations that surround any body of signs. In the human order the concept of “pertinence” becomes especially problematic, but there are resources for making some headway toward a judicious understanding of the penumbra of possible meanings available to the interpreter, among them, critical common sense and evolutionary competence. The prospective infinite is thus an invitation to interpret something in certain respects, always allowing for novel and augmenting interpretations insofar as they do not violate the logic of the actual infinite. There is thus a kind of gravitational mass shaping the interpretive process and this will be manifest over time if, and only if, certain conditions are met in psychosemiosis and social/political forms of empowerment. By saying that all interpretation is already politically positioned, and hence tainted, one is also saying that it is possible to make some distinction between just and unjust hermeneutic horizons. And the prospective infinite is always a player in this process.

To shift to more verbal language, the actualizing infinite provides its own inertial momentum to the prospecting infinite that surrounds and enables it. That is, the prospecting infinite is always infinite in respects A, or B, or X, but never in all respects. By the same token, the prospecting infinite provides the actualizing infinite with its potentials and respects, but not in the form of Whitehead’s atemporal eternal entities. A given sign in an actualizing infinite has, say, possibilities Ab, or Ac, or Ad, available to it because of fully *natural* and embedded conditions that belong both to itself (its own inertial charge) and its

relevant prospective infinite. The actual and prospective infinities are strongly relevant to each other, as one cannot have an identity without the other. But they come from different sides of the ontological fence: plenitude and a specific plenitude/nonplenitude that is a clearing in and for semiosis. Again, in a post-Newtonian and post-Peircean universe, there is no one absolute emptiness of all emptinesses, any more than there is an absolute coordinate system, even in the infinite long run. To put it differently, emptiness is *always* emptiness for *some* plenitude.

The verbal form, prospecting infinite, gives the depth-sense of an infinite that is always “looking” for some opening, some novel or augmenting sign that can be mined for further meaning. There is genuine novelty in this process, not just a form of “it only appears novel because of human ignorance.” As has been hinted already, omniscience is a concept that must be purged from the perspective of naturalism, even when applied to the sacred orders within nature. And if the underconscious of nature is stressed, any concept of knowledge will have to be left behind when crossing over the great abyss into the precategorical. Knowledge is at best a fitful and precarious product of the world, and cannot be read backward into the mysterious self-othering quality of *nature naturing*. It is a species of human narcissism to prop up some kind of deity within whom the knowledge relation to the world is primary.

The prospective infinite is not a passive shadow, but contains its own goads toward the transformations that are pertinent to the actual infinite. It is like anti-matter, constituted by anti-signs, in that it does have a very different ontological reality than signs and their series, but it cannot be totally different as it would then lack all relevance to anything semiotic. It might help to see the prospective infinite as a mobile river bed that can adjust itself to what the water does, but is not a mere causal result of that water. The analogy must be transcended when the self-moving quality of the prospective infinite is the object of phenomenological probing. For example, a sudden turn in phrase in a conversation (moment of an actual infinite) may open up new dimensions in the prospective infinite, which will, in turn, open up new prospects for the actual infinite. Aristotle's efficient cause needs to be augmented by his final and formal dimensions. His concept of material cause (as already modified above) is more pertinent to the actual infinite, but could, with caution, be applied to the prospective infinite insofar as it too has its own sphere of dominance, its place within the world that is unique to it and that excludes other traits.

But the prospective infinite does not have the last word on the principle of individuation. It makes given systems and sign series partially unique by providing a space “outside” of them that protects and empowers internal traits. It is as if the prospective infinite is an organic barrier that surrounds the actualizing infinite as it unfolds in the domains of world semiosis. The prospective infinite is thus system specific, like the gravity holding our entire solar system together.

The open infinite

When moving to the more particular level, where it is possible to speak of one sign, or one sign relation, another type of infinite is in play; namely, the *open infinite*. Here the principle of individuation receives its maximal expression. Each sign (planet) has its own space within which to unfold meaning, its own penumbra of possible signification that does not collapse into a super-dense semiotic fold that ironically admits no meaning. One sign *must* differ from another, indeed, from all others (again, in *some* respect), if it is to be a sign at all. The world does not allow for a centripetal movement toward a dead semiotic center because innumerable spaces of betweenness surround each sign and enable it to be the sign that it is. In the physical universe (a concept which does not exhaust the scope of the objects of semiotic cosmology), entropy will certainly affect how the forms of infinity will obtain, but unless there is a total annihilation of all “whats” (for example, protons), individuation will obtain in some form. Although we should note that the very distinction between the simple and complex is of pragmatic value only, since there are no “whats” that could be simple in all respects, it is still of value to distinguish between the vector momentum of the prospective infinite that is correlated to systems (solar system) and the open infinite that surrounds any given constituent of the system (planet).

Consider a painting that has unique and powerful forms of contrivance and presentation, say a color-field painting by Mark Rothko. The given painting, as a moment within the unfolding of New York abstract expressionism (a species designation that may be of only partial value), will be an actual infinite of signs. It is an actualizing infinite even though finished as a physical artifact, although it is still changing chemically and still affected by moisture and sunlight. It is actualizing in that it is part of meaning horizons that intersect with it and that can be transformed by its actualities and possibilities. The prospective infinite that surrounds and empowers it provides the mobile space for locating it within the

genre of its creator and the genre of abstract expressionism. The open infinite surrounds and empowers it as the one and only painting that it is. But try this thought experiment: suppose that every other Rothko painting (and reproduction) were to disappear, and further suppose that all other so-called abstract expressionist paintings (and their reproductions) were to disappear. Would the open infinite be the same for the sole painting or would it change?

The answer to this question should be obvious; namely, that the open infinite is never totally isolated from the “larger” prospective infinite that locates its object (sign) within its relevant species. While the distinction between the actual and prospective infinities does involve an ontological element, the distinction between the prospective and open forms is far more pragmatic, but this should not limit its importance, especially when dealing with initial encounters that may not be aware of species or class inclusion. Further, part of the very definition of creativity in the human order entails the ability to become sensitive to an open infinite around a novel sign precisely when no prospective infinite has yet announced itself. For example, a new categorization lifted a species of painting, now called the “luminist” movement (c. 1850s and 1860s), out of the so-called Hudson River School, and made it possible to see each example in a new way.

Now, the species of abstract expressionism is also an actual infinite insofar as it is constituted by attained and completed works that, given a family resemblance model, are held to belong to that species (at least). The specific Rothko painting is an actual infinite that is part of its appropriate sign series (the “larger” actual infinite), while also being surrounded and empowered by a particularizing open infinite, which itself is dialectically engaged with the prospective infinite. Does this language sound hopelessly layered and far too complex? For pragmatic purposes it may be unnecessary, but in the context of a semiotic cosmology that wants to probe into the hows and whats of the world, such distinctions are helpful in providing clues as to the differences among forms of plenitude and forms of emptiness. Just as one can lift a rock without knowing Newtonian mechanics, one can assimilate and manipulate the signs of a Rothko painting without knowing the fundamental categories of semiotic cosmology. But in either case, the same act can take on much deeper layers of meaning once the generic structures making it possible become thematic and available in their own right. Knowing, for example, about the how of the open infinite makes it possible to sustain a more robust open space for interpretation. While a

prosaic mass-produced scene painting will never fail to exhibit the various forms of the infinite, it will do so in far less instructive ways. The distinction between high and low culture, although challenged by Dewey, is also, and more importantly, a distinction between those artifacts that more powerfully exhibit the four forms of the infinite and those that do so in a hermeneutically predictable and less rich way. While democratic reconstruction is a near absolute in the social order, this should never be confused with a necessary value (not reality) hierarchy in the cultural sphere. What does follow in the dialectic between democratic reconstruction and high culture is that the Eurocentric notions of what *constitutes* high culture have to be radically challenged and augmented (without, however, being totally deprivileged).

The sustaining infinite

The actual infinite is different in kind from the prospective and open infinities, while the distinction between the prospective and open forms is more pragmatic than ontological. What of the fourth form, that of the *sustaining infinite*? Is it different in kind from the other three or only quantitatively distinct? What is the chief distinguishing trait linking the prospective and open forms? It is that of individuation; namely, of providing the space for uniqueness against the centripetal tendency to collapse into one super sign system. Is the sustaining infinite tied to the principle of individuation? No. As the term “sustaining” suggests, this form of the infinite is not “concerned” with surrounding and empowering particular signs or systems, but with enabling them to be at all. Buchler coined the term “providingness” as his version of the sustaining infinite. The sustaining infinite is not directly relevant to any of the traits of signs or sign systems, even as their anti-signs or anti-systems. It is not strongly relevant to *any* order of the world whatsoever, that is, it does not affect traits or provide particular forms of betweenness.

Rather, the sustaining infinite is directly analogous to what Paul Tillich called the “ground of Being,” provided that any direct theological equation between this ground and god is rejected. The sustaining infinite is neither religious nor anti-religious; it is not a creator, nor is it an agent in history or otherwise. It obtains prior to the distinction between good and evil, and prior to any axiological distinctions such as those aesthetic distinctions so prized in process forms of naturalism. The sustaining infinite sustains the just and the unjust, the beautiful and the

demonic, the fragmented and the harmonious, the honorific and the detestable, the living and the dead (via effects), and the realms of the possible and the actual. It sustains all of the innumerable orders of *nature natured*, whether semiotic or virtually semiotic. And insofar as ecstatic naturalism speaks of that which is both in the world but prior to even the virtually semiotic, it will be there as its sustaining ground.

But it does not reach down into the underconscious of nature. A very different kind of language than that pertinent to the four infinities will have to be developed to talk about the how of *nature naturing*, leaving behind with a great leap any language of the infinite as it applies to the world of signs. Thus the sustaining infinite lives on the cusp of the ontological difference between the two primal dimensions of nature. It does not sustain what lies “below” it, but lives horizontally, as it were, in the world of innumerable signs and sign systems.

Is the sustaining infinite akin to the Christian logos? To answer “yes” would be to import far too much lucidity and purpose into the sustaining infinite. It has no mind, contains no Word, is not part of a telic plan, and is not even aware of its foundlings. It sustains, nothing more, and nothing less. Yet it also ceases to sustain certain traits when their measure has been exhausted. It would romanticize the sustaining infinite to see it as a divine hand that gives and takes away by its *own* measure, as, for example, when we are told in a eulogy that the divine took someone away according to its own hidden purpose. The sustaining infinite has no plans for anything in the world. Plans are always intra-worldly, that is, relevant to and for certain orders that arise and perish within the world. The sustaining infinite is not supernatural but is as close to each and every trait as that trait is to itself. The most judicious thing to say is that an order perishes because of the how and what of that order itself. It is no longer participating in the sustaining infinite, except perhaps in a highly derivative sense through its effects.

How do the four forms of the infinite relate to each other? The actual infinite and the sustaining infinite are qualitatively distinct both from each other and from the other two forms. The prospective and open infinities are quantitatively and pragmatically different from each other, but not different in kind, except in those moments when the open infinite is on its own, as it were, in an initial encounter where no species connection is felt or understood. The actual infinite is the semiotic thickness or sheer thereness of signs and sign systems in the world. It is actualizing and self-moving to new possibilities and actualities, ever restless and the locus of ontological plenitude.

The prospective infinite provides the space for that very plenitude, refusing to let the actual infinite collapse in on itself or meld into one super sign. In any given instance the open infinite will provide the space for individuation insofar as it serves the particularity of a given sign. The open and prospective infinities work in consort to provide their own ever-mobile space of betweenness for semiosis in the orders of *nature* *natured*. Neither form of the infinite has attained semiotic traits (akin to Peirce's ground), but will be strongly relevant to attained traits in certain respects (and in that sense have something like anti-traits).

The sustaining infinite, like the prospective and open forms, is free of its own attained traits within the world, but unlike them is not a structure of betweenness. To be a betweenness structure it would have to be strongly relevant to some traits and not others, that is, it would have to participate in the drama of individuation. Rather, the sustaining infinite is *sheerly* relevant to the innumerable orders of the world. This designation is different from Buchler's distinction between weak and strong relevance. For Buchler, something is strongly relevant (like the actual, prospective, and open infinities) when it affects the identity of that order. Something is weakly relevant when it affects the mere scope of that order, that is, in one of its locations. His example is that of a person moving into New York City. Their becoming a new trait in the city does not affect its identity, merely its scope, its inclusiveness. But if an important person moves into the city, say a retired President of the United States, then the identity of the city could be affected. Ecstatic naturalism remains friendly to this distinction as developed in Buchler's descriptive naturalism, but must augment it with a third form; namely, that of sheer relevance where neither identity nor scope is affected. The sustaining infinite provides the clearing within which both identities and scopes can unfold or not unfold. But it is directly relevant to neither. This follows from the Kantian prescription that being is not a predicate, that is, neither a trait of an order nor part of the range or extent of that order.

In another sense, however, all of the first three forms of the infinite are dependent on the sustaining form. They could not "be" at all were the fourth form not sustaining them. Yet once there, they are on their own, subject to their own dialectic and their own various permutations. The most pervasive form of the infinite, the sustaining form, is actually both the most necessary and the least efficacious. This paradox has been noted since the beginning of thought, but its internal logic needs to be ramified further if semiotic cosmology is to probe into the mystery that lies on the other side of the ontological abyss. At this point we must settle

for a negative assertion: *nature naturing* obtains in its own way outside of the operations of the four infinities. Yet this is not the end of the story, as there are ways of gaining access to a depth-momentum that can be dimly sensed within the various actualizing, prospecting, opening, and sustaining infinities.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRAITS

Let us return to the sign vehicle itself, the so-called material aspect of semiosis. Any given sign is both an actual infinite of traits and a participant in other signs that are, per definition, actual infinities. Within its own constitution it will also house the prospective and open infinities in that it has space for possibility “within” itself that is not filled in with actualizing content. And the sustaining infinite will be manifest precisely by being nonmanifest *as* anything whatsoever, whether possibility or actuality.

Within this artificial focus on the sign in itself, are there further distinctions to be made that bring us closer to the how of the sign vehicle as it contains its own roots and bloom? If there are distinctions to be made, are they merely pragmatic, or is the pragmatic never a “merely” but a condition of the how of the world itself? This last query puts us on another historical cusp: that between the pragmatic, which has no direct ontological import, and what Peirce called the “pragmaticist,” namely, that which manifests genuine thirdness and law-like habit. Neopragmatists privilege the pragmatic and tie it to a species of postmodernism, thus cutting the legs off ontological discourse (cf. Dean 1986, West 1989, and Rorty 1989). But no semiotic cosmology can reach down into its objects unless it has an ontological structure to support it. Actually, the issue is rather more simple. Neopragmatism has a crude and unexamined ontology that ignores genuine secondness (resistance) and thirdness, while living out of a watered-down version of firstness (pure possibility). Ecstatic naturalism insists that the *fully* pragmatic has some ontological implications, even if different in kind or texture from other structures, and that Peirce at least honored this ontological substructure to his epistemology and theory of method. Thus, to say that we are seeking pragmatic (in this fuller sense) distinctions within the sign vehicle is also to say that they will be pertinent to something more than mere habits of human discrimination. Here, then, the “pragmatic” will mean an ontologically thick pragmaticist and evolutionary trait of the sign vehicle itself, even though such a trait will not be removable from specific forms of pragmatic interaction.

The first distinction to be observed within the sign vehicle, which can be anything from a gesture, to a sound, to an image, to language, to an organic structure, to a formal contrivance, to any trait that is self-othering in any way, is that between local and regional traits. This distinction pertains to degrees of scope, and, in a different way, degrees of semiotic density. Semiotic scope, like other forms of scope, is defined in terms of the range of a sign actually or potentially to augment, diminish, transform, or in any way affect another sign's scope. Semiotic density is defined in terms of the "amount" of power and meaning within a sign as it enters into the orbit of another. The overall efficacy of a sign can be seen in a straightforward equation: $\text{scope} \times \text{density} = \text{efficacy}$. Any increase in either scope or density will make for more efficaciousness within the actual infinite within which a sign is embedded.

As the terms indicate, a local trait will have both less scope and less density than a regional trait. But it is important to stress that this difference is more than quantitative. A regional trait actually functions differently than a local trait, and its transformation has more pragmatic impact than that of any (or all) local traits. Hence the difference between local and regional is one that we could call pragmatic/ontological in the sense above. Consider the common experience of a period change in a Shakespearean play. Suppose that *Macbeth* is relocated in the 1930s and that the costumes reflect the rise of fascism on the Continent. The stage setting and perhaps even the gestures are molded around this historical actuality that Shakespeare obviously could not have envisioned. Are these changes local or regional? Before answering it is important to ask another question: what would have the most transforming affect on the $\text{scope} \times \text{density}$ equation? Would it be something like a new periodization, or something else? Suppose that the text were rewritten in mid-twentieth-century English, and all historical references were changed from the British Isles to Spain, or Italy, or Germany. Which transformation would be more efficacious in changing the original sign, or in giving it a new provenance of meaning? Clearly the latter reconfiguration would be regional in scope and density, while the former, that of costume and period change, would be local. In the former case, *Macbeth* would still be the play that it is, while in the latter, it would become something else, that is, it would have lost some of its regional traits in a fundamental way. This negative way of highlighting the distinction between the regional and local draws even more attention to the reality of this ontological divide between these two types of traits within the sign vehicle. Note that a given play is both a sign vehicle

and an actual infinite of such vehicles, and this distinction is *both* pragmatic (now in the ordinary sense) *and* ontological.

It should be clear why the local/regional distinction is important in semiotics. There are genetic implications that are only now being forced upon us by genetic mapping and new technology that will compel us to rethink the ontology of the regional and local. Is the ability to change eye color affecting a local or regional trait? How about so-called IQ or body shape? In shaping public policy on such forms of genetic manipulation in the earliest stages of egg fertilization, how will the local/regional distinction be put into formal statute? Will the government stipulate that it is appropriate to change nose and ear features but not intelligence or forms of talent? To put it another way, who gets to decide which traits are local or regional? This is an unavoidable question and should put to rest the idea that the local/regional distinction is purely arbitrary. The question as to which traits are desirable or not can only be answered in terms of the local/regional distinction where issues of scope and density are weighed. In this example, the genetic material functions as a sign vehicle in a fairly straightforward sense; namely, that it has its own scope and density to manifest traits that are fully self-othering.

Any given trait can function (or be) as a local or regional trait in different contexts. The color red on a stop sign is a regional trait in that it makes the sign vehicle what it is in a pertinent human order of locomotion. Yet the same color in a painting can serve as a local feature of the work, contributing to the overall scope and density of the painting, but not in the same indispensable way. Color is an interesting trait because its discrimination by our species is far more brain-dependent than language-dependent, thus giving it a greater ontological thickness than some more conventional signs (Berlin and Kay 1969; Danesi 1993). Hence it is not always the trait itself that makes it local or regional, but its context, which shapes how its scope and density are to contribute to the overall efficacy of the sign vehicle.

Perhaps an ecstatic naturalist understanding of the regional traits of the sign vehicle could provide a rapprochement between the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of how form and its locus interact. Clearly, anything that either thinker would denote by their respective concepts of form would function as a regional trait for the particular order of relevance that is being described. No form/regional trait would emerge as a mere product of the “sum” of local traits, but would have its own way of being within its pertinent order. But not all forms need act alike.

Some regional traits are clearly atemporal, such as the structures of many logics, or the characteristics of certain kinds of sets. The Platonic model would be applicable to anything that is not obviously related to the thermodynamic arrow of time, and hence be, as Plato would argue, anti-entropic.

The dynamic model of Aristotle would see the regional traits as actualizing antecedent material into formal and final structures that would themselves be subject to temporality and its eventual guarantee of spoliation for each and every space-time order in which form is manifest. If his term “quality” is used, then he combines the dynamic and Platonic elements: “The primary quality is the differentia of substances, and of this the quality in numbers is a part; for it is a differentia of substances, but either not of things in motion or not of them *qua* in motion. Secondly, there are the modifications of things in motion *qua* things in motion, and the differentiae of movements” (Aristotle, *Metaphysics IV* [Aristotle 1984: 1611]).

Which term has greater fecundity: form (quality) or regional trait? Here the answer depends upon the penumbra of meanings that either term would accrue. There are connotations of the concept of form that make it less flexible as a metaphysical term, precisely because it has the sense of separability, even in the more incarnational Aristotelian model, which the term “regional trait” does not have. In common speech, à la Wittgenstein or Austin, we would say that form is *in* something whereas a regional quality is *of* something. The latter sense of inclusion is deeper and yet more flexible than the former sense of containment. In the domain of psychosemiosis, this difference between the containment model and the inclusion/participation model is even more clearly evident. Which makes more sense, to say that my unconscious complex is included in me, or that it is something that participates in my overall being? The latter phrase gets much closer to the phenomenological data by showing how the complex need not have any direct spatial or inclusion traits, yet can be fully efficacious in shaping my selving process. In spite of Aristotle’s advance upon Plato, making him one of the patriarchs of naturalism, there is still a form of idealism or intellectualism that reifies the status of form vis-à-vis its relevant substance.

The regional traits of the sign vehicle thus participate in the “material” aspect of the sign and its roots and bloom. No summing of local traits (an impossible notion) could produce even one regional trait. Human discrimination is often confused as to which delimited trait is local or regional, and advance in the sciences, to name no other forms of

query, can be measured by the success in eventually making the right distinction in the right way. Think of the import of making a correct diagnosis as to which disease-causing structure is local or regional, that is, which has more efficacy in the *scope* \times *density* equation. Or, in a commensurate case, consider diagnostics insofar as it wishes to isolate a symptom complex that is held to be pertinent to a given disease, for example, a rash that would function as Peirce's indexical (causal) sinsign (this rash here and now) legisign (the law of the posited disease body). Is the rash a mere local allergic reaction, or is it tied to some underlying regional trait that has the status of a legisign, which, by definition, deals with regional traits and qualities?

Local traits also follow the *scope* \times *density* equation in their own way. And there can be certain orders of contrivance in which a local trait can be transformed into a regional trait, but only by putting it into a different order of relevance. A prime example is that of pop art, which took ordinary cultural artifacts, such as the ubiquitous soup can, and made them thematic objects of cultural critique and appraisal. A Warhol painting of a soup can is a regional trait of a culture, whereas a material soup can in a cupboard, at least in its order of unthinking consumption, is a local trait.

This is delicate ontological terrain. A given local trait in one order could be a regional trait in another, but it would be so in another respect, that is, by also being surrounded by a different prospective and open infinite. To say simply "You cannot eat a Warhol painting" is to acknowledge that different modes of the sign vehicle and its respective infinities are in play.

In the above example, there is a tension, perhaps even a contradiction, between a local trait in one order and that "same" (more precisely, commensurate) trait, now regional, in another. The power of the soup-can painting could only be manifest *through* this tension between local and regional features, albeit in different orders. But what about tensions or contradictions within the sign vehicle in the same order? How does a given sign, which *must* participate in the actual, prospective, open, and sustaining infinities, exhibit its own dialectical contradictions, i.e., be at war with itself? Information models, which stress codes and redundancy, pass over this primary phenomenon at the heart of semiosis, opting for a highly abstract and nonphenomenological account of the how of signification. Again, thought must be willing to enter into the ragged edges of its objects so that less clear-cut contours can emerge.

Until we enter more fully into the object/sign distinction in chapter 3,

it is better to stay within the more familiar terrain of psychosemiosis where the more recalcitrant problem of object reference is muted. The semiotic self manifests innumerable forms of internal contradiction that cannot be smoothed over by a code model, even if codes will, of course, obtain in their own way within the how of the self. What makes the semiotic self especially interesting is that it seems almost inclined to generate a field of contradictions that do not admit of easy reconciliation with known semiotic tools.

INTERNAL SEMIOTIC CONTRADICTION AND HERMETIC DRIFT

One of the most tragic and intriguing manifestations of the internal contradictions within semiosis (in this case, the sign vehicle and its immediate pathways) is in the phenomenon of schizophrenia, where contraries emerge through a process that has now become *slightly* more understood. The following description of this process is taken from the biography of John Forbes Nash, Jr., who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 1994 for his pioneering work on the mathematics of game theory. After a decade of supreme-level creativity in his twenties, he succumbed to what has been diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. The biographer gives this account of the inner logic of the disease: “Such self-contradiction is also characteristic of schizophrenia, every symptom being matched by a ‘countersymptom.’” John Haslam – in what is widely regarded as the first psychiatric description of schizophrenic thinking – focused, early in the nineteenth century, on this peculiar combination of omnipotence and impotence: the person is “sometimes an automaton moved by the agency of persons ... at others, the Emperor of the whole world,” the tendency toward megalomania mixed with feelings of persecution, powerlessness, inferiority (Nasar 1998: 275).

The Nash case has fascinated mathematicians and psychiatrists because of the nature of the interlude (approximately 1958–1990) in which Nash combined his strong powers as a mathematician with seemingly bizarre speculations on numerology and beings from outer space. The energy of his integrating mind struggled heroically to forge some kind of semiotic structure during this extended period when his ego strength was compromised by the disease that inundated him with signs from the unconscious. A telling anecdote illuminates the thin line separating his mathematical creativity from his paranoid delusions. When asked by a fellow mathematician why he believed in such absurd things as space

aliens, he replied, “Because the ideas I had about supernatural beings came to me the same way that my mathematical ideas did. So I took them seriously” (Nasar 1998: 11).

Here we see two levels of contradiction in the pathological material. In the overall structure of schizophrenia, the sufferer will alternately live through logically and existentially incompatible thoughts and feelings. And these contradictions do not admit of a Peircean “third” term of concrete reasonableness that could reconcile them. The sign of the self, and its immediate relation to the world, is at total war with itself, moving rapidly from what Jung called “psychic inflation” (Emperor of the whole world) to total abjection. The sign vehicle, and its *immediate* pathways, immediate in the sense that they are not mediated by any form of self-critique in the horizon or life world, is in a war of attrition with itself, trapping what is left of the so-called ego in a vice that squeezes more and more tightly as the order of the self is undermined (a kind of psychic entropy). A useful definition of psychopathology could be developed using this entropic model of internal semiotic contradiction within the local and regional traits of the sign vehicle and its immediate pathways.

The second form of contradiction has to do with the nature of the *whence* that governs the processes of creativity. As noted, there is a correlation between manic-depressive disorder and high-level creativity. Yet there are also statistical correlations between forms of obsessive compulsive disorder and creation in the sciences, especially mathematics (Pickover 1998). Certain forms of schizophrenia (a term that covers a vast cluster of symptoms) seem allied to the forms of creativity that come from OCD and its obsession with counting and the control of number. Nash stated clearly that his delusions and his mathematical solutions came from the same source, and in a sense, were self-validating. He came to see numerical secrets in everything, from cryptic messages on the front page of the *New York Times* to the social security numbers of his Princeton colleagues. His semiotic universe became so suffused with “meaningful” signs that he was unable to develop a semiotic filter that could separate genuine mathematical insight from semiotic noise that only seemed coherent. Since his own astonishing ability to solve some highly recalcitrant mathematical problems was highly intuitive, i.e., nonmediated, he made the obvious inference that his “delusions” had the same structures of validity. The two forms of contradiction combined to ensnare him in a semiotic overload that lifted his mind out of the natural evolutionary conditions that would normally have governed

it. The dialectic of symptom and countersymptom, combined with a nonmediated *whence* that spawned two streams of signs, one paranoid, the other at least partially rational, enveloped Nash in a semiotic pluriverse that had no outside, no sense of mediation in which an alien horizon could exert its own counterpressure. The irony is that he was in a state of almost total semiotic closure, while from his perspective, he was in a world of infinite and highly compelling semiosis that was self-validating because of the familiar power of the unconscious and intuitive *whence*.

The selving process cannot move forward when there is a lack of mediation and when internal semiotic contradictions are so acute that no third term can emerge. By definition, all third terms in psychosemiosis have some social element, tied to structures of communication and intelligibility that transcend the host self. Nash developed what Wittgenstein would call a *private* language, one that seemed to have internal coherence, but one that lacked any of the necessary features of a genuine language. A genuine language is founded on a custom (Wittgenstein) or on evolutionary habit (ecstatic naturalism) and will always be responsive to extra-linguistic orders of relevance. In schizophrenia, most forms of semiosis are bent back on themselves and form a self-validating repetition (with only internal redundancy) that does not allow for external resistance. The clash of symptom and countersymptom has its own kind of resistance, and this must be distinguished from nonpathological forms in the sign itself.

As noted, schizophrenia is a highly complex phenomenon exhibiting an often bewildering number of symptoms. In the classificatory scheme of DSM-iv, five diagnostic criteria are listed that are pertinent to psychosemiotics: (1) delusions, (2) hallucinations, (3) disorganized speech, (4) grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior, and (5) negative symptoms, i.e., affective flattening, *alogia* (lack of speech), or *avolition* (lack of will). In the paranoid form of schizophrenia, there is also a persecutory dimension found in the first criterion of delusion. This can take the form of the sense of being followed, tricked, spied on, or subjected to ridicule. Nash suffered from persistent hallucinations and delusions that drove him into a more and more tightly bound semiotic system that gave him no way out into counter examples that could refute the paranoid delusions. What is *most* fascinating, and even heartening, is that the sufferer will still struggle to integrate these delusions into some kind of meaningful pattern that he or she tries to convey to others.

In the 1970s when Nash would wander around Fine Hall, the

mathematics building at Princeton, he filled blackboards with his numerological speculations in an effort to convince others of the truth of his self-validating forms of semiosis. Nash was known as the “Phantom”; his cryptic messages still conveyed something of the power of his mind. One mathematician, Mark Schneider, recalled, “We all found the remarkable connections, the level of detail, and breadth of knowledge . . . exceptional, which is why I . . . collected a few dozen of the best of these” (Nasar 1998: 333). The dialectic emergent from the unmediated *whence* in his unconscious left this curious legacy of rational and nonrational forms of semiosis that could be probed for some form of extra-personal validity. This is another example of why it is always necessary to distinguish between the issue of validity and the issue of antecedent and overdetermined motives in high-level creativity.

Any given sign will have some internal tension among its subaltern traits. Some of these traits may spoil the overall efficacy of the sign, while others may provide an enrichment of somewhat jarring contours. Take the prosaic example of a cup filled with coffee. The cup may have an inscription of a tribal nature (say a flag of the United Kingdom – a token of a type), while also stating its place of manufacture (say China). Right away an irony develops in this example between the fading of the British Empire with the formal deeding over of Hong Kong to China and the rising power of an emerging economy and culture. How many workers in the pottery factory are aware of this irony? Hence, just in the physical order of contrivance, this sign vehicle contains a fairly large contradiction with deep historical roots going back to the opium wars (at least).

What about orders of relevance in the sign vehicle that are not as obviously physical? Where are there contradictions within subaltern orders of relevance? Suppose that the coffee in the cup comes from a well-established company that may not always have been sensitive to the plight of the coffee pickers in their respective countries. How does their plight relate to the drinker’s physiological addiction to caffeine (now listed as a psychiatric disorder in DSM-IV, number 305.90)? Are personal taste and addiction at war with justice? If so, how is this tension manifest unconsciously when the coffee is drunk? Are past conversations around this theme embedded in an unconscious complex that occasionally breaks into awareness, causing some hesitation to continue with current habits of purchase and consumption?

As this prosaic example shows, no sign is necessarily free from a variety of subaltern contradictions. Why do we assume that the physical coffee cup is more real or more relevant than the plight of the people

who live toward the bottom of the economic chain? As this sign vehicle is rotated through only a few of its ordinal locations, tensions spring forth that immediately challenge any kind of container ontology that would insist on “this cup here and now.” There is no such thing as the mere coffee cup here and now, as semiotic cosmology undermines any notion of “hereness” that refuses to admit all of the relevant ordinal locations in its concepts of “hereness” or “thereness.”

In earlier decades when analytic philosophers invoked the “cat on the mat” they were admitting more into their Spartan ontology than they realized. Cats are bred (often) and mats have an economic history that is just as pertinent to their being as their so-called physical or sense-data parameters. And when a strict sense-data language is used, that is, one denying or bracketing efficient material cause, what violence is being done to the true thereness of the object? There has been a combination of deep conceptual laziness, in spite of what appears to be the “strenuousness of the concept,” and an apolitical blindness within the analytic traditions of philosophy that has seriously undermined the prospects of a more capacious semiotic cosmology and its shaping metaphysics. In the process, the sign vehicle has been stripped of its internal contradictions and reduced to a caricature of itself.

There is a clear continuum between a mathematical genius suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and the “simple” coffee cup. In either case the sign vehicle obtains in far more orders than will ever be known to finite forms of human probing. In both cases, the sign participates with its own subaltern orders in contradictory ways. In the former case, symptoms will be matched with countersymptoms, while in the latter case, ironies, here political, will shatter the delusion that the cup is somehow containable in the ordinary three dimensions. In addition, the humble coffee cup has now entered into a linguistic and pedagogical contrivance that gives it yet one more ordinal location, one more trait that is as truly a part of it as the red, white, and blue colors of the Union Jack on its outer surface.

A third example, mid-way between the first two, will provide further phenomenological evidence for the internal contradictions manifest in any sign vehicle that could be encountered by the self (although, as repeatedly argued, something can be a sign vehicle even if it is forever unknown by sign-using selves). Consider another physical artifact that is created for a specific religious purpose (see Gerard Lukken for his analyses in *Per Visibilia ad Invisibilia*, 1994). Such liturgical objects are held to have a different relation to normal forms of semiosis, precisely

because they participate in the pre- and posttemporal while being fully encompassed within the orders of *nature natured*. Our example is that of the flaming chalice that has become normative for the formerly Protestant and now largely post-Christian movement known as Unitarian Universalism. The name of the movement denotes the joining of the larger Unitarian movement (which rejected the trinity by the first decade of the nineteenth century) with the smaller Universalist movement (which affirmed universal salvation against the Calvinist belief in predestination) in 1961. The images of the flame and the chalice have long been used separately in many major and minor religions, but it is highly unusual to bring the two of them together in such a direct fashion.

In Christianity, of course, the chalice is a direct symbol of the cup that was allegedly used at the last supper before the crucifixion of Jesus, while the flame quickly emerged as a symbol of the holy spirit as manifest to the nascent religious community gathered around the memory of the founder (Acts 2). The cup holds the symbolic blood of life of the god/man, while the flame represents the rapid and consuming power of the spirit that overcomes all human divisions, linguistic or otherwise. In trinitarian thinking it is crucial to keep these symbols of the second and third persons of the divine separate, but in the post-trinitarian world, it is now possible to combine them in one liturgical object.

Historically, the symbol of the flaming chalice first appeared during the Second World War in Europe as a sign of an underground movement of Unitarians who were smuggling Jews to safety. It is not clear how this symbol became normative for contemporary Unitarian Universalists, but it is now found in most churches or fellowship halls within the movement. What can be said about this symbol which seems to be less semiotically dense than the world of a schizophrenic patient and yet more dense than a coffee cup?

It is especially difficult to give a full semiotic account of this symbol because it is so recent and because it has emerged within the context of a movement that is quite explicit in refusing to have anything like a theological creed that would provide the linguistic analogue to the physical symbol. There is nothing like a founder, or literal founding event, nor is there anything like a divine drama that is reenacted whenever the symbol is used (participated in) in a religious service. Usually, the chalice is lit by the liturgist to honor or heighten awareness of a specific event or person. The flame at *least* represents the power of reason and life against the powers of the irrational and death. The

chalice does not represent the life and death of Jesus (except for those few who identify themselves as Christian-Unitarian Universalists), but has a much more generic provenance of meaning. Perhaps it is a protective container for the flame that shields it from the winds of chaos and despair, a kind of nurturing vessel that can be found in different guises throughout nature.

Like the coffee cup, the chalice is a human contrivance, but unlike the cup it is made for the specific purpose of pointing to or participating in the sacred folds of nature and the self. It too will house political and psychological traits that may be in tension with each other, but these will be much more available for circumspect probing. Flames can destroy and flames can heal. Chalices can contain poison and they can pour forth sustaining liquids. Insofar as such a sign vehicle is still alive for its relevant community it will augment its traits, that is, will become manifest in more ordinal locations, some of which will remain unconscious. Most importantly, a liturgical object will point to the self-fissuring of nature between its perennial dimensions of *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. It does so by activating the human unconscious in such a way that it can then become permeable to the underconscious of nature.

Could we talk of a schizophrenic liturgical object; namely, one that *primarily* manifests traits and counter-traits? Such an object would violate the role that liturgical objects play within their relevant communities. It may make sense to talk of a work of art as being schizophrenic in at least some analogous fashion, but a liturgical object is characterized by its power to open horizontal structures, not to pull them back in on themselves in a centripetal momentum. If the self/liturgical object correlation is functioning well, the horizon of the self will become open to its outer edges, precisely because the unconscious is activated and participates in the not yet that surrounds the self in process. But if the flaming chalice becomes a mere tool of tribal identity, rather than an evocation of life and reason, it will fall back into the night time of repetition and closure (although not necessarily a form of schizophrenia). The flaming chalice will certainly manifest contraries, especially since it is a liturgical object that is still in the process of emerging into a fuller contour of meaning. But there is a cunning in the unconscious that seems to “know” that a given object has an intrinsic liturgical power, thus protecting its emergent contraries so that they are augmentative rather than entropic or destructive. Minimalist and Spartan ontologies wish to flatten the distinction between coffee cups and chalices, but the ineptness of this strategy is quickly obvious. At the very least

it ignores: (1) the role of unconscious semiosis, (2) the role of the relevant community of interpreters, (3) the intrinsic natural power of certain human contrivances, and (4) the depth-logic of horizontal self-awareness.

A coffee cup could, of course, be shown to manifest pre- and posttemporal traits, but this would violate its own provenance of meaning, or place it in another order such as the aesthetic. A liturgical object will, by necessity, and in its own order, manifest those forms of time that lie outside of the thermodynamic arrow of temporality. As pretemporal, the flaming chalice may manifest the conditions out of which reason and life have emerged, and indicate their fitful relation to the other children of time. As posttemporal, the flaming chalice may manifest the existential and social not yet that goads the religious community past its own narcissism. These are not ordinal locations added to the chalice from a point “outside” of it, but part of the very *how* or *what* of the chalice in its relevant communities.

Schizophrenic forms of semiosis, unlike genuine liturgical forms, express what Eco calls “hermetic drift” in which only the most bizarre analogies and connections are drawn between one trait of a sign and another. Eco’s definition of this process provides a clear parallel between psychopathology and certain historical practices:

I shall call Hermetic drift the interpretive habit which dominated Renaissance Hermetism and which is based on the principles of universal analogy and sympathy, according to which every item in the furniture of the world is linked to every other element (or to many) of this sublunar world and to every element (or to many) of the superior world by means of similitudes or resemblances. It is through similitude that the otherwise occult parenthood between things is manifested and every sublunar body bears the traces of the parenthood impressed on it as a *signature*. (Eco 1990: 24)

The weight of a paranoid horizon adds to the involuted and contrast-bound cluster of predicates that are assigned to an object such as the coffee cup. The cup could be at once Arthur and Christ, the holy grail, and the hope of the universe. It must be hidden in a desk, or hidden by being displayed as something it is not; namely, an ordinary coffee cup.

The sign vehicle, as the locus of its own roots and bloom, and as the locus of local and regional traits, is what it is in the deeper context of the four infinities. How would we begin to escape from the hermetic drift of the paranoid schizophrenic horizon and see the human contrivance in roughly its own terms? Until further delineations are made, we remain in the domain of the approximate, as structures of resistance need to be isolated phenomenologically from the background noise of random

semiosis. At this point, only some tentative probes can be made, but they will be crucial in tilling the soil for what comes later.

NATURAL AND INTERPRETIVE COMMUNITIES

The most basic distinction at this juncture, one that will make it easier to probe into the detailed ontology of those orders that are pointed to, or participated in, by signs, has to do with the larger framework within which psychosemiosis takes place. It is a distinction that has functioned in a variety of ways in hermeneutic theory, but needs to move into the more generic terrain of semiotic cosmology. Reframing Kant, we can distinguish between what he called *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. General metaphysics is here understood to be the domain of semiotic cosmology as shaped by ecstatic naturalism. The four forms of special metaphysics have as their objects: rational psychology (psychosemiosis), ontology (the semiosis of extra-human orders of relevance), rational theology (theosemiosis: see Raposa 1989), and cosmology (world semiosis). Framing the first form of *metaphysica specialis*, that of psychosemiosis, is that of communal semiosis. It is this last form of semiosis that provides one of the frameworks for helping us move past and through hermetic drift. Interestingly, the ontology of extra-human orders will emerge more fully within the context of world semiosis, where ontology is a species of cosmology (here understood in the more Kantian sense), and thus put pressure on Kant's four-fold categorization.

Within communal semiosis the primary distinction, then, is that between those communities that are *natural* and those that are *interpretive*. Psychopathology emerges precisely where there is a failure to work through this primal distinction, thus brooking internal and even social confusion as to which signs are "earning their keep" in an ordinal world and which are not. In what follows, the semiotic features of communal semiosis will provide the normative *how* and *what* of psychosemiosis.

A natural community is one in which there is a shared life world, often not much more sophisticated than a prethematic *Umwelt* in which signs have an assigned meaning within a highly habit-filled context. This is the realm of tribal affiliation, in which there is a strong dyadic structure of inclusion and exclusion. The humorous Nantucket phrase captures this best: "Napoleon was a great man, but he was an *off islander*." For any natural community, all other communities are off-island communities and hence, with the implied scheme of ontological

priority in all such dualisms, less real than the island community. Communal semiosis is governed by redundancy, the entropic loss of new information, and a strong resistance to forms of contrivance that cannot be easily assimilated and rendered into almost immovable antecedent sign systems. It is in the heart of these natural communities that racism, sexism, and xenophobia emerge to close off alternative forms of communal semiosis.

But the situation is not as one-sided as it might seem. There can be no psychosemiosis, and no form of communal life, if there is not a foundation in what could be called structures of origin. Natural communities are necessary for any sign user who is embodied in any way. The sign-using self must have a gender, race, language, and life world. The conditions of origin make semiosis *possible* in the human order. And this is precisely why there is a profound moral dilemma at the heart of all natural communities (and no sign-using self can ever fully escape from these conditions of origin). The dilemma is clear: no conditions of origin, no semiosis at all, but all conditions of origin can and do function to close off other allegedly competing conditions of origin. Again, the somber tone of ecstatic naturalism shows its warrant. There is something fundamentally tragic about the way and how of communal semiosis, no matter how much counterpressure is exerted through the fitful tools of democratic reconstruction (which belong to the inner momentum of interpretive communities). It is here that the problem of a realistic utopian expectation becomes acute; namely, how does a community avoid a demonic utopian hope that feeds off other communities by taking away their life energy?

Something happens to sign vehicles in the context of human natural communities. They are still ordinal, that is, they still occupy innumerable orders of relevance in innumerable ways, but certain of these orders are privileged, usually unconsciously according to communal projections, while other orders are ignored or deprivileged. The natural dimension of community is prethematic, unconscious, jealous of its attained sign vehicles, and hopelessly dyadic in its self- and other-understanding. Sign vehicle "A" is contrasted, again, unconsciously, with some alleged "not A" that is seen or felt as a threat to the provenance and smooth functioning of the "A" sign vehicle. The realm of the not A must be either abjected and thrown into the night time of psychosemiosis, or attacked through a power structure that will remove it from the smooth-running machinery of the natural community.

The natural dimensions of community, and personal forms of psy-

chosesmiosis, are unfriendly to resistance, to forms of time that slow down and complicate hermeneutic strategies. There is no real theoretical tension between those hermeneutic theories, such as Gadamer's, that stress the fusion of horizons of meaning and those, such as Foucault's, that stress the movement of power underneath meaning structures. Natural communities traffic in the powers and their unconscious currents, while refusing to bring abjection and domination into thematic awareness, thus blunting the processes of fusion or intersection. What the two hermeneutic theories represent is two dimensions within the ontology of communities; namely, in their natural and interpretive dimensions. The ontology of the sign vehicle, here seen as part of the ontology of social semiosis (but not confined to it), requires a more generic rendering of power and interpretive-based hermeneutic theories, in terms both of their objects (which must be more than human texts) and of their ways of functioning (which may or may not be "methods").

The sign vehicle is reduced in its scope and density by the natural dimension of community which is tied to conditions of origin. There are strong evolutionary reasons for this reduction, tied to the sheer need for a preservation of energy exchange between selves and their world. Any creature that tried to attend to all of the orders of relevance pertinent to a sign vehicle, an impossibility, would have little chance of replicating its own genetic material in the next generation. Selection is inevitable and highly compulsive, especially when inclusion and exclusion criteria, sometimes tied to patriarchal models of sacrifice, seem necessary to the basal forms of communal life. In a generic metaphysical perspective it is difficult to refrain from normative evaluations at certain key junctures in the phenomenological descriptions of those traits or structures that can have demonic manifestations. It takes a special effort of thought to probe into conditions of origin without demonizing them per se, but it is also crucial to show how, in this case, the dialectic between the natural and interpretive dimensions of communal life do affect the sign vehicle and its own powers for good and ill.

The artificially flattened sign vehicle loses some of its own contradictions, many of which are actually healthy for the sign users that encounter it. One of the most telling forms of liberating resistance within semiosis is that of measured and enhancing forms of internal contradiction within the sign vehicle, not, of course, in the extreme horizon of hermetic drift, or in the other extreme of Spartan denial, but in the midrange where sign vehicles have riches that can expand the

scope \times density equation of psychosemiosis. There is a different, and more dangerous, kind of contradiction between healthy forms of internal and external resistance on the one side and a silent and unconscious momentum to flatten contradictions on the other. Within the context of a fairly static natural community, contradiction is the enemy, while the easy assimilation and manipulation of sign vehicles is the norm.

Consider what happens when a natural community is forced to confront a series of signs that contradict its own sense of world semiosis (i.e., of the basic structures of its prethematic cosmology). To return to the debate that rippled through Peirce's generation, the reigning cosmology of the North American Empire, allied to its own understanding of Christianity, was forced to deal with the seismic tremors unleashed by the appearance of Darwin's 1859 *The Origin of Species*. How does a patriarchal community, in which conditions of origin are tied to a being of human shape and self-consciousness, deal with a radical deprivileging of one side of the analogical bridge to the divine? If the human order loses its uniqueness, and perhaps its trait of being ensouled, and if the physical universe, to name no other, is seemingly without a providential structure, where is the center of power to go? As the theologian Rosemary Ruether has argued (1983), the chain of being is related to the chain of command, and once the chain of being is destructured, the chain of command is also threatened. Clearly, there were no rational grounds for challenging the Darwinian model, then or now, so the real debate had to do with how a natural community would perpetuate itself against the unwanted intrusion of new signs and new sign vehicles, new *signatures*, as it were, of a nonsupernatural sort. From the standpoint of sheer replication of reigning power structures, the natural community (with its providential and pre-evolutionary cosmology) knew the threat when it saw it.

Unfortunately, this particular collision is still very much with us, and represents a continuing threat to the fitful and precarious forces of democratic reconstruction that struggle against the inertia of the natural dimension of communal life. Early nineteenth-century cosmology remains normative for many, precisely because it reinforces the innate narcissism of psychosemiosis and communal affiliation. Sign vehicles, in this case, biological systems, are flattened out so that some of their most pertinent orders of relevance, especially those tied to random variation, natural selection, and (in some cases) self-organization, are abjected. This abjection rebounds backward into the natural community, filling it with an almost manic power that comes from the need to suppress truths

that on some level are known to be compelling. Paul Tillich gives a brilliant and succinct diagnosis of one form of natural community that casts its shadow over our democratic institutions:

Fundamentalism fails to make contact with the present situation, not because it speaks from beyond every situation, but because it speaks from a situation of the past. It elevates something finite and transitory to infinite and eternal validity. In this respect fundamentalism has demonic traits. It destroys the humble honesty of the search for truth, it splits the conscience of its thoughtful adherents, and it makes them fanatical because they are forced to suppress elements of truth of which they are dimly aware. (Tillich 1951: 3)

Protestant fundamentalism thus represents one of the most striking instances of what can happen when a natural community, in this case intensely dyadic, refuses to feel the genuine force of novel sign vehicles. Unconsciousness can cost the larger community its interpretive birth-right and turn power structures outward as a way of repressing those nagging doubts that cannot be eradicated even by the most robust forms of denial. Tillich, as a one-time member of the Frankfurt School, reminds us that there is a danger in the split consciousness (what Adorno called the “reified consciousness”). The split allows power to gather around a prethematic cosmology and its abjections, thus destroying genuine forms of semiosis, both personal and social. In the case of fundamentalist anthropology, the human process is understood to exist within a continuing dialectic of sin and grace, denying anything like a third term that would ameliorate this conflict. The born-again experience only makes sense within an anthropology that abjects the unconscious, nature, and the deeper and more radical forms of developmental teleology (as tied to selving). The danger for the more fitful interpretive dimension of communal life comes from the accumulated power required to sustain the repressed and split-off material in the unconscious that gets projected onto the demonized other. Once this material is allowed into the open it will act to repress its own doubts by silencing the voices of reason. In practical terms this has become focused on the struggle to eliminate genuine biological inquiry in secondary school teaching, i.e., the place where fundamentalist anthropology is most in danger of showing its internal contradictions and abjections.

The natural dimension of community thus traffics in what could be called, at least in its terms, natural signs. The “natural” versus “conventional” distinction in semiosis, debated at least since Plato, gets played out in a variety of ways in terms of the sign vehicle and the two main forms of communal interaction. For the natural community there are no

conventional signs as all signs carry the nimbus of inevitability. In the racial theories of National Socialism the signs of exclusion were not seen as products of free communal choice, but as the inevitable results of scientific inquiry. Yet the issue is far more complex when the other side of the distinction is heightened. In postmodern communities (perhaps a contradiction in terms), the concept of the natural sign is so muted that every sign vehicle is seen to emerge from linguistic contrasts that have no bottom, that is, no sign roots that burrow into the soil of the world itself. Hence all sign vehicles are devolved into their pathways and these pathways are themselves seen as products of the imaginative constructions of the imperial self (a kind of pathological and asocial neo-Kantianism).

But this is not to say that the interpretive dimension of communal life is equivalent to a postmodern radical constructivism. A framework that is at once more judicious and radical sees that the postmodern horizon is an overreaction to some of the demonic features regnant in natural forms of communal interaction. This overreaction is often seen in an implied anti-scientific attitude in some feminist literature (see, for example, Adams 1993), insofar as the real or alleged patriarchal features of scientific and mathematical methods and models are held to be normative in a continuing and cumulative disclosure of the traits of the world. It is one thing to point to how biological inquiry can be captured by a reigning political ideology; it is another altogether to abject any such probing into those traits of our being that are not cultural constructs, no matter how disquieting some of them may be to our narcissism and sense of a libertarian self-shaping.

Let us look more specifically at the sign vehicle of the human process as it would be seen by natural, interpretive, and so-called postmodern communities. In each case, the implied or explicit anthropology is tied to a semiotic cosmology that attempts to locate the self in the pre- and posthuman orders of relevance that give shape and immediacy to the self in process. The purpose of this phenomenological description is to gain more insight into the ontology of the sign vehicle, thus preparing the way for an analysis of the object that is entwined with that vehicle.

How would a natural community, not necessarily fundamentalist, understand the human process? We take our initial cues from what has been said above. The structures of resistance within the self and within the self/world correlation are flattened, so that the community resists resistance, as it were. The signs of the self are flattened and become predictable to the point that novel sign possibilities are rendered suspect

and held to be alien to the unstated conditions of origin. Heidegger's phenomenological descriptions of *das Man* (the neuter they self of the average every day) capture the sense of the natural community as it pulls all sense of anxiety and death down into its own semiotic closure. The self is what it is and nothing more. The unique structures of the life world are held in check so that the prethematic momentum of the social *Umwelt* governs the what and how of the self. The selving process barely exists, as any surplus semiotic value is quickly channeled into alleged social needs that remain unfriendly to the individuation process.

Internal contradictions, especially between consciousness and the unconscious, are denied, and the power of the dream work is covered over by an implied physicalism that sees the dream as being mere random semiotic noise that should not be allowed to intrude into the artificially clear signals of public codes. The codes of the self remain unexamined, and the very fact that they are codes is covered over. Perhaps the most extreme form of natural community is the religious cult, in which the selving process is utterly destroyed in a context that tragically insists that only it is actually doing the work of selving. Power is concentrated in one person, and any interpretive acts are given over to that power. Yet the person who is the object of all of these pseudo-religious transferences is no more capable than his or her followers of genuine interpretive acts. The unconscious forms of semiosis take over completely and place the leader and his or her followers in a dangerous night time of semiotic opacity that fails to become open to any emancipatory energies within semiosis. What, then, is the self?

The self of the natural community is a kind of cipher (empty marker) of the unconscious conditions of origin that brook no contradiction to their sovereign sway. The time of the natural self is almost atemporal in that a genuine past and an emancipatory future are flattened into an unending present (a point well made by Heidegger). Yet this natural self has no sense that a genuine unconscious exists. Its life world (or what there is of it) is all there is, and it makes no sense to probe into anything pre- or posthuman if these orders resist the imperial needs of the self. The distinction between the self and its governing community is so muted that it is almost as if self-consciousness refuses to lift itself out of communal consciousness. This process operates like a gravitational field, pulling any nascent self back into those hidden conditions of origin that represent power bereft of interpretation. There is an intrinsic violence in the natural self, based on the split-consciousness that arises through personal and social repression. In turning against the other the

self is turning against its own abjected dimension (Kristeva's "stranger within"). By definition natural communities must turn violent, both through internal sacrifice (from Abraham and Isaac to "witch" burnings) and through violence against other natural communities. The tragedy is further compounded when a natural community becomes violent toward those interpretive prospects that may slumber in its own heart.

Going to the other extreme, the so-called postmodern community will uproot the self from all conditions of origin, or so it would seem. But is there not a different kind of vulnerability in this process, one that exposes these libertarian agents to another kind of violence against the social good? The irony has become clearer to social theorists: the radical critique of forms of domination has also elevated the individual from the necessary forms of origin that make any just or unjust use of power possible at all. But this irony may have a much simpler explanation. As social and economic structures continue to produce injustice and as disease and entropy continue to eat away at our species and its members, it is highly compelling to pull away from the powers of origin and hide in the sphere of self-spinning semiosis, away from the tragedies that our communications technologies are making more and more evident.

If the natural community exhibits a kind of primitive narcissism, the postmodern community displays a more sophisticated flight from moral evil and the genuine other. For all of the rhetoric of difference and the salvation of otherness, how much democratic renewal has actually taken place? Neither the monolithic natural self nor the libertarian postmodern self can aid in the process of social reconstruction, any more than either can fully understand the what and how of the self in process.

Which leaves us with the community of interpretation and its own anthropology. Again it must be stressed that there are no purely natural, postmodern, or interpretive communities. Any given community will manifest all three dimensions, although the natural dimension will be far more likely and have the greater inertial mass. Interpretive communities always emerge from and return to natural communities, and also have to struggle to distinguish themselves from postmodern communities which claim to be interpretive. If the natural community (dimension) has a flattened and almost atemporal understanding of the self, and if the postmodern community (dimension) has an anarchic and libertarian understanding of the self, the interpretive community (dimension) will have an open-ended and fully temporal (not to mention pre- and posttemporal) understanding of the self.

For a fragile and nascent interpretive community the self will be a precarious foundling that must raise its head and social body above the inertia of the conditions of origin that make it possible. Interpretive communities, whether they emerge from the social elite or the marginalized, are those communities that challenge the inert self-signs that are perpetuated by natural communities. If this process of critique moves into a postmodern horizon, the self actually becomes derailed and loses its emancipatory energies in an ersatz horizon that only *seems* liberating. But if the interpretive self reaches back into its conditions of origin in a creative way, and brings forth emancipatory energies *from* and *through* these prehuman conditions, the prospects for democratic reconstruction are heightened.

In terms of temporality, which has now flowered more fully in spite of the one-directional thermodynamic and entropic arrow of time, the great “no longer” contains those seeds that can be planted in the soil of the present, while the great “not yet” can affect how the self in process sees its interpretive horizon. But what about power? It is one thing to open up new interpretive avenues; it is another actually to change the conditions of origin so that they release some of their hidden treasures to the self and its communities. Can the interpretive self, which by definition is also fully natural, really shape social and personal powers so that they become liberating? If so, by what mechanism?

The answer has been suggested quite succinctly in much of our analysis of psychosemiosis. It is through the ability of the interpretive self to probe into its own unconscious and into the social unconscious that genuine powers and energies can be released for the social good. If the natural community is unconscious, and unconscious that it is unconscious, then the interpretive community is one that struggles toward consciousness of its extra- and prehuman orders of relevance as they participate in the personal and collective unconscious. Perhaps the hardest step is that of overcoming those abjections that surround the unconscious and allow its powers to become manifest through dangerous social projections. For the interpretive self (and its community) the unconscious is still *unconscious*, but it is also understood to be available through its effects (as known indirectly through a transcendental argument). Instead of the impatient flattening down of time and the dialectic of consciousness and the unconscious, the interpretive self will allow for the right measure of time to envelop its dealings with the unconscious and its dream work. In this sense, the interpretive self is the dreaming self, but in the special sense that its dreams are also social dreams with

real import for emancipatory energies slumbering within the whence (conditions of origin).

What conditions of origin can actually be changed by the interpretive self in its emancipatory drives to open up interpretive fields? Specific conditions have been mentioned: race, class, gender, and language group. Each of these is what it is even if cross overs are possible, at least in some senses. Much analysis has been given to the first three of these conditions, and ecstatic naturalism as a generic perspective relies on many of these analyses as necessary conditions for its understanding of the structures of natural community. What of the fourth form mentioned (and there are certainly others); namely, that of language? This text is written in what is currently one of the most socially powerful languages in the world. The assumption is that the English language has enough richness, scope, density, power, subtlety, texture, and creative contrivance to do all of the foundational work in philosophy and theology. It is well known that Heidegger, in his own chauvinistic horizon, privileged German and ancient Greek as the only two truly worthy philosophical languages, with Latin being a degeneration of the Greek.

How does one sort through the various linguistic chauvinisms that continue to mark generic-level inquiry? Is something as mysterious and yet as prosaic as a major language even open to an examination by someone who has grown up within its sway? Does learning another language open up enough of an interpretive space on the primal clearing of the mother tongue (or, for Kristeva, “the name of the Father”)? Wittgenstein struggled rather heroically to open up the inner logic of this great organon of thought, but in the end was unable to step outside of it to see “it” in itself. Is the case of language different from the case of race or gender? Yes. It is quite clear that races and the two genders differ, even if one argues that the differences are social constructions. But what about the primal covering over and the primal clearing away that language provides (images that would be congenial to Heidegger)? How is this condition of origin seen against its other? How many great philosophers, fully embedded in their own language of origin, make good translators? Is their relationship to the originating language more like a marriage or a covenant than a chosen partnership? This should be an obvious conclusion. Again, given this intimacy between thought and its originating language, how can this condition of origin become an object of “external” and circumspect analysis? It is precisely here that the mysteries of origin become clear. Some of these

conditions simply cannot be rendered into oppositional structures. In the case of language in its most primal giving and withholding, the interpretive self must learn a different kind of semiotic intersection with pre- or extra-linguistic orders, as well as with different languages, but in none of these cases will the intersection points be as clear as in the conditions of origin manifest in our racial and gender differences (although these have become ambiguous enough for many). This point can be put in two different ways. While it is true that I cannot change my race (at least under the current conditions of genetic engineering – if they are even relevant), I can attempt to become permeable to the experiences of another race by listening to prophetic witnesses of that race. Their horizon of meaning can become an object of circumspect analysis for my horizon and can impact on mine in important ways. Second, I can learn to devalue or deprive the alleged normativity of my own horizon (if it is part of an elite), or reempower my horizon (if it is marginalized). This involves a real shift of power in different directions, changing the conditions of origin in measurable ways. But the language/self relationship is different in kind. It has less flexibility, less openness to such radical shifts of power and meaning. And for the most part, this is not seen as a moral issue, unless a Heidegger makes exaggerated claims about a given basal language. The covenant is too strong, too precious, and too surrounding in its uncanny giving and taking away to be analogous to those of my human community who are of a different race and/or gender.

In what may seem like a non sequitur, although it is not, there is a powerful statistical correlation between suicides rates and practicing poets (18 percent having committed suicide as opposed to 1 percent of the general population: see Jamison 1993), who by definition live on the edges of this mysterious gift of origin. That very tension makes them especially vulnerable to the originating powers of language. Perhaps the philosopher's perennial fear of the poetic stems from an innate sense of the dangers lurking in this heightened form of linguistic contrivance. The one variable that connects these many suicides among poets, great or mediocre, is the power of language at its very edges that will not let the poet out of its circle, linked directly to an unveiling and an often infuriating closure that intoxicates and humbles the prospects of linguistic contrivance.

Both natural and interpretive communities hide the self from itself; indeed, the self unconsciously conspires in this process, giving it a momentum that augments the evolutionary patterns of energy

conservation and inertia. For an interpretive community to emerge it must work against this inertia and reshape the means by and through which sign vehicles are manipulated and assimilated. What are these means? Initially it has been recognized that the interpretive community has its own relation to time. It is, of course, fully embedded in the one-directional thermodynamic order of time that moves from more to less order. Strictly speaking, any order attained by a human community is through theft of the order from the nonhuman sphere. For every gain in interpretive richness, there a loss for some order somewhere. Consider how many animals and plants had to be consumed for someone to live long enough and under the right conditions even to be able to write about interpretive communities. The higher and more sophisticated the level of interpretive life, the more must be consumed from the surrounding orders. Process naturalisms eulogize the rise of complexity in the universe, but ecstatic naturalism recognizes that a price always has to be paid, and it is not by those more complex orders. Hence the community of interpreters is intrinsically ambiguous, both as to its conditions of origin and as to the conditions that maintain it. The only way to overcome the more debilitating of these implications is through a counter-mechanism that has its own natural standing in the ordinal universe and that appears whenever interpretive communities appear. But more of this later.

The community of interpreters will let the measure of time unfold in more qualitatively rich ways. The past can be retrieved and carry emancipatory seeds even when filtered through the screen of the hermeneutics of suspicion. A psychosemiotic analysis of motive and the conditions of origin will surround each sign vehicle that is the focus of the community of interpretation. The sign is known to come from somewhere and to have traits (orders of relevance) that cannot be exhausted by any finite human means. These keep the community from premature closure and allow the sign more of its own complex how as it impacts on human life worlds. The moral ambiguities of the sign, if pertinent, become objects of conscious appraisal and means are sought for directing these moral energies in ways that are congenial to human need. However, in a radical deprivileging of the anthropological and anthropocentric standpoints, nonhuman orders might be given moral rights that could compete with our own. For some thinkers, this is the next stage in our moral evolution; namely, one that extends rights discourse beyond the universalizable human moral agent. Only in the context of an interpretive community is this move even conceivable, whether recommended or not. In Kantian terms, the distinction be-

tween the kingdom of ends and the kingdom of nature will be erased as it has no intrinsic (rational) moral standing.

Let us look at the resistance question from another angle. In a natural community there is a built-in hostility to any internal and external forms of resistance that would compel experience and thought to slow down long enough to encounter novel sign vehicles. In the interpretive community there is just the opposite momentum; namely, to heighten genuine forms of resistance so that a much richer contour can emerge from those sign vehicles that are held to be pertinent to the changes in interpretation and power desired by the community. How does this work itself out in the specific question of anthropology? If the natural community has an empty self tied unconsciously to conditions of origin, then the interpretive community has a thicker self that is stretched between the whence and the whither while fully knowing that this stretch is essential to its emerging self-understanding. There is nothing in this framework to suggest what has been called “essentialism,” although there are essential traits constitutive of the human process overall, particularly those that shape its very embeddedness in the world and the various shapes of world semiosis. Again, something like anti-essentialism emerges as a response to misguided forms of essentialism, but fails to probe more deeply into ways in which the concept of essence (or generic trait) can be reconstructed. And, after all is said and done, such overreactions are never as radical as they claim to be.

The modified form of *strategic* essentialism is partially right insofar as it points to pragmatic conditions pertinent to the how of the self in an evolutionary context. But this is only part of the story, as will emerge in the phenomenological descriptions of world semiosis. In this context, the main concern is with showing how the temporally stretched self can gain new awareness of its actualities and potentialities in the personal and social orders. The self in process is always working past and through its necessary conditions of origin as they are illuminated from the hovering, yet power-filled, not yet that provides the clearing for transformation. But it does not follow from this that the not yet provides just any postmodern space within which signs can unfold according to hermetic drift. The self of the community of interpretation is a utopian self insofar as it is a self yet to be, a self that can alter some of its originating conditions in some respects, but never in all. The selving process is only possible in the context of a community of interpretation, never in a natural community, and only in a degenerate way in a postmodern community.

The interpretive self is fully evolutionary, and knows itself to be so.

The signs of evolutionary reality (which need not be understood in a fully technical sense) are assimilated in a number of ways and exert their own forms of resistance against the kind of manic inflation that can occur in both natural and postmodern communities. Specifically these resistant signs show the interpretive self that it is: (1) finitely located in a vast universe that antedates anything human, (2) subject to forms of spoliation that are indifferent to the powers of consciousness, (3) given a limited amount of energy that must be conserved and converted into reasonable habits, (4) denied any sense of an *ultimate* whence or whither, and (5) part of a species that has no guarantee of survival in the long run. On the other side, the interpretive self is also given the positive assurances that it is: (6) what it is because of evolutionary structures that have worked well in their own way, and (7) given certain archetypal and instinctual tools that can continue to shape and guide the self/world transaction.

Within these seven resistant parameters, which obtain as generic traits (or essential features), there is still a certain amount of maneuvering room available to the self in process, such that the interpretive self is still very much underway toward potential transformations that could conceivably have some impact on the larger evolutionary structures themselves. Unfortunately, some exaggerated claims have been made concerning the last clause, particularly in the realm of genetic engineering, and they must be looked at with some caution, although it is impossible to make any reliable predictions in this realm. Yet even in this sphere, genetic reconstruction will be what it is because of antecedent evolutionary structures that are semiotic through and through. That is, a gene is what it is by being self-othering and passing on its traits to something else in certain respects.

The seven forms of resistance, at least known preformally by the interpretive self, can also be seen as enabling conditions for psychosemiosis to be at all. They may appear to be negative (at least the first five) from the standpoint of an imperial natural community, or from the airy and narcissistic perspective of a postmodern community, but such a generic normative evaluation says far too much and lacks ordinal precision. These conditions simply are what they are, and the human process does not get a vote in the matter. Within their sway, however, much can and should be done to ameliorate personal and social conditions in the right way and at the right time. Yet any perspective that fails to take them fully into account will not be able to deal with the true depth-powers of communal life, and thus blunt its reconstructive efforts. There is nothing reductive in the evolutionary perspective, nor, on the

other hand, are any great promises made (contrary to process forms of naturalism). These seven principles stand as their own whence and whither for the interpretive self and provide a kind of natural grace for the self in process, that is, a form of sheer prevalence that makes human forms of semiosis efficacious in the world.

The human process becomes interpretive in an evolutionary context that allows for a complex relationship to time. The interpretive self has a more open past (interpretively) and future (as empowering) than the natural self. Entropy still, of course, exists, but the pre- and posttemporal dimensions of time are anti-entropic in the sense that they do not play by the same power and order rules as temporal orders must. How can one make sense of this strange statement? As noted, any increase in order comes from theft. In the world of *nature natured* this law is absolute. If the self is to gain a higher ordering of its own forms of psychosemiosis, it must do so by taking order from other selves and nonhuman orders. The economic and political implications of this are painfully evident. But is there a way to gain a higher ordering that is not so directly implicated in this tragic struggle to reduce something (someone) else's order?

THE PRETEMPORAL, TEMPORAL, AND POSTTEMPORAL

If the orders of temporality are by necessity part of the innumerable orders of *nature natured*, then the pre- and posttemporal dimensions of time are what they are by participating in the preordinal realm of *nature naturing*, a realm that is not governed by entropy (at least so far as we can possibly gauge). But is this to impose a kind of magical thinking on an otherwise healthy naturalism? Does it make any sense to envision an anti-entropic realm to nature when nonecstatic forms of naturalism would find such a claim to be unwarranted? Before answering this it must be remembered that the concept of "nature" being used in this book is in no way merely equivalent to the concept of physical nature in the sciences, nor is it confined to what antecedent naturalisms have said about the sheer scope and density of nature. Nature is the availability of orders (Buchler) and the *unavailability* of orders. It is also its own underconscious dimension (Coleridge) and the potencies therein "contained" (Schelling and Tillich). On the deepest level, nature is the self-othering and heterogeneous momentum that can never be captured by analogy or metaphor, not to mention a bound set of categorial structures.

The interpretive self must learn to negotiate within the perennial

sway of the ontological difference between *nature naturing* and *nature natured* which is the ungrounded nexus from which the pre- and posttemporal emerge within the conditions of temporality. The laws of science do not cross over this abyss, any more than philosophical or poetic contrivance can render the underconscious of nature into fully conscious terms. Part of the danger of poetic contrivance lies in this struggle to do the impossible with the only tool that seems adequate; namely, the covenantal power of the mother tongue.

But what of time? The temporal orders become more open in their own terms to the interpretive self and its community. Yet there is also the deeper enabling condition for even this form of openness; namely, the emergence of the pre- and posttemporal, which change the very heart of the sign-using self. The pretemporal aspect of time is that which opens up an infinite sense of the whence that can never be constricted to the conditions of origin that mark the specificity of the self. To put it simply: there are no genders, races, classes, languages, or life worlds in the pretemporal, only the radical and content-free “space” of originating power that is not an order per se, or anything like an order that would obtain in the dimension of *nature natured*. The pretemporal is the lost origin that haunts the self in all of its dealings with the other foundlings of time, and is first disclosed through the religious mood of melancholy. There can be no entropy in the pretemporal for the simple reason that there is no order (or orders) that could have or lose order. The pretemporal is an origin that manifests a different *type* of infinity than the four forms described (the actual, the prospective, the open, and the sustaining). It is somewhat analogous to the sustaining infinite, but it has a more robust, albeit indirect, relation to the orders of time insofar as it can give them something like anti-entropic energy that does not come to time’s foundlings via theft.

The posttemporal dimension of time, like the pretemporal, is preordinal, or perhaps, postordinal. It is not constituted by anything that could be an order or have order. Rather, it is a kind of infinite whither, but not in the sense of containing an ultimate meaning that could be read off it like a code. It is encountered by the religious mood of ecstasy that can only emerge from the heart of the equally religious mood of melancholy. Hence the radically different types of infinity manifest in the pre- and posttemporal are coimplicated in their depth-logic. How can these stark assertions be rendered into more personal and phenomenological terms?

The interpretive self becomes permeable to both the enhanced flow

of temporality and its enabling background condition in the pre- and posttemporal. There is a sudden lightning-like clearing in its life world that breaks the shell of the thermodynamic momentum of temporality. Contra Neville, however, this is not the inbreaking of eternity (which is too dyadically distant from time), but the unfolding of a melancholy whence and an ecstatic whither. Yet here the plot thickens, for the whence can also take on an ecstatic hue when the posttemporal emerges, just as the whither can be entwined with melancholy when the pretemporal emerges. In some sense, the pretemporal emerges first in the economy of psychosemiosis, for the reason that the lost object must be the shocking reminder of what lies buried in the background of origin. The psychoanalytic concept of the birth trauma represents one way of pointing to the lingering power of the infinite whence that is reawakened in the sign-using self when the structures of world semiosis become untenable. To put it in a more straightforward way: the ontological birth trauma came first, both literally and symbolically, and it will be the first structure to open up the interpretive self to that momentum of time that lies “outside” of the temporality manifest in the orders of *nature natured*.

There can be no doctrine, no dogma, in the *truly* religious sphere, as such concepts can only have meaning, if at all, within the orders of *nature natured*. The correlation of suicidal ideation and the possibility of a genuine religious experience is well known in the history of the human process. The despair that leads to religious melancholy is part of the cunning of the unconscious as it dramatically lifts the sign-using self out of the endless repetition of the orders of temporality. Yet there is also the inevitable return to the circle of time (which, of course, can also be seen as a flattened line). But the experience of the pre- and posttemporal will change the way temporality is experienced. Traces will be left, however tenuous, in the world of psychosemiosis. The answer to suicidal despair is the religious melancholy that turns inward on itself to become religious ecstasy (however named). The yes will be heard within the no of entropy, reminding the self that while it can never be removed from nature, it can be in nature in a different way than before.

The signs of the self are now more fully and richly stretched across the temporal orders precisely because of the entrance of the pre- and posttemporal dimensions of time. But the interpretive self cannot engage in this process by itself, as it must, by definition, find part of its contour through conscious social contrast and even creative conflict. The interpretive community allows more of the interpretive self to

become actualized and provides more hermeneutic space for its selected signs to unfold more of their pertinent ordinal traits. A natural community would not probe into the political implications of a coffee cup (in terms of both its manufacture and its contents), while an interpretive community could. A natural community would not try to probe into the delusions of a schizophrenic, while an interpretive community might find such analyses highly compelling. A natural community would not examine the potential demonic features of its ersatz liturgical objects, while an interpretive community would most certainly probe into these highly prized artifacts. Most importantly, an interpretive community would welcome those signs that run against its own current self-understanding, and struggle to render them intelligible on *their* (the signs') terms. In Peirce's model of the community of inquiry (a species of the genus) the correct procedure is always to look for a counter example to a generalized abduction (creative hypothesis from rule to case). To fail to look for such a potential counter example is to fail to be scientific. For the community of interpreters, which has innumerable available signs, some selection is inevitable, but never absolute, and rarely fully unconscious. Of course this is the limit case, and it needs to be remembered that an interpretive community is a fitful and precarious moment within a larger natural community.

The sign vehicle, whether it is a person or something extra-human, will be more fully known within a community of interpreters for whom closure is an anti-democratic sentiment. If natural communities have a tendency toward the collective, or even toward fascism, the community of interpreters is nothing if not democratic. By the term "democratic" is here meant that all sign assimilation and manipulation, i.e., the realm of public semiosis, is done in such a way as to enable each sign-using self to be a full participant in social problem solving – in reading and commenting on the signs. Both interpretive and power-based hermeneutic strategies are brought into play, especially in dealing with those signs that have the most power and interpretive richness; namely, the religious. Paul Tillich called for a religious socialism (Tillich 1933), but the current perspective prefers to speak instead of a theonomous democracy. The concept of "theonomy" refers to a deepening of Kantian autonomy without violating its principles. This deepening requires a movement into the personal and social unconscious, concepts only dimly sensed by Kant in his understanding of the noumenal will.

A theonomous democracy is an interpretive community that knows that it can only flourish if it takes heed of the powers of the unconscious

and their projective and transference energies as they emerge into social space. Further, a theonomous democracy goads each of its members into the strenuousness of the selving process, which can have no predetermined outcome, even though it will manifest points of convergence with other selves. The concept of autonomy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for healthy communal life. It is necessary because it points to a sphere of sovereignty that must be protected against internal and external forms of domination. But it is not sufficient because it does not contain an understanding of how these forms of domination actually work themselves out. Autonomy cannot protect itself from closure. The only lasting protection for the autonomous self comes from its own depth-dimension, which is theonomous. But if this depth-dimension is given a name, or gathered under the arm of a doctrine, it will turn demonic and shatter autonomy. In terms of power, autonomy is weak, while theonomy participates in the pre- and posttemporal, thus sharing in a different kind of power that can stand up against heteronomy (an alien and artificial power).

Heteronomy can invade the community from within, in the form of an unconscious social complex that gets projected, or from without through a natural community, or from the natural community that surrounds the interpretive community. It has been customary in liberal theory to link autonomy with democracy, which is a correlation that has a deep and reasonable warrant. But the liberal goal of democratic reconstruction, and there have been no better models proffered in the history of social theory or practice, will fail utterly if it does not grasp the logic of the power struggle between theonomy and heteronomy. Theonomy can protect and deepen autonomy against the forces of heteronomy. When autonomy thinks that it can go its way alone it devolves into the extremely fragile postmodern community, which can quickly become the plaything of heteronomous powers.

There is a precarious dialectic between the empowering momentum of theonomy and the power of autonomy to critique its own conditions of origin. From the standpoint of the autonomous self, all nonmediated origins are demonic, a threat to the hermeneutic space of free interpretation. Enlightenment rationality has proved to be a crucial moment in the evolution of the fragile community of interpreters out of the opacity of the natural community. Yet many social theorists, particularly the members of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas) place too much emphasis on the negative dialectic whereby what is here called heteronomy is dug out at its roots by the sovereign

autonomous self. However, the subtle weaving together of Kant, Freud, and the early Marx has been of great benefit in advancing our understanding of the sheer inertia and cunning of conditions of origin. Alienation is a phenomenon that permeates both economic and psychosemiotic structures, and has to be first looked at from the standpoint of the precarious perch occupied by the autonomous self as it vainly tries to free itself from these conditions.

The Kantian piece of the puzzle has to do with the normative criteria that must be in place for something like a community of free selves to exist. The Freudian piece of the puzzle deals with the power of nature to work through overdetermined motives that continually thwart the Kantian project. The Marxist piece of the puzzle correlates alienated (reified) consciousness and the bourgeois flight from genuine conditions of origin, which are handed over to the “lower” social classes. This tri-partite critique, and its normative elements, has clearly advanced into those dimensions of the human process and its communal forms of embeddedness that govern the three extreme forms of community I have described: the natural, interpretive, and postmodern. In purely historical terms, the two main theoretical frameworks for serious political reconstruction are the pragmatic liberalism of Dewey and the complex theoretical structures of the Frankfurt School. However, in both cases, theonomy has been abjected for a variety of reasons, and this has sadly marginalized both theoretical trajectories in ways that have damaged the goal of social reconstruction. This historical omission must be addressed in a way that will serve the needs of the communal dimension of semiotic cosmology.

AESTHETIC AND RELIGIOUS SIGNS

The sign vehicles of the interpretive community have more semiotic scope and density (from the human standpoint) than the “same” vehicles in the context of the natural community. In the postmodern community these “same” vehicles have too much of the wrong kind of meaning, meanings that do not advance genuine critique or social reconstruction. And that class of objects that I have called “liturgical” can only find their true measure in an interpretive community open to the underconscious of nature. As has often happened in the history of thought, the liturgical has been somewhat chastened (even sanitized) by being transliterated into the domain of the aesthetic, where it seems to be less threatening to autonomy, precisely because it is so clearly a finite

human product that emerges from a given agent. In this latter move, the artist replaces the liturgist as the primary agent of what could be called a nascent form of theonomy, one that will open autonomy to its own depths. In his maximally dense book on the music of Gustav Mahler, Adorno makes a case for calling Mahler one of the true precursors of ecstatic naturalism in both its religious and political senses:

His Utopia is the forward motion of the past and the not-yet-past in becoming. As it was for Hegel in his critique of the principle of identity, truth for Mahler is the Other, which is not immanent yet arises from immanence; in a similar way Kant's doctrine of synthesis was reflected in Hegel. To be is to have become, as against mere becoming. The economic principle of traditional music, however, its kind of determination, exhausts itself in exchanging one thing for another, leaving nothing behind. It "comes out" but has no outcome. Anything new that it cannot wholly assimilate it shuns. Seen in this way, even great music before Mahler was tautological. Its correctness was that of a system without contradictions. It is consigned to the past by Mahler, the breach becoming a formal law. (Adorno 1971: 14)

For Adorno, the community lives under the impress of instrumental reason that flattens out any aesthetic object so that it is not a threat to the reified consciousness that separates the mind from the body. Most artistic productivity serves this reification either by denying the uniqueness of art or by making art serve instrumental purposes, often ideological. A genuine work of art, like a Mahler symphony, refuses to play by these rules and breaks through instrumental reason, showing the contradictions within culture by presenting a higher synthesis of mind and body. This synthesis is itself grounded on the full emergence of the pre- and posttemporal modes of time, that is, the yearning of the not yet as it quickens the no longer.

Here we see how a series of powerful aesthetic contrivances can break the hold of the natural community which wants to live in a one-to-one exchange of semiotic value in which no genuine contradiction emerges from the churning realm of immanence to challenge its sovereignty. Mahler's music rejects the supernatural precisely by deepening the sense of the natural, through the twin religious moods of melancholy and ecstasy. For Mahler, truth can only be found in the evocation of the other, the emergent sign vehicle that is nestled in the heart of the natural community but awaiting the quickening touch of the artist to set it alight with meaning. The flattened line of the temporal breaks open ecstatically transformed time. The heart of the other is the underconscious of nature, which has no form.

Mahler's music takes the abject, as it has been ejected by the natural and unconscious community, and transforms it into portents of genuine utopian expectation, the not yet that is only fully grasped by the interpretive community. The deepest abjection of the natural community is that of the ontological wound, which should serve to remind the self of the ontological difference that continually opens out within the self:

Mahler did not treat the wound as expressive content as Wagner did in the third act of *Tristan*. It is manifested objectively in the musical idiom and forms. In this way the shadow of negativity in his symphonies is made palpable. However, the wound of the person, what the language of psychology calls the neurotic character, was at the same time a historical wound, insofar as his work sought with aesthetic means to realize what was already aesthetically impossible. (Adorno 1971: 25)

The great wound at the heart of the self is social, personal, and ontological. Music can either work to efface the wound or manifest it directly through its idiom and forms. Mahler took the latter road because of an increased sensitivity to the fissures within nature and his own psyche. His refusal to abandon the immanence of nature (in contrast to his onetime teacher Bruckner) enabled him to take the wound at the heart of nature seriously. At the same time it also enabled him to enter into the no longer and not yet in an emancipatory way, providing a realistic utopian energy that did not flee from the world in the form of a reified consciousness. The restlessness that permeates his music is one mark of the ontological wound that he struggled to heal with means that were "already aesthetically impossible." Does this impossibility mean that the aesthetic sphere is more properly seen as the antechamber of the religious, a perspective advanced by Tillich?

While it might seem like a colonial move to capture the aesthetic for religious purposes, less harm is actually done than might appear, once the concept of the religious has been freed of its own heteronomous components. Clearly in the case of someone like Mahler, the aesthetic sphere has little resemblance to the Kantian concept of intuition or appearance (*Anschauung*). It is not a perspectival shining of the surface of the world, but part of the very momentum of the underconscious of the world as it becomes manifest in finite forms. This is not to say that nature "uses" the artist to manifest its own depths, but that the artist becomes permeable to pulsations that can be only partially rendered into the media available to the human process. The psychological tensions manifest in such high-level productivity are great, precisely because of the form-shattering power of the ultimate "matter" of artistic

contrivance. The commonplace image of the tortured artist acknowledges far more than it realizes. The artist is doing part of the work of the emancipatory community whenever he or she breaks through the constricted and safe shells of social semiosis to forge new self-changing forms that can evoke the underconscious of nature. But the point of stillness will also be manifest in the heart of the ontological wound. This is especially evident in Mahler's Third Symphony (1896), in the sixth and final movement, which recapitulates his world semiosis from the divine perspective. Insofar as his music enters into the underworld of turmoil and comes out again, but still within the immanence of nature, it becomes open to the edges of the religious.

But what is the religious sphere in contrast to the aesthetic? If Mahler brings us to its edges, what is left behind in crossing this final semiotic frontier, and how does this impact on personal and social semiosis? Phenomenologically it is clear that the aesthetic and the religious are often fully entwined, since both forms of semiosis have a focus and intensity that are rarely found in other forms of sign assimilation and manipulation. Even in scientific inquiry it is customary to refer to the more powerful and highly formed aspects of the enterprise as belonging to the aesthetic sphere, or perhaps even the religious. Dewey was surely, if incompletely, right when he saw the aesthetic traits of experience as the consummatory traits *par excellence*. No other traits of lived experience could bring forth the same sense of qualitative immediacy and satisfaction. Ontologically this means that certain sign vehicles are pragmatic ends in themselves and not means to something else. This is not to say, however, that the concept of "end" can be eulogized:

We may conceive the end, the close, as due to fulfillment, to perfect attainment, to satiety, or to exhaustion, to dissolution, to something having run down or given out. Being an end may be indifferently an ecstatic culmination, a matter-of-fact consummation, or a deplorable tragedy. Which of these things a closing or terminal object is, has nothing to do with the property of being an end. (Dewey 1929: 97)

The religious sphere for Dewey lies more in the domain of a Kantian regulative ideal that can shape the overall context of social value, but it does not have a unique object per se. In a sense, Dewey's form of pragmatism privileges aesthetic consummatory ends over the religious "as if." But what was it that kept Euro-American pragmatism and Continental neo-Marxism from probing more deeply into the religious dimension of semiosis?

As noted, the aesthetic sphere seems to be much safer to autonomy

because it is less of a threat to the self-shaping desired by the autonomous self. After all, works of art are clearly human contrivances, and do not derive their power and validity from something outside (or beneath) the human. In the aesthetic sphere, so prized by process metaphysics, a much safer religious consciousness can stand duty for the form-shattering power of that which is never a human contrivance. From a religious perspective, art retains its fascination because it comes so close to this form-shattering abyss, yet shies away at the last moment. What is going on here?

Kierkegaard struggled with the distinction between the genius, as literary figure, and the Apostle, associated in his mind with St. Paul. Needless to say, this struggle was Kierkegaard's own, compelling him to abject the gift of genius that his genetic heritage unwittingly imposed upon him. Unlike the Apostle, who knows how to bend his or her will to the eternal, the genius magnifies his or her own traits to produce something like a works righteousness (anathema to all inheritors of the legacy of Martin Luther). The Apostle, like the humble and barely recognizable Knight of Faith, goes through the world without producing great products that will impose novel signs on the community. The genius will be misled by the lure of the glittering power of the means of contrivance and fail to enter into the liberating power of the Word that judges all human words. The psychoanalytic aspects of Kierkegaard's super-ego are well known, not to mention his utter abjection of the material maternal, but the logic cuts even deeper.

The aesthetic genius must generate a product. There is no way out of this dilemma, nor is there any respite from the need to add yet one more contrivance to the evolving work. Satisfaction and genius are incompatible concepts, as Kierkegaard knew from intense inner struggle. But what of the religious sphere, which he saw as transcending the aesthetic and ethical? Can there be a religious genius, like Schleiermacher's virtuoso of religion (1799), or have we entered into a different dimension entirely?

Of the many distinctions made so far in this book, the one between the aesthetic and the religious produces the most uneasiness, precisely because almost all historical forms of this distinction have served abjections from either side. It is easy to understand how certain forms of religious (or pseudo-religious) consciousness have been fearful of the thick and sensual realm of the aesthetic, which takes away the need for a mediated hierarchy. That is, the work of art is a resplendent end in itself that needs no external validation in order to evoke the underconscious

of the world. Iconoclasts have appeared in every religious era, realizing that they were confronting a genuine and perhaps equal semiotic power in the aesthetic. But why have some artists felt compelled to abject the religious? Here we enter into much more interesting terrain.

The aesthetic sphere, by definition, must render the unrenderable into finite form via some kind of shaping of an inherited or novel medium. A work of art is a finite way of participating in the actual, prospective, open, and sustaining infinities, but it is not collapsible into these surrounding conditions. It is a finite emergent created by the sign-using self so as to become manifest, it is hoped, to a relevant community of interpreters. Like a philosophical system (or perspective) a work of art is totalizing, even when its creator would be hesitant to make such a claim. It is both finite in its locatedness and infinite in its aspirations to render world semiosis into terms that are at least translatable into more available signs. The important aspect is the totalizing dimension, in which the array of aesthetic traits is itself a kind of world, or represents worldhood from a perspective. James Joyce rewrote the aesthetic theory of Aquinas to concentrate on the condition known as *claritas*, which would here be defined as the moment of radiant gathering of regional qualities in a finite pulsation of world semiosis. It is at this juncture that something of the traditional antipathy between art and religion is seen (from the side of art).

It would be too simple-minded to see this tension as one involving the status of the object in either sphere, with the aesthetic sphere stopping with traits as manifest, and the religious sphere as pushing beyond these traits, although something like this distinction was congenial to Tillich. In Adorno's reflections on Mahler it is clear that great works of art do push beyond their own traits into something unconditioned that is only elliptically captured by the work of art, no matter how complex and form-shattering in its own right. It seems that both the aesthetic and the religious dimensions of experience and ideation are concerned with the unmappable domain of the underconscious of nature. Again, what makes these two spheres different?

In both spheres the creative process is grasped *by* and grasps aspects *of* nature that do not devolve into specific ordinal traits. Yet there is a difference that soon becomes evident when the deeper question is asked: what is done with the preordinal realm as it relates in its hidden dialectic with the aesthetic orders of *nature natured*? For aesthetic contrivance the balance tilts toward traits as manifest, and a certain irony may intrude into the work as it points in its own melancholy way toward the lost

realm of the preordinal. In the religious sphere, the concept of contrivance becomes muted and the emphasis is on the sheer assimilation of the underconscious of nature, the moment that Schleiermacher called the feeling of absolute or sheer dependence (*das schlechthinige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*). While the aesthetic sphere gives a religious status to the sign vehicle, the religious sphere pushes away from its necessary forms of containment within semiosis. The vehicle becomes less important than its power of opening a clearing onto the unconditioned dimension of the underconscious of nature. This is why the aesthetic can be seen as the antechamber to the religious, because it prepares the way for another relationship to the orders of the world. In the work of art there is already a movement out of the abyss of *nature naturing*, rendered into form-shattering possibilities within the innumerable orders of *nature natured*. But the feeling of sheer dependence on that which envelops even the four infinities; namely, the underconscious of nature, honors translucency in its own right. The work of art (at least on the highest levels of creativity) is religious but not necessarily with a so-called religious content, while the religious sphere has no content at all. Of course, this is a limit case as no sign-using self can live without some content. The issue has to do with the ratio given to either side of the form/formless dialectic, and with the role of manipulation in semiosis.

The religious sphere is (ideally but not factually) content-free, by which is meant that it will always be distorted in some respect when shaped in any way. The mania behind and within aesthetic contrivance fits in well with the Frankfurt School's sensibilities concerning the more heroic aspects of the human process as it struggles to gain control of its own self-shaping, both economic and aesthetic. But what is heroic or self-shaping about the religious sphere? Nothing. In the sheer assimilation of the preordinal there is something akin to an empty space that devours all content (again, as a limit case). A humanist or Marxist perspective must be uncomfortable with any concept of the work of art that allows for a purely assimilative and even anti-heroic dimension at the heart of certain works of art. Nothing is entailed in this analysis about the artist's intention or world view, as the religious sphere is not confined to any such known or knowable horizon of delimited meaning.

In sum, any work of art that is of sufficient complexity and depth can transcend itself and become a locus of the religious insofar as it has its own means (often unconscious to the artist) of evoking the unconditional dimension of *nature naturing*. From the standpoint of the current perspective, Mahler's symphonies are religious in a strong sense because their

various forms of musical contrivance do evoke the pulsations of the underconscious of the world and manifest them in an almost visceral way.

To return to the community of interpreters it is now easier to understand the centrality of liturgical objects to its self-understanding, for no other objects so directly occupy the terrain between the aesthetic and the religious, nor do any others evoke such tension within communal life. One way of defining schizophrenia would be in terms of an over-readiness to convert ordinary objects into liturgical objects when there is no communal warrant. A private liturgical object is a contradiction in terms. Yet the purely formless can only be encountered in the rarest moments within psychosemiosis. Barth, in spite of his patriarchal Reformist theology, provides one valuable image of this relation to the formless: as when a line touches the surface of a circle at only one infinitesimal point. The divine is the circle, while we live in a two-dimensional flatland that affords only the most rudimentary glimpse of the great circle with which we occasionally intersect.

It is not clear that just any sign vehicle can become a religious object. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to list the necessary and sufficient conditions that must be met for something to make that leap into at least a partially adequate adumbration of the sacred. Clearly, the pre- and posttemporal have to be evoked and allowed an appearance within the movement of thermodynamic time. This takes place when the unconscious of the self and the underconscious of nature are activated, that is, allowed into the more fragile sphere of awareness. The specifically liturgical object emerges within the context of a community of interpreters because only such a structure can filter its power and keep it from becoming destructive. It is as if the interpretive community is like an electrical transformer, stepping down the power of the current so that it can do useful work in a more precarious context. The power of the no longer is entwined with that of the not yet to provide both the energy and the goals for social transformation.

PETROGLYPHS

In order to deepen our analysis of the sign vehicle and its pathways, it is necessary to rotate such a sign through the various orders that have been delineated to this point. This includes: (1) the pertinent traits of psychosemiotics, (2) semiotic scope and density as they correlate to efficacy, (3) the actual, prospective, open, and sustaining infinities, (4) local and

regional traits, (5) new delineations of sacred folds and intervals, and (6) the structure and how of betweenness as it impacts on the community of interpreters. A brief hint was made about this last dimension of communal semiosis, and this section will conclude with a phenomenological description of one of the most elusive elements in all of semiosis. Since the previous examples of the sign vehicle have involved either persons or smaller human contrivances, we shall choose an example that enhances the scope of contrivance and places it more directly within the context of nature, in this case, literal physical nature. Our example is the circular Paleolithic stone structure known as Stonehenge that sits on Salisbury Plain in England. This example is chosen because it represents an unusual and highly compelling constellation of natural, aesthetic, and religious elements that reaches back into ancient history no later than 1500 BCE and has roots going back as far as 4000 BCE or even earlier (Eliade 1978: 122). For our purposes it makes sense to see the entire edifice as a sign vehicle that has its own traits, and that has historical and psychosemiotic pathways that still manifest themselves to the sensitive interpreter. To a large extent an analysis of Stonehenge remains highly speculative. There is little agreement among scholars as to the exact nature of what has been called “megalithic religion,” but some reliable clues have been given by Mircea Eliade that will provide the horizon within which our ordinal rotation of semiotic traits will unfold. He downplays the centrality of the great mother cult and stresses the role of immortality and ancestor worship instead: “What characterizes the megalithic religions is the fact that the ideas of *perenniality* and of *continuity between life and death* are apprehended through the *exaltation of the ancestors as identified, or associated, with the stones*” (Eliade 1978: 124).

The structure of Stonehenge involves a circle (cromlech) of menhirs (large stones associated with the human body) and capstones (dolmens). Each stone can weigh several or more tons (up to 21 tons or so in some sites in England). The original purpose of the vast stone structures was to be a burial site, but this evolved into a more complex structure that, among other things, related the power of stone to that of immortality and fertility. The power of the dead ancestor was translated into the phallic and eternal structure of the menhir, providing renewal and protection for the members of the community. Some menhirs and dolmens have drawings on them depicting the human form, thus containing their own petroglyphs as signs of ancestral power. Fertility could be promised through direct contact with the stone, so using the menhir as an almost literal power source. The circular structure may have symbolized the womb out of which rebirth could take place.

The megalithic religion extended throughout large portions of the globe during its period of flowering in the third and fourth millennia BCE, thus antedating the full rise of the Western monotheisms. The semiotic density of Stonehenge in particular commands our attention because it combines so many elements pertinent to understanding the sign and its vehicles. We must be careful in what follows not to extend too far beyond the very limited data concerning this structure, yet the little that we do know can provide some very powerful insights into more generic structures of the religious depths of semiotic cosmology.

The menhirs stand substitute for the self as it moves into the realm beyond the thermodynamic arrow of temporality. The self continues to exist and to have causal effects on the living, effects that can be partially controlled through contact with the medium of transmission of the stone. Even if the menhir does not have writing on it, it is still a petroglyph in its own right. It represents a semiotic system that both points to and participates in powers that are held to be supernatural, or at least mysterious within the context of other natural powers. Is the menhir a code? No. It is not a code in the sense of conveying information along a channel involving redundancy and an increase of information. It is much more like a prethematic form of resistance and attraction that binds the finite self to ancient powers that have an elusive shape. To use the framework of codes in the case of something like Stonehenge is to run the risk of projecting far too much onto a structure that has a very different kind of semiotic density. The twin momenta of death and rebirth are present in visceral forms, and it is not at all clear that something like a “religion” can be extracted from the experiences connected with the menhirs and their felt powers. To be in contact with the stone is to be renewed, while not to be is to be cut off from the ancestors and their powers of renewal.

For the selving process in these nascent forms, there is a movement to transfigure the *Umwelt* that has been now broken open by a grasp of death so that it is not allowed to sink fully back into the night time of endless repetition. There is a transition from a repetition without death to a deeper repetition in which death and rebirth mark the outer circumference of the *Umwelt* as it struggles to birth its own life world. Consider the overdetermined motives that would compel a people to erect such an astonishing structure without the benefit of modern technology. Is the energy used in making a circle of menhirs a surplus energy, or is it more deeply correlated with a kind of psychic survival? Suppose that no response were made to the emergence of that great gap separating the *Umwelt* from the life world; namely, the sense of death.

Would the life world have withstood such a searing vision, or would it go underground? Or, in yet another defense of the psychic economy, would the gap opened out by death turn into unending violence against others so that death could be externalized? In the light of these questions it is not clear that the energy that went into the creation and repair of Stonehenge could be called surplus energy alone. But why stones?

In a semiosis of petroglyphs (in the sense that a stone is *itself* a kind of writing, at least for the human process), it is clear that the sign vehicle has unusual literal and symbolic density. If trees rot, and any human-made element may be subject to entropy often during an individual's lifetime, stone is anti-entropic to a finite observer (trees *were* used briefly before stones were selected as the final structural element). Here there is a fascinating contradiction within the symbolic power of the sign vehicle itself. The menhir represents the soul of the departed ancestors, and hence it is an expression of the least-embodied aspect of the self. At the same time it is also an overwhelming natural structure that is more fully embodied than any aspect of the self. Here the contradiction serves to deepen the depth-dimension of the sign vehicle because it is an augmentative contradiction, that is, the incompatible traits serve the same symbolic insight in different ways. For Eliade this is the "continuity between life and death" that only the stone, especially in its circular configuration (cromlech), can express.

The irony is even sharper when the stone is seen to occupy the gap between the closed *Umwelt* and the opening life world. The life world is anything but stone-like, yet the power of the stone protects it from sinking back into its ever-luring *Umwelt*. Again, what makes the menhir, and all such chthonic stones, so crucial to the preservation of the nascent space of the life world, the space that makes psychosemiosis possible? Reich provides a very important clue:

In thinking about his own being and functioning, man turned involuntarily against himself; not in a destructive fashion, but in a manner which may well have been the point of origin of his armoring. . . . Man somehow became frightened and for the first time in the history of his species began to armor against the inner fright and amazement. (as quoted in Sharaf 1983: 400)

There is a direct correlation between the emotional armoring in the face of death and the erection of stone as a transport to the other side.

In the fertility aspect of the menhir, it was customary for women to rub themselves against the stone to ensure their own fertility. The stone has magical powers that come directly from those who are undying, or

who have passed through the gate of death. Whatever the status of the great mother in this correlation, the logic remains the same; namely, that the life world is protected against the horrors of seeing its own death through the regenerative powers of that most enduring of natural objects. In rubbing against the stone I allow the ancestor to enter into my bodily space and transform its death-bound awareness into a rebirth. Once this rebirth is experienced in this visceral way, death is no longer the most acute dimension of the emergent life world. Consciousness can continue to sustain itself against the ever-present inertial pressures of the ancient *Umwelt*.

It would not be stretching the phenomenological descriptions of the role of the menhir to assert that the existence of so-called “megalithic religion,” which may have stretched from Europe to northern Africa to Asia, was instrumental in advancing the fitful emergence of psychosynthesis against the still powerful pull of our animal *Umwelten*. Stones continue to fascinate the human process, even if they are now usually confined to ornaments worn on our bodies. They represent the power of the underconscious of nature in a *very* direct way, precisely because they are formed in mysterious processes in the depths of the world (not, of course, from an informed scientific perspective, but from the perspective of mythic everydayness). The giant menhirs of our ancestors were the most powerful and obvious symbols of the realm outside of nascent awareness that could provide the link to the depth-dimension of nature on the other side of death. The petroglyphs that nature almost seemed to throw up into the path of human evolution became the unmovable place where the life world could find refuge against its own painful awareness of death.

Menhirs, especially in their circular form as completed with dolmens (capstones), contain an astonishing amount of semiotic density. This is clear from what has been said about their role in sustaining the gap between the *Umwelt* and the life world. In the context of ecstatic naturalism, religious sign vehicles have the most density, even if a given vehicle can lose some of that density over time. Clearly, Stonehenge cannot mean the same thing for us as it did for its builders, precisely because it did its job of partially freeing the life world from its conditions of origin. Yet it still retains a haunting power that reaches into our own personal and collective unconscious.

The menhirs also had a great deal of semiotic scope, not only because of their temporal and spatial extent (which may give them a longer run in the history of our species than, say, Christianity, whose future

remains uncertain), but because they touched on the edges of personal and social life in their period. In the *scope* \times *density* = *efficacy* formula, we can say that the menhirs and their embedding megalithic religion had an astonishing amount of efficacy. Part of this stems from the sheer immediacy of their form, and the practices, so far as we know of them, that connected the realm of the human to the chthonic realm of stone. The medieval and current practice of keeping the relics of saints is but a pale shadow of the power of the menhir to link the worlds of life and death.

What of the correlation of Stonehenge and the four infinities? The first mode of the infinite, the actual, is manifest in the utter thereness of the stones as they stand out sharply within Salisbury Plain. As noted, the sign vehicles have an astonishing efficacy in the world of *nature natured* and eclipsed everything around them. While scholars are reluctant to talk about *the* megalithic religion, certainly there were family resemblances among the various structures and their associated mythologies, linking them in a larger actual infinite that some would argue has left deep traces within psychosemiosis. The actualizing moment of this infinite is clear in the power of the menhirs to transform awareness from a state of dread before death to one of participation in deathless powers that provide a guarantee against entropy. Buried near a number of menhirs are small dolls in human form, probably meant to represent or embody specific ancestors so that their power can be more reliably transmitted to the still living.

In the contemporary life world of many, analogy has replaced such modes of direct participation in an actualizing infinite, but archaic residues always remain, as when, for example, people rush to touch a celebrity to take on some of his or her power in a direct way. When it is remembered that the menhir was in part a direct analogue to the human body, such a residue should not be surprising. Generically, the human process hungers to participate as fully as possible in as many actualizing infinities as can be sustained simultaneously. And even like some animals that will eat until they burst (for example, the wolverine), we shall gorge ourselves on the actual infinite, violating our own deeper interpretive needs.

Describing the prospective infinite that surrounds Stonehenge is harder for the obvious reason that we lack interpretive data as to what interpretive space was operative in these communities. The prospective infinite is like a system-wide gravitational field that holds moments of the actual infinite into some kind of interpretive and evolving contour.

Without doctrinal elements, or without a more direct participation in the life world of the era, the prospective infinite must be seen through a thick mist. It can always be read backward from the actual infinite, but this gives only a two-dimensional or black-and-white picture rather than a full-color holograph. And the actual infinite is itself partially obscured insofar as its surrounding field is unclear. When we attempt a fusion of horizons without the benefit of written language, the shape of the semiotic infinite becomes increasingly vague.

Interestingly, the open infinite may be more accessible to us than the prospective infinite, precisely because we lack the necessary understanding of the meaning horizon within which Stonehenge was operative. Hence we are like the interpreter who confronts a novel sign vehicle for the first time. If we walk around the edifice, we know that it has tremendous intrinsic power, that is, a power that is not a product of pure projection. Stonehenge represents more than the sum of modernist projections of its semiotic whatness, but speaks with a power outside of those projections. In this sense, it is a fold within nature itself, even though it is a human contrivance. A fold is any order that has unusual semiotic efficacy and that also participates in some direct way in both the unconscious and the underconscious of the world. Even if we knew nothing of ancestor cults, except through their abjection by the three Western monotheisms, we would still be drawn into the power of the menhirs and their sheer literal and symbolic density. To fail to see the religious depth of this contrivance would be a mark of a more paralyzing insensitivity to the what and how of semiosis in its depth-momentum.

The power of the open infinite in this context would be to hold open a space for semiotic query and wonder, a clearing that is not immediately filled with content. Suppose, for example, that we were suddenly presented with a full-sized three-dimensional model of a religious structure belonging to an extra-planetary race. There would be an actual infinite without a prospective infinite, and hence, a truncated actual infinite. Yet sheer astonishment and wonder, not to mention fear and suspicion, are held in place by the open infinite that would surround this particular here and now structure. Semiotic dissonance is as much a “gift” of the open infinite as is the “invitation” to interpret anew. The dialectic among the actualizing, prospecting, and opening infinities is even clearer with this science-fiction model because we would be stripped of all our usual hermeneutic strategies and props.

In the case of Stonehenge, presupposing no scholarly knowledge, the open infinite would make it possible to sustain enough semiotic

amusement or wonder to allow the scope and density of the menhirs to enter into mental and possibly visceral awareness. This is not to say that everyone would experience the open infinite in the same way, but neither is it to say that the open infinite is reducible to human patterns of expectation. The open infinite is an ontological structure that is “in place” whether sign users are engaged with it or not. Again, to presuppose otherwise would be to fall in the trap that ensnared Leibniz with his principle of maximal plenitude (which lies behind his much-derided belief that this is the “best of all possible worlds”). In other words, even though Leibniz had a good understanding of difference through his principle of the identity of indiscernibles, he did not let genuine difference be one that allowed for radical forms of diremption and discontinuity among the perspectival shinings of his monads. Difference boiled down to the mistakes in awareness caused by the confused perceptions of monads. Ironically, he moved to the edges of a view of the unconscious, but, like Peirce, failed to take the plunge into its radical otherness.

The open infinite, then, is not a space generated by sign users, but it is a space that can be entered into and configured in human ways. There is a sense of specificity here. Each contrivance or order, insofar as it is momentarily bereft, for us, of its prospective infinite, will have its own open infinite. The open infinite that could come to us with an initial encounter with Stonehenge will be different than that of our imaginary example of the extra-planetary religious edifice. It is native to the drives of psychosynthesis to move as quickly as possible past the open to the prospective infinite, and insofar as this cannot be done in a given case, frustration usually drives energies elsewhere.

The encounter with the sustaining infinite is much more tenuous, and certainly rather rare. Tillich argued that only the shock of nonbeing could open the self to an awareness of being, of the ground that sustains whatever is. Perhaps his existentialist account is too dramatic, as other, less earth-shaking, routes can be found to this sense of the sheer prevalence of the world, but the horizon of the self will certainly be transfigured in some key ways. The finitude of the human process seems to demand that any sense of the sheer prevalence of the world is obtained by a numinous encounter with one or more orders that have specific traits. In principle, any order of relevance whatsoever can serve to trigger the sense of prevalence, but in fact certain orders have more evocative power because of a constellation of traits that may be very elusive to describe in detachment from their mysterious and numinous

efficacy. The menhir as a sign vehicle has more power than most to convey the sense *that* the world is. Buchler links the sense of prevalence (which he sees operating most strongly in poetry) with a co-equal sense of ontological parity. An encounter with the sustaining infinite through an order of relevance that has unusual evocative and numinous power may, under the right conditions of psychosemiosis, bring these senses of prevalence and parity together. Hence Stonehenge can give us access to that infinite which is neither weakly nor strongly relevant to the world, but which sustains whatever is by being *sheerly* relevant to all orders in all respects. At its depth, numinosity points to parity, not to ontological hierarchies, making the numinous powers different in kind from every other. This is because they participate in the pre- and posttemporal and are implicated in the pulsations of *nature naturing*.

The regional and local qualities of Stonehenge can be isolated through a series of phenomenological descriptions that rotate the edifice through its aesthetic, geographic, and religious traits. In this case, the distinctions to be made can only be worked out in an empirical fashion by a study of physical elements and their attendant symbolic structures. Ideally, this would be done by a community of interpreters who have some sense of the mythic system in which the sign vehicles participate. Strictly speaking, this enterprise is a project that lies outside of the scope and interests of semiotic cosmology.

The concept of the “sacred fold” has appeared in several places as a way of indicating that there is something about the *how* of nature that generates unusual orders of great semiotic density and scope that cannot be said to derive their efficacy from human projection alone. Stonehenge is such a sacred fold, even though it is a human product as much as its material is a natural product. The concept of “fold” denotes the quality of a folding back over on itself again and again so that the sign vehicle becomes a series of indefinitely ramified orders with a deep numinous core that transforms them under certain conditions, conditions that may never be fully understood. For some reason, some orders of the world are almost instantly recognized to have this quality, while others seem to be bereft of this folding. Physical and spatial images have to be used with care, as the most tenuous orders, which may have a very diffuse spatiality or decidedly nonphysical structure, can obtain as sacred folds. Of course, borderline cases abound, such as the real or alleged vortices that many feel in the Sedona Hills of Arizona. Even if such vortices do not exist, it still makes sense to ask: why are they believed to be here? What is it about this setting that generates this

belief? In many such instances, sharpened perception may be sufficient to open the self to a sacred fold, while in other cases, the fold is maintained by some sort of underground projection. But even in the latter case, there are reasons why these projections exist, reasons that may have roots outside of the internal workings of psychosemiosis.

Intervals, by contrast, are those empty spaces that surround sacred folds and provide their own form of the principle of individuation. The dialectic of fold to interval is commensurate with the dialectic of actual infinite (as the form of semiotic plenitude) to prospective and open infinities. When the object of phenomenological description is more clearly (or potentially) religious, then the language of fold and interval is more appropriate as it better conveys the kind of numinosity and radically heightened scope and density of the sign vehicle itself. Thus, an actual infinite becomes a sacred fold when it adds the traits of numinosity and internal layering in fairly clear ways. The prospective and open infinities become intervals when they are more directly tied to an epiphany of power and serve both to individuate that power and to reduce its overwhelming quality in the context of semiosis.

Sacred folds are analogous to intense radiating stars that send out streams of semiosis from conditions of origin, while intervals are analogous to black holes that swallow light and point to a mysterious whither. Sacred folds, since there can never be one fold of all folds in nature, obtain as fragmentary powers of origin, while intervals must, by definition, serve as individuating counter-tendencies; namely, as the enabling condition for fragmented goals. As in the commensurate case of actual to prospective and open infinities, there can be no sacred fold without its own corresponding interval. And, by the converse logic, there can be no interval that is not the interval of a specific fold. In the religious sphere the dialectic of plenitude and emptiness is in effect an intensification of nonreligious forms of this dialectic. The material logic is the same.

Stonehenge is thus a sacred fold that is sustained by an equally sacred interval that can gather some of its almost overwhelming power within itself so that it is assimilable within the fragile sphere of psychosemiosis. The interval is like a receding field phenomenon that takes power into itself and transforms it into a space of more circumscribed meaning. To violate our star to black hole analogy somewhat, it is as if the fold and the interval stand next to each other, with the star/fold sending an endless stream of energy into the black hole/interval without diminishing its own reserves, at least in the short run. Perhaps the entropic loss of the order and power of religious sign vehicles throughout the course of

human evolution (i.e., in the long run) can be seen as the eventual triumph of the intervals as they swallow up these enfolded semiotic structures. No sacred fold is eternal, as no sign vehicle is eternal. Intervals do not require vehicles in the same sense, and hence are less directly implicated in the drama of religious entropy.

The possibilities for religious signification are endless, even if the human process continually tries to devolve all troublesome folds into one alleged imperial fold that will govern all others. The perennial struggle between what has been called polytheism and monotheism represents a simple-minded way of entering into the phenomenological data. From the standpoint of ecstatic naturalism, monotheism is one of the least sophisticated strategies and idea clusters possible in the face of the fragmented powers of the whence and the whither, and is more a product of wounded narcissism than a response to the ways in which *nature* *naturing* leaves traces within the innumerable orders of *nature* *natured*. Sacred folds and their corresponding intervals are always and in endless ways encompassed by other nonsacred orders. This is one of the reasons why the perspective of ecstatic naturalism refuses to make either the pantheist or panentheist move and identify nature with god. Insofar as the term “god” is used in this perspective, it is confined to certain sacred folds, and even there it has to be used with great care. The term “fold” has the greater neutrality and better conveys the sense of ontological parity than the term “god,” which has done inestimable harm to the principle of parity.

In describing the religious dimension of Stonehenge, the term “god” may have almost no value, while the concept of the sacred fold is immediately applicable. One of the most important features of a successfully generic term is that it allows for translations into appropriate subaltern terms at key junctures in the phenomenological description. Thus the concept of the sacred fold is clearly the genus of which the concept of god may or may not be a species in a given case. This specific claim will be worked out in far more detail in chapter 3, where a phenomenology of types of religious meaning will be detailed.

SPIRIT

The final set of phenomenological descriptions in this section involve the most elusive dimension of both communal and religious forms of semiosis as it impacts on the intersection points of sign vehicles. While ecstatic naturalism has expressed uneasiness about many of the key

traits of the Western monotheisms, insofar as they reflect species narcissism, there is one concept that has been essential, especially in the history of Christianity, that has very clear phenomenological warrant. This is the concept of the spirit. However, the concept to be used here, as it emerges from the phenomenal data, cannot carry the prefix “holy” because of its implied commitment to a principle of ontological priority. Rather, the spirit emerges more clearly as an order, or sphere of relevance, *within* the nature that eclipses it. Not only is the spirit part of the innumerable orders of *nature natured*, but it lies outside of the churning underconscious of the world. Some striking questions emerge from this dual locatedness.

In chapter 3 we shall face the recalcitrant problem of whether we can even use the singular form “spirit,” or whether the data require us to speak of spirits. For now, the singular form will be retained at least to honor an aspect of the historical delineations that have been inherited by semiotic cosmology. If the spirit, then, is ordinally located, that is, is not ubiquitous or equivalent to the sustaining infinite, what kind of scope does it have? If the spirit is not holy, what differentiates it from, say, the prospective infinite? If the spirit cannot penetrate into the mysteries of the underconscious of nature, what kind of consciousness can it have? More pointedly, given the historical cluster of traits associated with the holy spirit, which ones are left after its holiness is taken away and it is relocated within the momenta of an indifferent nature? Finally, what is the relationship between the spirit and sacred folds and their intervals?

All orders of relevance have scope, however minimal. To have scope is to occupy some semiotic terrain and to maintain that terrain against competitors. The spirit is clearly of a different kind than other types of orders. It is less spatial than physical orders, and has an elusive relation to time. To ask where is spirit is to make a category mistake. Or is it? Above it was mentioned that Peirce was willing to see feeling as extended in space, an implication of his panpsychism. Can the spirit have spatial predicates in an analogous way? Need these spatial predicates exhaust the sense of the locatedness of the spirit? There is a sense in which the spirit occupies a space that is not as clearly bounded as most other spatial configurations within the provenance of finite human experience (to mention no other orders). The appropriate term for the locatedness of spirit is “betweenness,” where the stress is on the interstices that are found between and among more “solid” orders of the world. This distinction is often effaced, giving the spirit far more solidity than is

warranted. The spirit emerges within a bound context, where it has some form of relevance to other, nonspiritual, orders. It is most appropriate to see the spirit as being strongly relevant to communal orders insofar as it lives in the spaces among sign vehicles and can enhance the richness and power of sign blooms. At the same time, the spirit can be weakly relevant to some orders if it helps them become more available to interpreters. What does this mean in practice?

Traditionally, the spirit has been seen as an agent of interpretation. If it makes a community break out in tongues, it also provides that same community with the ability to read the tongues. It affects the integrity of the sign vehicles of the community by intensifying some of them and giving them more force in social space, while also bringing interpreters into their orbit so that they can enter into new interpretive space, thus enhancing their scope. But the spirit is not a body of signs in its own right, nor is it a repository of extranatural wisdom, whatever that would be. It is the enabling condition for interpretation within a community by moving away impediments to interpretation that often come from the imperial pressures of the sign vehicles themselves.

In this sense of clearing away impediments, the spirit works against those projections that emerge from unconscious complexes. As a mobile field of betweenness, the spirit can provide its own version of the ontological difference for the self. The “larger” difference of *nature naturing* and *nature natured* is reenacted by the spirit when it holds open a space between the projection and its object. This space is analogous to the preordinal underconscious of the world, while the object and its projection are analogous to the orders of *nature natured*. The spirit enters into the fierce momentum of the projection to object correlation and pries the projection loose from its intended object. How does it do so?

The spirit, as different in kind from any other type of order, is differently related to the self than either *noesis* (mental act) or *noema* (object of projection). It is not a specific act, nor does it devolve into a specific object. It is a third possibility, laying ontologically between act and object. As such it can enter into the nexus where act and object are connected by providing a kind of penumbra around the projection that pulls it outward by a vacuum-like momentum. The projection becomes “thinner” as the spirit drains its manic energy. This in turn frees the object to release some of its key traits to the self so that the other person becomes less contaminated by the now dissipating projection. Does the spirit intend this to happen? No. It is more like a natural gradient that has its own ontological momentum, come what may for the attending

consciousness. The spirit simply is its clearing away; it is not a consciousness in its own right that actively goes after persons and their projections.

The scope of the spirit, then, is measured indirectly through its relation to personal and communal projections and to its ability to serve as a betweenness momentum for dyadic semiotic tensions. It is impossible even to envision a contour for the spirit, as it indeed “blows where it wills,” as long as the concept of “will” is deprived.

Is the spirit the same as the prospective infinite? In certain orders of discourse, this is an appropriate correlation, especially when communal semiotics is the focus. For like the prospective infinite, the spirit surrounds an actual infinite, giving it its own penumbra of possible meanings and novel trajectories. However, the concept of spirit has a deeper religious signification insofar as its appearance is most dramatic in those places where semiosis is unusually intense and fraught with danger. Perhaps one difference is that the spirit is more active in enhancing meaning while the prospective infinite is best seen as a space where meaning is protected and potentially nurtured.

It has been denied that the spirit has consciousness in the sense pertinent to the orders of psychosemiosis. In Christian theology, the spirit is a person with a special relationship to history, an agent who works out the incarnation of Christ within communities of faith. Again, this says far too much and goes way beyond the phenomenal data. The correlation of history and consciousness is problematic enough without projecting it onto a cosmic scale. Nor is the concept of personhood helpful in dealing with the ontology of betweenness. There is no centered consciousness in the spirit that could be addressed by human consciousness, even though the spirit can be met in an I–Thou relationship. Lacking consciousness, it must be seen as that kind of gradient that goes where there is a gap or opening in the semiotic world that needs to be transformed. If the spirit has less than infinite scope, that is, if it is not equivalent to all of the orders of *nature natured*, it stands outside of innumerable locations to which it does not have “access.”

And if this condition obtains, the problem is even more acute when we are looking at the ever-receding abyss of the underconscious of nature. No finitely located order, however different its *type* of spatiality, temporality, or sheer locatedness, can cross the ultimate ontological abyss into the heart of the underconscious of the world. This is a limit condition that even the naturally embedded spirit must face.

Positively, what can be said about the spirit, once many of its historical traits are removed in the context of a semiotic cosmology that honors the stringent requirements of ontological parity? First, it can be said that the spirit aids interpretation without being an interpreter. Second, it can be said that the spirit has an astonishing flexibility as a momentum of betweenness that makes it available in an indefinite variety of ways to the community of interpreters and to pre- and posthuman orders where some sense of law-like thirdness is necessary. Third, the spirit works against the potential demonic effects of projection by providing a vacuum or penumbra around given projections that drain them of their unconscious power. Finally, the spirit provides a mobile, yet perennially available, point of stillness for the individual interpreter by encompassing the manic plenitude of semiosis with something that is not directly semiotic. That is, it allows for a prethematic stillness that stops the wheel of uncontrolled semiosis.

The dialectic of sacred folds and their corresponding intervals represents the depth-dimension of religious semiosis for both psychossemiosis and the community of interpreters. The spirit is not so much a fold as it is the betweenness momentum that helps the numinosity of the fold enter into social space in creative ways. The fold simply is what it is, an emergent from the underconscious of nature that is indifferent to its effects on human community. The spirit, on the other hand, while not an intentional consciousness, is somehow more directly implicated in the semiotic well being of the community and its members. The Christian emphasis on the social dimension of the spirit is appropriate and represents perhaps its greatest contribution to a more generic concept of the how of the spirit in the worlds of social semiosis. Without the spirit, the dialectic of fold and interval would lack more direct pertinence to the community of interpreters. Again, the spirit serves as that enabling space of betweenness that can bring great powers into intersection. In this sense it is analogous to the interval, but unlike the interval it is not as directly tied to a given fold. Were it so tied, it would lack the distance it requires to empower intersection points between or among things that it is not. Through the spirit, the community of interpreters and its constituent members can become more and more open to intersection points without being devoured by them. On an even deeper level, there is a direct correlation between the spirit and interpretive courage. The spirit moves the self past its recurrent forms of self-protection so that it can have a different relation to the very processes of semiosis in the world.

Finally, the spirit can open the self and its communities to the most capacious horizon of all, that of world semiosis in which the gift of semiotic horizons per se announces itself to a creature otherwise marked by semiotic opacity and timidity.

CHAPTER 3

World semiosis and the evolution of meaning

The structures of world semiosis are the most pervasive in the various universes available to human probing. The concept of “world” to be used here refers, somewhat elliptically, to any and all worlds or universes that are or could be encountered in any way. No one world or type of world takes priority, such as the world of astrophysics, the world of qualitative immediacy, or the world of formal possibility. Further, the concept of “world” refers to any worldly structure that may forever be beyond the reach of sign-using organisms like ourselves. The concept of ‘worldhood’ (*Welttheit*), as partially developed by Heidegger, refers to the sheer availability of worlds to the human process on the most generic level. Worlds have content while worldhood does not. Worldhood is the sheer availability and *unavailability* of semiotic worlds to and for the self.

Meaning is rarely a static structure and is subject to its own forms of evolution, both in terms of its emergence through thermodynamic time and in terms of its unfolding within particular orders in particular respects. On the deepest levels, the evolution of meaning is correlated to the betweenness structures that house the spirit of interpretation within certain rare and fragile orders of interaction. While ecstatic naturalism denies that there is a final meaning, or that meanings progress in a linear fashion, it remains committed to the view that the worlds we encounter all have meaning in some respect, no matter how tenuous or how at variance with our wishes. The dialectic of plenitude and emptiness permeates all semiotic worlds, and serves to sustain their innumerable unfoldings and mysteries. The meanings encountered in sacred folds represent the most intense and “evolved” of the meanings available to the human process. World semiosis cannot be described outside of the context of the evolution of meaning (its how), any more than the structures of semiotic evolution can be delineated without a phenomenological description of world semiosis (its where). Yet underneath both of these actualities is that which can never evolve or be a world;

namely the perennial potencies of *nature naturing*. The great between that opens out continually between the most generic structures of semiotic worlds and the underconscious of nature can never be transgressed by human, or even divine, thought. When *this* form of betweenness comes more fully into our purview, a different kind of phenomenological and transcendental strategy will be required, one that is willing to endure the volcanic pulsations on the cusp between the two primal dimensions of nature.

We have three great structures and powers to deal with in this final section of the book: (1) the most generic features of world semiosis, (2) the phylogenetic and ontogenetic momenta of meaning's evolution (travail), and (3) the ever-reticent potencies of the underconscious of nature. Within these three great realms of nature a specific list of issues intrudes itself with tremendous force: (1) the nature of the sign/object relation, (2) the rise of archetypal and generic meanings, (3) the competition among meanings in finite contexts, (4) nascent forms of meaning "at the beginnings," (5) consummated forms of meaning "at the endings," (6) the tension between semiotic entropy and potential self-organization, especially political and social, (7) the emergence of spirit and the issue of its real or alleged singularity, and (8) the fundamental forms of the sacred vis-à-vis their intervals and the underconscious of nature.

THE SIGN/OBJECT CORRELATION

The current philosophical climate has utterly failed to illuminate the depth-structure of the sign/object relation, primarily because of a commitment to a semiotic idealism that gives signs too much freedom from the vector forces of those objects with which they are implicated. When Peirce's seemingly innocent interpretant theory is grafted onto the first dyad of sign and object, the temptations to idealism become almost overwhelming. Interpretants (new signs that emerge from the original sign/representamen to object relation) are what they are because of human forms of semiosis that can manipulate signs without probing into their underlying objective correlates. As is well known, Peirce reworked Kant's phenomenal/noumenal distinction into his immediate/dynamic object distinction to give the sign-using self at least *some* access to that which signs are alleged to be about. His primary difference from Kant was that the dynamic aspect of the object *would* (or at least could) be known in the infinite long run through the methods of science. If Kant gives us two infinite parallel lines that never meet, Peirce gives us

convergent lines that will eventually allow the object to appear fully through its interpretants. In some sense, the immediate object serves its hidden partner by rendering aspects of it available to human probing.

Yet Peirce still privileges human forms of mentality, and most of his followers have downplayed the potential naturalistic (and ecstatic) dimension of his perspective for a stress on the manipulative and allegedly postmodern aspects of semiosis. Peirce is not blameless, and even his post-Kantian elements still remain strongly within the Kantian orbit, especially the Kant of the schema:

The schema is in itself always only a product of the imagination; but since the synthesis of the latter has as its aim no individual intuition but rather only the unity in the determination of sensibility, the schema is to be distinguished from an image. Thus, if I place five points in a row,, this is an image of the number five. On the contrary, if I only think a number in general, which could be five or a hundred, this thinking is more the representation of a method for representing a multitude (e.g., a thousand) in accordance with a certain concept than the image itself, which in this case I could survey and compare with the concept only with difficulty. Now this representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image is what I call the schema for this concept. (Kant 1781: A140, Cambridge edition)

Kant's system allowed him to stay within the circle of his transcendental subject by linking a bare singular image with an equally bare concept through the mysterious realm of the pure image as woven together by the unconscious schema, itself a "transcendental time-determination." The schema serves as a kind of atemporal interpretant that makes objectness possible through internal semiosis. The schema is temporal but rooted in the pretemporal, and hence it is not subject to semiotic entropy (a feature of most forms of semiotic idealism). Heidegger tried to abject the atemporal dimension of Kant's schematism, but only served to impose his own categorial delineations on the problematic (see Heidegger 1929/1973). Peirce's perceptual judgment, which applied a predicate to a percept, is a more temporal form of the schema (hence closer to Heidegger's version of Kant), with an evolutionary dimension that at least makes a form of semiotic naturalism possible. However, this process is still biased toward the schema/perceptual judgment, and away from the manifold to which it is applied.

Clearly, Peirce's percept is more self-shaping than Kant's chaotic manifold (*Mannigfaltige*), but it is still caught in a kind of eschatological drama in which it will only be delivered into its proper kingdom of meaning at the end of thermodynamic time. A postmonotheistic

semiotic cosmology cannot privilege history in this way, or *deprivilege* the pulsations and rhythms of his so-called dynamic object. Another model is called for that can better exhibit the internal and external tensions between signs and their objects, without falling off the tight rope into the abyss of the transcendental schema, whether atemporal or partially temporal.

Of course, the term “object” is profoundly limited in scope and only retains its use in the current perspective because it continues to function in both pragmaticist and phenomenological perspectives. It is a shorthand designation for the far more flexible and generic designation “orders of relevance,” and must always be understood to stand duty for this latter concept. The two terms will be used interchangeably, but the term “object” must never be confined to any spatial or container connotations. Any thing whatsoever can be an “object” in this special sense, whether a thought, a possibility, a desire, a probability, or a law-like habit of nature. When the term “object” is given this great interpretive license, the only domain where it is not allowed to trespass is the underconscious of nature, which is not an order of relevance (or irrelevance) in *any* sense.

From the standpoint of finite sign users, all objects are at least partially known through their relevant signs. Is there a residue left over from this relationship that might be presemiotic, or in a different way, postsemiotic? Nonnaturalist perspectives would answer these questions in a negative way, while naturalism, especially of the ecstatic variety, will acknowledge that the self (at least) is impacted in ways that are not always semiotic or even commensurate with (translatable into) the semiotic. The stress here is on how objects have more scope and density (in some respects) than their signs, and that they have their own *how* that may not involve signification and its requisite senses of otherness. To return to the image of Jacob and the divine stranger, no matter how resourceful Jacob may be in his wrestling holds, the stranger always partially eludes him. His victory is deeply ambiguous, and pertains more to his sheer persistence than to any totalizing knowledge or information (code) won. He has protected the fragile sphere of consciousness, but has not received the universal code of all codes, although his tribal and family missions become clearer to him. Jacob is analogous to the signs by and through which the stranger becomes known, while the (divine) stranger is analogous to those aspects of the object that are “stronger” and more resourceful than the signs that make *some* forms of encounter possible. In this primal sense, the object is always more than the

innumerable actual and possible signs that are pertinent to its penumbra of meanings.

Two insights are already emergent here: (1) that the object is always more, in some sense, than any and all signs that make it available either to other objects or to specific sign users, and (2) that the object has a sphere of dominance, of resistance, that is both semiotic and pre- and postsemiotic. It is presemiotic insofar as it contains traits that are not translatable into a sign in some respect, and it is postsemiotic in that it is enveloped by betweenness structures and momenta that are more primal than either the prospective or open infinities. The object (order of relevance) clearly has semiotic traits insofar as it is encounterable at all, or has effects in any respect, i.e., is either weakly or strongly relevant to another order of relevance. Need these signs always be interpreted by another mind? This has been, and remains, one of the most vexing questions in all of semiotics, and has usually been answered in the affirmative. The concept of sign is held to entail that of sign interpreter, and that interpreter is usually held to be human, although many semioticians are now willing to talk about forms of biosemiotics. But what of those sign/object relations that are not organic, and that might be merely causal? Is there only an object/object relation, or is there a sign/object/sign/object relation in some sense? Above, John Deely's concept of the "virtually semiotic" made a brief appearance as one entrance point to this problematic. He is primarily concerned with exploring the nexus where physical causality unfolds into semiotic causality, all prior to any sense of final causality:

Before there are actually signs, there are signs virtually, that is, there are beings and events so determined by other beings and events that, in their own activity as so determined, they determine yet further series of beings and events in such a way that the last terms in the series represent the first terms by the mediation of the middle terms. (Deely 1990: 87)

The interpenetration of the physical and the humanly cognitive is further defended: "Not only can anything signify through cognition, and not only through cognition can anything fully signify, but, also phenomena not in themselves actually semiotic are nonetheless entangled in semiotic virtualities" (Deely 1990: 101).

The time process is semiotic through and through, even when so-called physical objects are involved. Any present state of a physical order of relevance will contain signs of its previous states, whether decoded by humans or not. Josiah Royce argued that the entire time

process was one involving a series of signs commenting on previous signs (all in the context of his Absolute Idealism). If I examine any physical object at random, it will represent its causal antecedents which can only be known through their signs, and hence part of the very physical being of the object will be its semiotic structure. In looking at the face of the Grand Canyon it is clear that each stratum contains its own semiotic “commentary” on its own and its antecedents’ histories. The causal relation is at least virtually semiotic in that it can become actually semiotic through an interpreter. But is it also actually semiotic in its own right?

At this juncture, what would keep us from calling a physical causal relation actually semiotic? What traits are manifest in a physical order of relevance that illuminate its causal history? Clearly there are concreteness of past states that have become hardened and obtain in the present. At the same time, the object will also have more recent traits that could only be what they are because of the antecedent traits, traits that have an ordinal location. The Grand Canyon does not need human (or other) interpreters to be a sign of itself and its past. It is its “sum” of signs no matter what form of consciousness may or may not interact with it. Hence, in the prehuman order, the sign/object relation is so intimate that there may be no way of making the distinction that is so pertinent for the sign-using self. Pushing beyond Deely, the current perspective affirms that even physical orders of relevance, the seemingly most distanced from semiosis, are actually semiotic. Their virtuality is ironically a virtuality for us, not a virtuality *an sich*.

The object is fully semiotic in the sense that it already *is* its signs of its past states (assuming that it occupies the thermodynamic arrow of time). But there are traits – they may not be semiotic, that may not be available within the object. Here the needs of naturalism have to assert themselves against an omnivorous pansemioticism. The object will be its signs of itself, but will also participate in the presemiotic in ways that are beyond the reach of interpreters and the object itself (without the object being personified). That is, the object is not completely exhausted by its actual semiotic traits, or its virtual (for us) forms of semiosis, but will also be the locus for those nonsemiotic traits that participate in the underconscious of nature. No order of relevance will be fully semiotic, although it will appear so to any perspective that does not honor the ontological difference between *nature naturing* and *nature natured*.

The object, whether physical or not, will be presemiotic, actually semiotic, and virtually semiotic insofar as it has potential semiotic traits

that can be actualized by sign-using selves of whatever biological complexity. The Grand Canyon does not “know” that it is a sign of itself, but that does not make it any less so. The gas cloud remnant from a supernova does not “know” that it is its signs of violent explosion, but it is so regardless. It is an anthropocentric prejudice that signs must be known to be such by a form of awareness that is fully intentional. A formal structural principle is a sign of itself whether discovered by sign users or not, and its “discovery” may only disclose part of its complexity, hence making it as much virtual as actual. We have a progression from the more “primitive” form of sign as object/object as sign, to the separation of sign from object when some form of awareness pries the sign loose from its embeddedness in a causal (or other) history or structure. Again, an order of relevance of any form will be presemiotic (insofar as it participates in the underconscious of nature), actually semiotic (insofar as it is a sign of itself), and virtually semiotic (insofar as it has semiotic traits that can be further actualized by a sign-using self). Where is the postsemiotic?

The postsemiotic dimension of the object is manifest “after” (and this need not be a temporal relation) it has entered into the mobile provenance of the spirit, which is the most elusive movement of betweenness. Here the plot thickens because the spirit is not always present between and among orders of relevance. Imperial concepts of the presence and power of the spirit must be purged from the perspective of semiotic cosmology because they have no relationship to the actual way of the spirit in the world. This particular analysis must wait, but it is clear that the postsemiotic dimension of semiosis is most unusual in nature and must be described in different language.

If we remain in the sphere of those orders of relevance that are preorganic, there is no problem concerning the sign/object relation. Any order that obtains in any way will be a series of signs of itself. These signs will be its traits in the domain of *nature natured*. From the standpoint of the object, to permit an anthropomorphism here, it makes no difference whether these traits are called signs or not, while from the standpoint of sign users, the distinction takes on varying degrees of urgency, especially in the domain of psychosemiosis. Looked at in its entirety, as per impossibility, the domain of *nature natured* is constituted by uncountable orders of relevance that are semiotic through and through. But this is also to say that these orders are traits that only need to be talked about semiotically in the organic orders.

In the spirit of Sartre, although from a very different philosophical

perspective, semiotic cosmology takes seriously his idea that so-called consciousness is a strange and displaced decompression in the worlds of semiosis and that it may generate more problems than it solves. Were consciousness not to exist, the sign/object relationship would only be minimally problematic for other organic forms which have built-in evolutionary mechanisms for decoding and sign translation. Once the reflexive turn takes place and subjectivity arches out over the worlds of semiosis, objectness is covered with a new veil of semiosis that is further complicated by the momenta of projection and transference. In the domain of psychosemiosis an extreme hermeneutic pessimism was averted through the positive insights of a generically reconstructed psychoanalysis that makes it possible to sort through projections *as* projections, and to probe into the correlation of validity and motive in any attempted semiotic cosmology. While this is painstaking work, it can and often will have a compelling outcome. But what about the domain outside of psychosemiosis, where the sign-using self encounters pre-human orders of relevance?

What do orders of relevance “do” to stake out their claims in the world, especially in that ever-elusive world where psychosemiosis intersects with preorganic orders, a nexus where internal processes cover over and distort intentional objects? To ask the question differently: can the unconscious be a gateway to objectness rather than its perennial shape shifter? The answer to these questions might seem surprising to any semiotic perspective that has fallen off the other side of the tight rope; namely, into a kind of hyper-realism that sees objects as ready made and available through their sheer secondness or thereness. The return of the object from its exile in the decompression known as consciousness is through an inversion of the very mechanism that covered them over in the first place. Here we enter into a different concept of resistance.

Phenomenologically, the concept of resistance (*Widerstand*) refers to the ability of orders of relevance to stand against and to propel away intentional acts that violate the self-giving of the phenomenon. The care given to phenomenological description requires that projections are examined in the light of varying degrees of denial that come from the object itself. Is this a naive and almost pre-epistemological formulation, or does it represent a strategy that has some chance of bringing us out of the morass of endless hermetic drift? How is the latter prospect reinforced?

For Husserl, one of the basic acts of phenomenological description is

the bracketing out of existence claims, his somewhat subjectivistic version of ontological parity. In an ordinal phenomenology, the commitment to parity more successfully completes Husserl's project by giving the phenomenon, not the subject, its full reality by rejecting any notion of degrees of being. The kind of phenomenology practiced by ecstatic naturalism has a more radical decentering of consciousness than Husserl's, and, in a different way, than Heidegger's, which remains within a romantic and heroic understanding of the correlation of the human process and the innumerable orders of *nature natured*. If consciousness is decentered, partially through the strenuous requirements of ontological parity, what access do we as sign users have to objects that helps us wrestle with the sign/object relation?

The unconscious, working in and through the interactive (transference and countertransference) field, has its own intentionality and its own relation to orders of relevance that serves the principle of ontological parity without any conscious effort. That is, the unconscious is a born practitioner of ontological parity and can serve to bring priority-driven consciousness back to its dimly sensed understanding of parity. The return of the fullness of the object from its exile in conscious priority and projection schemes is thus through the unconscious, which can never replace consciousness, but which can, under the right phenomenological conditions, attune consciousness to its abjected and missing relation to the object. The goal of any phenomenological description is to enter into the rhythms of the self-showing of the order of relevance with which it is bound so as to find the right measure of the sign/object correlation. Any order of relevance whatsoever, even the human, will be (minimally) a sign of itself. Phenomenology starts with this basal recognition and lets go of as many projections as possible so that the alleged free space of semiosis is jettisoned for the moment. Here the workings of the unconscious become crucial.

If the unconscious is a factory of projections, it is also a scanning system that has deep evolutionary reasons for getting the object right. The overdetermined sphere of projection, with its species transference, does have the positive role of enhancing the semiotic universe by holding open spaces for interpretation and the augmentation of traits. Yet it is also a sphere that needs to have its heat cooled by a counter-movement in which the object is gradually stripped of those projections that cover over its self-giving. In more concrete terms, how does this work?

Let us take an example that has an unusual level of semiotic density in

the human world, that of a large and perhaps religiously powerful tree that may be hundreds of years old. Structuralist semiology often uses this example in pointing to the distinction between the sign (word) and the signified (concept of tree within a system of binary linguistic oppositions). But what a bare and sterile formulation this turns out to be! For the sake of probing into the sign/object relation, let us further assume that the tree now functions within the ordinal location of certain neopagan practices that divinize it in terms of a sense of those immanent and earthly powers that have been abjected by the three Western monotheisms. The tree can now assume mythic proportions as a symbol of the center of the world or as a symbol of regeneration on the edges of thermodynamic time. But what, exactly, is the tree itself? Of course, this is an absurd question as the “tree” is *all* of its ordinal locations, all of its spheres of relevance, whether known or not.

Clearly this ancient tree is an object that now has overdetermined traits, many activated by the unconscious that we have ironically (or foolishly) invoked to help us out of this dilemma of endless semiosis. Again, is there any way past manic forms of semiosis toward the self-giving of the tree, or must thought accept a kind of aesthetic plenitude in which the tree is anything we project onto it regardless of real or alleged forms of resistance from the tree itself?

We begin the movement toward the tree in its self-giving by making as many of our projections as thematic (self-conscious) as possible. This is done through a series of rotations in which contrary traits are projected onto the tree so that it is shown to house incompatible yet compelling traits. This is a form of resistance that stands between the subject and the object, pushing contraries into the realm of internal conflict as housed in an external object. The very fact that there is now a semiotic overload becomes obvious to the sign-using self, and the distinction between the sign and its object becomes much sharper. For example, we can contrast a molecular understanding with the neopagan one, or an economic with an aesthetic ordinal location. A gap begins to open up with more and more clarity: the signs of the tree are not necessarily embedded in the tree in its own self-showing. This gap, as we shall see, is a gift of the spirit that holds open the mobile space between human projection and its intentional objects. The gap resonates with a field of possible interpretations, yet also keeps any given interpretation from collapsing back into the object. This is, of course, a limit condition under the conditions of finitude, but phenomenological inquiry can enter into this momentum when it lets go of one projection after another.

The process unfolds fitfully, but has its own vector force. The contrast between the molecular understanding and the neopagan will show the limits of either in gaining access to the way the tree is a sign of itself. The tree is a sign of itself in a much less frenzied or overdetermined way than either extreme, although each extreme occupies an ordinal location and hence is real in the way that it is real. The tree of board feet is as real as the tree that can generate a series of aesthetic contrivances, and neither series of signs can be rejected as belonging to the domain of the less real. But what is crucial here is the gap held open by the spirit, which is neither a sign bloom nor a sign root in itself. The spirit is the open clearing that can hold back demonic or simple overdetermined projections from the self-showing of the tree.

Projections resist each other insofar as they are contraries. But this only happens when thought insists, in a preordinal understanding, that any given trait is the only one possible. An ordinal analysis can live in contraries provided that each member of the contrast is understood to occupy its own order. Thus I can see the tree as being a molecular structure *and* as the mythic center of my religious world if these traits are held apart and allowed their own provenance in their respective orders. But once this deeper insight takes place, each trait becomes less likely to collapse into the tree itself. Two insights have thus emerged into the sign/object correlation: (1) there is a gap that holds open the space between projected traits and the object (a special kind of resistance that is a gift of the spirit), and (2) incompatible traits can coexist if they are seen to occupy different orders, which further pries any given sign loose from its object, that is, the sign is seen to live with and among other signs that limit its claims. We are now ready for the more positive aspects of the self-showing of the phenomenon on the other side of projection and the overdetermination of traits.

Here we enter into a kind of semiotic minimalism that may seem to be in tension with the plenitude of the ordinal perspective. The ordinal perspective honors the innumerable ways in which an order of relevance will, or may, obtain in the world, and does not seize on any one of these orders as being ultimate, although there are often practical reasons for privileging one order over another. Under conditions of extreme need we may cut down the ancient tree to convert it into heat energy, or at the other extreme we may protect it with civil laws so that its unique traits are preserved. But the tree is never reducible to any of its orders. How does the tree show itself in this ordinal plenitude?

The answer should be obvious, even though it may be profoundly

difficult to enact in practice. On one level, the tree is fully self-showing when phenomenology enters into the rhythms of each of its available ordinal locations. Ordinal traits can be allowed to emerge without questioning their whence, say, in the unconscious realm of projection. This is the first step of self-showing, in which contraries can emerge as protected from each other by their ordinal locatedness. Here phenomenology honors the semiotic plenitude that is the mark of any object that impacts on the human process in any way.

But we are seeking a deeper layer in which something at once more simple and more attuned to the unconscious emerges as the basal self-showing of the tree. Philosophers like Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur have spoken of a second level of naïveté or primal simplicity that can only take place *after* what we have called “ordinal rotation” takes place. While neither thinker has an adequate metaphysical or cosmological horizon, each has pointed to the place where the mania of semiosis finally gives way to the object field as it presents itself through a “cooler” unconscious that has built-in semiotic receptors.

There is a depth-correlation between the self-showing of the order of relevance and the receptors in the unconscious that actively probe into the preprojective features of the object. There is an encounter with the object/object sign that underlies the sign/object relation in the more robust ordinal sense. This correlation does not bring us a more real object, only one that is far less overburdened with semiotic noise. Thought is never compelled to privilege the full ordinal rotation (often filled with projection) over the simpler self-showing of the object through the unconscious, both because of energy constraints and because of the impulses coming from the object prior to its being clothed in projections. Why is the unconscious reliable in this second sense of increasing signal over noise?

In our analysis of dream work in particular, the unconscious was shown to have a compensatory relationship to consciousness. That is, whenever consciousness has a one-sided relationship both to itself and to its world (as the strange decompression that it is), the unconscious will “know” how to balance the manic projections and distortions of consciousness. This is a logic as ancient as the rise of consciousness itself and one that has proven itself over and over again in the analytic context. In terms of the self-showing of the object, this is manifest in a counter-field of awareness that undercuts the projections that it has itself manifested through consciousness. How is this strange mechanism possible?

Specific projections exist because a given consciousness is what it is;

namely, a one-sided take on a world that needs to be shocked into an awareness of its missing components. Projections in general will always exist, but their specificity is almost always available to phenomenological probing. Hence the unconscious “knows” when to project something overdetermined and when that projection has been recognized for what it is. The object is fully implicated in this process as its ordinal features are enhanced and/or diminished by the momenta of the unconscious. Here the concept of resistance takes on another fold.

The object will in some sense be known in its more primal self-showing by the unconscious. This is *precisely* why overdetermined projections emerge into and through consciousness, because of the felt gap between how consciousness sees the object and how the unconscious encounters it. It is as if the unconscious wants to propel consciousness into an absurd series of ordinal enrichments in order to force it to founder on its own folly. Thus the unconscious grants both manic plenitude and shipwreck, both ordinal fecundity and primal simplicity, all in service of the self-showing of the object. Let us return to our example of the tree.

The tree is certainly all of its forms of ordinal fecundity, as well as that which is prior to its projective enrichment in the nexus where consciousness encounters nonhuman orders of relevance. Not all of its ordinal locations are products of projection of course, as it will have uncountable such locations whether sign users exist or not. A tree falling in the forest certainly does make a sound, and that sound is a trait that may or may not be fully semiotic, but it is not a trait that need await some sign-using self in order to have its own ordinal location, its own sphere of prevalence.

Thus the tree is: (1) its prehuman ordinal locations, (2) its locations as they are partially shaped by its encounter with human selves, and (3) a more projection-free layer that resists the second dimension. For finite observers and actors it is impossible to understand the scope of the first domain, even though we can gain some access to the second. The third domain is the concern of this section because it is the one that involves moving backward toward the tree prior to its impaction on the self (and vice versa). Is this to say that the first and the third domains are in the end identical? No, for the third domain is a result of the second and can never pass through it back to the first from which it emerged. The tree will never be fully encountered in itself or for us, but will be differently encountered depending upon how consciousness and the unconscious struggle together to decompress as many projections as possible.

Semiotic space needs to be filled, but projections represent only one kind of sign material.

Objects both resist and call forth projections, while the unconscious also both generates and overcomes projections in its continuing dialectic with consciousness. The priority here is to say that desire is the foundation for knowledge, while knowledge serves, for good or ill, the objects of desire. This thought is as old as Plato, but needs to be woven into a phenomenology of signs and their objects so that the knowledge relation is allowed to play the role it must in the drama of the self-showing of objects. In the phenomenological transfiguration of desire into assimilative sensitivity, the object and the unconscious work more closely together to manifest their relevant traits to the sign-using self. From the standpoint of ecstatic naturalism, the object *an sich* is closer to us than Kant's noumenal sphere, but differently available to us than Peirce's dynamic object, which exerts a rather primitive form of resistance. The withdrawal of projections is a product of the more subtle resistances emergent from the orders of relevance that surround the self in process. When the object comes to us in its most primal form, it no longer wears a human face. The tree can show itself on the edges of language, putting great pressure on any form of linguistic contrivance that would render it into manifest structures. Is this yet another reason why poets are especially vulnerable to the world as it rises up into language?

ARCHETYPAL AND GENERIC MEANINGS

Insofar as the object can become free from the manic free space of projection and enter into its own vis-à-vis its encounter with the sign-using self, it can become free from those distortions that compress it into human shape and give it a provincial meaning tied to the will to power. Objects are generic in their own way and manifest features that are larger in scope and density than anything the human process can say about them. On the other hand, projections can give an inflated status to the role of the object within the pervasive features of world semiosis, losing all sense of its contextuality and sheer locatedness. Spartan ontologies abject archetypal features because they are held to represent a magical imposition of thought on the pristine and ascetic purity of the simple this-here-and-now. But as has by now become very clear, there are no such simple orders of relevance, and purity is itself a dubious metaphysical concept, more precisely, an allegedly honorific concept that has imposed itself on the descriptive enterprise. Phenomenological

humility, to mention no other, comes to recognize those generic forms of structure and meaning that emerge from object fields in their own right. The classical term “archetype,” going back to Augustine, well denotes the first or primal type that envelops many particulars in the world and gives them a much deeper sense of locatedness.

On one level it makes sense to say that any order of relevance will have archetypal features insofar as it has traits commensurate with an indefinite number of other traits in the world. But there are also warrants for a more circumscribed domain for the term. In Jungian analytical psychology the term denotes both instincts and preimagistic patterns that will generate images for the self. This Jungian perspective is somewhat honorific but has the advantage of pointing to the special nature of archetypal structures. In the current perspective the term will denote all that Jung means (with some revisions) and any generic trait in the prehuman orders that has an unusual power, scope, density, and fecundity within the structures of world semiosis. Hence in this reconstruction, not all orders are manifest as or are archetypes. It does not follow that we shall ever know all of these archetypes or that they are all even potentially knowable. Here once again the tension between the phenomenological and transcendental strategies becomes heightened.

For Jung, the archetype is never knowable in itself and has to be inferred from its effects on the psyche. In the domain of psychosemiosis this is a warranted view point, while in the prehuman orders such reticence is less necessary. A definition of the nature of the archetype is pertinent here. An archetype is any generic structure of unusual scope and power that participates in the ontological difference between *nature naturing* and *nature natured* while representing a kind of *sheer* thirdness (which is ontologically prior to Peirce’s concrete reasonableness). As such, the archetype is both presemiotic and semiotic. Insofar as it evokes and goads generality it is an eject from the underconscious of nature, while as an attained general trait it is a semiotic structure that links together subaltern structures. When the archetype intersects with the human unconscious, it takes on the extra fold of numinosity as it draws unconscious complexes to itself.

From the standpoint of human culture, the archetypes represent what Ernst Cassirer would call “symbolic forms of objective spirit,” that is, those concrescences of the movement of the depth-spirit that provide the ultimate matter for cultural assimilation. A great aesthetic contrivance is the embodiment of archetypal structures that are partially manifest within its shifting boundaries. Further, insofar as the artifact is

truly archetypal it will also compel hermeneutic strategies worthy of its depth-content. For Hegel, at least in his later lectures on the philosophy of religion (c. 1827), the objects of the religious *cultus* transcend both the aesthetic and the philosophical spheres, which makes them the ultimate tokens of archetypal powers. Without these embodiments of Absolute Spirit, the human spirit would have no sign-posts guiding it toward the lucidity of total self-knowing.

The Romantic notions of spirit in the early nineteenth century retain much of their value for the current perspective, precisely because of the role that *objective* spirit plays in the process of meaning in time. The archetypes of the realms of objective spirit represent the most powerful structures within world semiosis (for us) and must be placed at the center of any theory of reconstructed community if political theory is to have any access to real powers not of its own making. The archetypes of nature (as condescended for us in the collective unconscious) are those powers without which no depth-connection can exist in the human and prehuman orders. But as has been indicated in the analysis of psychosemiosis, archetypes are neither good nor evil per se, as such distinctions only make sense in the sphere where archetypes are already manifest within the personal and social spheres.

It is not clear why some of nature's unconscious potencies "produce" archetypes and some do not, especially since the very concept of number makes no sense when we are talking, however elliptically, about the pulsations of *nature naturing*. Yet it is also clear that archetypes cannot be reduced to the forms of scope and power manifest in and as the innumerable orders of *nature natured*. There is something about the *how* of archetypes that immediately signals that they participate in the presemiotic in a unique way, and that their correlation with any trait in the orders of the world will be strongly relevant to that trait. No orders are more strongly relevant to other orders within world semiosis than archetypal orders. Different linguistic formulations can be used in different contexts to refer to these orders, such as the language of folds and intervals in the so-called religious sphere, but it is the archetypal structures that are being referred to. Any order that is impacted by an archetype will have its *fundamental* traits augmented or transfigured.

The archetypal structures of world semiosis are semiotic when they become entwined with orders of lesser scope and power. Insofar as an archetype inters into the structures of the human unconscious, it opens that unconscious to the underconscious of nature and creates a kind of abyss beneath the self that compels a recognition of the ontological

difference between the realm of orders and that which is never an order. This does not always make archetypes welcome guests, but does provide a new sense of measure for the self in process that is anti-provincial, at least until some aspect of the archetype is projected in a distorted way onto a hapless object or self. Whether an archetype heals or rends is as much an effect of what the psychological agent does as it is a condition of built-in neurological structures that have their own elasticity or lack thereof.

Can the archetype theory help us to gain further access to the mysteries of the sign/object relation, especially since it has traits that are both semiotic (and hence like signs) and presemiotic (and hence like the presemiotic dimension of objects)? In a sense, yes. As noted, the archetype is never knowable in itself, but is indirectly known through its manifestations, which appear within an astonishing array of orders, both human and not. The kind of “essentialism” being asserted here is not that of a static preordinal variety, but one which places archetypes in an evolutionary context and one that has a modified version of the family resemblance model. The stress here is on how archetypes may change over time (like Hartshorne’s version of eternal entities) and have forms of relation that are not static but involve family branchings and correlations. However, an archetype is ontologically more “solid” than any Wittgensteinian family precisely because it has the power to shape orders and to be strongly relevant to them. In other words, the passivity that is connoted by Wittgenstein’s model belies the deeper phenomenological data which suggest a more robust form of relation for archetypal structures.

Objects can be seen to manifest local and regional traits. Certain regional traits take on an archetypal status when they are especially strongly relevant to the overall momentum or structure of the object within which they are incarnated. This relation is one that clearly involves formal causality, even if final causality is muted or only present in a fitful way in the realm of sign users. The final causality manifest is not so much that of a blueprint (again, Aristotle’s acorn-to-oak-tree) as it is a momentum that emerges from the gap between the local and merely regional on the one side and the archetypal on the other. Hegel had a very clear grasp of *this* aspect of semiotic cosmology with his understanding of the role of the concept in empowering particulars toward a greater manifestation of their internal fecundity. The superiority of his system over Kant’s is most obvious in his dynamized understanding of formal and final causality (even if we must downplay the second form in

most orders). If the Christian (Lutheran) and triumphalist aspects of his perspective are deprived, his categorial scheme remains highly pertinent to any contemporary attempt to frame an archetypal analysis of the sign/object relation.

The archetype reveals more of its relevant object to sign users by carrying that law-like generic momentum that is at the basis of all forms of evolutionary ramification (for example, cosmic, biological, or semiotic). In a sense, the archetype belongs to the religious category of what could be called “general revelation”; namely, that form of revelation that is not tied to a particular place, founder, tribe, or text. Each archetype is revelatory of its unique genus, especially since it also has the momentum that comes from that which is prior to the genera, hence turning “backward,” as it were, to illuminate the genus from below. In theological terms, this is the domain of the holy as contrasted to a patriarchal and exclusive revelation, which has a delimited whence and whither, always self-serving to a given natural community. An archetype that enters into human purview will have its own numinosity, which signals its elusive participation in the domain of *nature naturing*. By opening up the ever-receding underconscious of nature, the archetype, when genuinely grasped, makes tribalism impossible. Yet by the tragic logic of the human process, natural communities can capture a given archetype and divert its numinous powers for reasons that are pseudo-religious and demonic.

The object that is enveloped by its archetype is thus “more than” its mere objectness. There is a restlessness to the archetype that is a direct consequence of its stretch between *nature naturing* and *nature natured*. A genuine religious life enters into this stretch and feels its pull away from the exclusivity of a particular semiotic location, no matter how intoxicating. For sign users, the archetype, coming as it does through the medium of the collective unconscious, represents one of the most dramatic ways in which the ontological difference of nature can become manifest and compelling for thought and experience.

Here we see that the object is also its own not yet, a point seen by Peirce through a different lens. Jung often erred in stressing the no longer aspect of the archetype (which is certainly part of its provenance), thus making it necessary to remind thought of the prospective and dynamic dimension of the archetype as it gathers its relevant objects into the not yet of fuller semiosis and scope. An archetype fully participates in the $scope \times density = efficacy$ equation that applies to other forms of semiotic interaction. But the equation becomes more open ended in that

the scope and density of the archetype are partially derived from the ejecting underconscious of nature, and hence the variables of the equation are less “calculable” than they would be were the archetype not present.

No given archetype will be universal in all respects, as per the general conditions of ordinality. Nature manifests innumerable forms of resistance to the archetypes, providing a kind of outer boundary in each case that limits the reach of these powers that are both pregeneric and generic, but in different respects. From the perspective of ecstatic naturalism is it appropriate to equate archetypes with natural or scientific laws, such as gravity or the curvature of space? There seem to be no overwhelming reasons for not doing so, but something of the unique power of the archetype, certainly as experienced by us, is lost if it is simply equated with fairly ubiquitous structures. It seems to be more than a matter of philosophical taste whether, say, scientific principles are called archetypes. What is it that makes the archetype different from other general structures that are clearly quite similar?

From the perspective of human sign users, archetypal structures have the ability to activate complexes in dramatic ways, and to open up an abyss in and through the unconscious. A law or principle such as that of universal gravitation is unlikely to do so, although it could under unusual conditions of aesthetic contrivance or even religious contemplation, but these would be limit cases that actually illuminate the rule that archetypes have more immediate power in more direct ways. There is a striking difference between the archetypal power of the material maternal, as an embodiment of conditions of origin and the awareness that all bodies attract according to laws of mass and distance. But what about archetypes in the prehuman orders, where the issue of numinosity does not come into play?

There is a restlessness in an archetypal structure, precisely because its no longer is ultimately rooted in the underconscious of nature and its not yet is tied to prospects within the genus over/through which it holds sway. Does this assertion of “restlessness” impose a Schelling-like romanticism onto naturalism, making the world far more generative and self-othering than it is usually held to be? Or is this restlessness a momentum that is rooted in genuine conditions of ordinality and the preordinal pulsations of nature? The current perspective obviously supports the latter prospect for the oft-stated reason that no order is ever fully exhaustible or finitely bound. More deeply, no order is ever *totally* without some traces that link it to the ejective ground of *nature naturing*.

Archetypes, as semiotic structures of unusual fecundity (scope and density), have the kind of restlessness that comes from straddling both dimensions of the ontological difference, and insofar as an archetype is implicated in an order of *nature natured*, that restlessness will carry over to that order in ways that may or may not be available to human circumspection.

From the provincial perspective of an Earth-centered semiotics, certain geological formations may manifest an archetypal dimension, such as a sacred grove or mountain. There is something so universal and so compelling about the selection process behind these choices that the concept of an archetypal fold becomes less troublesome to assimilate. Zeus's eagles may no longer fly over Delphi, but the site still embodies archetypal folds that are almost instantly recognizable. The mysterious aspect of these archetypal folds is that correlated with the ejective ground of the underconscious of nature, the restless ground from which all gods and goddesses come, and the ground into which they will all return, no matter whether enveloped in a polytheistic or monotheistic *cultus*. The archetypal power of a location is stronger than any divinity condescended in and through it.

But what of an archetypal fold that is not so circumscribed by obvious spatial parameters? Can a divinity be enveloped by a location that has extremely elusive contours? After all, one can enter and leave Delphi in a very brief time, but the monotheistic god is held to be without boundaries of any kind. This god has neither center nor circumference and, for Augustine at least, is the source for the archetypes, not a captive of their powers.

The first clue is not too far afield. It can be found by starting with a question. What would be other to god in a so-called monotheistic universe? Is there something that god is not, and if so, what is it? Pantheism, and its far more sophisticated cousin panentheism, would efface the god/world distinction so as to downplay the otherness of god. But there are profound difficulties in this type of strategy (many of which have been carefully noted by Neville). Chief among them is that the concept of god risks becoming so trivial as to make it an unlikely candidate for a genuine discriminandum. Insofar as process naturalism is still a naturalism, it actually (and certainly ironically) finitizes god far more than ecstatic naturalism, which recognizes the great archetypal powers that punctuate nature at every turn. If god has no meaningful locations, then there is little reason for talking about an encounter with something of great and overwhelming meaning within the orders of the world.

A god that is everywhere is also a god that is really nowhere, and this implication is not lost to critical common sense, which recognizes in its own way that numinous powers are located in some orders rather than others. While nature has no other, god, the gods, and the goddesses must. Without an ordinal location, no divinity has any chance of being even weakly relevant to the sign-using self.

But why is it being asserted, contra Augustine, that archetypes envelop divinities? Is the concept of “divinity” being used here too idiosyncratic, or perhaps too “Greek?” Archetypes are held to be more enveloping than divinities of whatever stripe because they have a more generic sweep than any concrescence that could emerge from them. A divinity is located in such a way as to be at least partially addressable, while the idea of addressing an archetype involves a category mistake. Let us invert the order. It would certainly be possible to have a bare-bones naturalism that still honors archetypal powers without having any use for a sense of the divine, but it is not possible to have a sense of divinity without a co-equal sense of the numinous horizons from which they emerge. This is a clear asymmetrical dependency relation. Archetypes are not dependent on divinities, but divinities are dependent on archetypes. This does not make divinities less real than archetypes, only differently real. Would it make more sense simply to jettison divinities and have a less robust ontology? Only if the phenomenological evidence pointed in that direction. But the cumulative weight of millennial experience points to some kind of tie, however dependent, between archetypes and their, for us, compelling forms of embodiment.

Gathering our categorial threads together we can assert that archetypes are those primal first forms that emerge from the mysterious self-othering momenta of the underconscious of nature and generate dynamic and restless generic traits that envelop their objects in unique ways. They are not equivalent to general laws (scientific or otherwise) because they have a special numinosity (for us) and an openness to the ontological difference that general laws may not have. While it would be philosophically jarring to talk of the laws of gravity as pointing to *nature* *naturing*, it is not transgressive to talk of an archetype of power, or spirit, or the maternal, as opening out the underconscious of nature in however elusive a fashion.

The object comes closer to us under the aegis of its archetype because it is gathered into its own momenta of past semiotic states and prospective forms of semiosis. The archetype retrieves the more pertinent and semiotically dense of antecedent traits and renders them available to other objects or other sign users. This represents a deepened form of

the resistance that is so crucial for the truth question in phenomenology.

It is customary to make some choices among a number of traditional models of truth, for example: (1) the correspondence of thought to its object, (2) the coherence of a conceptual array, (3) the unhiddenness of the phenomenon in its own terms (of self-showing), and (4) the pragmatic correlation between thought and the growth of the dynamic object in its own “would be.” An endless stream of arguments have been proffered for each of these possibilities, but there may well be a kind of meta-pragmatism that honors the role of each approach or commitment insofar as it has something to reveal about the contours of orders of relevance as encountered by the self. The value of the archetype theory is that it can add a layer of depth-semiosis to the four strategies by compelling thought to slow down and enter into the complex rhythms of structures and powers that compel thoughts, objects, forms of manifestation, and forms of convergence into the capacious horizon of semiotic cosmology. Consequently, all epistemological methods are contributory in certain respects to the more basic task of framing those generic forms of semiosis that form the richest fibers in the cloth of world semiosis.

The actual infinite is suffused with archetypes, but is not reducible to them. The matter of the actual infinite is the “sum” of signs that obtain, that is, that have a given sphere of dominance. An archetype obtains in a different way as it has preordinal momenta that make it elusive. Yet the great archetypal powers form the skeletal structures for the actual infinite, empowering the growth of meaning along generic lines. There is also an intimate relationship between the archetypal powers and the prospective and open infinities in the sense that the archetype is a goad to the enhancement of meaning that emerges on the edges of the actual infinite. Not every mode of the prospective infinite will be the locus for an archetypal goad, nor will every mode of the open infinite always house one of these great ejects from the underconscious of the world. Yet the archetype, like Plato’s spirit of eros, will ply the realms between the actual infinite and the prospective and open infinities, linking them together in a dynamic way but without enveloping them entirely.

SEMIOTIC COMPETITION

Not all signs or sign systems are compossible in the same semiotic space. Part of the how of world semiosis involves an intense competition between and among sign systems. If there is no such thing as a nonevolutionary cosmology in science, the same logic applies (for simi-

lar reasons) to semiotic cosmology. Signs are what they are because of natural selection and random variation, not to mention vast histories that are given traits in sign vehicles as they obtain in the present. There is also something akin to semiotic cooperation, but this too takes place in an evolutionary context in which cooperation is a means to the end of survival in a potentially or actually hostile environmental niche.

To obtain as a sign vehicle (with its relevant pathways) is already to have won out against other competing signs. This is not to say that there is an overarching harmony that assures ultimate compatibility among all signs, but that within particular ordinal locations, some kind of competition will have shaped the resultant semiotic matter. Meanings have the quality of being omnivorous, that is, of seeking greater and greater instantiation in the world. The only check for this is competing sign systems that have their own similar hunger. The analogy between semiotic expansion and hunger reinforces the idea that signs are self-othering, that is, that they desire to gather other semiotic matter into themselves and convert it into usable semiotic energy. The theological concept of “concupiscence” captures this almost manic drive to ingest and devour the worlds of signification.

We have innumerable examples of this in the human order, where, say, a categorial array will pull in competing sign systems and make them subaltern configurations within its own provenance. Hegel is surely the great Master of this strategy by “showing” how any actual or possible shape of self-consciousness can only reveal its inner truth through the momentum of his categorial array. In a few pages at the end of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel reenacts the entire history of Western philosophy as it moves fitfully toward the perspective of absolute knowing, a culminating act that devalues all that comes before it. A similar strategy is employed by Peirce when he defines the value or scope of previous philosophical systems by how adequately they embody all three of his primal categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. He takes Hegel to task for failing to honor secondness (brute and preintelligible dyadicity), thus making his own imperial move, which reduces Hegel to a subaltern position within an allegedly more encompassing semiotic array.

In the extra-human orders, the same logic of semiotic competition applies. If objects (orders of relevance) can be defined as commenting on themselves, that is, as having both sign/object and object/object relations that are internal, then they can also be seen to reject other actualities and possibilities within their relevant spheres of operation.

For example, an atemporal logical structure will exclude certain classes of meaning (for example, inferences) as impossible in the same logical space. There is no intentionality or consciousness in this process, but there is semiotic competition. Some signs are forever excluded, while some are allowed. In temporal orders the conditions of exclusion and inclusion can change, but some such conditions will always obtain, no matter how flexible.

In the inorganic orders, a particular geological formation, for example, will manifest both the sign/object relation and the object/object relation. If the formation is the result of erosion it will not house signs or object signs that come from volcanic sources. They will be excluded from the ordinal locations of those signs. Again, neither intentionality nor consciousness is involved, but there is semiotic exclusion none the less. One sign series has made another impossible within its own sphere, and this basic law of world semiosis forms one of the touch stones of a naturalistic account of signification. It is all too easy to imagine impossible signs in the same order, but this is far different from that order actually allowing them to occupy the same domain.

Meanings are both finite and infinite. As argued, the concept of the “finite” is a precarious one and is best understood in a pragmatic context where the specific needs of sign users are at play. We can call a sign series finite in the special sense that we need or wish to ignore its endless prospects of ramification. Ontologically, any sign series is infinite in that it is impossible to exhaust its actual and possible locations, but it never follows from this that it will occupy all locations. Even an atemporal formal system will have innumerable applications and implications that come from its structure. In talking about semiotic competition it is crucial that the ontological sense of infinity be kept in the foreground. While there are innumerable moments within the actual infinite, they are also in competition with each other. There is thus a struggle among infinities for instantiation in what could be called a finite but expanding semiotic space.

In physical space-time, galaxies collide and devour each other, gravity pulling apart one system and melding it into another. A given galaxy is a sign/object and an object/object, again, for the stated reason that it is a commentary on its past states (at least). When the galaxies come into their intersecting mass and gravity fields, nothing remains the same. The signs and objects must adjust to each other according to well-known laws and principles. When the two galaxies occupied two different space-time systems, they were not in competition, but when their

infinite (that is, semiotically infinite) powers entered into the *same* physical order, they became impossible with each other. Augmentation and transformation emerged to create new infinities, new configurations that would contain semiotic traces of the formally separate constituents, but now in a new gestalt.

Semiotic competition thus occurs within any order of *nature natured*, whether organic or not. Underneath all of these forms of competition is the ultimate devouring abyss of semiotic entropy; namely, the tendency of any semiotic system to lose order and meaning over time. In a striking sense, the universe will lose meaning, perhaps all meaning, in the long run. This insight flies in the face of the intense eschatological longings of the three Western monotheisms, which all insist that meaning will grow in time and that there will be an ultimate bursting forth of meaning in some kind of apocalyptic inversion of history. But the history of religions should remind us that meanings are quite tenuous as they travel through human generations. Above, it was argued that the religious consciousness behind the building of Stonehenge remains locked in mystery. The so-called megalithic religions of the third and fourth millennia BCE are no longer transparent to phenomenological probing. There is a net loss of meaning and semiotic order in the movement of temporality.

Similar attempts to return to “primitive” Christianity have also been faced with the entropic problem. However, there are textual artifacts that at least make it possible to encounter something like the religious self-consciousness of the era, but even here there is so much lost in the process that it puts pressure on the very concept of *a* religion over time. There are innumerable Christianities, but no one religion, and each version of this allegedly unified tradition may find itself in intense competition with others. Each semiotic foundling, cast adrift into the momentum of thermodynamic temporality, will lose some of its own meaning as well as some of the antecedent meanings that follow behind it like a shrinking tail of a comet.

For sign users like us, the moral implications of both semiotic competition and semiotic entropy are immense. Each self is caught in vast, often underground, semiotic currents that have imperial claims. There are numerous intersection points where one sign system, as its own actual infinite, will attempt to compress or even destroy another. The perennial struggle between so-called secular and so-called religious sign systems in a democracy represents one of the most intense and dangerous such intersection points. If the secular sign system is overwhelming, then autonomy, as allegedly self-grounding, is without any genuine

depth-empowerment, while if the religious sign system is overwhelming, then autonomy is threatened by alien powers that break the structures necessary for democratic reconstruction. To live in a secular democracy while also being permeable to the religious depth of signs is to enter into one of the most important intersection points within all human forms of semiosis.

The denial of semiotic entropy carries its own dangers. Nascent and perhaps curative signs are ignored as past semiotic structures are protected against internal decay. Barriers are erected against the intrusion of chaos and disorder, but these barriers and their semiotic matter can only come by theft. There is a real danger that the three Western monotheisms will cling to antecedent sign systems long after they have been riddled with semiotic entropy. This is a process that can only produce demonic distortions in the long run. If a postmonotheistic world is emerging, then the most strenuous efforts must be exerted to provide a clearing for new meaning, meaning which will, of course, give way to something else in the flow of temporality, but meaning which must be prepared for in the current configuration of history.

All meaning contexts are finite in the special sense that they can only house a given set of meanings or sign systems simultaneously, even though ramifications are always available. In the conflict between the secular and the religious, or between an entropic religion and an emergent prospect, there is the full evolutionary drama of natural selection and random variation. The more efficacious meaning will emerge if certain conditions are met in psychosemiosis. One of the things that makes the human sphere so disquieting is that it can remain blind to its own best semiotic interests, and be a victim of entropic decay without knowing it (consciously). However, the unconscious has a clear sense of when and where semiotic entropy occurs, and can guide the selving process past and through an entropic situation toward one in which a new pattern of self-organization on the edges of chaos is taking place. The concept of “self-organization” adds a third term to those of natural selection and random variation. For some, this third term is actually a misguided way of talking about random variation, and in most orders this is true. But in the human order, at least, self-organization (which still entails theft) can open up a clearing within which semiotic competition takes on a deeper fold. In fact, without entropy and competition, newer sign systems could not emerge for sign users. The premier example of the dream work shows this most clearly in the context of everydayness.

NASCENT MEANINGS AND ENGRAMS

What about those nascent meanings that must fight against the tyranny of the past? And what about the very beginning of meaning in the various semiotic universes we inhabit, whether known by us or not? Can semiotic cosmology talk about its own version of the Big Bang, which crossed the threshold from the prespatial and pretemporal into the spatio-temporal? Is there something like a semiotic singularity that remains unknown except through a transcendental argument? If so, what can possibly be said about it?

The analogies with astrophysics are pertinent, but there are some differences to note, especially since the “object” of *semiotic* cosmology is not confined to the realm of matter and energy. In dealing with matter and energy, the semiotic structures emerge with their object, from the most primitive constituents that obtain in the rapid expansion of space and time to the most complex that currently obtain. Not much can be added to this account from the side of semiotics except the insight that these structures are also structures of signification, and hence analyzable in semiotic terms.

On a more generic level, there is something like the Big Bang at the nexus where *nature* *naturing* ejects the innumerable orders of *nature* *natured*, but great care has to be exerted in reining in metaphors and analogies that would render this in pseudo-scientific or even magical terms. The presemiotic pulsations of the underconscious of the world are fully self-othering, as can be seen indirectly in the ontological restlessness of semiotic orders which inherit this restlessness (which need not involve energy systems at all). The concept of “traces,” which has played a large role in postmodern perspectives, needs to become more phenomenologically sensitive in the context of ecstatic naturalism, where each order will elliptically manifest some faint remnant of the original expulsion from the night time of *nature* *naturing*. There is something like cosmic background radiation surrounding each order of relevance within the world, even if we don’t have instruments to detect it in the usual ways. The one instrument we do have is the unconscious, which senses this semiotic background radiation whenever it becomes open to the precarious and entropy-filled life of signs. Metaphorically it is as if the unconscious understands that each sign or sign system rests on fragile grounds and that it is an eject from an unruly and taciturn ground that has no semiotic features in its own right. To invert Sartre yet again, it is as if each order of relevance has

a heart of nothingness that points to the empty realm of self-othering potencies.

Unlike the Big Bang theory in astrophysics, however, the semiotic version need not always entail an actual beginning at a specific past (and it should be remembered that the concept of “past” falls away when the singularity *an sich* is speculated about). The implication here is that there are atemporal orders of signification that still manifest their own non-temporal version of a Big Bang, and that temporal orders, even spatio-temporal ones, have traits that point to an ejective ground that is in no way past (or present or future for that matter). This is not to reintroduce some physical doctrine of continuous creation, but to move the concept of creation into a very different order of relevance where it connotes the ejective momenta that form the mysterious “half” of nature. Science will use the creation concept in ways commensurate with its subject matters, while semiotic cosmology will use a differently located concept that is in harmony with its orders. When the orders of science and semiotics overlap, as is frequently the case, then the concept of creation has to be used in two distinct ways to avoid categorial confusion. Conceptual wisdom consists in the acceptance of a noninterference clause when two orders of conceptuality enter into the same space. But this does not exclude translation or convergence where appropriate.

Did signification exist before the physical Big Bang? This is an impossible question to answer. If some physicists speculate that there are innumerable other physical universes, or that they could exist, even along the lines of natural selection and random variation (so-called “baby universes”), then the history of meaning is not confined to this physical universe. But semiotic cosmology asks a different set of questions and seeks a different set of answers. Rather than confine thought to the physical Big Bang, prior to which it is impossible to see anything significative, the questions shift to the perennial tension within the heart of nature between its underconscious and heterogeneous momenta and its manifest orders of relevance. Were there orders of relevance “before” the Big Bang as understood in astrophysics? In the special sense being put forth here, it can only be said that there “were” virtual forms of semiosis within the heart of *nature naturing*. Note that the term “virtual” has now changed its meaning. Above, the concept of virtual semiosis was confined to the human process as it encounters meanings yet to be *for it*. In the present context, the concept of virtuality applies to nascent forms of signification *an sich* as they obtain in the presemiotic, pretemporal, and prespatial dimension of nature. Hence we can say, at least

within the purview of this transcendental argument, that there were at least virtual meanings “before” the Big Bang so long as it is understood that this concept is not in competition with the physical one resting on a mathematical concept of a singularity. The harder question to answer is: were there actual meanings before the Big Bang?

If ecstatic naturalism, as the supporting metaphysics for semiotic cosmology, had a more traditional conception of the divine in its arsenal, it might find a way to answer this question in the affirmative. But the fact that the divinities are ordinally located, and hence subject to limitations, especially those pertinent to omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, precludes the possibility that even they (whatever they are) could peer into this abyss. Hence semiotic cosmology must also find its absolute boundary, even though it is different in kind than that facing astrophysics. Hence, “before” the Big Bang (in the physical sense) there is virtual but not actual signification. But what about orders that already exist? Where are nascent structures encountered?

In the continuing dialectic between sign roots and sign blooms, it is often difficult to find something like a beginning sign. Peirce argued with some justification that there could not be a first sign, at least for sign users like ourselves. Yet he also argued that all realities emerge out of the ground of firstness, which has no forms of signification in itself. There remains some serious tension in his categorial array because he simultaneously counted on firstness to provide an explanandum for something like continuous creation while also abjecting it as something perhaps dangerous and devouring. It is as if firstness is best left behind as soon as possible so that dyadicity and general meaning can secure their rights against the background that remains ever too present for comfort. Any sense of a first sign, that is, one that still carries a nimbus of firstness, would be too discomfiting for his manic and aggressive semiotic theory.

Is Peirce right that there can be no first sign (either *an sich* or for us) (see *W* II.213)? In more technical terms, is his distinction between the sign as representamen and the sign as interpretant ontological or pragmatic? The better argument seems to be that this distinction between the first sign (as encountered) and the sign as interpreted is pragmatic and falls along an ongoing continuum that itself has no pristine or first sign. There is an Augustinian, better, neo-Platonic, sense in Peirce that signification is already a fall from the grace of firstness, and that we must live within this world of semiotic sin, come what may. This larger sense of a state of affairs that is both an emanation and a fall from firstness can

be seen in his philosophical theology in passages such as the following: “Do you believe this Supreme Being to have been the creator of the universe?” Not so much *to have been* as to be now creating the universe” (CP VI.505) or “In general, God is perpetually creating us, that is developing our real manhood, our spiritual reality. Like a good teacher, He is engaged in detaching us from a False dependency upon him” (CP VI.507), or “It must be by a contraction of the vagueness of that potentiality of everything in general, but of nothing in particular, that the world of forms comes about” (CP VI.196). This strong emanation theme, by which even the Platonic forms, à la Hartshorne, are emergent, has direct implications for his semiotics. There is no creation out of nothing for either the universe or the world of signs as both emerge from a whence that is clouded in mist. And if semiosis is part of god’s body, as process forms of naturalism assert, then god is creating both the body that is its historical being and the signs that are its intelligible surfaces and depths. To put it more imagistically, there is no Adamic sign, nor is there a semiotic garden of Eden, only embodied signs in innumerable gardens with elusive locations and even more elusive contours. But there are already worms in the fruits of these gardens, and these worms form the body of secondness or brute otherness that takes away from the purity of the origin. But is Peirce right?

From the standpoint of ecstatic naturalism, it does make sense to talk of first signs, signs that are emergent from the pulsations of *nature naturing* and that carry those traces with them. For all of his technical innovations, Peirce remained captive to the Christian longing for transfiguration within history (even if his concept of historical scope is much larger than Christian concepts). And transfiguration is only meaningful in the context of its counter force; namely, the structures of alienation and semiotic estrangement that will continue to thwart it until the ultimate “would be” at the end of chronological time. While these structures certainly obtain in innumerable ways, they are not the only structures, or always the most pertinent. Can the concept of semiotic sin be applied to prehuman orders? If so, what would make its application to our order distinctive? While Peirce did not use this language, the momentum of his categorial array suggests it as a continuing subtext to his problematic. But what, then, are first signs if semiotic cosmology is to occupy a post-Christian perspective on the fall and the processes of history?

First or nascent signs need not be temporally first. They could be foundational in atemporal structures as well as newly emergent orders of

scope and density that are ejects from the underconscious of the world. Peirce in fact had some novel ideas about what *could* be called first signs when he probed into the mathematical theory of infinitesimals. An infinitesimal is a unit that is infinitely small yet greater than zero. As such it occupies a very special ontological terrain. The difficulty with this concept is that it is impossible to decide about its ontological status, even though Peirce seemed to see infinitesimals as constituents of the world. Do they exist in themselves, or are they only tools that can make it possible to do certain kinds of mathematical work? In our context, the pertinent aspect is the metaphorical. The infinitesimal is self-othering in that it births an actual space-time point that represents its emergence into the world of *nature natures*. In itself (whatever its status) the infinitesimal never appears. Consequently it is a good candidate for something that lives on both halves of the ontological difference. In one of its dimensions (as infinitely small) it is akin to those pulsations in the underconscious of nature, while in its other dimension (as greater than zero) it lives on the cusp where the presemiotic gives birth to the semiotic. Thus the infinitesimal, in Peirce's special sense, while not a first sign, is correlated to nascent or even first signs in a direct way. Mixing concepts, we could say that each infinitesimal obtains as its own singularity, generating a miniature Big Bang that brings a sign into being from the presignificative. At this point, the language is sounding hopelessly magical, but it helped Peirce to solve a problem concerning his own abjection of firstness; namely, by providing an alternative language that would de-emphasize the fall away from firstness and stress the creative expulsion from the self-othering of the infinitesimal units of the world.

One of the things that makes Peirce so fascinating is that he opened up a tension between an implied Christian sin and grace model and a neo-Platonic notion of emanation. Both strands exist within his system and they are never fully reconciled. The neo-Platonic model, which is tied to his understanding of infinitesimals, enabled him at least to approach the idea of a first sign, while his Christian dualism made him a captive to an eschatological perspective that could only redeem signs in the ultimate would be or infinite long run.

For the current perspective, first signs continue to exist insofar as there is genuine novelty within a semiotic order, or insofar as a given sign root is more directly tied to the ejective powers of *nature naturing*. When the astrophysical Big Bang occurred, innumerable signs of a certain type also obtained as first signs (among other things). This is a

fairly noncontroversial claim. But outside of this event, what exactly is a first sign? Perhaps this is a limit condition, certainly for a phenomenology practiced by finite creatures. Perhaps we can only posit a first sign via a transcendental argument so that we forever give up on the quest for finding the self-showing of such a sign. But is there a way of finding first signs that hasn't been displayed to this point?

As might have been suspected, ecstatic naturalism is prepared to talk of first signs in certain respects, rather than first signs in all respects, whatever that would be. But this perspective on nascent signs is more ontological than that of Peirce, who was inclined to see any attribute of semiotic firstness as being the result of an arbitrary human slice of the line of semiotic continuity. For the current perspective, two dimensions of relevance have been delineated, (1) that of novelty and (2) that pertinent to the emergence of a sign from the pulsations of *nature naturing*.

The concept of novelty is notoriously difficult to define or even defend as it seems to fly in the face of our growing understanding of operative principles in nature. Yet if one shifts the discourse to talk about "novelty in certain respects," then many of the attendant problems drop away. There can be no such thing as absolute novelty within the orders of *nature natured* as that would entail a sign or object that could not be traced back to some antecedent conditions, that is, it would entail a sign or object with no ordinal location. Further, it would put extreme pressure on the concept of relevance as the novel order would also be discontinuous with surrounding conditions. Consequently, it only makes sense to talk about degrees of novelty within certain orders of relevance that happen to "favor" the emergence of new traits that are not *fully* reducible to antecedent conditions.

The concept of a relatively nascent sign makes sense once the above conditions are satisfied. In the human order, novel signs emerge in creative contrivance and in dream work, compelling us to attend to these eruptions within world semiosis that stake out new terrain against the ubiquitous background of cosmic and personal habit. But these novel signs are always novel in certain respects, and insofar as there is an appropriate kind of commensurateness with antecedent signs, they may become available to the communities of interpretation that encounter them. In the analytic context, the analyst and analysand form a two-person community of interpreters with the dream functioning as the third and necessary partner in the semiotic field. The success of the analytic enterprise depends upon the ability of both selves to find relevant continuities amid discontinuities within the dream series and its

signs. Failure to see nascent signs is also a failure to enter into the developmental teleology of dream life.

The concept of a first or nascent sign thus has its own ordinal humility; namely, that no sign is purely first, although it may be partially first in very important respects. A new gestalt is brought into being that is somehow more than the sum of antecedent traits. Peirce argued that without some form of novelty, habits could not be broken and new laws could not emerge. Hence, for him, novelty is a necessary feature in personal and cosmic evolution.

From the standpoint of the self, novelty is necessary for the fulfillment of the selving process as the novel irruption of signs can compel a new self-organization that encompasses past signs and brings them into a new configuration. Yet there is also the tendency to stress the novel traits too much, thus ignoring or abjecting the necessary antecedent conditions for their emergence. This abjection process can be seen most starkly in certain forms of religious conversion which abject the preconverted self as being no longer relevant to the new self that has emerged. Psychologically this is a dangerous move as it utterly ignores the continuing power of unconscious complexes to intrude in the life of the so-called “born-again” self. Again, all novelty is novelty in certain respects and not others.

The more difficult problematic has to do with the role of novelty in extra-human orders. Is this a question for semiotic cosmology or a question for more empirical forms of inquiry? The latter probability suggests itself here, precisely because we can never be sure whether we have isolated all antecedent traits. It is for physics to decide, for example, if quantum theory can be reconciled with other theories, thus linking it to a hoped-for Grand Unified Theory. What semiotic cosmology can contribute is a sense of what ontological relevance means for any order encountered, whether within the purview of the sciences or not. Thus, if quantum theory remains what it is, the question of relevance still must address the respects in which orbits within the atom are relevant, weakly or strongly, to the atom as a whole. Quantum leaps have their own sphere of prevalence, not just any. Again, it is always novelty in certain respects, but in this domain only specialized and instrument-driven forms of inquiry are appropriate for settling (or failing to settle) what those respects are.

The nascent sign emerges in the way that it does within the context of antecedent conditions that provide and take away options. But what about the more elusive concept of novelty; namely, that tied to the

sign/*nature naturing* relation? Here we must rotate thought through a different concept of relevance than that pertinent to the concept of novelty within the orders of *nature natured*. In the orders of the world, any novel trait will be either weakly or strongly relevant to the order within which it appears. If it is weakly relevant it will merely add to the scope of the order, while if it is strongly relevant it will add to its identity. Generally we can assume that a novel trait will be strongly relevant to its pertinent order, precisely because it leaps beyond current configurations into a new gestalt, that is, a new type of trait in that order.

But the concepts of weak and strong relevance have been shown to apply only within the orders of the world, not to the nexus where the underconscious of nature and *nature natured* “intersect.” What about the concept of *sheer* relevance that was used to describe the unique relationship between the sustaining infinite (as providingness) and the innumerable orders of the world? Is this the kind of relevance that points to the deeper traces left by the underconscious of nature? No, for the sustaining infinite leaves absolutely no traces within the world, that is, it neither changes nor augments traits in any respect. It is roughly equivalent to the power of Being (Tillich) that sustains whatever is.

Another language is called for if thought is to be rotated into the full draft and power of the ontological difference as it correlates to novelty. Two dimensions have to be delineated, the first being the more generic one pertaining to any sign as it correlates to *nature naturing*, and the second pertaining to novelty per se, although this will be a different kind of novelty than that manifest in and through the transactions of the orders of the world.

An equivalent term for trace is “engram,” which can refer to a kind of memory trace within organic tissue. Whatever the status of this particular usage in scientific inquiry, it can serve a more generic function within semiotic cosmology by denoting the memory traces left within each object of the unruly ground, a ground from which they have been ejected. This “memory” need not be consciously entertained, but it is somehow available in the object as a mark of the conditions of origin. There is a kind of nothingness in the heart of each sign or object that cannot be filled in with semiotic content. This represents an internal abyss that marks temporal orders (at least) as bound by death. Buddhist perspectives have developed an unusual phenomenological sensitivity to the engrams that are found in each object or sign of the world, reminding the self of its own engrams that point backward into the lost origin that is never an order, and is neither born nor dies.

The still point around which phenomenological rotation takes place (Husserl's *Abschattungen*) is an engram of the emptiness of the unruly ground. In poetic contrivance it is common to evoke the concept of the melancholy of the world itself, as if each order manifests a longing for that which is remembered. Perhaps a more circumspect (and flattened) language would shy away from invoking such a ground-tone for the world, but some ontological insight has taken place here.

If a sign emerges at all from the state prior to its own signification, it will, by definition, carry traces of that state. When that "state" is not a worldly state of affairs, but the unruly ground (*nature naturing*) itself, then the traces will be specific engrams or indefinitely determined openings onto that which is without traits of any kind. The emptiness that can be sensed in objects and signs is the nonlocated place where the engram of the underconscious of nature is manifest. Is the engram a trait? Yes and no. The engram is a trait insofar as it is discriminated by the sign-using self. Either it is seen or it is not. From the standpoint of *ecstatic* naturalism, these engrams obtain in their own right outside of human forms of assimilation and projection. But the engram is not a trait in the special sense that it has no semiotic features per se that would differentiate it from other engrams. In other words, Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles applies here. Engrams obtain, but there is no principle of difference that would mark one from the other. This puts the engram in a unique ontological position, somewhat like Peirce's infinitesimals. Yet unlike the infinitesimal, which is clearly a posited "as if," the engram can be encountered on the edges of awareness. The analogy here is to that in optical astronomical observation. To see a deep-space object through an amateur telescope it is often necessary to look at it from the side of the eye, which has more light-sensitive rods than the center. A galaxy like Andromeda (M31) will be much clearer when looked at obliquely. The engrams "within" each object and/or sign must be seen obliquely, but they can be seen under the right conditions. But they will never be seen as having respects or traits per se.

Again, what of novelty? In the domain of *nature natures* novelty involves the eruption of a new trait or a new configuration of traits, usually strongly relevant to their respective antecedent and present order(s). But if the engram is never fully a trait, never different from other "instances" of "itself," then where does the concept of novelty come into play? It comes into play in terms of a sense of the absolute novelty of any sign or order as it lies suspended over the abyss of *nature naturing*. Metaphorically, the engram represents the seed of longing that

ties each order to the mysteries of the ejective process out of the womb of nature. Plato and Kristeva both rely on the concept of the *chora* (open space or womb) that is the ejective ground, respectively, of cosmic evolution or signification. The engram is a trace of the womb from which anything whatsoever emerges, and it is a womb that can never readmit its ejects once they have emerged into the dialectic of plenitude and emptiness in *nature natured*. Part of the restlessness of world semiosis and its constituents is a product of the engrams that represent opening pathways into the unruly ground of nature. Lest this sound too magical and insufficiently phenomenological, it must be remembered that each order of relevance within thermodynamic temporality contains its own seeds of death, and these seeds can become manifest in the engram that participates in nonbeing. But this is not to say that the engram is merely an expression of entropy, which, by definition, has manifest traits that can be quantified. Rather, the engram has no degrees and no coloration that could individuate it. We may be compelled to use the plural form “engrams,” but there is no way of deciding between the plural or singular, as the concept of number is inappropriate. What *is* being evoked in the encounter with the engram of the sign or object is the absolute novelty of the order as the order that it is. This sensibility is subtly different from that which comes from the encounter with the sustaining infinite, which can become open to the sheer shock of being. The encounter with the engram is much more like an encounter with the ever-receding origin that has no face, and certainly none of the plenitude and power of being.

Hence, the concept of the first sign has been modified beyond Peirce’s partially felicitous formulations. First signs do exist in the sense that novel traits can exist, certainly in the human order, and perhaps in the extra-human orders as determined by scientific (and other) forms of inquiry. And each sign is a first sign insofar as it houses its own engram that opens out into the reticent abyss of *nature naturing*. When we come to see *each* order of the world as a foundling, then we shall have understood what the engram illuminates of its lost point of origin.

CONSUMMATED SIGNS

To turn the problematic around 180 degrees, what can be said of the consummatory phase of signification, of the ends that emerge within the orders of the world? A perspective that privileges history over nature will place great priority on the consummatory phase of signification,

whether written on the cosmic scale or on the more modest level of human and natural interaction. Ends will be eulogized as moments to be prized and as consummations to be protected against social or natural entropy. But ends can no more be eulogized than any other semiotic structure. The term itself is neutral in value and merely refers to that phase of signification in which a sign series has momentarily or eternally completed its branching process in time. In atemporal sign systems different rules apply, and ends are always and already consummated, whatever the human process says about the matter.

One striking feature about psychosemiotics is that the concept of ends as consciously and rationally sought has been forced to retreat as more and more knowledge is gained of brain neurology and unconscious complexes. The human process often acts far more out of unrecognized (by the attending consciousness) impulses and causes than was known in previous eras, and the ends that emerge are often after the fact. The concept of will, when tied to that of conscious deliberation of ends in view, is even shakier. It may well turn out that the concept of the human will boils down to a series of feelings that are associated with the momenta of internal structures over which we have little control. But care has to be exhibited here. The concept of free will needs to be folded back into the larger sense of the great assimilative potentialities of the self, and when this is done, it loses some of its sovereign status as the alleged sphere of open indeterminacy. That is, something like free will does exist, but it is always will in the face of vast and ancient semiotic structures and internal determinations that provide it with its sense of location and which shape its finite prospects. That being said, is there something more positive to say about the consummatory phase of signification, both in human and extra-human orders of relevance?

In the human order, ends are as precarious and fragile as certain forms of origin. If developmental teleological processes are the rarer form in the human process, with the causal form being the more encompassing, then most ends are consummated without conscious contrivance or instrumental control. Dewey was persistent in his justified belief that waste and sheer drift are as much a part of the woof and warp of experience as creative transformation. In fact, conscious deliberation takes concerted communal effort to lift the habit-bound individual out of the grooved patterns of interaction. This is one of the reasons why Dewey places such stress on education, because flexibility in habit formation at an early age is a necessary condition for personal fulfillment and democratic reconstruction. For the most part, however, ends

are simply causal products that have a certain rounded quality or which cease to generate further ramifications because of entropic decay.

In the rarer case, ends can emerge that are part of a continuing developmental teleology in which the selving process emerges fitfully from its own inertia and semiotic mass. Here ends are no longer merely endured but entertained and probed for their potential transforming power. Yet they remain bound by the conditions of horizontality; namely, that they operate in a finite meaning horizon that has opacity at its edges. The self is never fully clear that a given set of partially chosen ends is appropriate or ultimately beneficial, and one mark of this is the possibility of fanaticism, which can erupt when there is internal doubt about alleged freely chosen ends.

Consequently, most ends emerge for the self by their own accord and need not be consciously entertained, while a small class will emerge through more or less genuine forms of semiotic probing, yet remain unstable in a creature characterized by drift and inertia. But no end, whether unconscious or conscious, is purely private. Ends emerge through the sheer inertia of the social unconscious as well as through the rarer moments in which a community of interpreters transforms its natural antecedents to bring ends more fully into view.

The contemporary postmodern fashion is to privilege an exfoliation of divergent personal and social ends, as if such a strategy is a sufficient condition for conquering patriarchy or essentialism. While this momentum may be a necessary moment within a more generic personal and social reconstruction, it has demons of its own, especially when it is tied to a blind narcissism that fails to grasp the limits of self-grounding autonomy. In an ordinal perspective, convergence in some orders complements divergence in others, with neither being privileged in all respects. Insofar as an end becomes even partially conscious, it is rendered available to creative counterpressures and affirmations that will test its continuing viability. Unconscious ends, while inevitable, are especially problematic. The moral force behind and within ecstatic naturalism is manifest in an insistence that all unconscious ends become at least potentially available for conscious scrutiny. Again, unconsciousness, where not absolutely necessary, is a sin, both personal and social. If the concept of "sin" is too jarring on postmodern sensibilities, then concepts like "estrangement" or "closure" can be substituted, especially since the latter term seems to correspond better with the phenomenological data.

Peirce did not fully grasp some of the more radical implications of his

theory of developmental teleology (see *CP* vi.156), perhaps because of his Lamarkian belief that novel habits could be creatively passed on to subsequent sign series or panpsychist systems. A more chastened naturalism understands that all developmental goals are surrounded with “hostile” forms of habit that remain inflexible. A more compelling image of the actual situation might be that of a fragile structure that briefly emerges from the powerful waves of an unconscious sea, lifting itself up just enough to grasp that the sea is even there *as* a sea, and that any forward momentum must somehow find a way to steer both with and against strong currents that have no conscious intentionality of their own. One suspects that Peirce could not abide such a vision, which so devalues the manic hubris of the human sign maker.

In the extra-human orders, ends are more clearly marked in terms of entropic decay or through complex intersection points that transform one causal stream into another. Perhaps it is merely a heuristic device on the part of human sign users as to whether some selected trait is an end or not. Are all ends finite? Can we speak of the end of the physical universe in the same way that we speak of the end of a species that has become extinct? Can we speak of the end of a member of a continuing species in the same way that we speak of the species itself? As noted, process naturalisms are profoundly uncomfortable around the issue of endings, and have developed a conception of the consequent nature of god that makes sure that there are no absolute endings in the world. Whatever has been an order in any respect is remembered by a divine order (which may or may not be a society of orders). There is thus no genuine loss in the world, only the growth of plenitude in time. Yet nothing, either conceptually or phenomenologically, suggests that this belief is anything more than a species-need to write its own future onto a nature that is not even aware that it exists.

For ecstatic naturalism, ends do exist, and many of them are experienced by us as intrinsically tragic, comic, or neutral. But it is important that the *concept* of endings be neither eulogized nor demonized. Endings are what they are, and the human process has, ultimately, no say in the matter. This is not to say that we can stoically watch endings take place without taking some action where deemed pertinent or efficacious, but it is to say that we cannot import dubious concepts of everlastingness into a world of orders that is continually manifesting death and rebirth in an endless cycle. One depth-structure for our more sagacious sense of endings is our existential loss of the self-othering origin of the underconscious of nature. This awareness is the source of religious melancholy,

attuned to genuine tragedy, yet open to genuine ecstatic pulsations on the edges of finite endings. A second depth-structure for our sense of endings is in the power of the not yet, which holds open a place for semiotic ramification in the momenta of the spirit. But it is mythic thinking to assume that all losses are redeemed as they occur, and that the world always comes out with a positive sum equation in which tragedy is some kind of infinitesimal value. The tragic is not a privation of the good, but part of the perennial how of nature. For many, the real mystery is about how the good can exist, not about its alleged forms of privation. Of course, “nature” in itself cannot be seen to be either tragic or nontragic. Yet from the perspective of finite sign users, such conclusions seem compelling in their own right. So naturalism is left with a dual-layered insight; namely, that nature is absolutely neutral as to the intrinsic meaning of ends, and human sign users seem compelled to assign value to these endings in fairly predictable ways. The point here is that the latter sensibility is also fully natural and that process naturalisms try to efface the wisdom of critical common sense.

ENTROPY AND SELF-ORGANIZATION

To push beyond the concept of developmental teleology, it has been suggested that human sign users may add the trait of self-organization to those of natural selection and random variation. This is controversial terrain, but some conceptual and experiential openings have taken place that may secure this concept within the larger neo-Darwinian synthesis. Regardless of how biological forms of inquiry incorporate (or fail to incorporate) the concept of self-organization, it is directly evident in the correlation of selving and surplus semiotic value. The basic conceptual structure is straightforward, even if it has revolutionary implications. At certain levels of complexity a system will reach a state of disequilibrium that is equivalent to being on the cusp of a phase transition. Under certain conditions, these emergent systems will reach a new level of self-organization that is not subject to entropy (in the short run). However, there are no envisioned systems that will not succumb to entropy in the long run. Peirce had his own way of describing this process in terms of gambling against the house. In the long run one is destined to lose, while in the short run, one can win. The trick is knowing when to bow out.

In psychosemiosis, phase transitions occur all the time as one form of self-organization pushes past the limits of its support conditions, causing

a new more complex form of self-organization to emerge. Of course, there can be a backward momentum in which the edges of the organization collapse because the new complexity cannot be sustained against internal centripetal pressures. To put it in terms that not all complexity theorists might accept, complexification has to be paid for. The overall trajectory of the human process is precariously perched between the complex systems in the unconscious and the fitful momenta of consciousness. Self-organization allows for emergent properties when the balances between these two spheres are properly adjusted. Both the unconscious complexes and the world of intentional consciousness are brought to a new level of complexity in which sign systems can interpenetrate. But sustaining this new complexity calls for even more complex adjustments, and there are limits to how much the self can endure. Psychic phase transitions are not always in the honorific class, and certain forms of complexification may damage the selving process. When the relationship between the self and its communities is envisioned, then the problems of self-organization become even more strenuous.

But this is not to cast doubt on the necessity for self-organization on the edges of chaos, especially if these processes are ubiquitous throughout nature (cf. Kauffman 1995). There are even some dramatic political implications in complexity theory: “the emerging sciences of complexity . . . offer fresh support for the idea of a pluralistic democratic society, providing evidence that it is not merely a human creation but part of the natural order of things” (Kauffman 1995: 5). If this view is correct, then steps have to be taken to correlate the how of self-organization in human sign users with the structures of natural and interpretive communities.

Natural communities are organized according to the internal momentum that keeps their sign systems moving along highly predictable pathways. The effects of entropy are partially delayed by the inclusion of new sign users who will give their energy over to the omnivorous social body. But there is nothing analogous (in this limit case) to the kind of self-organization found in the community of interpreters that will push itself toward a creative disequilibrium every time new signs are encountered or already available signs need to reveal more of their ordinal locations.

In a very clear sense, Kauffman is right. The community of interpreters is and must remain democratic and pluralistic if it is to live on the edges where semiotic overload gives birth to higher and more complex levels of self-organization. In a natural community, no such surplus or

overload is long tolerated, and any novelty in the interpretive situation is dampened. For the community of interpreters, self-organization preserves the Kantian principle of autonomy, but this principle is deepened by an awareness of the unconscious and the underconscious of nature.

The whence for the community of interpreters is continually reenacted in creative ways, with the hermeneutics of suspicion living in creative tension with the need for direct participation in those lost potencies that slumber in the heart of all genuine and emancipatory communities. The whither lives in the full drama of a *realistic utopian expectation*, that is, an expectation that knows the limits of its powers in a world of natural communities and also knows the dangers of exclusivity in which one utopian goal is allowed to destroy and maim the present conditions of social life. No community can exist without some utopian energy. A natural community has a one-dimensional and closed utopia with very specific semiotic content. This quickly becomes and remains demonic. But a community of interpreters must have an open utopia without such delimited content, and must use the energy from this open utopia to enhance present forms of self-organization.

A natural community will have a closed utopia that has a dyadic base. Other groups are excluded from full participation in this utopian dream. For example, the natural community could envision an end to “injustice” through a hierarchical use of power that eliminates any threat from the fragile orders of autonomy. The kingdom to come would be all too clear to those outside of it, but clear in a less conscious way to those inside of it. Only a reign of terror, however subtle or brutal, can instantiate the utopia of a natural community.

The realistic and open utopia of an interpretive community can also point toward justice, but must do so through the preservation of autonomy against its own tendencies toward a return to the magical thinking of content-filled utopian dreams. In a realistic utopia the community dreams forward into a creative not yet that, by definition, cannot have its content spelled out in advance. Who would map this utopia in a fully interpretive community? There can be no such antecedent map, only emancipatory energies that enter into the depth-structures of self-organization on the edges of routine forms of semiosis. The utopian energies of an interpretive community become emancipatory when they open up signs to the not yet, which comes from the underconscious of nature itself.

The community of interpreters is thus democratic, pluralistic, self-

organized, protective of autonomy, open to content-free utopian energies, open to past and often lost emancipatory potencies, and sensitive to the powers that must come through the human unconscious as it participates in the underconscious of nature. How does this work in more concrete terms?

Consider a specific proposal such as an anti-racism campaign within a community that has its own history of racism. How can such a campaign possibly succeed against the forces of oblivion, which erase history, and the forces of sheer inertia, which make a quick cost-benefit analysis “showing” that such a campaign is always bound to fail? To make our example even more specific, suppose that this assignment is given to a particular church group that has a congregational model of autonomy and the rights of individual conscience. In such an organization, there is no concept of a moral authority above the given members or their local community. Yet they are in the curious position of having a larger body, which may be barely tolerated, giving them a utopian expectation that requires a new level of self-organization. How does this kind of community proceed to enact something that it knows to be morally compelling, but may feel is a threat to its autonomy?

It is at this juncture that the moral implications of ecstatic naturalism show themselves. The locus for moral transformation is within the positive utopian energies of an interpretive community as it struggles to balance the demands of the autonomy of its members with a moral sensitivity to how those same demands have had, and continue to have, negative implications for those who lie outside of the community. The moral horizon for ecstatic naturalism actually emerges out of a consideration of entropy, in which the anti-entropic elements of a community may have come from the theft of other selves and their communities.

If a community exists because of literal or less literal forms of slavery, then its own conception of autonomy is deeply compromised. In the economic and social orders, autonomy is always relative and finitely located. Of course, this observation has become common coin in recent criticism of libertarian forms of social life that function as if autonomy does not have to be paid for by someone else. The question becomes: how does a nascent community of interpreters develop its own form of self-organization that will open it to its parasitic relationship with other communities from which it derives its anti-entropic momentum? That is, how does the realistic utopia of justice actually become compelling?

SPIRITS

There can only be an openness to the parasitic structures that support a community if another form of energy can be discovered that will carry the community past and through its painful self-discovery into the realm where specific actions can take place. What is it that makes this transition possible? Above, several hints were made concerning a field of energy that was not specifically semiotic, but which has very direct semiotic implications. The traditional name for this field is “spirit,” a concept which has had an almost unbounded series of ramifications in the various religious and philosophical traditions of the world. How does the current perspective use the concept of spirit to understand the foundation of ethics and communal transformation?

Several clues have already been provided. The spirit is not a person, not omnipotent, not omniscient, not omnipresent, not a body of signs ready to be decoded, and is not a reality that existed prior to the other orders of the world (hence anything like the Christian notion of the immanent trinity is rejected). It is finite, plurally located, a field phenomenon that exists in the between, relevant to semiosis but not part of a sign series per se, concerned about the human process in a way that nature simply cannot be, and a necessary but not sufficient condition for healthy personal and social life.

How does the spirit enter into the community of interpreters enabling some kind of moral transformation? To return to our example of the anti-racism campaign within the context of a congregational-style church, the spirit must do two things. First, it must open the members of the community to the realities that have made the community possible in the first place; namely, the structures of racism that have given these members economic freedom and intellectual license because of the sacrifice of other communities. The spirit works against historical blindness by opening the eyes of interpreters of their *true* locations within the social and economic worlds. Why is it necessary to posit this thing called spirit for this movement from semiotic blindness toward semiotic openness?

The reason has to do with the kind of inertia found in psychosemiotic structures, which will usually let their own sign systems unfold without external and troublesome interference from contrary sign systems. When an alien and painful sign system threatens to intrude on self-understanding, the self has built-in mechanisms for pushing it aside, with abjection being the most powerful. Only the spirit, while not

infinite in traditional senses, is large enough to invite the self into the space where an encounter with contrary material can take place. In this sense, the spirit is that which opens the self, and its relevant community, to its own past in such a way that it can participate in the ambiguities that are still operative in the present. The spirit is thus an agent of connection, making the possibility of creative historical retrieval available to the self in process.

For our church community, then, the first step in launching an anti-racism campaign is to turn the search light inward to acknowledge the ways in which racism marks the very empowerment structures that the community has taken for granted, perhaps for centuries. This entails accepting the fact that autonomy has to be paid for, and that it is never genuine autonomy if some other group has had to foot the bill. The spirit is that agency that enters into the interpretive spaces among the members of the community, enabling the community to let go of its false self-image as already being anti-racist.

The spirit is deeply tied to the principle of ontological parity. While there is no direct correlation between the strict philosophical use of the concept of parity, there is an analogical use in the political and social orders. If the concept of self-organization entails that of pluralistic democracy, then the concept of parity indirectly entails a conception of justice, insofar as the concept of justice affirms that all selves are equally real. Here there *is* a moral implication in the doctrine of ontological parity; namely, that there can be no priority schemes in which one group of selves is held to be less real than another. The spirit, then, is one of the agencies of the sense of ontological parity in the social and political orders of interaction.

The spirit makes it possible for our religious community to accept its own built-in priority schemes, and to recognize that they have caused great pain to other members of the larger community. Here Schopenhauer's regrounding of Kant's ethics is directly pertinent. For Kant, ethics emerges out of a universalizable sense of duty and imperatives, as reinforced by a commitment to the kingdom of ends, while for Schopenhauer ethics is not so much a formal system as it is a *response* to the pain of others (whether human or not). It is in the totalizing experience of compassion (*mitteilen*) that the shells of the narcissistic self are broken open and the suffering of the other is made manifest, perhaps for the first time. And it is the spirit that makes this shattering of shells possible. The spirit lives between selves, "sensing" their internal travail and providing a means for making that travail available to other selves.

In even more concrete terms, a nascent community of interpreters can expose itself to witnesses who can testify to the effects of racism, effects that the religious community may have unwittingly reinforced. To understand that racism even exists, it is necessary to see its direct effects on those for whom its force has long held sway. This is one of the hows of spirit; namely, to provide an energy for this encounter that can still the flight-response that comes from a hidden guilt.

But this is only the first part of the story. The experience of compassion can quickly become romanticized, or even degenerate into a form of the will to power insofar as compassion might entail the greater “strength” of the person who is in the privileged position of feeling compassion (a point argued by Nietzsche in a genealogical context). How does the spirit make it possible for our religious community to move toward the positive momentum of anti-racism once it has made it possible for the community and its members to understand its *own* implied racism? Here again, the unique betweenness structures occupied by the spirit come into play.

Psychosemiotic structures, as noted, have a kind of inertia similar to physical bodies, that is, they have a tendency to travel in the same direction unless acted upon by another force. Unlike more physical structures, however, psychosemiotic ones also have a sense that some other semiotic forces are a threat to the reigning self-image. The movement of the spirit, as a field phenomenon in the between, has already made it possible for our community to integrate the painful sign series pointing to its own racism. Yet the spirit also has a second momentum, a second way of entering into the nascent community of interpreters as it struggles to become a truly emancipatory community.

Tillich made a very clear correlation between the concept of courage, which he gave an ontological foundation, and the religious life (Tillich 1952). In the current context, his formulation can be transformed to show how the spirit has its own power to infuse something like this ontological and moral courage into a community so that it can take on emancipatory energies, even if they are against its own short-term interests. Where does true moral courage come from? Is it a product of the self as it develops a utopian expectation that stands over and against the present? If it is a “product,” what kind is it?

The utopian hope that can move our religious community past the stage of compassion into a stage of political and social action is a product of the conjunction of the selving process and the spirit. The selving process makes it possible for the given self to take its own individuation

seriously, while the spirit compels the self, via the sense of parity, to take the individuation of other selves seriously. It is almost as if a gap opens up that has its own vacuum energy, drawing the self toward those centers of distorted energy that must be transformed through democratic reconstruction. The product that emerges is paradoxical. On the one hand it is a content-free utopian expectation that infuses the self with the courage of moral action, while on the other it is a form of connectedness that will always find specific contents that need to be addressed. If either half of this great moral paradox is forgotten, utopian energies can be lost, either in a sweeping sense of “let’s do something to restructure the entire society” or in a narrow sense of “let’s only concentrate on this particular group in one particular way.” Given the tensions in this paradox, it should be clearer why the necessary third term in moral transformation must be that of something that is both trans-finite (but not infinite in traditional terms) and available to finite structures. The spirit is thus the agency that holds the two halves of the moral paradox in creative tension, thus giving the finite self the moral courage to enter into a utopian dialectic that can have no predictable outcome.

The spirit is anti-entropic in a special sense. It does not live by the theft of some other order’s resources, thus making it unique in its ontological status. This does not make spirit any less a product of nature, or any less an order with given, if elusive, locations within *nature natured*. If the self usually overcomes its own entropic decay by theft from other selves or other extra-human orders, it needs something that is differently anti-entropic if it is to enter into moral space. But this also applies, in a different way, to those selves who have traditionally been the ones whose energy has been stolen by other communities and selves. The return of more stable anti-entropic energy comes from the spirit, which can empower the self in the “down” position toward a renewal of energies that cannot be stolen, at least initially, from selves in the “up” position. The energy gradient is fully natural, in the case of the “top” self, moving from the wrong kind of anti-entropic theft to the gift of the spirit, while in the case of the “bottom” self, providing a means for saying an even stronger “no” to the theft that has marked its life. The spirit lives in a fully natural way in the betweenness structures that have their own gradients, which can become available to sign users under certain conditions.

The spirit need not be conscious of these gradients any more than water needs to know where to flow across a complex terrain. Tradition-

ally, naturalism has been hostile to any concept of the spirit, unless it is that of Santayana's more harmless quasi-psychological one, because of the sense that it would entail a supernaturalism. Ecstatic naturalism has struggled to find a conception of spirit that would satisfy the genuine concerns of more traditional forms of naturalism (such as the descriptive), while also honoring what various religious traditions have come to recognize regarding the how of spirit. The phenomenological evidence, once it is pried loose from antecedent categorial commitments, points to a field phenomenon with its own momentum through fully natural gradients that seem, for whatever reason, to "want" to instantiate a sense of parity in human orders of interaction. Further, there may well be momenta of the spirit that point to a sense of parity between the human and extra-human orders, thus reinforcing an ecological sensitivity that will more radically deprive the human orders within our own biosphere, not to mention the larger orders of space-time. Finally, there may even be a sense in which the spirit, as the most active momentum within the spaces of betweenness, can "use" the radically decentering vision of contemporary astrophysics to compel psychosemiosis beyond its self-blinding narcissism.

We are now ready to face the question that was posed earlier; namely, whether the spirit, in the sense being proffered by ecstatic naturalism, is singular or plural. Traditionally, the Western monotheisms abjected the idea that the spirit could be plurally located, or could actually be plural in itself. In Christianity, the spirit was elevated to the status of the movement of Christ in time, so that without the spirit, the kingdom of god could not be actualized in history. Earlier notions of the spirit were held to be too tied to primitive forms of animism, or to be ancestor-centered rather than centered in the one true deity who has absolute sovereignty over all that takes place in the world. Consequently, the spirit has had to play a role for which it was not ultimately suited. On the one hand it had to be a person co-equal to the divine (at least in Christianity), while on the other, it had to be more directly relevant to worldly orders and forms of psychosemiosis that were deeply fragmented and resistant. Feminist theologians have rightly referred to the Christian spirit as the stepchild of the trinity, precisely because its parentage and its present communal affiliations are deeply ambiguous. Further, of all three persons, it has the least honorific status, especially in those theologies that stress emanation "downward" rather than co-shaping horizontally (such as Pannenberg's).

Any hint that the spirit might be plurally located immediately evokes

a strong sense of resistance, or even downright abjection, because it would seem to reduce spirit either to a predivine but still powerful natural agency, or to a human species-projection à la Feuerbach. But what is behind this abjection? Could it be that there *is* an unconscious recognition that the spirit cannot be supernatural, especially since it always seems to operate under fully natural conditions that thwart its momentum? And could this awareness, however suppressed, be linked to another that is aware that not all manifestations of “the” spirit move in the same direction or have the same moral force? This second insight can be put into the form of a question: how do you test the spirit to see if it is genuine? Was a form of the spirit manifest in the Nazi Nuremberg rallies? Was a form of the spirit manifest to Beethoven when he struggled, in spite of his manic-depressive disorder, to honor his sense of the divine through musical contrivance? Was the spirit present in a genuine sense when it was invoked by some theologians to condemn the carriers of the HIV or AIDS viruses? Was the spirit present when Freud deconstructed some of the more patriarchal of our religious projections, even while importing some of his own? Was the spirit present when the native peoples of North America resisted the European expansion, or was it present as a goad to that very expansion?

It seems clear that the term “spirit” can be used in innumerable situations, many of which are incompatible with each other. But what of the ontological structures pertinent to the spirit? Is “it” anywhere in these ascriptions, or are we really left with the realm of mere projection and the will to power? From the analyses given above, it should be clear that there may be a way to talk about spirit *an sich* provided that the complexities of the human/spirit correlation are never ignored. Where, then, is the spirit in all of these all too human ascriptions?

To ask the question differently: what are the marks of genuine spirit, and do these marks point to an ontological unity or an ontological plurality for the spirit? The current perspective holds that the spirit is “concerned” about the human process in a way that nature, as the sheer availability and *unavailability* of orders, cannot be. How is this concern manifest? It is primarily manifest in its gift of ontological courage that enables the sign-using self to peer into its own unconscious projections and to enter into emancipatory energies that may be available to its relevant communities. The grace of the spirit is thus different in kind from natural grace, which conveys a bare-bones sense of prevalence. The unique grace of the spirit empowers the self qua individual toward its own selving process and the selving processes of others.

Consequently, one of the truest marks of the spirit is that it will work for rather than against universalizable selving. Most locations of the spirit are morally ambiguous, for the simple reason that the spirit never acts alone but only within and against inertial structures that exert varying degrees of resistance. The spirit, as naturally located and limited in its kind and “amount” of power, simply cannot wash away all impediments to its unfolding. But within an ambiguous situation, the universalizability criterion can be applied so that moral energies can be marshaled to lessen the ambiguity and render the situation more moral.

Consequently, the situation of a Beethoven or a Freud can involve varying degrees of ambiguity, while a Nazi rally cannot. The latter event was not universalizable in any sense, but served a purely tribal agenda that was anti-spiritual in the deepest and most corrosive way. Insofar as the spirit is an ally of ontological parity it would be only fitfully manifest in the European invasion of North America. The so-called Christian spirit has been tribalized for so long that it is unclear if it can ever escape from its captivity to this tradition with its various forms of manifest destiny. Joined, then, to the mark of universalizability is the mark of parity. Both must be present, in however tenuous a form, if we are to designate a specific location as being a manifestation of the spirit.

The more difficult question pertains to the real or alleged unity of the spirit. Must we accept the reigning historical narrative that sees the principle of unity as an emergent from the inferior and dangerous principle of plurality? And must these two concepts always be used in their traditional ways? Perhaps the ordinal perspective gives us another way of talking about the spirit that may soften this tension, or move it into a different language game altogether.

Given the finite locatedness of the spirit, and given the fact that its manifestation is always ambiguous in at least some respects, there seems to be no conceptual warrant or phenomenological evidence for continuing to talk about *the* spirit. After all, what would enable us to trace back all manifestations of what we are inclined to call spirit to some origin that is unambiguously present? Having a consistent narrative of the spirit, as if this were even possible, is not the same as having genuine phenomenal evidence of its how, where, or what. We have innumerable candidates for the how and where ascriptions, but the what ascription is almost beyond our capabilities of thought. And all of this already presupposes that we can even talk about the spirit in extra-human terms.

Ecstatic naturalism feels comfortable in talking about the extra-

human status of spirit because it is held to occupy the unique terrain of betweenness in ways that the human cannot. Further, it can represent such a direct challenge to our projections and self-images that at the very least it must come from the deepest recesses of the unconscious. And if there is any weight to the various arguments and descriptions of the correlation of the human unconscious and the underconscious of nature, it follows that the spirit must come from somewhere “below” what we almost always mean by the human.

If we accept its extra-human status and forms of locatedness, we can certainly make the easier assumption that the spirit is at *least* plural in its manifestations as these manifestations are assimilated by the self. If the manifestations of the spirit are always ambiguous, can we go even further and argue that some of them may entail that the spirit is at war with itself? This bold move was made in a different trinitarian context by Jung when he argued that the biblical god manifests an internal psychological split between his own shadow projection of power onto Job and an internal image of righteousness. For Jung, Job’s steadfastness eventually (i.e., by the New Testament) compelled god to recognize this split within himself and to overcome it by taking back the shadow projection on the cross, that is, by feeling his own wrath against himself by becoming Job/Christ and atoning for what he had done to Job.

Jung’s model has profound implications, and represents one of those moments when psychoanalysis can open up the beginnings of a post-monotheistic and universalistic perspective on the sacred. To return to the third person of the trinity, can this model help us with our problem of the unity verses plurality in the spirit, and with whether there is any conflict within the spirit itself?

Postponing the unity question for one last time, as it has already been put under some pressure from the phenomenological data, let us look at the how or way of the spirit as it may be in conflict with itself. The issue here is far more complex than the god problematic because Jung could assume a model of god that entailed self-consciousness. The spirit, as has been argued, is not a self in any analogous sense, and hence cannot have a self-consciousness that could be at variance with an unconscious insight into itself. Jung’s god was so harsh toward Job because Job reminded him of his own repressed insights into his shadow side. But does it make sense to say that the spirit represses something that is part of its way of being in the world of orders?

It would be better to say here that the spirit is not a split consciousness but a postconsciousness, that is, a form of awareness that is not split into

halves so much as it is an awareness that at least has its own way of recognizing the limitations of conscious selves. In Tillichian language, it cannot be less than personal, but it is not a person. Therefore, it must be more than personal, but not in the sense that it retains person-like features and then simply adds new ones to its contour. The analogy here is to a mobile field of energy that can sense gradients and respond to them, but never as a conscious intentional agent. But this response is in some sense far richer than a negative magnetic pole “responding” to a positive pole. It is a response that involves what we could call an invitation to an unfolding of meaning, of furthering the growth of sign roots and blooms, of sign series, and of maximizing, under the conditions of finitude, the *scope* \times *density* equation in pertinent orders of relevance.

But are the criteria of universalizability and parity themselves unambiguous? In the world we inhabit is it meaningful to have a utopian longing in which each self would fulfill its selving process? How can we assume that there would be a convergence among these processes, such that even my genuine sense of selving would not conflict with someone else's? The hope that drives ecstatic naturalism is that the kind of postconsciousness that may be part of the elusive *what* of the spirit is somehow open to the need to reduce the clashes among selves when they involve the deeper unconscious components of the selving process. But here we are pulled to the absolute edges of thought and experience, a realm where moral persuasion and rhetoric has usually replaced conceptual insight.

Within the context of this hope only the most tentative assertions ought to be made, but there are no compelling arguments for not making them. Let us gather the threads that have been woven so far. The spirit is a kind of postconsciousness: (1) that is plurally located (at least), (2) that always appears in ambiguous ways in ambiguous situations, (3) that has its own momenta pointing toward some form of universality and parity, (4) that remains friendly to the deeper needs of the human process (which may cut across cost-benefit analyses), (5) that lives in betweenness structures, (6) that aids the interpretive processes of interpretive and emancipatory communities, and (7) that provides the gift of ontological courage to human sign users. Given all of these traits of the spirit, are we now ready to make a statement concerning its real or alleged unity?

If ambiguity is an ontological structure, rather than a trait that only emerges for human sign users, can the spirit occupy an unambiguous

perch from which to overcome ambiguity? The answer, which will profoundly distress those for whom unity is an absolute and necessary feature of the spirit, is a profound and melancholy no. The spirit must itself be ambiguous in *its* ontological structure, even if it is far less ambiguous than we are. And this ambiguity entails that there is some ontological conflict within the spirit that makes it a momentum never fully at rest or fully consistent with itself. How can something that is a “mere” gradient be at war with itself?

It is clear that the spirit must traverse a complex terrain that it itself did not create, since the concept of “creation” is here held to be purely intra-worldly and finite (again, not in the specific sense of astrophysics, where the creation concept has a more focused application). Insofar as any momentum across a terrain represents some minimal sense of awareness of that terrain (at least for the spirit, which is postconscious), then it follows that there will be terrain-dependent traits that are part of the how of the spirit. These traits are not always convergent, nor do they produce a collective integrity over time. Here another paradox is manifest. The spirit is anti-entropic in its own unique way, but it must also live in entropic orders and in some sense “feel” or even assimilate their entropy. Hence the spirit admits entropy into its evolving contour, although it will be subject to it in a different way, precisely because it has principles of organization that are preordinal and presemiotic. However, in the orders of space-time, if the physical universe grows colder and less ordered over time, then the spirit will (in these orders) also grow “colder” and less ordered. Triumphalist views of history haven’t even begun to wrestle with this deeply sobering fact.

At this juncture it is now compelling to shift to the plural form and talk about the spirits that are manifest within the innumerable orders of *nature natures*. We have come a long way from the holy spirit of Christianity and the Absolute Spirit of Hegel. The motor force driving us in this direction has come from the radicalized categories of psychoanalysis and a broader conception of an (ecstatic) naturalism that takes the implications of anti-supernaturalism seriously. The linear and imperial conception of spirit that has dominated at least certain forms of Western philosophical theology has been undermined by the phenomenological evidence of the various *hows* of an ordinal nature. The categorial shift that is coincident with ecstatic naturalism has found a way of talking about types of infinity that allows for variations in scope, density, manifestation, and power. The spirits that are so clearly manifest in sacred folds within nature are infinite, but in very special senses. They

have no collective contour that could be mapped, and there is no divine being of all beings who could even map them. They are truly emergent from the underconscious of nature and are themselves unaware of what lies in this underconscious.

Process naturalisms have unleashed a great deal of radical conceptual energy, but such perspectives also shy away from some of their own implications which are destructive of what might be called their regnant forms of bourgeois idealism, an idealism that insists on the upward movement of creativity in the world. This assertion is not to reduce a complex categorial array to its political dimensions, one of the most persistent and damaging myths of the sociology of knowledge, but to acknowledge that there are forces that provide blinders on the genuine implications that come from novel conceptual structures. Can we be more specific?

Hartshorne has given us a god that is infinitely self-surpassable, but he has failed to probe more radically into what makes that surpassability possible. It is not the divine itself that provides the space for its own growth, but nature, both in its inexhaustible underconscious dimension and in its unlimited ordinality in the orders of so-called "creation." The concept of the divine itself is still so filled with anthropomorphic structures that it needs to give way to a concept of the sacred, where no claims are made about anything like self-consciousness and intentionality. In shaping his neoclassical theism, Hartshorne has helped make it possible for a more daring philosophical theology to probe into a different way of understanding the growth and decay of the sacred, a different way of understanding an incomplete divinity that is somehow in need of orders other than itself. But these innovations stop short of taking the measure of their full implications.

The sacred is indeed self-surpassable, but it is also vulnerable to entropic decay, at least in its manifestations in time. Above it was argued that the archetypes, as presemiotic and semiotic both, were greater in scope and power than the sacred orders or traits that appeared within their provenance. This setting for the sacred, this rootedness in the underconscious of nature and its potencies, pulls philosophical theology, as a reflection on and a response to sacred orders of relevance, back down into a more naturalistic understanding of the where and how of that which we hold to be ultimate.

Clearly the sacred orders that we encounter are filled with human projections, but they are also more than some of those projections and less than others. Ultimately, ecstatic naturalism asserts that the sacred

orders are more than projections and less than fully divine in the monotheistic sense. The spirits that conalesce into a variety of forms, from human artifacts to numinous locations within physical nature, enter into the human process in powerful ways, goading the processes of semiosis into more capacious horizons of meaning that are at least potentially universal and filled with a sense of parity. Yet, again, it is not at all clear that all of these spirit-enhanced locations can be compossible. The sign systems of one location, now filled with spiritual energy, may be hostile to the sign systems of another. The Greeks were wiser than they are now often held to be when they envisioned the gods as capable of conflict with each other. Indeed, the spirits that punctuate the world of psychosemiosis, to mention no other, are often both conflictual and ambiguous in their manifestations. A more stoic naturalism must accept this fact as part of the meaning of human life under the aegis of the spirits.

The spirits that emerge from their own betweenness structures enter into semiotic relations with attained sign systems as they are embodied in human sign users. Spirits have a momentum that pushes any semiotic system toward the edges of its own stability (order) so that a creative disorder may emerge. On this cusp between the disruption of the old order and the creative gift of disorder, self-organization can transform antecedent structures into ones that are more encompassing. But even with this shift to the plural language of spirits, the two criteria of universalizability and the sense of parity are fully applicable. We judge the moral value of any given spirit by its ability to instantiate these two prospects for the self. But given the *ontological* ambiguity that belongs to all spirits, any instantiation will be incomplete and may contain internal tensions.

Given this radical demotion of the status of the holy spirit to ambiguous spirits that have limited power, is there any good reason for continuing to use this religious language within a radical naturalism? Haven't we violated the language game of philosophical theology to such an extent that we are no longer entitled to use its most important terms? A more conservative and Wittgensteinian approach would make this conclusion, demanding that we do not intrude on a language game that has its own successful rules. But what a limited conception of language and the language/world correlation is being imposed here! In an emancipatory reenactment of antecedent linguistic and categorial structures, thought is perfectly entitled to probe into the unsaid potencies that are abjected by a language game, and to bring them forward in a new

categorial and linguistic array. Where Wittgenstein would often quite literally say “leave the bloody thing alone,” the current perspective would say that the “thing” is always far more than it appears, and that the implications of psychoanalysis compel us to probe into what those hidden facets are. Indeed, the thing is never as static as it seems, and has its own restlessness, rooted in the presemiotic. Every categorial structure carries the shadows of its own abjections, and the most important phenomenological work is often done in this shadowy realm.

We cannot escape the implications of this move into a new language game. The ambiguous and partially finite spirits that emerge from the underconscious of nature and play out their postconscious roles within the orders of the world do not give us any reason to assume a grand consummation of history. While there is “one” nature, there are innumerable histories, and they are as often as not in conflict with each other. Where does this leave our own finite energies as we struggle with the spirits?

In the Rabbinic tradition of Talmudic commentary there is a deep insight into how the human process (shades of Jacob) enters into a struggle with the sacred. If a scholar can best god in an argument, then the divine will graciously acknowledge that victory, thus reinforcing the idea that our moral transformation is to some extent in our own hands. If we were to combine the best of the Greek with the best of the Hebrew worlds, we could say that the sacred folds of nature are in some sense responsive to our own semiotic and moral probes, and that there are energies that are extra-human that can aid us in the process of moral growth. But these powers are not extra-natural, nor are they in a “position” to give us a moral blueprint. Yet without their powers, we are truly at the mercy of semiotic inertia and blind habit.

The spirits of nature are thus concresced in sacred folds and manifest themselves to those with the sensitivity to understand their unique ontological location as emergent from the structures of betweenness. Particular concrescences come and go, subject to their own form of entropy, but the spiritual powers behind them are not as directly entropic (except in the physical orders in the extreme long run). For our own species, the entropic quality of the spirits is almost negligible. But we must live with the fact that all manifestations are entropic, regardless of our cultic practices. At this juncture we have no evidence that a given religion (and there really is no such thing as *a* religion) will last more than several millennia. What is clear is that within the brief trajectory of any life, a sacred fold may be quite stable and enduring in its ability to

sustain semiotic energies against the entropy coming from the non-spiritual orders of the world.

FOUR SPECIES OF SACRED FOLDS AND INTERVALS

This has been a complex tale, but its sheer complexity has been dictated by the phenomenological data. The final chapter in our narrative must deal with some of the ways that sacred folds, as concrescences of the spirits, impact upon the self. At the conclusion of this phenomenological survey, some tentative probes must be sent into the most elusive domain of all; namely, the ever-receding underconscious of nature. This will enable us to acknowledge what we can and cannot say about the primal whence and whither of nature, a nature that will always both invite and mock our categorical structures.

The strategy in what follows will be to look at four locations of sacredness that point in different ways into the how, where, and even what of the spirits within the worlds that we assimilate. In keeping with the principle of ontological parity, different forms of contrivance and different types of sign system will be described, never adding up to a collective contour, but pointing toward the commensurate structures that at least make some form of communication and connection possible.

Dyadic centrifugal fold

We shall start with the paradigmatic encounter with a sacred fold within the Christian traditions; namely, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus into the Paul who founded the primitive church. This Damascus road experience has been the touch stone for most later such descriptions, from Augustine to the so-called born-again experiences of the contemporary scene. Its dyadic structure appears even in the writings of the gentle Kant, whose conception of the moral will harks back to the concept of conversion that marked Paul's less gentle life. The description of Paul's conversion is as follows:

Meanwhile, Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you

persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9: 1–9)

It is fair to assume that something like this event took place, and that it had the cataclysmic effects that are described. What can be said about this encounter with a sacred fold? The dyadic structure, as noted, is central to the drama. There are two actors in the piece, the preconversion persecutor of those Jews who follow the new Way that is held by some to be a violation of the older forms, and the Christian who has shed his old identity because of a content-specific epiphany that has blinded him to the world of finite objects. The death of Saul is not the result of finite and incremental insights into the wisdom that is emerging from the new movement, but comes from a radical inbreaking of pure light that also manifests a human form. The light itself can be understood to be an archetype emergent from the underconscious of nature as it enters into the unconscious of Saul. The voice of Jesus is emergent from the ontologically prior archetype for the simple reason that it is the only one available in this context. In the language of William James, the "choice" of Jesus as the manifestation of the light is an option that is live, forced, and momentous. It is a *live* option because it is available to him in his immediate cultural context, while, for example, an option for a *neopagan* experience is impossible. The option for Jesus as the appropriate manifestation of the archetype is *forced* because he cannot escape it. It is thrust upon him because of the specific nature of his assignment as the official persecutor of the disciples of the Way. And the "choice" of Jesus is a *momentous* option because it changes the most fundamental structures of psychossemiosis, as is signaled by his physical blindness.

Before Saul can become Paul he must pass through three days of darkness in which he is cut off from the world. He neither eats nor drinks, and must await the messenger who will bring him back to the world of the living through a divine touch, thus removing the scales from his eyes. This dyadic structure is ripe for abjection because it can only function insofar as the previous self is demoted to the status of the less real, and becomes a model for the new self to abject. The plot thickens because a new asceticism enters into the equation in which the elusive body of the risen Christ is contrasted to the flesh that marked the body of

Saul. For Kristeva, Paul's conversion compelled him to transmute his physical body into the body of Christ as embodied in the emergent church (see Kristeva 1991). The energy of this transmutation process was most fully expressed in Paul's endless journeys around the Hellenistic and cosmopolitan world of the Mediterranean.

A further layer was added to the dyadic conception of embodiment that involved more traditional views of the messianic goal of history. The pressures of bodily abjection, as a refusal to remain bound to the world and its demands, further compelled Paul to abject human history. The choice for apocalypticism was also live, forced, and momentous for Paul. History was now seen as having a finite ending, perhaps within the lifetime of Paul's hearers, hence driving him into manic explosions of energy to bring his messianic teaching concerning the risen Lord to the entire world of Jews and Gentiles. Abjections always release energy, even though that energy will ultimately have destructive components and will have to be paid for by other mechanisms in the psychic economy. The most telling appearance of this inescapable psychic logic is found in his letter to the Romans, where his apocalyptic dualism utterly rejects the power of sexuality as a means to enter into a sacred fold of nature. The spirit is contrasted to the flesh, which is itself in bondage to sin, thus making any self/world correlation impossible.

The self must wait in fear and trembling for the end of history that will transform the sinful body into the spiritual body that is analogous to that of the risen Lord. Abjections are piled on abjections as the dyadic model of conversion pulls Paul more and more away from the categorical frameworks that are prevalent in the Hellenistic world. Nietzsche, of course, saw a twisted form of the will to power here, based on resentment toward those who had worldly powers. This only tells part of the story, because the forces driving Paul were emergent from a sacred fold that had a specific spatial and temporal location. What is the missing part of this tale?

Here we see in its most dramatic form the tensions that can emerge between the presemiotic dimension of the archetype (light) and its archetypal manifestation (Jesus as the risen Christ). In dyadic forms of conversion, the manifestation replaces the archetype as that which is essential. And when a finite and located manifestation stands duty for that which is presemiotic, abjections are inevitable, precisely because the manifestation is never as encompassing as its archetypal source. Jesus becomes Paul's "magical other" who forms the measure for any possible life. And the preconversion life can only go underground to

serve the manifestation of the archetype. But how far underground does it go?

In a sense, Nietzsche is right, Saul remains present in Paul in the form of a dyadic fanaticism that grows more intense as Paul's journeys eventually take him to Rome for the last time. There is a curious mix in Paul's dualistic world view. On the one hand he has a generic sense of who may be included in his new community, having won out over the Jerusalem faction that did not want to include Gentiles, while on the other hand he has very stringent criteria as to who, even among this larger group, will enter into the kingdom that is sending its light into the rapidly fading historical drama. If one compares the manic energy of his literal journeys with the more place-bound life of the enlightened Buddha, something of the power of his abjections becomes clearer.

What is the depth-logic of this process? Saul has a one-sided conceptual and experiential horizon that places him within a certain political hierarchy. This allows him to impose a position of ontological priority physically and psychologically on those Jews who do not follow the so-called proper ways. He has no clear way out of this structure, and clearly seeks none. It is only when there is a radical inversion of his psychic economy that he even becomes aware of the ontological validity of the alternative Way. However, for reasons that lie within his psychosemiotic structures, Saul cannot integrate this new perspective into the continuing life of semiosis. The manifestation of the archetype of light that confronts him on his journey places him in another dyadic structure. He must cease being the old Saul of the flesh and sin (sin being a condition rather than a series of specific actions) and become the spirit body of Paul who will help to instantiate the body of Christ in space and time. The postconversion Paul cannot find a bridge back to the preconversion Saul, and this closure becomes manifest in the increasing energy with which he literally and figuratively flees from his own antecedents to become the carrier of the New Being (Tillich).

In this paradigmatic model of the encounter with a sacred fold, several features become evident. The fold is manifest at a particular place and time, on the road leading to the synagogue at Damascus. The fold is manifest most clearly to Saul, while his partners on the journey do not understand its significance. Within the fold itself two dimensions appear, the first being the more encompassing, that of unearthly light itself, the second being that of a finite and located being who can use something at least analogous to human speech. What happens in this type of self/fold encounter is that the manifestation becomes more real

and more powerful than its source. It is as if there is a centrifugal momentum lifting the archetypal image into the sphere of psychosemiosis so that its originating condition must be abjected. To put it differently, Jesus becomes a gravitational field for the nascent Paul while the depth-dimension from which the addressing image comes ceases to have the same attraction. What could be a continuing and creative dialectic between archetype and image becomes broken by the power of the image itself, thus bringing in its train a series of abjections that push the archetype further into the unconscious.

Once this has taken place, the now emergent Paul has no choice but to abject fully the threatening realm of the unconscious and the under-conscious of nature. Had his psychic economy been less extreme to begin with, his abjections would have been less intense, and the subsequent history of his movement would have taken less one-sided forms. Where did the diverted energy of his abjections go? If a one-sided conscious attitude refuses to probe into the compensatory momenta of the unconscious, then it will be the victim of energies that must always be dyadic and directed against the other. This is a well-known dynamic in psychoanalytic theory, but its implications for a theory of sacred folds need to be delineated.

Paul's abjected Saul had to become projected onto those who denied the power of the spirit to lift them out of bondage to sin and the flesh. The messianic aspect of the abjection compelled him to reject any horizontal connection among selves insofar as they could represent competing loyalties that would thwart the emergence of the kingdom at the pending end of history. The depth-logic of the sacred fold was lost on its recipient because of his already in place abjections that automatically privileged the particular manifestation over its encompassing archetype. Again, this is a reason why it is crucial to the psychic economy to pay attention to the compensatory powers of the unconscious, because a failure to do so will make one especially vulnerable to a one-sided assimilation of a sacred fold. The fold can only land in psyches already made, and has no say in the matter. What makes the fold so potentially dangerous is that it heightens one-sided powers that are already in place. Of course, we must avoid a caricature of Paul. He did struggle to integrate many aspects of his Hellenistic and Jewish worlds into some kind of coherent pattern, and his genius for speaking within accessible meaning horizons almost jumps out at the reader from his various letters to the nascent churches under his care. But the fold itself, the blinding epiphany that led him away from the old ways into the resurrected life of

the spirit, remained present to him in the form of a split consciousness. Were we to give a name to this form of the self/sacred fold encounter, it could be called a *dyadic centrifugal fold*, in which the split between the encompassing and originating archetype and its concrete manifestation becomes too extreme, propelling the image outward into personal and social space. The inner logic of this kind of self/sacred fold encounter is not confined to Christianity or to the experience of Saul of Tarsus, but punctuates human culture at all times and on all levels of sophistication. The dyadic structure is maintained by those very abjections that privileged the “yes” and “no” in the first place. The yes to the new Paul entailed the no to the old Saul, and this abjection swept through social space for reasons that are endemic to the human process. The relationship between the self and its encountered fold is centrifugal because it has a momentum that keeps the manifestation from ever returning to its gravitational center in the archetype. The light becomes eclipsed by the finite structure that emerges from it, thus setting up one dualism after another in an endless cycle that deepens across time.

The interval around this type of sacred fold is more spatial than temporal. Paul’s journeys functioned to delimit a region within the Roman and Greek worlds that operated with a dim sense of the encompassing framework that lay outside of his messianic mission to the Jews and Gentiles. As has been argued, the interval takes away some of the ferocity of the fold by providing a clearing or clearing-away within which it can radiate by its own uncanny logic. Paul’s obsession with the *kairos*, with the fulfilled time and the end of human history, could only make sense against the backdrop of the unredeemed spatial wastelands of his world. In the simplest terms, his light was always swallowed up by the expanse of space in the Near Eastern world, and indeed was extinguished when he went to Rome. For the dyadic centrifugal fold, which moves outward through abjection, there is always an interval that is even more capacious and enveloping of its manic energies, but it is rarely understood as such and doesn’t always cure the restlessness of this especially powerful type of fold.

Labyrinthine centripetal fold

A very different kind of sacred fold, with its own kind of self/fold correlation can be seen in the genre of film. Our example exhibits a fold that moves in a very different direction, one pointing to the demonic powers of origin that do not always allow escape into any kind of

liberating not yet. The film to be described is Stanley Kubrick's 1980 horror masterpiece *The Shining*, which unfolds themes that become very clear within the context of a semiotic cosmology attuned to the forms of ensnarement found in many of the more intense forms of semiosis. In this film of 144 minutes, Kubrick takes an otherwise ordinary horror story and reweaves it into a tapestry that graphically depicts how the self can become pulled into a centripetal momentum that circles downward into an abyss that yet remains sacred.

The basic story line is quite simple. The main "actor" in the film is the large summer resort the Overlook Hotel, perched high in the Colorado Rockies. During the winter months it must be shut down because the one access road, the sidewinder, is covered with up to twenty feet of snow. Consequently, the hotel owners must hire a caretaker to insure that the "elements can't get a foothold." During the long winter months, the father, Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson), becomes increasingly insane as he begins to realize something like an eternal return of the same in which he has played out a murderous drama in this same hotel over and over again. His wife Wendy (Shelly Duvall) only comes to the realization that supernatural forces are at play at the end of the film and flees with their son Danny (Danny Lloyd). After following Danny into the labyrinth that stands next to the hotel, Jack falls from exhaustion and freezes in the snow. In the final scene the camera pans to a photograph taken at the July 4 Ball in 1921 in which Jack is pictured at the head of the party being held on that night.

Danny is the one person in the family who has the ability to "shine," that is, to be clairvoyant about events or objects in the present or the past. At the same time he is in telepathic communication with the head chef of the hotel, Hollarann (Scatman Crothers). Hollarann is aware that Danny has experienced something of the sinister quality of the hotel and tries to quiet his fears. The events to which Danny is responding involve a caretaker named Grady (Philip Stone) who chopped his two daughters (ages 8 and 10) and wife to pieces with an ax before stacking them neatly in room 237. Upon completion of this task he shoots himself in the mouth with a two-barreled shotgun. The traces of this series of events are still present in the hotel and impinge themselves on those who shine.

The hotel itself was built between 1907 and 1909 on a Native American burial ground. Jack takes the caretaker job because of his self-delusion that he will write a book during the winter stay. But even before the family arrives Danny has visions of blood flowing violently out of the

elevator shafts in the hotel lobby. He also encounters the two sisters shortly after his arrival. Wendy struggles to hold the family together when Jack begins to unravel, as he begins to take on some of the roles of Grady. In a crucial scene in the film, Jack meets with Grady in the men's room during what appears to be the 1921 Ball, which will appear in the black-and-white photograph at the end of the film. Grady informs him that he (Jack) has always been the caretaker and that he must take stern measures to discipline his son and wife, especially since his son is trying to bring Hollarann back into the picture to rescue them from Jack's growing fury.

The image of the maze or labyrinth is one of the central motifs of the film. Both the hotel and the garden labyrinth with its thirteen-foot-high hedges function as mazes within which it is possible to become lost forever. The labyrinth is, of course, an ancient structure that has tortuous passageways moving back in on themselves with varying degrees of complexity. To enter into the maze without leaving a trail of one's path is to risk being devoured by the powers that dwell in the center. In another crucial scene in the film, Wendy and Danny are walking in the garden maze while Jack is inside the hotel looking at a miniature model of the maze. He sees both Wendy and Danny in this model in a perfect Leibnizian mirroring of the external situation. The microcosm is the perfect replica of the macrocosm.

The time sense in *The Shining* is itself quite strange. The narrative of the present is constantly invaded by narratives from the past, and there are moments in the film when it is unclear which time order is in play. Danny is the first person to gain some understanding of the labyrinth of time, and Jack soon catches on as he begins to recollect his past lives as the caretaker of the hotel. Wendy only grasps the internal paradoxes of the time orders when she is fleeing for her life and coming dangerously close to being a victim yet another time. The cyclical structure could be a combination of Hegel's unending bad infinite with Nietzsche's eternal return of the same. There may be no escape from the labyrinth of time in the compressed and snow-bound space of the hotel.

Language can function as a labyrinth by closing in on itself in an eternal repetition. Wendy is sternly warned against interrupting Jack when he is working, even if he is not typing. When she finally gets a chance to look at the very large manuscript on his desk she notes to her horror that every single page is filled with the exact same phrase written over and over again in a variety of visual patterns. For all of his weeks of writing the only sentence to come from his efforts is "All work and no

play makes Jack a dull boy.” The absolute closure of origin encircles Jack, pulling him into the stranglehold of a time sequence that will not allow for a qualitative new emergence. Even Paul had his conception of the *kairos*, of the dynamic time that transformed the endless repetition of *chronos*. For Jack, time only gives more of the same, and that same disintegrates his already fragile self.

What kind of sacred fold, then, is this film trying to portray? It is clear that the hotel and the labyrinth are the primary elements within the sacred fold, functioning as an ever more powerful gravitational pull toward a center that continues to turn back in on itself. The labyrinth becomes the lure for the final denouement of the drama by pulling Danny and Jack into its endless circling pathways. It is significant that the final scene in the maze takes place at night with snow-covered hedges, thus giving the labyrinth an even eerier and more forbidding presence. This is enhanced by the placement of lights that cast shadows over the hedges. Danny, fleeing from Jack, who is carrying an ax, has enough knowledge of the ways of the labyrinth to lure Jack into a place from which he will not be able to escape. At a crucial juncture Danny carefully steps backward in his own footsteps so that his trail appears to end in thin air. Jack is so befuddled by this strategy that he simply twirls in rage until fatigue makes him collapse in the snow.

Because of his ability to shine, Danny becomes the maze master who can enter into the power of the sacred fold and come out again. But Jack, for reasons that will never be known, cannot escape from the labyrinth of time within which he is trapped. The sacred fold that envelops him and fragments his consciousness is too close, too overpowering to be integrated properly. To put it differently, there is no protecting interval that can take away some of the ferocity of the fold.

If the sacred fold that enveloped Paul could be called a *dyadic centrifugal fold*, what terminology would be appropriate for denoting the kind of fold and self/fold correlation that appears in the film *The Shining*? Clearly the momentum is not outward, and thus must be centripetal. But is it dyadic? This seems less clear as the disintegration of Jack’s so-called normal self is a very complex process that takes place over time, unlike Paul’s conversion, which was almost instantaneous. Given the maze-like structure of the Overlook Hotel and its outside garden maze, perhaps it is most appropriate to call it an example of a *labyrinthine centripetal fold*. Upon reflection many examples of such self-circling and downward moving folds suggest themselves, such as the growth of a neurotic complex or a chemical dependency, or, on the positive side, of

a continual renewal at the source that can keep the self in a safe orbit while also providing some novel semiotic material.

The chief criteria for this kind of fold are: (1) that the fold acts more slowly to disintegrate and/or reintegrate the self, (2) that the fold pulls semiotic material downward into the archetype rather than pushing it outward into a given and bound manifestation, and (3) that only someone with special powers can map the fold and avoid its negative gravitational effects. But what of the role of abjection? Does the labyrinthine type of fold entail the overdetermined rejection of some unconscious material? In our encounter with this kind of fold, abjection plays a much smaller role. There is less of a split consciousness and more of a disintegrating/reintegrating momentum that has smaller forms of splitting, but no one grand fissure that runs through the self/fold correlation.

As noted, it does not follow that labyrinthine centripetal folds are always negative. Our chosen example happens to stress that prospect, but more positive versions of this type of fold can be seen in journey motifs that aren't as manic and spatially extended as those of Paul or the legendary Jason. The journey into and out of the maze is in effect a journey that always returns to its point of origin, yet when it does so, everything is changed. Historically, the labyrinthine centripetal folds are found in more contemplative religions, such as Buddhism or certain forms of Hinduism. Phenomenologically, the main feature is the centripetal pull toward a hidden center that may or may not be beneficial to the given self.

If abjection is less crucial, then there is more of an identity relation in which components of the self are bound together more tightly. In the film, the little boy Danny has an imaginary friend named Tony who lives in his mouth. Tony is the source of his ability to shine (as a manifestation of the archetype). It is through Tony's intervention that Danny first learns of the sinister quality of the Overlook Hotel. As his father Jack starts his long spiral downward into the abyss of madness, an abyss that has always and already come to meet him in the present, Tony begins to move outward from the small cavity of Danny's mouth and takes over completely. At one point Wendy asks Danny a question and Tony's voice answers saying that Danny is gone. The "magical same" takes over completely as Danny is pulled into the heart of the drama of murder and infanticide. Yet it will be the archetypal manifestation of Tony, the true maze master, who will save both Danny and his mother during the final crisis in the tale.

Every sacred fold carries with it its own interval. In this case the

interval is expressed in the ability to shine which keeps Danny from falling into the demonic aspects of the fold. The function of an interval is to take away some of the ferocity of the fold with which it is correlated. Paul had less protection because his abjections pushed away this mediating power, whereas Danny retained his openness to the interval as mediated to him through Tony. Semiotically, the interval provides the clearing within which it is possible to gain some distance from the fold. Sometimes it doesn't take much distance to recognize a fold *as* a fold; namely, as an unusual order of relevance that must be dealt with in terms of both melancholy and ecstasy.

The creative tension between the sacred fold and its interval is one of the ways in which the spirit can be in a dialectical struggle with itself. The fold itself is an overpowering epiphany that can shatter the fragile structures of psychosemiosis, while the interval is a strength-giving clearing that can mediate the power of the fold. For Jung, Job had to appeal to god against god in order to make his case heard. For Danny, and later for Wendy when she begins to shine, the Overlook Hotel, as the sacred fold, is in tension with the ambiguous gift of shining, as the interval. In the end it is the gift of the interval that allows Danny into and out of the magical labyrinth, thus granting him a vision that most others will never see. Shifting the axis of vision 180 degrees, we could say that the spirit struggles to overcome its own bifurcation into fold and interval by using the interval to provide the right kind of identity and difference with and from the fold.

In the labyrinthine centripetal fold there is often a correlation of the ordinary and the extra-ordinary. As noted, the Overlook Hotel was built on a Native American burial ground and the workers had to repulse several attacks from the outraged tribe of the area (or so legend has it). Inside the present hotel are Apache and Navaho motifs that have rhythmic and quasi-labyrinthine patterns. The ordinary and domesticated patterns almost mock the deep currents that course through the hotel and its imperial history. The labyrinthine fold is magical and weaves its spell over its victims when they least expect it. It is like being in a slow-moving conversion experience without knowing that one is taking place, something that would be impossible in the dyadic type of fold.

Consequently, the only way out of the maze is to have a counter-magic that is as powerful as that of the ever-devouring labyrinth. Since he will never have the shining, at least in Danny's sense, Jack will never be able to leave the winding paths that pull him downward. But Danny,

with the help of his archetypal powers as embodied in Tony, can see the way out. Wendy finally shines at the end of the film and is thus able to see the world that Danny has seen all along. As the film ends we see the stark contrast between Wendy and Danny fleeing the snow-bound mountain in the snow cat vehicle and the 1921 photograph that traps Jack forever. For Jack, the labyrinthine centripetal fold forever pulls him under, while for the new maze masters it contains liberating powers that they can now take with them into the world of the everyday.

Comparing our first two examples we can see very different directionalities in play. For Paul, the sacred fold propels him outward into the larger world of social space. The manifestation of the archetype is his magical other that lures him into a dyadic rejection of his past self, a self that must be left behind both in terms of the personal sphere of the flesh and in terms of the impending historical drama of the end of human affairs. The centrifugal momentum of this fold fills Paul with a manic restlessness that only feeds off the dyadic abjections that have their own kinetic energy.

For Jack, on the other hand, the sacred fold is finitely located in the hotel and maze. He is pulled downward to a center that has always been there, and presumably always will. He is not thrown outward into larger spheres of interaction but remains caught in 1921 in the static photograph on the wall outside of the Gold Room where the Balls are held, even though he seems to be living in present time. The labyrinthine structure of the hotel will not let him escape his destiny as the murderer of his own family, and its grip tightens as the winter snows deepen. Unlike his gifted son Danny, whom he has come to detest in true Oedipal fashion, he does not have the shining. He only learns of his predestined role through the intervention of others who reemerge from the mists of the past to remind him of what he must do. If Paul moves more and more into the new being (at least in his own eyes), then Jack is drawn more and more into the old being, the being of endless repetition that so frightened Nietzsche.

Many would have no trouble with seeing Paul's sacred fold and the resultant self/fold correlation as being sacred per se, but why would one call Jack's encounter with the Overlook Hotel a self/sacred fold correlation? The answer has to do, again, with moving past the honorific language that has blunted the generic momentum of monotheistic language games into the more neutral language of ecstatic naturalism. Combining the two language games to form a momentary bridge, we can say that many sacred folds have demonic features, indeed, all will

have at least one trait that we would call demonic. But the demonic is sacred in its own way; namely, as the form-shattering power that underlies the stabilities in our world. The term “sacred” as it is being used here connotes any extra-human power that is both numinous (as rooted in an archetype) and strongly relevant to the selving process, for good and/or ill. In this sense, then, the Overlook Hotel fully satisfies the linguistic formulation being used here.

It would be convenient if we could rank sacred folds in terms of their truth value or moral goodness, but this would involve a category mistake. The fold is deeply relevant to the human process and conveys its power to the self, but for reasons that may forever be locked in mystery, it will do so in very different ways. We can say that folds are fully natural and that they enhance the selving process in ways that no other structures can. It is part of the cunning of nature that they exist and that we have the unconscious mechanisms to enter into their orbits, but it is also up to us to reweave these great powers into a higher form of self-organization that does not produce a split or disintegrated consciousness. The best tool we have for this process is that of an enlightened psychosemiosis that fully understands the various potencies and powers that punctuate our lives.

Fixed-point enveloping fold

A third type of sacred fold can be encountered that differs from the first two in terms of sheer scope and breadth. Here we shall deal with something that has nothing to do with a dyadic religious conversion or with human contrivances that require magical insights (via the maze master). In this encounter, something at once quieter and less immediately threatening happens to the self, although there will be a type of danger for certain meaning horizons that refuse to abandon provincial perspectives. The example is deceptively simple and can be experienced by almost anyone.

It involves the act of looking upward in the night sky to encounter a cluster of photons that have traveled millions of light years to die in the optical nerve of the human eye. A good example is that of our sister galaxy Andromeda (M31 from the catalogue of Charles Messier compiled between 1781 and 1784), which can be seen as a distinct fuzzy patch with even the smallest telescope or pair of binoculars. Before the 1920s, Andromeda was not recognized to be an independent galaxy, as only the Milky Way was held to exist. It is now understood to be a spiral

galaxy like our own, and to have a similar constitution; namely, of billions of stars in various stages of evolution along with gas clouds, a central black hole, and planets.

It is one thing to encounter a deep space object (i.e., one that is extra-galactic) in textbooks or in a computer program; it is another altogether to see it with the naked eye, with its actual photons interacting with the electro-chemical properties of the eye and brain. This is an encounter that has stirred wonder from the very beginnings of nascent self-consciousness and continues to fascinate in spite of the jaded and overloaded experiential horizons in the industrial parts of the world. It was argued above that it is no longer possible to practice the craft of the metaphysician without an immersion in some form of psychoanalysis. The same argument applies to the craft of star gazing. One of the necessary features of the movement past tribalism is the recognition of the sheer locatedness of the human process within vast orders that it did not create. Sometimes the best cure for the postmodern disease is not the creation of yet another internal reconstruction of its categorial array, but direct contact with a cosmic structure that utterly mocks anything we contrive in any way, including our astrophysical theories of that structure. There is a crispness and directness to this experience that stands in its own category.

Of course, some knowledge has to be brought to the encounter. To see a fuzzy patch through an optical instrument is not yet to feel the dizziness that comes from having one's sense of measure overturned. It is only when the utter immensity of an unreachable world enters into full awareness that the horizontal shift takes place. Consider the probability that some form of life, however primitive or grand, exists somewhere within the spiral arms of Andromeda and further consider that the picture we have of the galaxy as it comes to die in our eyes is 2 million years older than the galaxy itself. Time and space suddenly become dramatically extended and the concept of an absolute center, which we live out of experientially regardless of how sophisticated our categorial array may be, is threatened.

There should not be too much resistance to calling this encounter with an extra-galactic object an encounter with a sacred fold. Nothing is here entailed about the ontology of the object, which can certainly be viewed in purely physical terms. What is entailed is that the encounter involves something numinous, something that has an archetypal core, and something that can be strongly relevant to the selving process. Of course, it can fail to satisfy the first and third conditions, which entail

each other, but it will have its archetypal reality none the less. A galaxy has well been called an “island universe” that has relative autonomy, but never complete isolation. In fact, Andromeda is part of a group of galaxies called the local cluster that are gravitationally attracted to each other. The archetypal quality of the galaxy is seen in its almost overwhelming majesty as a manifestation of law-like generality and life-generating and destroying power.

What would be an appropriate name for this species of sacred fold and the self/fold encounter? The relationship is certainly not dyadic as it does not involve a split consciousness, nor does it have the labyrinthine quality of pulling the self downward into a disintegration. The stress here is on immensity and on the fixed reference of the encounter. Strictly, no celestial body is static or fixed, but from the perspective of finite human experience, it appears so. Perhaps a judicious designation for this type of fold, then, would be that it is a *fixed-point enveloping fold*. The fold does not push the self in radical new directions, nor does it compel abjections, although in rare cases it could do so, but only under already pathological conditions. This type of fold is encountered in a direct, rather than a labyrinthine, way and can envelop the self and give it a powerful new sense of its own finite measure.

In the case of our example of galaxy M31, the interval is more literal, namely, the vast seemingly empty space between our earth and the origin of the light cone that has come to meet us so many years later. Hence both time and space distance us from this sacred fold, thus forming a protective barrier that can be relied upon to keep the self from decentering. Historically there has always been an association between the kind of wonder produced by astronomical observation and that found in religious liturgy. Kant came close to this sense of numinosity in his honoring of the mysterious moral law within and the starry heavens above. His own nebular theory of 1755 actually helped to advance cosmology by showing how a gaseous cloud could evolve into the known shape of a galaxy.

Other examples of fixed-point enveloping folds suggest themselves. Any geological formation that has a reasonable stability can function in this way, and even certain human contrivances might have this capacity, provided that they are unrelenting in their move away from tribalism. For example, most philosophers and theologians have a deep transference relationship with one text, a text to which they feel compelled to return again and again. Insofar as this relationship does not involve abjections, and insofar as it continues to pull the self past its own

horizontal constrictions, it can function as a fixed-point enveloping fold. But such objects are less fixed, if we can put it this way, than celestial objects, and consequently they are not the best exemplars of the genus.

The connotation of “enveloping” is not meant to be threatening or constricting, but to suggest the awareness of sheer boundedness by something with an almost different *kind* of measure. A theoretical structure can certainly function this way, and even a game like chess, insofar as its rules do not change, can be a numinous fixed-point enveloping fold. The danger comes in when other potential enveloping folds, and their corresponding intervals, are denied entrance into the life of experience. Celestial objects do have something close to an honorific status in ecstatic naturalism because of their absolute autonomy vis-à-vis the semiotic mania of the human process. Our relationship with them is deeply asymmetrical. As Buchler might put it, they communicate their vastness to us, but we do not communicate anything in turn. This asymmetry, so long as it is understood, can itself convey a moral lesson about our limits and prospects in an indifferent universe.

Polyform dialectical fold

A fourth type of sacred fold functions in yet a different way to relocate the self in process. It is neither centrifugal nor centripetal, nor is it a fixed-point that can stand over and against us. Rather, it functions in more of a chaotic and zigzag pattern, acting like both a carrot and a stick that seems to swirl around the self in an unending variety of configurations and patterns. In terms of the economy of the psyche, the example to be described is one of the most persistent and problematic, certainly keeping the self from stasis or a sense of containedness. Our example has to do with the first half of Freud’s celebrated dyad of eros and death. The erotic momenta of the self represent their own sacred fold, a fold with so many layers that even the most astute analyses seem only to open out the uppermost layers. It is a kind of sacred fold that Paul could only abject, and the three Western monotheisms have struggled with all of their powers to tame the sacredness of this competing reality.

Sexuality competes with monotheistic aspirations for fairly obvious reasons. It can generate a series of affiliations that have such a power and compellingness that very little can break their spell. From Freud to the present day, thinkers have recognized that the sheer energy behind monotheistic religion derives from, but is not reducible to, an abjection of sexuality. Unfortunately Freud’s one-sided narrative of this correla-

tion has delayed inquiry into its depth-logic. By shifting to the language of sacred folds, the correlation may be approached in less polemical terms and some of the phenomenal data may be more easily retrieved.

Clearly, sexuality is an overdetermined reality in psychosemiosis. Its evolutionary value is obvious, but in our species its presence often brooks more problems than it solves. So much of our precious semiotic surplus value goes into sexual fantasy that there is often little room for much else. Freud's sublimation theory, in spite of a lack of sophistication and a tendency toward reductionism, gives us a good indication of how cultural evolution has stolen energy from this primal source to use it for other, often thinly disguised, goals. Jung, on the other hand, struggled to show that psychic energy was neutral in value and that its sexual expression was only one trajectory that it could take. But one suspects that he was abjecting his own difficulties with this imperial power, especially in the countertransference over which he had limited control. The answer to the question of the ultimacy of the sex drive may never be found, but no one would doubt its complexity and at least partial ambiguity.

Few things are more astonishing than the variety of sexual practices among the members of our species, and few things have been as much the subject of judicial vexation. Just which practices are "divine" and which are not? Which are healthy and which are not? Which are stabilizing and which are liberating, and in which ways? Is autoeroticism valid, or does it represent a narcissistic regression? The questions are endless. But throughout this tangled web one thing stands out in clear outline: for whatever reason there will always be some dominant sexual trait in any human contrivance, utterance, action, or event, no matter how sublimated or abjected. If ever there was a god or goddess worthy of both fear and worship, the sacred fold of sexuality is the prime candidate. And it is because of this unique status that we have the most difficulties in this sphere and spend the most precious of our energies in negating a power that oftentimes seems to mock us.

Most people have had moments in which they wished that this dominant force of life would simply disappear, and most of us have also had moments in which we would give almost anything for it to abide at least for a while. These extremes that course through psychosemiosis do not abate with age, nor is the pain of nonactualization ever fully overcome. What, ultimately, seems to be at stake for our species with this strangest of all guests?

Once we leave the evolutionary sphere behind, the realm of

overdetermined motives opens up. The sex drive seems to have a lot to do with a sense of connectedness and with a sense of openness to unconscious potencies that may have no other way to enter into the life of awareness. There is a well-understood sense in which the sex drive decenters the ego, or even makes a mockery of its pretensions. One of the best cinematic examples of this is in the German film *The Blue Angel*, in which the dance-hall singer, played by Marlene Dietrich, dethrones the imperial ego of one Professor Rath, whose descent into self-caricature represents the melancholy denouement of the film. This is not to validate the patriarchal aspects of the femme fatale myth, but to point to the great power of sexuality to crack through the social persona.

The ironies compound themselves. The act that gives us the greatest pleasure is also one of the ways that nature has of passing on bacteria and even deadly viruses. The exclusivity of the immediate “object” of the sex drive may often fade as quickly as it came, and the restlessness that sexuality can partially overcome is in turn only deepened. The feeling of self-enhancement that comes from a fulfilling sexual relation can just as easily turn into self-loathing and abjection. Demonizations of other sexual practices can take away the potential pleasures of one’s own. And the strange correlation of pain and pleasure, perhaps nowhere as strongly manifest as in this sphere, seems to mock any straightforward understanding of the so-called pleasure principle. It is no wonder that abjection has been such a motor force in the cultural evolution of our species, and there seems to be no reason to assume that this situation will change.

The sphere of sexual fantasy is so complex and so loaded with characters and situations that it almost eclipses the real world. Of course, most persons understand the necessity for certain boundaries and constraints in attempting to enact these fantasies, especially if the principle of autonomy is to be preserved. Yet the fantasies return again and again, promising us a kingdom of sexual bliss that is just around the corner, once the magical other appears, or our current partner reveals another facet of his or her own sexual potency. Perhaps the stretch between the present and the not yet is most acute in the sexual sphere, making it a good analogue to the eschatological fantasies of the various world religions. And what are the immediate semiotic aspects of this stretch?

The sexual sphere is the one in which the self expends the most energy decoding signals that come to it from other selves. Rarely, however, are the signals as clear as we would like, while in rarer contexts

they may be too clear, lacking the kind of ambiguous play that we seem to desire in our dealings with others. Misreading signs can have personal and social consequences, and even the signs themselves may be intrinsically ambiguous, as when unconscious transference projections are at play.

But what are the positive semiotic implications of sexuality? Insofar as two people come into a semiotic clearing in which they become strongly relevant to their respective selving processes, sexuality may become a key ingredient in solidifying, however briefly, a journey through time. Of course, this can be a labyrinthine journey as in the second species of sacred fold, and it can also have dyadic and abjected features as in the first species, but it will also have a momentum that can secure the self against its own disintegration, at least in the short run. If you ask yourself which other powers in the world can have this positive and direct meliorative effect, you arrive at a very short list.

In fact, there may be a sense in which this fourth species of the self/sacred fold encounter is inclusive of the first three forms. The much-eulogized myth of sexual bliss and sexual union, in which two selves overcome their cosmic isolation, is rarely played out in real life. It is part of the unconscious cunning of the sex drive that labyrinthine structures are often prized in their own right, as when flirtation or nonmonogamous practices flourish. Some evolutionary biologists argue that adultery is actually hard wired into the brain, for fairly straightforward reasons tied to the sexual selection process. Whatever one makes of these arguments, there is clearly statistical evidence for a kind of polygamy in practice as well as in fantasy life.

The sexual sacred fold, then, has a number of very distinctive features. It is: (1) overdetermined beyond immediate survival needs, (2) polyform in its expression, (3) capable of its own unique combination of pain and pleasure, (4) the motor force for much of cultural evolution, (5) the source for the most immediate and compelling semiotic practices of coding and decoding, (6) the locus for the great stretch between the is and the would be, and (7) a kind of actual infinite that never wanes in strength. Given all of these complexities, what designation would be most apropos? Perhaps we can call this type of sacred fold and self/fold correlation a *polyform dialectical fold* which connotes a continual movement around a shifting center. The stress on the dialectic signals that this type of fold represents a movement backward and forward in which its animating spirits struggle toward a potential integration. This kind of fold can include the dialectic of the labyrinth, but as a subaltern

formation, and it can include abjections and dyads, but as inferior forms of the dialectic. Unlike the fixed-point encompassing fold, which it often struggles to imitate, its objects are too complex (in sheerly human terms) and too unpredictable. In fact, we can say that it is part of the melancholy logic of this kind of fold that it wishes to be an encompassing fold, which is never possible. Even with the sacramental model of monogamous sexuality, the polyform structures appear at least in fantasy life. But the sacredness of this fourth kind of fold is rarely in doubt, if we understand sacredness to denote numinosity.

The interval that surrounds this type of sacred fold actually points to the other half of Freud's dyad; namely, the death drive. When the polyform dialectic is in play, the death drive functions as a form of satiety or fatigue that stills the ferocity of the fold. Yet the death drive can be a fold in its own right when it enters into the self in process without direct reference to sexuality. When tied to the sexual fold, the death drive opens out a clearing underneath fantasy and the erotic drive for participation, thereby giving the fold a sense of measure.

In the phenomenology of these four types of sacred folds and their self/fold correlations, we have mapped out at least some of the parameters of the depth-dimension of the human process. Each fold derives its power from the unconscious of the self that fills it with human, sometimes all too human, content. Yet somehow the fold is more than the sum of human projections and comes to meet us when we least expect it. Saul did not expect to become Paul, any more than Jack expected to turn into a homicidal maniac. Until our first direct encounter with a celestial object we may not understand the immensity of that which encompasses our fragile species, and each human encounter has the potential to fall under the grip of a sexual fold that may have astonishing richness or demonic depths. Ecstatic naturalism, unlike its hide-bound descriptive relative, recognizes that all four types of sacred fold are fully part of nature in its cunning and wonder, and that no account of semiosis is even remotely complete until it enters into a dialogue with these great powers. In the spirit of Tillich, who argued that religion represented the depth-dimension of culture, and culture the form of religion, ecstatic naturalism affirms that the sacred folds that disturb, transform, haunt, and goad us are the religious heart of the self/world correlation. For it is in the encounter with these folds that we gain access to both our own unconscious and the underconscious of the world. In the final pages of this book we must make what observations

we can, both phenomenological and transcendental, about the *how* of that most elusive reality of all, *nature naturing* and its innumerable potencies.

“DIE POTENZEN”

Here we are already trespassing in a domain where thought has placed us under a general quarantine. The easier strategy here is the transcendental that will posit alleged necessary and even sufficient conditions for what takes place within and among the orders of *nature natured*. In all of the preceding phenomenological descriptions, the human unconscious has shown itself to be the gateway to the underconscious of nature, to the potencies of *nature naturing*. The term “potency,” derived from Schelling’s term *die Potenzen*, which he transported from mathematics into philosophy, has little in common with the term “possibility.” For some order to be a possibility is for it already to occupy some location within *nature natured*. Possibilities come and go as actualities do, and many of them can be plotted and allowed for. The potencies, on the other hand, are more like Peirce’s infinitesimals; namely, as prespatial, pretemporal, and presemiotic powers awaiting a sudden entrance into the world of orders. It is at this juncture that apocalyptic language becomes appropriate, not in the orders of human history, but in the heart of the ontological difference where a potency in its self-othering gives birth to a sign root. Peirce referred to his own system as a “Schelling-fashioned idealism” (CP VI.102) and probed again and again into the germinal state prior to the dyadic objects and signs within the world. It is from this germinal state, churning with the self-othering momenta of *die Potenzen*, that the world as we know it arises.

Peirce’s version of the transcendental argument used the potency theory, via his infinitesimals, to explain aspects of novelty and growth. The above-noted tension between his more traditional Christian views on creation and his perhaps more cherished neo-Platonic views of emanation, was fueled by his ambivalence about the germinal state and about how much could be said about it. Like Buchler, he was deeply suspicious of any appeal to the inexplicable (cf. *W* II.213), and thus put his own transcendental strategy under an ironic cloud. But his system could not function without an ultimate appeal to the inexplicable, to that which is deeply embedded in the heart of nature and beyond the reach of all of our sign systems. Of course, no categorial array can long

function without *some* use of such a strategy, so the wise pragmatist knows that the issue is one of fecundity and pertinence, not of an ascetic avoidance.

Within the purview of our own transcendental strategy, what can be said about the potencies to help us make sense of the how of nature, in terms of both its underconscious and its manifest orders? Before answering this question directly, it is necessary to ask: what is the potency theory trying to explain, that is, what is it about the orders of *nature* *natured* that cannot be explained in intra-worldly terms? The answer to this second question has emerged in a variety of phenomenological contexts. The primary fact about the sign systems and objects within the world is that they exhibit a kind of restlessness that is not exhaustively a product of efficient causality. There is a momentum to orders of signification in particular that points backward to an ejective source that must itself be self-othering, must be a taciturn self-splitting that propels meaning outward in an infinite variety of ways. Our primary means of access to the manifestations of this self-othering is through dream material that will always live on both sides of the ontological difference. In the dream series, something of the birthing ground of the potencies is manifest, albeit through image, metaphor, narrative, and a form of living theatre.

Let us return to the image of theatre, to the image of nature as being a nonintentional playwright. The transcendental strategy struggles to open up the counter-logic of *nature* *naturing* as a kind of counter-world to our own. Strictly, it is not composed of anti-signs, but of presemiotic momenta that will birth signs. If nature is writing a play, it is not writing it as a conscious playwright trying to fill the house, but on a different level. Any notion that this world is “merely” a world of theatre is deeply offensive to the moral imagination, which is permeable to the astonishing amount of suffering in the world. But, of course, theatre is never “merely” theatre, but represents one of the very best analogies or metaphors for the way of nature itself. What can our (we hope) judicious use of a transcendental strategy say about the theatre/nature comparison that sheds light on the potencies of *nature* *naturing*?

First it must be acknowledged that in an ordinal universe there can never be one play, one narrative, or one repertory company. There are innumerable plays, many incomplete, and many in competition with each other. The actors in the play are often in dead earnest about their roles, which can overwhelm as well as transport. Most players belong to extra-human orders and do not have a centered intentional awareness.

And even in the human orders we move across the stage with only the barest understanding of our lines or roles. But where is our cosmic playwright?

Here we enter into the darkest waters of all, the churning night time of the underconscious of the world that even the spirits (concreted in their sacred folds and intervals) fail to penetrate. Of course, the image of “penetration” has become suspect because it suggests patriarchal domination and control, if not outright violation. Yet the word still has some phenomenological value as one of the ways in which orders interact with each other. Another term might help us a little farther down the road, that of “permeability.” This term has served us well in much of the preceding descriptions and can return one last time for a brief cameo appearance.

Any order of signification will be at least minimally permeable to the self-othering momenta from which it or its ancestors have come. There are engrams of this lineage available in the heart of each order, and this space of no-thingness is manifest in its own uncanny way. When an order of signification, certainly as encountered by human sign users, becomes open to this vibrating empty center, it becomes permeable to, or available to, the potencies of *nature naturing*. This is not a penetration relationship, but one involving a receptivity for that which is extremely reluctant to show itself.

The potencies of *nature naturing* have been described both as self-othering and as self-effacing. Is the latter trait an inverse (perverse) patriarchal concept; namely, that what we often connote by the image of the material maternal is self-sacrificing, giving over “her” blood and essence to her children? No. The patriarchal implications are avoided once it is recognized that the concept of sacrifice is utterly out of place in this context. The underconscious of nature has nothing delimited to sacrifice; it has no semiotic treasure to give away, no life force that is spent in its self-othering. The self-effacing quality of the potencies of nature has far more to do with the impossibility of their ever concretizing themselves into the manifest world of orders. It is an abyss that cannot be crossed.

So where does our nature/playwright analogy stand? The underconscious of nature is not a playwright in the conscious sense, but is more like an architect of theatrical space, working with all possible and actual playwrights to make narratives, plots, characterizations, and dramas possible. No one style or genre is privileged, and no one set of actors will be called upon in each situation. Does this meta-playwright know what

dramas will be enacted? It is in encountering the full weight of *this* question that the absolute limits of our transcendental strategy become clear. We shall never know, at least in our current embodied form in space and time, whether the underconscious of nature has an awareness like our own. From our studies of the dream work, we do know that some kind of prethematic awareness is in play, that is, that there is a recognition of and response to meaning shifts and forms of semiotic inertia. But this is a far cry from the notion of a fully conscious personal being whom we can address.

We at least know what we cannot say about *die Potenzen*. They cannot be counted or delimited in any way. In fact it is as if we are in the sphere where there is no principle of individuation. The potencies, at least as seen through the dark lens of our transcendental strategy, are perennially self-othering and recede from view long before they can be captured by phenomenological insight. They are not in time in any sense that we would understand, so that this temporal language has to be applied only as a heuristic device. It makes no sense to talk about a time when the potencies were not and the monotheistic concept of creation is inapplicable, that is, it is a category mistake to talk as if the potencies were created by something or someone other to them. The sacred folds and their intervals that we encounter in the world of *nature natured* (the dyadic centrifugal, labyrinthine centripetal, fixed-point enveloping, and polyform dialectical) are what they are, at least, because they are permeable to the potencies that erupt in their own way into the orders of nature. But these sacred folds and their corresponding intervals are not potencies, only their most dramatic effects within the structures of world semiosis.

Ecstatic naturalism emerges out of the perennial dialectic between melancholy and ecstasy. As unwitting actors in stories for which we often write only a few of our own lines, we are surrounded with traces of the ultimate whence that haunt us, while we also ride on those pulsations that can propel us into the not yet, the ultimate whither that is only dimly sensed on the edges of our meaning horizons, both personal and social. For those countless millions who will never fulfill their selving process, the curtain comes down too soon, and the narrative is abruptly broken off. And even those who do complete the drama are often blinded by the stage lights to what lies just beyond the stage itself.

We conclude by once again facing the paradoxical tension between the robust affirmation of categorial power when dealing with the manifest semiotic structure of *nature natured* and the silence that surrounds us

and muffles our speech when we try to peer into the abyss of *nature naturing*. The current perspective assumes that we can affirm *that* the unconscious of nature exists, but that it can say almost nothing about its internal structures. The transcendental strategy can inform us about what might be behind the effects of the potencies of nature while phenomenological description can unfold how these effects are encountered by human sign users.

Where does all of this leave the human process, that often decentered and unwitting semiotic microcosm that seems to bump along in dimly lit corridors with neither beginning nor end? The normative heart beat of ecstatic naturalism can be found in the movement to convert as many unconscious structures and powers into conscious ones as is possible within the limited strength of the person or community involved. Regardless of what imperial consciousness says about the matter, the self will be seized by sacred folds, often when they are least expected. The trajectory of the self in process will be dramatically altered in ways that can never become fully conscious, but some consciousness can be won by the right use of our native semiotic tools. When psychoanalytic insight is combined with critical common sense, there is a movement past blind reiteration toward the open clearing of the not yet.

In the end, how would we characterize the kind of enterprise that has been undertaken here? Has it had its own momentum that is analogous to the momentum of one of nature’s folds? If so, which one? Perhaps there is something impertinent about such questions, but there may be a sense in which an attempt to answer them can shed light on the kind of contrivance that is found in the nexus where philosophy, theology, semiotics, and psychoanalysis intersect. If one of the four types of fold were to be privileged here it would probably be the *labyrinthine centripetal fold*. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The world of *nature natured* has no outer edge, no mappable boundary that can shape and delimit what occurs “within” it. It is like an infinite maze in which there are innumerable entrance points and a shifting center. Under the conditions of finitude it is impossible to find our way out, even if we can come to recognize certain pathways as having been traveled before.

The movement of thought along these pathways involves a return again and again to a center that remains just beyond the horizon. But this movement is not a passive one. It involves the creation of new pathways, of new mazes that instruct the self as it journeys toward its own and nature’s centers. We are called to be both maze masters and maze builders, but always in such a way as to honor the hidden and

taciturn source of all mazes, the potencies of *nature naturing*, and always in such a way as to affirm our connection with vast semiotic systems which shape our contrivances and give them what validity and reach they may have.

References

References in the text conform to the official style sheet of the Semiotic Society of America, in which the original-language version of a text (where pertinent) is listed first, while the pagination refers to the noted translation. Thus, for example, the reference Schelling 1809: 36 refers to p.36 of the Gutmann translation of the original 1809 German edition. The only exception to this practice involves references to the works of C. S. Peirce, which have their own standard notational forms as noted below.

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