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Thirdness along the Intuitional Path: Reflections from Maritain and Peirce

This inquiry exposts Maritain’s and Peirce’s account of the pre-conditions for emergence of event relations.¹ This spotlights Maritain’s model of how to prepare for the receipt of objective intellection, as well as Peirce’s treatment of abductive inferencing. It further identifies the foundational representations (signs) which compel the intuitional/inferencing process. The ultimate illustration of inferencing for Peirce² is

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¹ Katherine Nelson is largely responsible for developing psychological accounts of event representations. She posits that a script including beginning, middle and end structures events, often exemplified in narrative practices (although event representations emerge prior to language (Patricia J. Bauer, “Recalling Past Events: From Infancy to Early Childhood,” *Annals of Child Development* 11 [1995]: 25–71). Fivush and Haden (see their “Narrating and Representing Experience: Preschoolers’ Developing Autobiographical Accounts,” in *Developmental Spans in Event Comprehension and Representation: Bridging Fictional and Actual Events*, ed. P. van den Broek, P. Bauer, and T. Bourg [Hilldale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997], 175) augment this definition with the claim that event structures “are driven by the protagonist’s wish to achieve a goal.” Based upon these accounts, this inquiry attributes recognition of a temporal sequence to happenings—together with their connection with spatial contexts. These smaller happenings cohere in a kind of story (Katherine Nelson, “Event Representations: Then, Now, and Next,” in *Developmental Spans in Event Comprehension and Representation: Bridging Fictional and Actual Events*, ed. P. van den Broek, P. Bauer, and T. Bourg [Hilldale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997], 1–28).

² 1908: CP 6.455.

imputing meaning relations between events³ within different universes.⁴ Although Maritain does not explicitly address the role of inferencing to determine novel event relations, he bears witness to how intuitions (comprising inferences which emerge suddenly) establish the foundation for truth-seeking. They do so by virtue of a logical nexus assumed (absent investigation) to operate between events. Both Peirce and Maritain advocate that inferring event relations depends upon two distinct kinds of knowledge: from empirical sources in Secondness/sensible experiences, as well as from an objective (in the sense of modern usage), transcendental (extra-categorical attributes of being) state in Firstness.⁵ In the latter, intuitions emerge from unbidden pictures vividly flashing across the mind's eye, while in the former, embodied action templates trace lived experiential paths with objective import. Although both knowledge sources give rise to iconic and indexical signification, it is initially the indexical function which compels inferential reasoning—the bases for intuitions.⁶ With respect to the former source, acting

³ Peirce's notion of event relations entails not a momentary temporal point in time, consonant with his concept of individual—a Scotistic determination, but a continuum-based model in which continuity is driven by propositional/argumentative logic. This is so given Peirce's requirement that all signs, including event representations, must be associated with meanings (interpretants), and hence contain at least implied propositions (1906: CP 8.338; 1905: CP 4.538).

⁴ "The third Universe comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes. Such is everything which is essentially a Sign—not the mere body of the Sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign's Soul, which has its Being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind" (CP 6.455).

⁵ For a foundational discussion of Peirce's categories, cf. Cornelis de Waal, *Peirce: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 39–46, and Richard K. Atkins, *Charles S. Peirce's Phenomenology: Analysis and Consciousness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 140–204.

⁶ For elaboration, cf. Donna West, "Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation," in *Consensus on Peirce's Concept of Habit: Before and Beyond Consciousness*, ed. D. West and M. Anderson (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2016), 215–240.

upon objects by direct involvement or by observation (both empirical) illustrates direct involvement in movement within and across events, experiencing their contours. The embodied nature of these enactments can facilitate the inferencing process—establishing the event’s syntax—who does what to whom, and in what sequence. Accordingly, many action schemas, which draw upon Peirce’s percepts/perceptual judgments, make use of inferential skills;⁷ and index particularly hastens inferences by highlighting relational event paths.⁸ Drawing attention to objects in their spatial array as observed in their co-context—a primary function of index—compels inferences; it elicits conjectures pertaining to how the objects might function in an event scheme, and the relevance of their consequences. The notable advantage of indexical signs is the element of Thirdness—suggesting, not naming nor exemplifying relations by analogy (as with symbols and icons, respectively). Unlike other kinds of signs whose relationship with objects is explicit, index stands for its objects implicitly. In fact, the implicit nature of these relations leaves them vulnerable to being unnoticed.

Integrating transcendental with empirical sources, which both Maritain and Peirce advocate, supplies checks and balances in an effort to discern truth via objective intellection; but exploring the special role of Thirdness⁹ in determining relational paths remains uncharted. Accordingly, both models recognize that intuitions are derived in substantial part from sources beyond empirical ones, mystical sources. But, whether intuitions surface as primary cognitions (having relevance to

⁷ Catherine Legg, “Idealism Operationalized: How Peirce’s Pragmatism Can Help Explicate and Motivate the Possibly Surprising Idea of Reality as Representational,” in *Peirce on Perception and Reasoning: From Icons to Logic*, ed. K. Hull and R. Atkins (London: Routledge, 2017), 46–47.

⁸ Donna West, “Perspective-Switching as Event Affordance: The Ontogeny of Abductive Reasoning,” *Cognitive Semiotics* 7, no. 2 (Winter 2014): 149–176.

⁹ “[Thirdness] is that which is what it is by virtue of imparting a quality to reactions in the future” (1903: CP 1.343).

animal and plant life) is still an open question. If they emerge as vivid images, they may be entertained by other life forms, as suggested by Kemple.¹⁰ By encapsulating the potential for objective meanings in elementary event representations, potentiality for future meanings is enshrined. The upshot for both models is that the triadic nature of event signs (sign, object, meaning/effect) is present even in primordial forms such as matter, by virtue of its potency to insinuate subsequent intuitions into the sign's fabric. In other words, despite its latency, the potency of Thirdness has its presence, implicitly for Maritain, explicitly for Peirce (in which thought defines fact).¹¹ This "conformity of fact to thought" establishes the foundation for a promise to turn over relevant objective meanings implicit in primary states of being, and in the relations existing among concurrent and contiguous states of affairs.

Intuition as Intellectual Apprehension

Maritain asserts that preparation to receive intuitions entails practice of three mystical exercises: prolonging psychic states, feeling anguish, and fidelity to one's metaphysical existence. While Maritain¹² borrows the first two from Bergson and Heidegger, respectively, the third is his own contribution. Prolonging psychic states is orchestrated as follows:

¹⁰ See Brian Kemple, *Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition: The Philosophy of Being as First Known* (Boston: Brill-Rodopi, 2017), 125–127.

¹¹ "This element of our daily & hourly experience, the element of the conformity of fact to thought,—this element whose being such as it is consists in this that it has such reference to an object independent of it as to bring a third thing (the interpretation) into the same triadic relation to that same object,—this character of a *sign*, the being an exponent of thought, is what I call the element of Thirdness in the phenomenon" (1903: MS 462: 84–86).

¹² See Jacques Maritain, "The Intuition of Being," in *Challenges and Renewal*, ed. J. Evans and L. Ward, (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 124–125.

We have here a psychological experience which is not yet the metaphysical intuition of being, but which could have led to this intuition, for, enveloped in this psychological duration, implicitly given there, is existence, the irreducible value of *esse*; it is therefore a path, an approach, to the perception of existence.

Duration of being illustrates the need for some awareness of the stable features which comprise the essence of the individual despite environmental/contextual factors.¹³ This initial step to receiving intuitions precludes consideration of subjective, arbitrary or capricious factors which might intrude, and hence interfere with achieving objective dispositions. The second step toward reaching readiness entails further insulation from adherence to ego-based interpretation, namely, suffering. This process requires tearing the self from itself: “[N]o one can be a metaphysician without first passing through the experience of anguish . . .” Maritain emphasizes that the self needs to be “save[d] from nothingness, snatch[ed] from nonentity. Yes, this kind of dramatic experience of nothingness may serve as an introduction to the intuition of being.” Here Maritain determines that anguish is a necessary precondition for recognizing intuitions, given its means to subvert the ego to a place of humility/respect for otherness. Apprehending the insufficiency of subjective operations is paramount. It acknowledges that the often-misleading nature of idiosyncratic perceptions is too compelling to allow objective truth-seeking processes to have prominence, given their inability to establish which hunches/inferences have promise as objective virtues. In fact, an awareness that begins and ends with ego often short-circuits the process of listening rather than “fabricating answers” which Maritain cautions against.¹⁴ Maritain’s description of this attitude of

¹³ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 57.

¹⁴ Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 132. Kemple (in his *Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition*, 125) frames this problem in terms of Thomistic “intentionality,” with “the etymological signification of ‘tending-towards.’” Here “in-

anguish as “lived,” further intimates the need for ego to repeatedly feel the agony of excising self from the process of intellection. The third posture/attitude (fidelity) finally approaches entry into metaphysical realms:

We may observe that all the consistency, *steadfastness*, firmness, and victory over disintegration and oblivion contained in this virtue and suggested by the word ‘fidelity’ are strictly dependent upon a certain *steadfastness* in reality itself in virtue of which I dominate the flux of my own life and possess my metaphysical consistence.

He sums up the three-fold process of hearing intuitions as follows:

The first of these experiences, that of duration, is more of the speculative order, at once psychological and biological. The two others are more of the practical and moral order, the psychological factor being invested in the ethical.¹⁵

Despite attempts toward ego denial, ascertaining fidelity may still fall short of the metaphysical knowledge necessary to receive what Maritain characterizes as intuitions:

And what is especially dangerous in all these ways of approaching being is that one runs the risk of remaining imprisoned in one or the other of the concrete analogues of being, the one that he will have chosen as path of approach. The experience in question gives information only of itself. This is indeed the drawback of pure experience in philosophy and the stumbling block of every metaphysics which wishes to be experimental. The experience, though valid for the particular domain in which the intuition in question has arisen, cannot be extended to a vaster intelligible

tentionality” does not entail a plan of action, merely an attitude of preferential “listening,” as Maritain notes.

¹⁵ Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 125–126.

domain and cannot take on an explanatory value, except in an arbitrary manner.¹⁶

Here Maritain encapsulates the characteristics which differentiate a metaphysical state promoting intuitions from a lesser state: amplifying actual experience by analogy, and drawing upon the explanatory adequacy of the relation recognized within the inference. Absent access to the explanatory value of the event relation, and its application to wider genres (by analogy), preparation could not reach sufficiency for intuitional status; and with respect to the third and ultimate stage for preparation (fidelity), even minimizing self-interest (deferring to otherness) can fail to provide the light sufficient to ascertain the metaphysical state necessary to engage in objective intellection. Maritain is clear that employing experiential data as the yardstick to extract inferential material falls short of intuitional status, presumably because its temporal and spatial actualization limit the means to draw explanatory hypotheses to determine future applications of these relations—hence precluding inclusion of other places, times, and participant roles.

Maritain's emphasis on attaining a metaphysical state to receive intuitions demonstrates his clear vision of the transcendental process leading to receipt of the intellectual absolutes necessary to ascertain event inferences. He notes that a primary component to ultimately arrive at intuitions is "trans-objective real offering itself as object."¹⁷ "Offering [one's] self as object" requires an elevated kind of being which depends upon the three kinds of preparation cited above; such is transcendental at its core, consequent to subjecting the self to objective principles—becoming an object such that self enters into the observable fabric of all things. This process materializes upon receipt of eidetic moving images containing mystical qualities:

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 120–121.

The typical mode of intellectual apprehension or eidetic visualization—the degree of immateriality, of spirituality, in the manner of seizing the object and of conforming to it, required of itself by the trans-objective real offering itself as object . . . constitutes what the ancients called . . . the objective light under which things are . . . knowable to the intellect.¹⁸

For Maritain, eidetic visualization constitutes a practical form which can be exercised by life forms other than human. But when it attains sign status, accompanied by a concept or mental word, it has the supreme power to preempt the highest state of knowledge—allowing the mind to subsume the object (or “seize” it):

[I]ntellectual knowledge is accomplished thanks to a mental word or concept, a presentative form uttered by the intellect within itself, and in that form the intellect intentionally becomes . . . the thing taken in . . . one of its intelligible determinations.¹⁹

By classifying the issue under consideration beside other concepts within the same mental system, the concept/mental word advances from the practical effect of the simple vivid image to a more speculative effect—proceeding from sensorimotor action schemes to propositions/assertions which contain raw material for inferences. Naming the action (by articulated or unarticulated words) makes more explicit the implicit inferences of the action relations as represented in the eidetic image; hence, the inferences implied in the image rise to the level of “seizing the object” as a “transobjective offering.” In fact, these specific eidetic images (which Maritain identifies) may well be equivocal to Peirce’s abductions, in that their initial flash of insight illuminates the consequences; afterward (like mental words) additional images explain the phenomenon.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. G. Phelan, ed. R. McNerny (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 124.

Maritain identifies three levels of eidetic visualization/intensive visualization: physical abstraction (not allowing material qualities to be primary), quantitative abstraction (relations of order and measure proper to quantity), and metaphysical abstraction (foregrounding the intelligible).²⁰ The third level is not ascertained without traveling through the prior levels; objective intellection requires attenuation from appearances, as well as the affirmative recognition of foundational relations implied in appearances. To advance to the third stage, these foundational relations must be applied to would-be contexts, qualifying as intellectual apprehension whereby “onticity of being” is the objective. Here, eidetic visualization of selective previous relations become material for future meanings—advancing the state of knowledge to “being as such.”²¹ Beyond achieving the objectively transcendental, what elevates the intellect is inferring subsequent ontological relations from already observed event relations, with recognition of their outcomes. This extension of relations into futurity demonstrates not merely a use of signs beyond space and time restrictions, but a definite awareness of their expanded use—perhaps equivocal analogous to meta-semiotic semiosis competency. For Maritain, the specificity/sharpness intrinsic to salient mental images obviates objective principles, and when accompanied by symbolic signs (e.g., “mental words”) brings about the ultimate metaphysical state of intellectual apprehension, namely, intuition (cf. *infra* for expansion).

By contrast, Peirce insists that abductive reasoning is the factor responsible for arriving at this intellectual objectivity—using the con-

²⁰ Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 88–99. Cf. Edmund Morawiec, *Intellectual Intuition in the General Metaphysics of Jacques Maritain: A Study in the History of the Methodology of Classical Metaphysics* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2013), 27.

²¹ For further discussion of this kind of suchness, cf. Morawiec, *Intellectual Intuition in the General Metaphysics of Jacques Maritain*, 27–28.

sequence as the point of departure.²² Here abductions posit plausible explanations for vital relations between consequences and the factors which give rise to them. Whether abductions actually qualify as intuitions though is hardly likely for Peirce, despite their similarities, because (like abductions) intuitions lack the requisite status as first cognitions. Even when intuitions appear to be first cognitions, they arguably depend upon other percepts/cognitions, such that even the most primary cognition implicitly depends upon previous cognitions and hence upon inferences.²³ But, apart from his early repudiation of the existence of intuitions,²⁴ Peirce's semiotic (after further development) suggests modification to a more moderate position—that indexical signs approach the status of intuitions, because they imply logical relations by means of their natural spatial and temporal situatedness to their objects. As such, object-meaning relations can be inferred by virtue of co-occurrence with the indexical sign, e.g., smoke implies fire, or pointing fingers imply performatives (especially obviated when performatives comply with imperative meanings). “An index is a real thing or fact which is a sign of its object by virtue of being connected with it as a matter of fact and by also forcibly intruding upon the mind, quite regardless of its being interpreted as a sign.”²⁵ Because of its direct physical and temporal association with its object, index implies performative meanings (with its objects) which are especially imperative in nature—forcing the attention to particular entities. In this way, index intrinsically contains propositional value—that the object merits attention because of its meanings/effects, or that it suggests augmented, future

²² MS 630: 6: 1909.

²³ Cf. Aaron B. Wilson, *Peirce's Empiricism: Its Roots and Its Originality* (Lanham: Lexington Press, 2016), 86–89; Robert G. Meyers, “Pragmatism and Peirce's Externalist Epistemology,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 35, no. 4 (1999): 645.

²⁴ 1868: CP 5.213.

²⁵ 1903: CP 4.447.

meanings. Index's reference to individual objects in the immediate here and now of the context delegates to it a unique function—individuating relations and topical shifts across objects, and monitoring meaning alterations.²⁶ By extension, the propositional function of index (with subject and predicate) supplies the raw material to infer actual and future relations; and novel propositions implying event relations are more likely to surface thereafter with accompanying indexes when compared to other sign types because their proximity and directionality uniquely imply logical relations between objects in the same and alternative contexts.²⁷ If interpreters entertain those indices which suggest plausible propositions, they open themselves to receipt of *il lume naturale*, given the implied relations to be inferred between indexical signs and their objects:

[I]t is to be expected that [man] should have a natural light, or light of nature, or instinctive insight, or genius, tending to make him guess [nature's] laws aright, or nearly aright. This conclusion is confirmed when we find that every species of animal is endowed with a similar genius.²⁸

²⁶ For further discussion, cf. Gabriele Gava, "What Is Wrong with Intuitions? An Assessment of a Peircean Criticism of Kant," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 50, no. 3 (2014): 350.

²⁷ Cf. Donna West's: *Deictic Imaginings: Semiosis at Work and at Play* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2013), and "The Work of Peirce's Dicisign in Representationalizing Early Deictic Events," *Semiotica*, no. 225 (2018): 19–38. Deely (see his *Purely Objective Reality* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009], 29–30) likewise recognizes that inferring relations is foundational to semiosis, but does not address the role of index in this phenomenon: "For while relation is like all the other accidents in requiring an *esse in alio* (a modification of subjectivity), it is unlike all the other accidents in not *consisting* in that modification but only resting upon or *provenating from* that subjective modification as from a foundation or basis in subjectivity."

²⁸ 1903: CP 5.604. Cf. 1893: MS 408: 148–149. Peirce more clearly defines instinctive insight deriving from natural light in a 1913 letter to F. A. Woods: "I use the word instinct in the precise sense of an animal's faculty of acting (whether physically or psychically) in a reasonable (or better 'an adaptive') manner, when the animal (human or other) would be unable by reasoning to reach the requisite conclusion" (Kenneth

As hinted at earlier, Maritain determines that vivid images (which may be propelled by Peirce's notion of instinct) are the most propitious source for exploiting the natural light, because they possess a power surpassing embodied action schemes. As such, the component of Thirdness in the indexical sign elevates eidetic images to propositional status—creating an embryonic forum to construct events in future universes. Maritain illustrates how eidetic visualizations first have a practical import, then a psychic purpose. They first preempt certain cultural expressions of episodes ritualized in chants and/or incantations²⁹—their practical effect. But he illustrates that their ultimate effect as instruments of natural light is to signify objective propositions. As such, they supply a forum to practice how relations would be were they to materialize in the future. This has the effect of hastening viewer's inferences by means of specific moving pictures of novel states of affairs/relations. Even from the outset, eidetic images insinuate future intuitions with the implication that subsequent meanings/effects are likely to surface. They likewise amplify/consolidate/reify concepts of past experiences. But, to receive these new relations which usher in fresh meanings the subject's awareness must first be cauterized from all presumptions, such that one's being does not miss the "voice" of the intuition by dependence on subjective factors.³⁰ In this vein, Maritain cautions against dependence upon previous experience as the primary source—without sufficiently seeking the light of intellectual absolutes. The former results in sterile facts of subjective past happenings, uninformed by dynamic inference-making principles. The influence of mystical factors then is paramount for Maritain along the path toward receiving the natural light/grace of intuitions. This mystical element exploits the potency of meaning in

Laine Ketner, *His Glassy Essence: An Autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce* [Nashville and London: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998], 104–105).

²⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Redeeming the Time* (London: Centenary Press, 1943), 213.

³⁰ Maritain, "The Intuition of Being," 124–125.

elementary event signs, when it transforms past experience into material for predictive future event relations. It orchestrates this by subverting idiosyncratic memories, and by encouraging new expectations for objective, resultative states of affairs which obviate the potential for interventions relevant to all entities, extending to would-be participants and conditions.

The Influence of Mystical Factors

Maritain's warning against overreliance upon affective influences, precluding the transcendental process, further convinces us of the indispensability of mystical factors to receive intuitions: "Being proceeds such an intuition not as for that sort of sympathy requiring a twisting of the will back upon itself . . . but of the intellect and by means of a concept, an idea. The concept of being, the notion of being corresponds to this intuition."³¹ For Maritain, intuition requires a purge which guards against myopic conclusions, in which self convinces the self of the efficacy of hunches by virtue of a fleeting act of the will, or from feelings to align with some capricious attraction. Instead, the intuitions encapsulating the inference must be interpreted according to a mystical source—the light of an absolute virtue, such that being/essence takes precedence over subjective impressions of event relations. Becoming subject to this mystical source for receipt of objective truths, prevents subjects from "twisting' . . . the will;" it insulates against drawing conclusions from experiential data alone. It is arguably the case that this mystical source derives ultimately from the use of signs. Maritain's characterization of intuitions as "sudden," further supports his cautionary directive against adopting inferences drawn simply from empirical sources. He insists that subjects receive this mystical virtue of

³¹ *Ibid.*, 122.

objective essence via a flash of insight or light—without grasping at their preconceived answer, often blurred by idiosyncratic experience.³² In fact, this light often presents itself not to the mind or body, but to the soul—as “mystical grace:”

There is a kind of sudden intuition which a soul can receive of its own existence or of the being inviscerated in all things whatsoever. . . . It may even happen that in the case of a particular soul this intellectual perception may present itself under the guise of mystical grace. . . . It often happened that by a sudden intuition I experienced the reality of my own being, of the deepest first principle of placing me outside of nothingness. . . . Its violence often frightened me; that intuition gave me . . . knowledge of a metaphysical absolute.³³

By retiring from one’s subjective being, with its capricious perceptions, one can empty the self of acquired knowledge, setting the stage to receive an essence which readily recognizes the import of other essences—animal, plant, as well as inanimate substances. In fact, rejecting adherence to one’s initial identity (heavily derived from past experiences) has a turbulent effect or “kind of violence,” because the new order of being replaces the accustomed, known being. This process may be stabilizing and destabilizing at the same time—“placing me [the subject] outside of nothingness.” Being shunted “outside nothingness,” is apprehended only after rejecting earlier illusions brought about by self-constructed answers. “Outside nothingness” constitutes a new situatedness supplying the degree of objectivity necessary to acquire a meta-

³² For further discussion, cf. Morawiec, *Intellectual Intuition in the General Metaphysics of Jacques Maritain*, 16–17.

³³ Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 122. This is similar to Peirce’s notion of “instinct” in that both are sudden, and can give rise to plausible inferences; this has its genesis in Bergson’s use of “instinct:” “[S]ocieties swayed by pure instinct, in which the individual serves the interests of the community” (Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Audra and C. Brereton [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1935], 118–119). This instinct need not preclude intelligence.

physical existence—the potency of a something can only surface in the context of other somethings.

Similarly for Peirce, *il lume naturale* serves as a platform for receipt of inferences, although inferences are not synonymous with the second order status of intuitions. Like Maritain's account, this light emerges suddenly, as a flash of insight, from instinct, although it does not specify ascendance to a transcendental state, but to an emergent logical principle of abductive inference: "the abductive suggestion comes to us like a flash. It is an act of *insight*, although of extremely fallible insight."³⁴ Whereas for Maritain, intuition guides the subject to a "metaphysical absolute," Peirce's insight is anything but absolute. Peirce continues to demur the final nature of *il lume naturale* when making the assertion in *Grand Logic*: "The Light of Nature itself represents itself as able to show how the Outward World is. But experience shows its forecasts are untrustworthy."³⁵ Here Peirce's Final Interpretant emerges reminding us that potentiality for new meanings/effects is continually present in the sign. Like Maritain, Peirce insists that past experiences/empirical sources when taken alone are untrustworthy to reliably give rise to sound inferences; consequently, some metaphysical influence (for Peirce in the form of hypostatic abstractions) enlightens percepts/perceptual judgments to discard parochial viewpoints in an effort to adopt new habits of mind/behavior: "[M]an is so completely hemmed in by the bounds of his possible practical experience, his mind is so restricted to being the instrument of his needs, that he cannot mean what transcends those limits."³⁶ Consequently, direct experience must be tempered by hypostatic abstraction—a Firstness-based focus on a single attribute/aspect which surfaces in consciousness, but which, itself encompasses unconscious elements—the process allows one to in-

³⁴ 1903: CP 5.181.

³⁵ 1893: MS 408: 149.

³⁶ C.1905: CP 5.536.

fer propositions by perseverating upon particular qualia. In this way, Peirce accounts for how the mystical informs empirical sources to arrive at more plausible inferences—not shaping propositions from limited experience.

Although Maritain likewise recognizes the need to avoid seeking answers from past experience alone to reach metaphysical knowledge, he emphasizes the preparation necessary—vitiating preconceived concepts: “[W]e have become sufficiently empty to hear what all things murmur and to listen instead of fabricating answers.”³⁷ For Maritain, mystical factors are pivotal to inferential reasoning—for revelation of intellectual absolutes, particularly those which guard against the insinuation of subjective affect/meanings. As alluded to earlier, Maritain posits that empirical sources are insufficient to apprehend the nature of events’ contributory effects. His model in fact, arguably proposes a developmental pattern, such that each stage gives weight to distinct influences in the path toward embracing intuitions. Although this pattern is not explicitly invariant, it does suggest a U-shaped developmental sequence—beginning with notice of undifferentiated percepts, to intuitions flowing from idiosyncratic and social factors, finally arriving at intellectual objective principles toward revelation of absolute truths. This trajectory is consolidated in the following assertion:

Thus all human thought, with its great and at first undifferentiated primordial ramifications, passes . . . through a diversity of conditions, or stages of experience and practice. As it progressively diversifies, human thought passes from the condition of magic to the condition of logic.³⁸

Although the nuts and bolts of this process remain unelaborated, Maritain does more than hint at how human thought can advance from un-

³⁷ Maritain, “The Intuition of Being,” 123.

³⁸ Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, 212.

differentiated awareness to mystical, and even magical concepts of event relations, ultimately transcending to a more speculative thought system governed by objective logical principles. Every phase of Maritain's U-shaped paradigm illustrates a mystical influence—higher stages ultimately actuate a more metaphysical Being. The process initially involves a more magical character, requiring active, embodied enactments which derive from a more subjective perspective which ignores transcendence to “outside nothingness.” Afterward, cultural and social practices convert the purely practical into a directed magical regime in which conjectures as to the etiology of practices acquire causal qualities. To complete the cycle, “trans-objective intellection” translates unlikely conjectures of causality into likely ones—establishing the dominance of logical and objective principles.

Social sources for intuitions are likewise obviated in Maritain's notion of being:

Being superabounds everywhere; it scatters its gifts and fruits in profusion. This is the action in which all beings here below communicate with one another . . . By this action they exchange their secrets, influence one another for good or ill, and contribute to or betray in one another the fecundity of being . . .³⁹

The key for Maritain is adopted from a Bergsonian framework. Bergson alludes to it in terms of a “miraculous hallucination,” detailing how a woman was saved from death by stepping into an empty lift, only to be saved at the last minute by a man operating the lift: “At this point she emerged from her fit of abstraction. She was amazed to see that neither man nor lift were there. . . . She had been about to fling herself into the gaping void; a miraculous hallucination had saved her life.”⁴⁰ This mental image emanates from a recharacterization of practices which

³⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, trans. L. Galantiere and G. Phelan (New York: Vintage, 1966), 42.

⁴⁰ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 120.

were initially performed individually (either eidetic memories or actual behaviors) recast as cultural practices—such that the teleology of the conduct/set of conduct is redefined according to culturally-based causes and effects determined for and by the group. The social and transcendental character of these newly derived purposes for events is propelled by “etiological” myths, because in their recital, they represent a continued commitment to perpetuate the “action” and “life” of ancestors:

This power alone permits the tribe to enter into community with its ancestors of the mythical period, in some way to participate in them, to make actual their presence, and to ensure that their action is renewed . . . it [the recital of chants] is equivalent to an act; it concerns to the ultimate degree the very life of the group.⁴¹

Accordingly, paramount in transitioning from notice of percepts is recognition of the origin which underlies particular rituals. When rituals are memorialized in incantations and chants, they draw upon practical, social and historical purposes; and as such they stabilize the community in their repetitive, unchangeable character. In fact, it is to the etiological property of myth’s that Maritain attributes the power to imbue the community with shared purposes because of the practical similarities (in cultural structures) which chants and incantations establish across generations: “[Primitive man’s] myths have a character which is above all practical.”⁴²

It is obvious that chants/incantations encourage conjecture beyond a static practical benefit, when they give rise (ordinarily via reference to the source for the practice) to possible conduct/beliefs which could effectuate an outcome. This advancement emerges when these rituals incorporate a logical/speculative character. According to Maritain, this habit change is instrumental in importing a higher level of

⁴¹ Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, 213.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 212.

knowledge than that emanating from subjective/practical sources: “The myth from the very fact that it makes known the origin of things, recalls to them [the tribe] their origin in order to induce them [tribal members] to act . . . thus to speak to things in order to make them propitious . . .”⁴³ The propitiousness of the event sequence (its benefits) is illustrated in “speaking to them.” As such, the “inducement to act” follows. Spoken signs have the power to organize the action into a template toward a sought-after purpose/destination, much like Vygotskii’s “inner speech,” in which success at settling upon a conscious course of action to explain and produce the consequence is enhanced by accompanying mental words.⁴⁴ These mental words may, in fact, emerge from vivid mental images, demonstrating the ultimate import of eidetic visualizations and their implementation as action schemes in the acquisition of intellectual apprehension. When myths become etiological they acquire a speculative character:

[T]he myths known as “etiological” already respond to a need for knowing; but if they are examined closely it is seen a remarkable circumstance, that . . . they thus exemplify an extraordinarily curious passing over of the practical sign of magic into a speculative sign.⁴⁵

What Bergson and Maritain mean by recognition of “etiology” and “cause” is that “[things] will then be more or less charged with submissiveness and potency . . .”⁴⁶ Submissiveness is a necessary mental precondition for the recognition of the intellectual light, in its deferral beyond self to encompass the influence of community, more objective

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴⁴ Lev S. Vygotskii, *Thought and Language*, trans. E. Hanfmann and G. Vakar (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1962), 149.

⁴⁵ Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, 215.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

factors. Potency is realized in the recognition of implicit relations, that when origin is apprehended, relations across events are inferred.

Promoting Intuitions/Abductions through Virtual Habit

Although objective apprehension/intuition is by far the most primary faculty facilitating receipt of sound inferences, more mystical sources can be drawn upon (magic, virtual worlds, creative hallucinations). Any of these sources can reveal the nature of new event connections. Provided that the explanation uncovered by the exercise (new belief) has the potential to lead to trustworthy affirmations, it can inform credible hypotheses. Even affirmations drawn from non-magical sources (e.g., the empirical) can often be misleading, perhaps consequent to the fact that they do not rely upon conscious realization of event relations. A simple awareness of the presence of entities and their effects ordinarily suffices—a fact consonant with the state of the art in memory-based investigations.⁴⁷ Because conscious awareness of the presence of entities is not necessary to exact relational inferences, it is obvious that the means to infer is not derived from sensory impressions alone. Since inferences can flow from either mystical or empirical sources (absent conscious awareness), inferential logic can operate in species other than humans. Hence, inferences which propose connections between events need not rise to the level of metalanguage; conduct alone (of any member of animate life) can imply that the hunch has been adopted. Accordingly for Maritain, the light which uncovers whether to act on an emerging hunch shines into the awareness of sentient and nonsentient beings alike, verifying that something less than consciousness is necessary to apprehend the explanatory worthiness of proposed event relations:

⁴⁷ Alan Baddeley, *Working Memory, Thought, and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 148.

Moreover, it is in things themselves that metaphysics finds its object. It is the being of sensible and material things, the being of the world of experience, which is its immediately accessible field of investigation; it is this which, before seeking its cause, it discerns and scrutinizes—not as sensible and material, but as being. Before rising to the level of spiritual existents, it is empirical existence, the existence of material things, that it holds in its grasp—though not as empirical and material, but as existence.⁴⁸

For Maritain, a necessary ingredient to take on metaphysical existence—such that the transcendental self is brought back into the fabric of the historical and social framework—is the groundedness of inferences in metaphysical processes. In keeping with this argument, magic can serve as a source for intuitions, when it has a truly metaphysical character.

As Maritain makes explicit via Bergson,⁴⁹ what translates magic into myth is the awareness of causality or origin: “[Things] will then be more or less charged with submissiveness and potency: they will hold at our disposal a power which yields to the desires of man, and of which man may avail himself. . . . [The workings of magic] begin the act which men cannot finish.”⁵⁰ Here Maritain agrees with Bergson that magic can result in the apprehension of novel and workable inferences, provided that it is “submissive” to the logical order of events, and that its meaning/effect contains a real potency to create new habits of mind and of action. As such, magical exercises can supersede those of myth, in that in magical forums historical/cultural practices are open to worthy alterations. Maritain elaborates on how this process plays out for “primitive man” and for nonhuman animals when he likens the mystical influence to that of “magic:” “[A]nimals make use of signs. They live in a kind of magical world; biologically united to nature, they use signs

⁴⁸ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 31–32.

⁴⁹ Maritain, *Redeeming the Time*, 203.

⁵⁰ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 155–157.

belonging to a psychic regime which is entirely imaginative.”⁵¹ Here Maritain implies at least a primitive level of awareness for non-sentients (that may not reach consciousness) that a sign stands for an object, regardless of whether the two are in proximity or whether consciousness is operating. Kemple echoes and even amplifies Maritain’s point of view: “Thus, signification is not limited to intellectual human knowledge, but extends through animal cognition, the interactions of plants, and even of purely inorganic beings as well.”⁵² Kemple claims that some semiotic capacity (use of signs) operates in plant life, attributing to plants some degree of primitive relational awareness.

Without addressing other potential semiotic systems, Maritain distinguishes children’s use of magic from that of animals, intimating that children, even early on, can employ semiotic, not merely semiotic skills. The former requires at least a primitive degree of consciousness to extract implied information, which most animals do not exploit. As a consequence of reliance upon conscious engagement of relational logic, children’s magical exercises can result in intuitions, when new relations between events are inferred:

Knowing this relationship of signification will come later [in children’s development], and this will be to have the *idea*, even if it is merely implicit, of that which is signified. Animals and children make use of this signification; they do not perceive it. When the child begins to perceive it (then he exploits it, he toys with it, even in the absence of the real need to which it corresponds)—at that moment the idea has emerged.⁵³

⁵¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 56.

⁵² Kemple, *Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition*, 127.

⁵³ Jacques Maritain, “Language and the Theory of Sign,” trans. R. Nanda Anshen, in *Frontiers in Semiotics*, ed. J. Deely, B. Williams, and F. E. Kruse (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 53.

What appears to distinguish younger from older children's semiotic skills for Maritain is the emergence of metacognitive awareness so that deliberation on the "idea" can become a regular practice. While (like non-human animals) children's object–sign relations are first unconscious and wholly imaginative, especially at the prelinguistic stage, they become more conscious, and even reflective of relational cognition, when they utilize eidetic images and mental words for truth-seeking. For Maritain, although intuitions can be derived from magical genres, eventually impossibility of events within particular forums is offset by more objective representations/principles—"exploiting and toying with it [signification] even in the absence of the real need to which it [signification] corresponds." "Toying" with the sign's meaning/effects apart from contexts in which the sign and object have co-occurred, reifies the emergence of meta-skills, and illustrates integration of a speculative system, in which the object is "seized," and, in turn, possibility assumes a more prominent place. In this context, the "idea" or "mental word" initially attenuates unfounded connections between two concurrent or contiguous events; this attenuation minimizes the compelling suggestion that co-present entities/events are logically related based merely upon proximity of space and/or time. This dissociation or decoupling from the physical context makes way for the influence of speculative logic and the birth of intuitions, because the same sign is applied to novel, more abstract genres. This "idea of the signified" when two or more events are connected logically (not by co-presence), constitutes the most fertile ground upon which Thirdness can insinuate itself. Here, the relational representations are rescued from the purely observable to incorporate invisible/unobservable influences across events; thus Maritain implicitly embraces Peirce's Thirdness. In attributing new meanings/effects to signs—after "ideas" of new event relations surface, children demonstrate their meta-knowledge that signs

are inherently comprised of foundational potency, especially obviated when logical relations are inferred between absent objects.⁵⁴

Peirce addresses attenuation between present events, those in the past, and those intimating futurity by analogy, when he examines event inferences in the context of hallucinations: obsessional, social, and creative.⁵⁵ He further addresses how creative hallucinations qualify as abductions. In his later writings, Peirce is clear that certain kinds of hallucinations can (however infrequently) elicit plausible inferences, i.e., events proposed to have a viable logical relationship: “Hallucinations were so very common, while hallucinations coincident with truth beyond the ken of sense were so very rare.”⁵⁶ Despite their infrequent emergence, Peirce insists that only those hallucinations which derive from sources other than direct experience of observables (given the ease with which the latter are misperceived and misappropriated) can ever suffice to “flash a suggestion before our contemplation,” such that novel envisagements propel plausible inferences. The precise kind of hallucinations which qualify as propellers of sound inferencing are the last of three types/grades; the two initial types do not result in abductions: “Hallucinations proper, obsessional hallucinations, will not down at one’s bidding . . . there are also social hallucinations.”⁵⁷ Peirce describes the most productive type earlier in the same passage. He illustrates how an unnamed painter exercised the creative kind of hallucination when recounting how the painter changed his action and beliefs

⁵⁴ Cf. Donna West, “Person Deictics and Imagination: Their Metaphoric Use in Representational Play,” *California Linguistic Notes* 35, no. 1 (2010): 1–25.

⁵⁵ For an extended discussion, cf. Donna West, “Peirce’s Creative Hallucinations in the Ontogeny of Abductive Reasoning,” *Public Journal of Semiotics* 7 (Winter 2016): 51–72.

⁵⁶ 1903: CP 7.603.

⁵⁷ 1903: EP 2: 192.

consequent to a pictorial insight, a virtual habit.⁵⁸ This depiction in the inner world of the painter (sudden mental image of the change in color of the backdrop curtain), ultimately provided the scaffold for the entire painting. Peirce recounts how the painter explained to him that the different color (of the curtain) “suited the picture better.”⁵⁹ Despite the painter’s inability to subsequently provide an explanation for the effect of the color alteration, the change still constituted a trigger for developing sound inferences/abductions. The painter’s unexpected vivid mental depiction alone effectuates the change upon the whole of the painting, in that it “flashes the new suggestion before our [the painter’s] contemplation.” The upshot of these unbidden, creative hallucinations begins with the anomalous result, whereupon particular viable explanations can be proposed. But, the proposal entails a concerted plan (though it need not be conscious/intentional); and the proposal is subject to continual updates (from sense data and insights). Sense data are tantamount to Peirce’s use of “percept,” while individually conceived projective insights are equivocal to his notion of “fancy.”

In any case, for Peirce, these future percepts and fancies must logically homogenize with already accepted values and ontological principles expressed in predisposed and learned beliefs and action patterns to result in abductions. In other words, what governs the integration of the world of experience with that of interpretation is the individual’s predilections, namely, their innate dispositions and acquired patterns of belief and conduct (hence their characterization as habits of

⁵⁸ Peirce, because of the amplified Thirdness-based effects it can give rise to, elevates a non-actual event to status beyond the actual and refers to it as a virtual habit: “By ‘virtual touch’ Milton’s Adam meant something that was not touch, but we might all the delight [sic] that touch can bring. So a determination is not a habit . . . but it works all the effects of habit, and is, therefore, strictly speaking, a virtual habit” (1909: MS 620: 26).

⁵⁹ 1903: EP 2: 192. Peirce follows by revealing his limited means to experience these forms of hallucination: “I myself am so utterly destitute of such hallucinatory imagination that I was astonished” (*Ibid.*).

mind). Peirce indicates that although the two worlds (inner and outer) are initially distinct, they become homogenized in habit:

Every sane person lives in a double world, the outer and the inner world, the world of percepts and the world of fancies. . . . A man can be durably affected by his percepts and by his fancies. The way in which they affect him will be apt to depend upon his in-born disposition and upon his habits.⁶⁰

Peirce is clear that habit (either acquired or consequent to predetermined visualizations/patterns of belief and/or action) determines how fancies/percepts are ultimately interpreted in Thirdness. Furthermore, without changes in assumptions/conduct, habits could not materialize, since their very nature defies mechanistic action, modes of thought, and reaction.

Peirce painstakingly illustrates how children can target their compulsions and feelings to arrive at new habits of action and belief via envisioning specific images and implementing them.⁶¹ He further demonstrates how believing/acting in recommended ways establishes habits—proceeding from resolutions to determinations. These recommendations are tantamount to self-initiated commands or suggestions from others as to how to act to produce the desired outcome. This process affects habit-changes (Thirdness) at early stages in each sign's use: "inner exertions of power" can be directed by "an act of giving a compulsive command to one's self. Some books call it self-hypnotization."⁶² Here Peirce claims that Thirdness begins even at the point of ascribing feelings to actions or action to feelings, because it supplies a template to convert undirected affect associated with the event production to directed affect, especially when the observer prescinds—fastening on a single issue in the mind. At the same time, this process of

⁶⁰ 1907: CP 5.487.

⁶¹ 1911: MS 674: 11–14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11–12.

toggling between prescinding and compulsions toward action infuses behavior with the impetus to comply with the imperative/suggestion; and this impetus to act is paramount for Peirce, because a “resolution” (without purpose) fails to possess the impetus or “force” to direct the action plan of the organism. For Peirce, resolutions lack the force to become habits because their absence of clarity/specificity fails to qualify as determinations—resolutions do not permit modification of the old mechanistic pattern. In contrast, because determinations require specificity supplied by the vividness of the mental image, they qualify as abductions and virtual habits:

The effectiveness of the virtual habit relatively to that of a real habit is, I say, unquestionably than in proportion to the vividness of the imaginations that induce the former relatively to the vividness of the perception . . . therefore, I venture to think, be a sort of self-hypnotizing effect, when we strain, in some obscure way, to influence our future behaviour by calling up as vividly as we can the image of a given sort of stimulus and that of our responding to it in the desired way. For we seem to command our organism or our soul as if we said to it: “You will act thus: do you hear? Thus! Thus!! Thus!!!”⁶³

Here Peirce emphasizes the effect of vivid mental images as inferencing material—a procedure which translates what Peirce refers to as terms into propositions/assertions. As such, proposed picture events constitute potent event signs (worthy propositions) because they inject a plan/logical organization into newly conceived explanations and their courses of action.⁶⁴

In short, other less direct factors, such as magic or creative hallucinations may have an even greater effect in the business of accessing logical truths. They can inform knowledge underlying objective states

⁶³ 1909: MS 620: 26.

⁶⁴ Cf. West, “The Work of Peirce’s Dicsign in Representationalizing Early Deictic Events,” 19–38.

of affairs/being—hence illustrating a speculative purpose for magic and play-based ventures. For Maritain,

Being, seen in this light, is neither the vague being of common sense, nor the particularized being of the sciences and of the philosophy of nature, nor the derealised being of logic, nor the pseudo-being of dialectics mistaken for philosophy. It is being disengaged for its own sake, in the values and resources appertaining to its own intelligibility and reality . . .⁶⁵

Thirdness as the Soul of Signification

C. S. Peirce's emphasis on Thirdness in the sign (although not utilized directly by Maritain) supplies an indispensable tool to characterize objective intellection. Maritain's claim that in the sign resides its representational character, although implicitly rooted in Peirce's semiotic, emphasizes the nature of the relation between sign and object, rather than how the sign itself houses would-be meanings/effects. Peirce's Thirdness provides greater potency to the sign, because incorporating the Interpretant into the sign augments signification at the inception of sign use, since it embraces all of the signs' future meanings/effects. Housing meaning in the sign imbues it with the promise of future meanings from the outset of its existence. In this way, the whole of potential meaning/effects is contained in the sign even prior to emergence of the interpretation. Peirce's Interpretant allows the sign to house expansions in the sign's use with time and across species. This illustrates the indispensability of what Deely⁶⁶ refers to as "provenation"—that signs, from their inception, contain all of the yet unexpressed meanings/effects consonant with their future use. Deely defines

⁶⁵ Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 19–20.

⁶⁶ Deely, *Purely Objective Reality*, 29; John Deely, "Toward a Postmodern Recovery of 'Person,'" *Espiritu* 61, no. 143 (2012): 156.

provenation as “to come or issue forth, appear, arise, be produced.”⁶⁷ The early presence of these seeds prior to attaching meaning to the sign equivocates sentient, nonsentient, and inanimate—the potential obtains for both groups, independent of any awareness of signification. The potential sign meanings are present even within the its most basic use/appearance, when awareness is questionable, expectations of would-be meanings still hold as a promise to fill a seemingly empty slot.

It is obvious that Peirce’s promise of Thirdness within the sign (in its pregenerative form), by way of “provenation,”⁶⁸ hastens a new order of things—since meanings can be fostered in elementary living systems (perhaps even in inanimate systems, as well). This transpires by virtue of “interpretive reactivity.”⁶⁹

Krampen’s illustration of plants reacting to forces of nature such as: raindrops, the pressure of air/wind/water, or a light source such as the sun, demonstrates this kind of reactivity. In the case of rain water, the leaves react by curving downward to direct the rain toward the plant’s roots. In the case of the latter, plants lean toward the sun to enhance receipt of nutrients. This constitutes “interpretive reactivity,” in that the plant, itself, changes its stature in expectation of a sought-after consequence, namely, its nutritional benefit. “Meaning factors are those stimuli among the stream of impingements pressing upon the plants from all sides that are relevant to their life.”⁷⁰ Interpretive reac-

⁶⁷ John Deely, *Semiotic Animal: A Postmodern Definition of Human Being Transcending Patriarchy and Feminism* (South Bend, Ind.: St Augustine’s Press, 2010), xiii. Deely openly uses the term as a neologism from the Latin *provenire*, given that it is seldom used as a verb in English, compared to the noun form “provenance,” indicating the source of a given item (*Ibid.*).

⁶⁸ Cf. Deely, *Purely Objective Reality*, 29; Deely, “Toward a Postmodern Recovery of ‘Person,’” 156.

⁶⁹ Martin Krampen, “Phytosemiotics,” *Semiotica* 36, no. 3/4 (1981): 192.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

tivity illustrates the presence of a basic form of meaning demonstrated by a behavior change whose purpose is to elicit a particular consequence; hence it contains a primary form of Thirdness. The key is that the reaction upon confronting the same environmental factor must not remain static/mechanistic; the process must be open to eliciting changes in meaning/effects.⁷¹

In continuing to follow a Peircean framework, Deely⁷² extends Krampen's assertions regarding the origin of the reactivity, and how it transpires. Like Maritain's account, Deely attributes potency (the promise of future meanings) to the sign from its inception, of which sentients and non-sentients alike can avail themselves:

How, then, can all this work in the realm of inorganic nature? Not *constantly*, as in the "genuine Thirdness" realm of life. But why not in a 'pregenerative Thirdness' *intermittently*, like a match struck to light a cigarette which sputters out before it flames sufficiently to achieve its purpose.⁷³

In highlighting Thirdness as "pregenerative," Deely asserts an indispensable and distinctly Peircean claim regarding the origin of Thirdness and its ontogeny in the sign. His 2015 position intimates that although elementary systems (e.g., plants) may not engage in semiotic processes (they do not actually use signs), the operation of habit can allow potential semiotic and semiotic meanings.⁷⁴ Accordingly, the future meanings are, nonetheless, present in the sign prior to its characterization as sign. "At that moment when the first living substance emerges, of course, and only then, the flame of sign activity is true and

⁷¹ For further explication, cf. West, "Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation," 215–240.

⁷² John Deely, "From Semiosis to Semioethics," in *The International Handbook of Semiotics*, ed. P. P. Trifonas (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2015), 780.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cf. Donna West, "Peirce's Legacy to Living and Non-Living Systems: Deely's Last Word," *The American Journal of Semiotics* (in press).

properly—fully lit.”⁷⁵ Deely forges what Peirce merely made implicit, that even before signification operates, meanings insinuate themselves in future sign use. He further articulates that the capacity accounting for representational differences across sign users (all living creatures) is not consciousness, but something far more fundamental, namely, Thirdness, the promise of ascribing augmented meanings even when only basic relations are actualized.⁷⁶ Even in more conscious living systems, pregenerative Thirdness can surface as conscious or unconscious meaning potential. The latter materializes as sudden, instinctual flashes of insight, while the former is more intentional in changing self’s or other’s habits of conduct or belief. Peirce characterizes the more conscious, more intentional form of Thirdness as urgings/submissions containing alternative meaning relations.⁷⁷

Conversely for Maritain, potency in the sign refers to the character of the objects and their transcendental qualities. This kind of potency does not approach the triadic character of Peirce’s sign; any meaning potential is minimized by a more semiological approach, in which only the sign and the object have explicit validity. Maritain attributes to the sign a transubstantive function; as such, he reconstitutes it (after Thomas Aquinas) as a “vicar of the object.”⁷⁸ He elaborates as follows: “The fruit of understanding, it [the sign] has as its intelligible content the object itself.”⁷⁹ Yet, by deploying the nomenclature of “vicar,” Maritain engages in a kind of epistemological sleight of hand; the term implies a kind of displacement or detachment between sign and object, allowing for a brand of signifiatory slippage usually reserved for the semiolo-

⁷⁵ Deely, “From Semiosis to Semioethics,” 780.

⁷⁶ Cf. West, “Peirce’s Legacy to Living and Non-Living Systems.”

⁷⁷ Cf. 1905: CP 8.338.

⁷⁸ Maritain’s: *The Person and the Common Good*, 204, and *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 124.

⁷⁹ Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 132.

gists—in the respect that he directly folds meaning into the signifier, Maritain appears more semiological than semiotic, per se. Maritain highlights this model of meaning as follows:

On the other hand, precisely as a means of knowing, presentative forms are purely and formally vicars of the object, pure likenesses of the object (i.e., in the soul, they are the object itself divested of its proper existence and made present in an immaterial and intentional state). By this title they do not determine the faculty as a form determines a matter or a subject. They determine it according to a wholly immaterial and suprasubjective union in virtue of which one becomes the other intentionally, first in initial act and then in second act through its vital operation.⁸⁰

For Maritain, the sign transcends its past and present manifestations, such that it becomes substantially part of the fabric of otherness on a transcendental plane—to the degree that the appearance of one (the sign) is indistinguishable from the other (object), despite any obvious differences in form. This representational property is consonant with the concept of transubstantiation, one becomes the other; and appearance is but the accident by which the other is revealed. Although Peirce's triadic semiotic gives great weight to the representational character of signs (how they refer to their objects)—only one of which depends upon likeness, icon, his insistence that meaning is part of the sign (by way of the Interpretant) distinguishes it from Maritain's approach. Maritain's characterization of the sign as a vicar highlights the iconic relations between sign and object, while Peirce's triadic system incorporates signs whose representamen (sign vehicles) fail to resemble the object at all; but, the signs still represent legitimately. In fact, their power to do so may exceed that of icons, since the meaning holds in spite of little or no similarity. In short, it is the meaning holding be-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 124–125. For further discussion, cf. Kemple, *Ens Primum Cognitum in Thomas Aquinas and the Tradition*, Chapter 2.

tween symbolic or indexical signs and their objects which advantages Peirce's semiotic.

Although not acknowledged in Maritain's semiotic account, Peircean Thirdness is nevertheless a latent force which renders the sign substantially identical to its object, despite the fact that their accident/appearance is vastly different. The presence of Thirdness (meaning) between sign and object may well constitute the likeness to which Maritain refers. But, whereas "likeness" for Maritain is equivocal to sameness of representational quality, for Peirce it measures meaning sameness between sign and object—both contributing to the same effect. In other words, shared meaning is formed in and through the interpretant, the primary vehicle of Thirdness for Peirce, because of its unique status in establishing novel relations.

The Soul of the Sign

The sign's potency or life, for Maritain, is equivocal to its soul:

Matter [body/sign] itself is a kind of non-being, a mere potency or ability to receive forms and undergo substantial mutations; in short, an avidity for being. In every being made of matter, this pure potency bears the impress of a metaphysical energy—the "form" or "soul"—which constitutes with it a substantial unit and determines this unit to be that which it is.⁸¹

This potency consists in an implied promise that infinitely further relations can be associated with the sign in question—leaving open the possibility for new event meanings to emerge. Maritain characterizes it as "a metaphysical energy" or "an avidity for being." As such, this potency is present even in primitive forms of being. This is so since every being, even plants, are composed of matter. Maritain does not limit the existence of potency to conscious beings capable of deliberate interpre-

⁸¹ Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, 35–36.

tation, because the “impress” of this energy is “in every being made of matter.”

Peirce notes that although the sign’s soul offers critical, alternative meanings/effects to the mind, in doing so, the meanings become limited to meanings which are in fact adopted. In adopting a meaning, other meanings are precluded:

A *this* is accidental; but it only is so in comparison with the continuum of possibility from which it is arbitrarily selected. A *this* is something positive and insistent, but it only is so by pushing other things aside and so making a place for itself in the universe.⁸²

So, despite the indispensable purpose of Thirdness as an intuition informing others’ minds, maintaining the sign’s very life (avidity⁸³), Peirce determines that Thirdness can narrow meaning potential.⁸⁴ This limitation is, nonetheless, necessary to pre-certify that the validity of novel hunches is seriously considered. The limitation demonstrates that potency often emanates from impotency.⁸⁵ Despite the limitations, Thirdness still constitutes a dynamic force beckoning members of the continuum (animates, inanimates alike) to adopt alternative ways of feeling, acting, and thinking.

It is the dynamicity of the sign, to incorporate alternative meanings/effects (“soul of the sign”) that draws sign users to seek new sign relations, enriching the sign’s functionality. The stabilizing life force of the soul energizes future interpretants, grounding sign development in its interpretant, and providing the promise to discover what is positively possible. In short, the sign’s potency is so substantial that without it,

⁸² 1898: NEM 4: 136.

⁸³ According to Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, 36.

⁸⁴ For a more extended discussion, cf. Ivô A. Ibri, *Kósmos Noetós: The Metaphysical Architecture of Charles S. Peirce*, trans. H. Mallett (Heidelberg: Springer, 2017), 68.

⁸⁵ 1868: MS 932.

attaching alternative interpretants to the sign would be “cut off at the outset,” which Peirce cautions against;⁸⁶ and the readiness necessary to abduce would-be meanings would be truncated. Precluding meaning augmentation is especially relevant with respect to Peirce’s Final Interpretant, since expectation of the “ultimate opinion” would be frustrated were meaning averted.⁸⁷ It is within the sign’s soul that the promise of meaning change resides toward reaching the Final Interpretant. This entails uncovering new relations relevant to reinterpretations of past happenings, percepts/judgments of present experiences, as well as reflections of the effects of future episodes.⁸⁸ Proceeding toward the Final Interpretant facilitates integration of affective, experiential, and more objective logical relations. In short, the promise of Thirdness to be discovered in seeking the Final Interpretant comprises the sign’s soul; it compels attention to and notice of relations which supply augmented meanings—insinuating alternative and often invisible relations. In fact, without the promise of this potency, many new meaning relations would go unnoticed.

The sign’s soul is encapsulated in the core of Peirce’s semiotic with the hope of reaching the Final Interpretant:

But we must also note that there is certainly a third kind of Interpretant, which I call the Final Interpretant, because it is that which would finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached.⁸⁹

Potency/avidity within the sign is nothing short of vigilance toward reaching the ultimate opinion—which constitutes an objective view-

⁸⁶ C. 1890: CP 1.390.

⁸⁷ Cf. EP 2: 496: 1909.

⁸⁸ Donna West, “Virtual Habit as Episode-Builder in the Inferencing Process,” *Cognitive Semiotics* 10 (Fall 2017): 55–75.

⁸⁹ EP 2: 496: 1909.

point whose purpose is an absolute truth of how events relate. This is Thirdness at its core—the raw material for abductive inferencing. In this way, semiosis is activated, enlivened, and continues to energize meaning relations. Without the soul, (the promise of Thirdness) signs would lack what Peirce calls an “intermediary” between the object and the mind:

The third universe comprises everything whose being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different universes. Such is everything which is essentially a sign—not the mere body of the sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign’s Soul, which has its being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind.⁹⁰

Peirce’s use of “intermediary” highlights the indispensable role of an elementary form of Thirdness (a pregenerative form) within the sign to suggest invisible relations among Objects, operational even within more primary systems of sign use. Critical here is Peirce’s claim that something within the sign itself mediates relations between objects in the outer and inner worlds, and even extends to “relations between objects of different universes,” emphasizing the function of the sign to remain open to would-be interpretants, and to the process of presenting, urging, or submitting these would-be meaning relations “the reasonableness of which will be acknowledged” by others.⁹¹

In Peirce’s semiotic account, the soul of the sign is indispensable for another but related reason—it promotes his quintessential expression of Thirdness, namely, habit. It does so by excluding mechanical stand-ins—forms which hold fast to single meanings/effects between signs and objects.⁹² Peirce adamantly demonstrates the inadequacy of

⁹⁰ 1908: CP 6.455.

⁹¹ Cf. 1908: CP 8.349–350 and 8.373.

⁹² Cf. West, “Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation;” and c. 1890: CP 1.390.

the sign as a body uninhabited by a living meaning-based component which propels the inner sight (insight) of determining new relations. For Peirce, “body” alone can never qualify as sign (cf. *supra*), because a form which never ceases to be associated with a single relation lacks the vitality to amplify meaning connections between objects within the same or different universes. Drawing upon Poinset, Deely⁹³ elaborates on this in characterizing relations as “suprasubjective”—going beyond intersubjective relations that hold in *ens reale*. By “suprasubjective,” Deely clarifies how relations survive their actual uses by existing independent of the “original participants.” Deely’s characterization elaborates upon Peirce’s semiotic, in that meanings hoped for in the final interpretant are legitimized. The potency of Thirdness must operate in the sign (its soul) to capture new relations as habit change (belief or action). The potency offered by habit-change rescues the sign from sterility—from perseverating with mechanistic meanings/effects.⁹⁴ The sign’s openness to predict or react to others’ propositions/arguments via presentments, urgings, and/or submissions demonstrates avidity through semiosis (the pervasion of signs in the universe) not merely for sentient beings, but for the semiosphere at large.

Sign Potency as Responsibility

Human sign use (given its conscious, reflective character) bears the greatest responsibility to promote the potency (soul) present within

⁹³ John Deely, “Gilson, Poinset, Maritain, and the Future of Thomism,” in *The Wisdom of Youth: Essays Inspired by the Early Work of Jacques and Raissa Maritain*, ed. T. Dumsday (Washington, D.C.: American Maritain Association Publications, 2016), 252–253.

⁹⁴ “Were the tendency to take habits replaced by an absolute requirement that the [battery] cell should discharge itself always in the same way, or according to any rigidly fixed condition whatever, all possibility of habit developing into intelligence would be cut off at the outset” (c. 1890: CP 1.390).

every sign. Since they know that they are using signs, and are more disposed to ascertaining objective truths with such signs, humans can more adequately predict, and plan for others' reactions and outcomes. As Deely aptly notes:

[W]hile all animals are aware of related objects in the construction of their lifeworlds or *Umwelten*, only human animals become aware directly of the insensible relations themselves in that dimension of awareness which opens the way to the development of culture in its species-specific difference from the social organization generic to animals.⁹⁵

In promoting Peirce's concept of potency in the sign, Deely lays a great responsibility upon humans to harness their own and other's belief/behavior patterns through future plans. Deely comments that these habits are often encoded in socio-cultural contexts, and require emotive, logical and moral anticipatory skills, perhaps tantamount to meta-semiotic competencies.⁹⁶ This socio-cultural responsibility is described by Deely as "metasemiosis," which requires a higher consciousness—knowledge about sign meaning/effects. Such forms "the foundational imperative of moral life."⁹⁷ This metasemiotic competency makes humans sensitive to potential would-be outcomes (be they affirmative or negative), and holds them particularly responsible for the plight of others in that process. As such, human sign users are impelled to actively foster new legitimate courses of action/mind to preserve the semiosphere. Accordingly, the sign's soul (its activity as a primary force urging responses to signs), requires forward-thinking habits of behavior and mind toward

⁹⁵ Deely, "From Semiosis to Semioethics," 772.

⁹⁶ Cf. West's: "Indexical Scaffolds to Habit-Formation," and "Peirce's Legacy to Living and Non-Living Systems."

⁹⁷ Deely, "From Semiosis to Semioethics," 783.

grasp of the Final Interpretant. By this means, past and future relations among diverse universes can be consolidated.⁹⁸

Conscious knowledge of signification calls certain members of the continuum to bring before the mind of another alternative relational perspectives. This obligation is tantamount to an imperative. It particularly makes its mark when meanings or effects are shared and elaborated among sign users in their socio-cultural milieu, because unless interpreters ultimately have a common ground or a “place to stand”⁹⁹ such that the sign has some similar meaning across users, for Peirce, the sign consists of form only (body), and ignores the soul—the impetus hastening semiosis, meaning negotiation as illustrated in the endoporeutic principle.¹⁰⁰ Absent a “place to stand” (potential shared meanings) flowing between conscious sign users, the intended sign lacks “avidity”/activity and does not qualify as sign. This “avidity”/activity is tantamount to an energy for Peirce to evoke a response to the sign, be it emotive, action-based, or elicitation of some logical force. In any case, this “avidity” or energy entails sensitivity to one’s part in the inferencing process, resulting in a recommendation for a course of mental or practical action.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ 1908: CP 6.455.

⁹⁹ “No man can communicate the smallest item of information to his brother-man unless they have *ποῦ στῶσι* [a place to stand] of common familiar knowledge; where the word ‘familiar’ refers less to how well the object is known than to the manner of knowing” (1908: MS 614).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, *Signs of Logic: Peircean Themes on the Philosophy of Language, Games, and Communication* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 186. To clarify, “Endo” means internal, while “poreutic” refers to passage into. Although endoporeutic processes are largely governed by illustrations of receptive competencies within the individual, they likewise apply to the receptivity of the masses to access and embrace propositions.

¹⁰¹ Cf. 1909: MS 637: 12.

Short¹⁰² elaborates on the kinds of interpretants particularly relevant when the endoporeutic principle is operating. It is the Immediate Interpretant, not merely the Dynamic Interpretant, which influences another's complexion of conduct. In fact, absent some common meaning, the message receiver would not be afforded even the most primitive knowhow to determine what the sign producer is suggesting that he do or think. In short, the most primary internal attribute of the sign is its modal nature (housed in the immediate interpretant)—commanding, suggesting, recommending, urging, or hinting at an alternative template for future responses, hence affecting habit-change. Acting/responding or expecting a change in thought or conduct in response to the sign upon its presentation, urging or submission,¹⁰³ demonstrates the need to share interpretants; openness to others' meanings establishes a channel either to impose action-habits upon another (imperatives), or to submit meanings to their reason (subjunctive prospects). As a consequence, new common ground is created, such that the give-and-take of signification hastens the "avidity" or life of the sign by nourishing its meaning/effect. Behavioral assumptions (including belief structures) are attached to the sign which, upon its presentment, compel the sign's effect (meaning/changes), facilitating its "avidity," or what Deely¹⁰⁴ refers to as the sign's "activity." The activity of the sign is "lit" from the inception of the sign and continues to be enlivened through semiosis.

Inferences (as intuitions or abductions) housed within the "soul" of the sign promote and regulate other's modes of mental and/or practical conduct: giving rise to novel emotive turns, to altered action sequences, and/or to modifications in logical approaches. This imperative and subjunctive effect of every sign materializes in several distinctive

¹⁰² See Thomas L. Short, *Peirce's Theory of Signs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 248–250.

¹⁰³ 1905: CP 8.338, and 1908: CP 8.371.

¹⁰⁴ Deely, "From Semiosis to Semioethics," 780.

ways: first as an obvious force in Secondness which brutally comes into physical contact with another member of the continuum (animate or inanimate), orchestrating another physical response. The imperative component of signs can alternatively surface as invisible vehicles to affect change in the belief or conduct structures of another. In either case, the responsiveness that ensues often highlights commonalities in the interpretants which underlie the signs, be they of the Energetic or Logical kind, given presumptions of what the sign partner expects, or in compliance with what nature requires from an organism. Reaction to the imperative/subjunctive effect of the sign evidences the interlocuter's complexion of mind—a decision is made whether to conform to the implied directive. The force of the imperative may vary from a command to subjunctive-like suggestions. In short, the soul of the sign ranges from more obvious compulsive adherence, to urgings, to admonitions, to simple recommendations, in which appeal is made as to the reasonableness of the argument to be submitted—to the mind of another.¹⁰⁵ In any case, it is obvious that the soul of the sign has a modal complexion—fostering meanings from pregenerative Thirdness, as well as encouraging the consideration/adoption of alternative modes of belief and conduct.

Conclusion

Were one to look beyond surface trimmings, the similarities between Peirce and Maritain are far more notable than are the differences, particularly the sources which account for objective intellection, and the presence of future meanings in primary forms. They concur that integrating external with internal sources is paramount to establish meanings/effects between events. Nonetheless, differences include the

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 1905: CP 8.338.

way in which meaning is grounded in the sign. Whereas Peirce distinguishes the Interpretant as a necessary element of the sign, responsible for foundational pregenerative Thirdness—implying relations which are later inferred, Maritain emphasizes transcendental factors enhancing the mental objectivity to receive these Thirdnesses as spontaneous intuitions for sign use. In short, although both acknowledge that intellectual apprehension constitutes the vehicle to infer event relations—such that knowledge relies upon the combinatorial influence of past experience informed by eidetic mental images suggesting future intellectual apprehension—the particular sign component responsible for intellectual readiness is of a different character. For Peirce, Thirdness via his Interpretant constitutes the seeds pregnant within every sign for future inferencing (quite apart from mental preparation); and the signs which hint at potential event relations consist in moving icons—the involved index implying event relations.¹⁰⁶ Maritain arrives at the issue of meaning potential quite differently—not from provenation from within the sign itself, but by achieving a transcendental state by which objective, spiritual truths are ascertained. While Peirce’s model emphasizes the promise of new meanings within the province of every sign, Maritain’s details the process of shedding subjectivity to uncover veiled objective Thirdnesses.



¹⁰⁶ Cf. Frederik Stjernfelt, *Natural Propositions: The Actuality of Peirce’s Doctrine of Dicsigns* (Boston: Docent Press, 2014); and West, “The Work of Peirce’s Dicsign in Representationalizing Early Deictic Events,” 19–38.

Thirdness along the Intuitional Path: Reflections from Maritain and Peirce

SUMMARY

This article expositis Maritain's and Peirce's account of the preconditions for emergence of event relations. It spotlights Maritain's model of how to prepare for the receipt of objective intellection, as well as Peirce's treatment of abductive inferencing. It further identifies the foundational representations (signs) which compel the intuitional/inferencing process. Both Peirce and Maritain advocate that inferring event relations depends upon two distinct kinds of knowledge: from empirical sources in Secondness/sensible experiences, as well as from an objective transcendental state in Firstness. In the latter, intuitions emerge from unbidden pictures vividly flashing across the mind's eye, while in the former, embodied action templates trace lived experiential paths with objective import.

KEYWORDS

Peirce, Maritain, intuition, inferencing, eidetic visualization, index, event relations, virtual habit, thirdness.

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