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NATURE'S GOD AND THE RETURN OF THE MATERIAL MATERNAL

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Semiotic theory has made it possible to probe more fully into the basic features of religious experience and to shed light on the elusive structure of the divine life. What is not often noticed is that a new configuration is emerging in which philosophical theology can put creative pressure back onto semiotic theory in such a way as to transform fundamental semiotic categories to serve a much larger conception of nature and the divine life. A dialectic between semiotic and theology has emerged that promises to transform the depth structures of both fields of discourse. Of greatest import is the recognition that our encounter with the divine shakes the foundations of semiotic theory and makes it possible to move beyond the current seeming impasse between Peircean and post-structuralist theories of signification.

The creative transformation wrought by the intersection of theology and semiotics is especially evident in the convergence of Peirce's concept of "ground" and the post-Lacanian analysis of the "lost object" in Kristeva. While it would be simplistic to equate ground and lost object, it will become clear in the following analyses that the concept of ground admits of other possibilities that point in the direction of a presemiotic realm that makes both manifest nature and the divine life possible.

Our order in what follows is dictated by the subject matter itself. Clarity must first be gained as to the fundamental structure of nature. This will in turn make it possible to exhibit the features of natural semiosis. Once these structures are laid bare, it will be possible to probe more fully into the divine natures. The key concepts of ground and lost object will then exhibit their proper contours within a philosophical theology that honors the utter sovereignty and ubiquity of nature.

The fundamental divide within nature itself is that between nature naturing and nature natured. This distinction represents a rethinking of what Heidegger has called the "ontological difference" that obtains between Being and a being (Heidegger 1927). For Heidegger, an abyss separates the two 'halves' of this divide and thought can only enter into the full power and meaning of the ontological difference by a leap. By the same token, the divide separating nature naturing from nature natured can only become manifest by a depth transformation of thought in which the structures of intelligibility give way before a mystery that cannot be circumscribed or encompassed. The traits, of nature naturing, insofar as they are manifest at all, are incommensurate with the traits of nature natured (Corrington 1992).

Initially, we can say that the 'realm' or dimension of nature denoted by the term nature naturing is constituted by innumerable presemiotic potencies. Kristeva invokes the image of the chora, which is the enclosed space or womb from which forms of signification emerge (Kristeva 1974). As we will see, the chora represents that part of nature naturing that is dynamic, rhythmic, and ejective of the signs of nature. Insofar as nature naturing is greater in scope than the chora, this will be manifest in terms of the unconscious potencies (as preformal) that provide the chora with its presemiotic 'matter.' Kristeva distinguishes between the "semiotic" and the "symbolic" by linking the semiotic to the bodily rhythms of the self and the unconscious, while linking the symbolic to the publicly available realm of cultural codes ("Name of the Father"). The current perspective, while honoring the intent of her distinction, speaks instead of the presemiotic and the semiotic proper. The presemiotic is here equated with Kristeva's term "semiotic," while the semiotic is equated with her term "symbolic." The symbolic is a subaltern class within the semiotic and represents its culmination in the domains of art and religion.

Nature naturing, then, prevails as the presemiotic dimension of nature that moves outward into forms of signification that can become publicly available to sign users. As presemiotic, this hidden dimension of nature represents nature's unconscious and is thus reluctant to manifest itself in semiotic terms. A kind of *via negativa* is necessary so that we can read backward, as it were, from the manifest face of nature (nature natured) to the hidden face that yet goads

each order into forms of signification and semiosis. Some of the terms and distinctions that have become compelling in psychoanalytic forms of semiotics are of great value when stretched beyond their normal sphere of use to open up dimensions of the unconscious of nature. .

On the other side of the great divide within nature lies the innumerable orders of the world. The domain of nature natured is inexhaustible insofar as the orders of the world cannot be enumerated or placed into some kind of encompassing perspective or framework. Both fundamental dimensions of nature are inexhaustible but in very different respects. Nature natured is inexhaustible in the sense that its potencies, which are preformal and presemiotic, cannot be demarcated from each other or even approached in semiotic terms. Nature natured is inexhaustible in the sense that its manifest orders, all fully or at least virtually semiotic, are infinitely complex and cannot be counted or summed as if they were discrete units only secondarily related to other orders. Since any given order is complex and fully relevant to other orders, it is unclear as to what makes any given order an order rather than a constituent in another order.

The manifest 'half' of the ontological difference, that of nature natured, lives and records its own histories through forms of semiosis that have their most intense expression, so far as we know, within human cultural codes (Corrington 1991). While post-structuralist semiotic theories place a veil over the signified (thus privileging the signifier), and pry cultural codes loose from natural forms of empowerment and validation, the current perspective assumes with Peirce that cultural codes represent intensifications of natural forms of semiosis that are found throughout the organic and inorganic orders (Corrington 1993). All orders of the world give birth to signs even if the inorganic orders, interacting through efficient causality, are only latently or virtually semiotic (Deely 1990). Insofar as semiotic theory remains ensnared in "glottocentrism" (Sebeok 1991), it confines itself to human forms of signification and thereby remains cut off from the depth structures of nature and natural forms of semiosis. This in turn makes it impossible to shed light on the divine natures and their intimate correlation to the innumerable orders of the world and to the potencies of nature natured.

Any given order within nature natured will contain semiotic seeds that may or may not enter into larger orders of communication. The "object," in Peirce's sense, lies behind all forms of signification and represents the spawning ground for any sign that emancipates itself from the opacity of the dynamic core of the object (Savan 1987). The "representamen" is the original sign that emerges from the dynamic vector force of the object. The representamen assumes an original position and moves outward, in a form of self-othering, so that it can generate a string of interpretants. In each case of transformation, the object continues to obtain as a dynamic goad and constraint on the processes of signification. Even inorganic orders generate representamens and interpretants whenever they render their traits available to other, more complex, orders. This is not to say that the domain of nature natured is constituted by mentality or must assume the status of a quasi-mind, but that all of manifest nature is self-othering and ejective of semiotic possibilities that always eclipse the object from which they have sprung. Objects 'hunger' to generate representamens while representamens 'hunger' to generate interpretants. This is not to say that nature is thus some kind of super-order of intelligibility or mentality but that it never remains satisfied with its current semiotic configuration. There is a striking sense in which a kind of primal "not yet" (noch nicht sein) hovers over, in, and through the orders of nature providing the 'space' within which signification can, and must, unfold. Put differently, nature, both as nature natured and as nature natured, exhibits a profound restlessness that points toward both a lost object in the past and a hoped for consummation (transfiguration) in the future. In theological terms, all forms of natural semiosis live under the eschatological lure that promises to return the lost object (the "material maternal") on the Other side' of all signifieds.

Peirce's category of "firstness," that is, the natural domain of possibility, feeling, and qualitative (but pre-intelligible) unity, points in the direction of the ejective momentum of nature natured (cf. "A Guess at the Riddle," c. 1890, CP 1.354-416). Firstness is self-othering insofar as its own internal restlessness generates dyadic oppositions within and through which firstness can become more fully actualized within and as the innumerable orders of the world (nature natured). It is as if firstness, as the preformal rhythm of nature, cannot remain satisfied with mere possibilities, but must generate those oppositional structures, later to manifest law and habit, that give shape and contour to the world. This is not to say that firstness, Peirce's conceptual analogue to nature natured, is ideologically driven to produce any particular world, but that it had to produce some world in order to fulfill its own momentum. Peirce, of course, was willing to envision purposes within nature as a whole that we, under the deeper impress of the neo-Darwinian synthesis, are more reluctant to entertain. Yet his primal category of firstness can provide us with a much needed conceptual goad that compels us to acknowledge the presemiotic potencies that drive outward into manifest orders of signification, whether inorganic, and hence virtual, or organic, and hence obtained.

The innumerable orders of nature natured manifest firstness, secondness, and thirdness while at the same time pointing back to that primal firstness that has not yet condescended into specific firsts within the world. Any given first, as a quality within an order of relevance, will derive its ontological power and momentum from the pure firstness that lies on the nether side of the ontological difference. While sign using organisms can encounter and delineate firsts, they

cannot stand face to face with firstness itself. There is a striking sense in which pure firstness is presemiotic while yet hungering to manifest itself in firsts, seconds, and thirds. The unsaid in Peirce is precisely this preliminary grasp of the ontological difference that is most forcefully manifest in the distinction between pure firstness (as roughly analogous to nature naturing), and any given quality in and of a semiotic order. Had Peirce sharpened this version of the ontological difference, he would have moved more decisively toward an ecstatic semiotic naturalism that would acknowledge the self-transcending potencies of nature and natural forms of semiosis.

If nature is fully semiotic, whether in the virtual form of inorganic orders, or the attained form of the organic realms, it follows that cultural codes ride on the back of a self-transforming nature that is greater in scope and complexity than the sum of all cultural codes. The contemporary obsession with human linguistic artifacts has blunted semiotic analyses of nature and the divine life as manifest within nature. Theories of temporality (e.g., diachronic linguistic structures) privilege the fitful orders of time over the pretemporal and post-temporal thereby brooking confusion as to the status of time-generating organisms within the innumerable orders of the world. Many forms of signification are only derivatively temporal or stand outside of temporal modes of relevance. The co-privileging of mentality and temporality has rendered some of nature's more ubiquitous orders opaque to semiotic theory. The divine natures, as will emerge shortly, obtain in temporal, pretemporal, and post-temporal ways. More importantly, the non-divine orders of the world have innumerable relations within temporality, either negatively or positively. Put in the strongest terms, time is simply not a generic category and has only a limited role to play in a metaphysics that honors the intrinsic signifying properties of nature.

Nature naturing is pretemporal in the sense that it is responsible for subsequent orders of temporality within the domains of nature natured but is not itself in any way part of a time process. Peirce's theory of cosmogenesis presupposes that the manifest world, characterized by time, is itself a product of something that is pretemporal. There is even a sense in which the divine life and the world are co-constituting and together generate time out of something ontologically prior. Writing c. 1906, in a conceptual move that foreshadows Whitehead, Peirce redefines divine creativity and temporality in such a way as to hint in the direction of the pretemporal domain of nature naturing:

I am inclined to think (though I admit that there is no necessity of taking that view) that the process of creation has been going on for an infinite time in the past, and further, during all past time, and further, that past time had no definite beginning, yet came about by a process which in a generalized sense, of which we cannot easily get much idea, was a development. I believe Time to be a reality, and not the figment which Kant's nominalism proposes to explain it as being. As reality, it is due to creative power. . . . I think we must regard Creative Activity as an inseparable attribute of God. [CP 6.506]

The creative power of the divine is itself generative of the time processes constitutive of nature as manifest (nature natured). The clearing within which the divine emerges as the creative and ejective power of time is that of nature naturing, which is not itself directly part of the divine life, even if the innumerable potencies of this hidden side of nature will have effects on the evolution of the divine within the world. In a number of passages, Peirce shies away from the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* and seems to be saying that God's creative activity and the manifest universe are equiprimordial, that is, that neither precedes the other and that both derive the contours that they have from their dialectical interaction (cf. CP 1.303 & 6.612). Thus we can argue that any given order within the world, as directly relevant to the divine creativity, will be at least virtually temporal, but it does not follow that it will be actually so. The realms of actuality and of possibility can move in and out of temporal orders. While in a temporal order, any given subaltern order may participate in several forms of time.

The human process, as the most dramatic example of a temporally relevant order, moves through natural orders of time while generating its own unique form of temporality. At the same 'time' the human process encounters orders that have their own complex relations to time. Consider the possibility that any given cultural artifact, for example, a painting, will become the locus of a depth transformation in which spiritual import gathers up the manifest form and content into a new configuration of meaning (Corrington 1987). What is the relation between: the temporality of the creator, of the work itself as a finite human product, the assimilative momentum of the community of interpreters, and the presence of the spirit within and through the work? Clearly these four semiotic orders, to mention no others, have their own distinctive relations to time and may point both to the pretemporal domain of nature naturing and the post-temporal domain of a spiritual presence that hovers in the not yet (*noch nicht sein*). The painting moves in and out of public time, while having its own objective temporal/semiotic features that themselves enter into internal and private forms of temporality. The ultimate import of the painting points both to the pretemporal and ejective abyss of nature naturing and the post-temporal domain of the spirit.

Nature, in both of its fundamental dimensions, manifests various forms of the ground relation. For Peirce, the "ground" of the sign/object/interpretant correlation is the respect in which a sign signifies or points to its object. There is a sense in which the ground is presemiotic only insofar as it is not directly part of the semiotic triad but serves as an enabling source for the specific directionalities of signification. In an early text (1866) Peirce correlated the semiotic

triad with the Christian trinity:

Here, therefore, we have a divine trinity of the object, interpretant, and ground. . . . In many respects this trinity agrees with the Christian trinity; indeed I am not aware that there are any points of disagreement. The interpretant is evidently the Divine Logos or word; and if our former guess that a Reference to an interpreting Paternity be right, this would also be the Son of God. The ground, being that partaking of which is requisite to any communication with the Symbol, corresponds in its function to the Holy Spirit. [W:I, 503]

The manifest interpretant, as already part of a network of signification and public meaning, is correlated to the word of God that is the outward expression of the divine life. The ground, on the other hand, seems more elusive and less a part of the delivered goods of communication. Peirce's intuitions here are deeply relevant to the semiotic analysis of the divine natures. In particular, his understanding of the spiritual momentum of the ground, as the enabling condition for any subsequent and temporally defined communication, advances semiotic theory right into the heart of the divine life by showing how the spirit, as the fully temporal dimension of God, moves in a variety of ways to generate and sustain the connection between a sign and its object. Without the spirit, which is both semiotic and presemiotic, there could be no communication. The reason for this should be obvious. Any given sign will be either under- or overdetermined in its referential power until the ground/spirit actualizes certain respects (relations) and not others. The spirit is the precondition for the giving of meaning within the semiotic triad of sign/object/interpretant.

The ground appears within each manifestation of the semiotic triad and lives precisely by making communication possible. Put differently, the spirit/ground does not draw attention to itself so much as give over its hidden momentums to the publically observable realm of interpretants (emergent from the sign/object correlation). The spirit thus lives in the innumerable 'betweens' that punctuate natural semiosis and which provide the mobile spaces within which signs can obtain efficacy and relevance for sign-using organisms. Without a self-othering ground, which moves fitfully through the open places of signification, the world of interpretants would have no possible relation to the hidden (yet dynamic) realms of objects. The ground has content, but this content is ontologically distinct from that of interpretants. Any given interpretant will have a semiotic integrity that is manifest in specific, if often ambiguous, meanings. The ground, on the other hand, will have a much more elusive integrity and will always remain just beyond the reach of our semiotic grasp. The ground/ spirit is the locus of mystery.

It should be obvious that the unique ontological status of the ground places it somewhere between the divide between nature naturing and nature natured. Insofar as the ground manifests a mystery that only indirectly gives itself over to semiotic processes, it participates in the elusive rhythms of nature naturing. Insofar as the ground is fully caught up in any finite and manifest correlation between a sign and its object, it participates in the realms of nature natured. By probing into the unique status of the ground we gain a deeper access into nature and its divine aspects. By the same token, we begin to become permeable to that aspect of grounding that is denoted by the term "lost object."

It is at this crucial juncture that we can begin to see where Peircean pragmatism converges with post-Lacanian psychoanalysis. The arch concept of firstness, always less 'available' to semiotics than secondness and thirdness, comes from that dimension of nature that is unconscious and pre-positional. Firstness is restless self-othering that is pre-mental. On rare occasions Peirce was willing to speak of the unconscious, both of the self and of nature [cf. CP 7.547], but he did not flesh out the full implications of these hints in terms of his broader conception of nature and the divine. By taking our cues from Kristeva, we can make the appropriate conceptual move that shows the correlation of pure firstness with the unconscious. At the same time, Peirce's much bolder cosmological speculations can put creative pressure on Kristeva's excessively anthropocentric perspective.

For Kristeva, the realm prior to symbolic cultural codes is that of the chora that itself is lacking in symbolic content. In terms of the current perspective, the chora lives as the presemiotic ejective origin of all forms of signification. The chora is unconscious, heterogenous, self-othering, pre-categorical, and pre-positional. Yet it has a strong rhythm, tied to the maternal body, that compels it outward into the public space of cultural codes. Once a sign has emerged from the chora, it is 'on its own' and has to derive its semiotic nutrition from the growing web of interpretants rather than from the material maternal source from which it has come. Once ejected from the chora, the sign experiences a kind of melancholy (at least in an analogous sense) for the lost object that is now receding further and further from view (Kristeva 1987). In Peircean terms, this would be described as the sense of loss experienced by any interpretant as it moves away from firstness toward thirdness. From the standpoint of the human process, this loss of the material maternal is the fundamental loss that permeates and determines all others. The self-othering and heterogenous ground of the chora (or of firstness) continues to exert an uncanny lure on the self-in-process making all outward movements masks of the deeper longing for a return to the pretemporal potencies of nature. The chora can be seen as the most dynamic and rhythmic dimension of the unconscious of nature, and thus as that dimension that is the most responsible for the creation of the innumerable orders of signification. For the self, the movement from infancy toward the realm of public codes must mirror the primal matricide that makes any form of semiotic emancipation possible.

Kristeva links all forms of melancholy to the irruption of the human from the realm of nature so that the very act of individuation from a prethematic background is marked by primal sadness (Kristeva 1987). To be a self is already and always to be guilty of a primal act of symbolic murder in which the maternal body must give way before the alleged lucidity of public and patriarchal codes. Kristeva lays bare this logic:

From the analyst's point of view, the possibility of concatenating signifiers (words or actions) appears to depend upon going through mourning for an archaic and indispensable object -and on the related emotions as well. Mourning for the Thing - such a possibility conies out of transposing, beyond loss and on an imaginary or symbolic level, the imprints of an interchange with the other articulated according to a certain order. [1987: 40]

The transition to manifest and manipulable signifiers is only possible insofar as the self comes to terms with the lost object (Thing) in such a way as to accept the loss while moving outward toward its amelioration through public forms of communication. At the heart of all use of signs and symbols is the melancholy for that which can no longer be attained by the sign-using organism.

Hence firstness and the chora manifest themselves precisely through their uncanny absence within the obtained realms of interpretants. The traces of both realities point directly to the even more elusive heart of nature naturing. Firstness, particularly in the eternally returning moments of cosmogenesis, points to the unconscious of nature, while the chora, as the depth structure of the human unconscious, points to the depth structure of nature which remains unconscious and presemiotic. All positioned and thematized cultural codes break open under duress to show the continual presence-in-absence of nature naturing within and through the orders of world semiosis.

The divine natures can now begin to manifest themselves from out of the heart of nature. These natures (or dimensions) all point toward a deeper unity within the divine life, yet they each manifest unique traits that can only become clarified against the background of nature and the correlation of ground, firstness, and the chora. The depth logic of the three categories will continue to emerge as they are correlated to the divine natures.

The current perspective assumes that the divine is in and of a self-transcending nature, and that any discourse about God must remain sensitive to the larger semiotic and metaphysical categories just delineated. Nature remains the genus of which God is the species. Of course, the utter vastness of nature transcends the genera per se. Any trait assigned to nature as a whole can have only a limited application. Peirce reminds us of this when he states (1878):

The universe ought to be presumed too vast to have any character. When it is claimed that the arrangements of Nature are benevolent, or just, or wise, or of any other peculiar kind, we ought to be prejudiced against such opinions, as being the offspring of an ill-formed notion of the finitude of the world. And examination has hitherto shown that such beneficences, justice, etc., are of a most limited kind -limited in degree and limited in range. [CP 6.422]

Thus no finite trait can be assigned to nature, although any given trait will certainly be manifest 'within' nature, either in the realms of possibility or actuality. The divine natures do not represent an exception to this rule. Any feature of the divine life will be of a "limited kind" and will have a specific degree and scope within the innumerable orders of the world (nature natured). As noted earlier, God and the world are co-constituting and the concept of a radical creatio ex nihilo only brooks confusion about the ontological locus of the divine natures.

We can delineate four divine natures, each of which will have its own relation to either nature naturing or nature natured. The question of the origin of the universe remains outside of the scope of semiotic naturalism and must remain mute in the face of the deeper mystery of the unconscious of nature. Traditional Christian trinitarian structures will be reconfigured to better correspond to the semiotic and ontological structure of the divine life.

The first divine nature is manifest within the orders of the world and represents the presence of what can best be termed the "fragmented ground." As fragmented, this ground is manifest in fitful and ambiguous ways within the orders of the world and does not have a kind of ubiquitous presence throughout nature. Some orders remain recalcitrant to the presence of the divine, while others only manifest the divine in broken ways. Rarely will an order of relevance be a fairly unambiguous manifestation of the divine. The positive power of fragmented origins is most clearly seen in those epiphanies of power, that transform and deepen many of our cultural artifacts. Returning to our previous example of the painting, we can say that insofar as that painting becomes the locus of an epiphany of power its internal and public/relational semiotic structures will all bend toward the divine life and manifest an additional semiotic layer that cannot be circumscribed by sign-users. The depth dimension, where meaning and mystery converge, points toward the elusive grounding power of the divine. The first divine dimension grounds certain orders in the sense that it confers a new correlation between the sign and its object. Unlike non-divine grounds, the fragmented ground of the first divine dimension, opens up the depth dimension of the world to sign-users so that they can transform their own cultural codes. Put differently, a confrontation with an epiphany of power makes it possible to

leave static cultural codes ("The name of the Father") behind so that a semiotic inversion takes place. In this sense, God as fragmented origin, is actually a mask for the return of the material maternal in the guise of a transfigured realm of cultural interpretants. The power and sovereignty of cultural artifacts (as consecrated moments within cultural codes) gives way before the self-giving ground of God who speaks not with the voice of the Father but with the deeper voice of the material maternal.

The second divine dimension, like the first, lives within and among the manifest orders of the world (nature natures), while pointing indirectly toward the unconscious of nature (nature natures). Yet this dimension moves in the opposite direction from the first. Instead of manifesting itself as a fragmented ground, the second dimension manifests itself as a fragmented goal. The goal is fragmented in that there is no super-goal that hovers over all of the orders of the world, but rather a series of possible goals that stand before sign-users in the guise of a persuasive lure. Goals are developmental, as noted by Peirce, and serve to remind sign-users of either the incompleteness or the imperialism of their own semiotic structures. A marginalized semiotic horizon is empowered for a depth transformation while an imperial semiotic horizon is shriven of its parasitic plenitude. The first divine dimension is manifest in terms of epiphanies of power, while the second appears to sign-users as a goad toward justice in which antecedent semiotic and ontological conditions must break open to show their possible demonic features.

Theological speculation has often probed in the tensions between the two dimensions of God. Even though widely divergent categories have been used, the human process repeatedly encounters the seeming split within the divine life between the sheer presence of epiphanies of power and the momentums of justice that seem to work in the opposite direction of overturning the powers that stand in the way of human emancipation. In biblical terms, this is exhibited in the tension between the awesome power displayed before Job, and the preaching of the prophets who challenge all powers other than the humbling power of justice. The human theological imagination has well understood that there are fissures and breaks within the divine life itself, even if it has rarely had the courage to express this insight directly.

Both of the first two divine dimensions are fully temporal and participate in natural and cultural forms of semiosis. The first dimension lives in the power of the past and present, reminding sign-users of the sheer prevalence of the divine within a fragmented world. The second divine dimension works in the present and the future, goading sign-users into new configurations that derive their inner momentum from hope. Paul Tillich referred to the signs of what is here called the second divine dimension as signs of expectation (Tillich 1933). Such signs are unique in that they defer the realization of their content until the arrival of the community of justice. Put in ontological terms, signs of expectation participate in the emerging structures of justice that are manifest to the human process through hope. Needless to say, such signs do not have a straightforward causal efficacy but rather open the human process to possibilities of transformation that had been hidden.

The first two divine dimensions have their efficacy within the world of nature natures. As such they serve to quicken certain semiotic orders and to move them toward a deeper permeability to the divine life. The first dimension of God grounds certain natural and cultural orders by intensifying the correlation between the available signs and their referents. The second dimension of God grounds certain cultural orders by opening them to possibilities of renewal that live between signs and their referents. Again, the concept of ground points toward a between-ness structure that enables and sustains new semiotic configurations. All of these grounding activities are at least virtually temporal and participate in the innumerable forms of relation found in the domain of nature natures.

The third divine dimension appears on the other side of the ontological difference. This dimension of God is intimately related to nature natures although it is not fully coextensive with it. Insofar as spatial images are at all helpful on the most generic level of analysis, we can say that the third divine dimension does not exhaust the full scope of nature natures, and that the unconscious of nature will always be 'larger' than the divine. Yet the third divine dimension is as large as the manifest world of nature natures. Using the image of Tillich, this dimension lives as the "ground of Being" that sustains all of the innumerable orders of the world (Tillich 1951). Each order, no matter how brief its tenure or how fragmented its structure, receives its being from the divine life. The third dimension of God is thus manifest as an unfragmented origin/ground. It grounds, not in the sense of enhancing specific semiotic integrities, but in the sense of making any semiotic integrity possible in the first place. The third dimension of God effaces itself before the objects of the world. Put differently, the unfragmented ground does not interfere with any of the traits of the world, be they semiotic or not, but makes it possible for traits to prevail. The third divine dimension lives between the abyss separating nature natures from nature natures. It lives on 'this' side of the ontological difference by sustaining all of the orders of the world. It lives on the 'other' side of the ontological difference by sharing in the pretemporal and prepositioned potencies of nature. Just as nature natures provides the chora with its 'matter,' so too does it provide the third divine dimension with its internal power of Being. Both the chora and the third divine dimension live out of the hidden powers of nature natures. In this sense, they are products of nature natures and represent part of the 'outward' movement of the unconscious of nature.

As noted, the first two dimensions of God are temporal in their manifestations. The third dimension is pretemporal in the sense that it allows for time but is not itself in time. A helpful analogy at this point is suggested by Tillich where he denies that God can be a person, but affirms that God lives as the ground of personality within the universe (Tillich 1951). In translating the analogy we can say that the third divine dimension is not in time but lives as the ground of time. Like the unconscious of nature, from which the divine ultimately springs in all of its dimensions, the third divine dimension is pretemporal yet ejective of the possibility of various forms of time.

What is the correlation between the unfragmented origin and the material maternal? The third divine dimension lives as the lost object for the world. All orders within the world derive their being and autonomy from the unfragmented origin that enables them to obtain at all. From the world's standpoint (if such a locution may be allowed), God is the true lost object that lies just beyond the surface of each and every order. Thus God is the sustaining source for the world, while the world lives as God's semiotic body. In this sense, God is the true material maternal source for all orders of nature natured. No order would be at all were it not for the hidden origin that sustains it against the forces of nonbeing.

Hence God is both ground and lost object for the world as a whole. The third divine dimension is beyond good and evil and is presemiotic. It is the ultimate enabling condition for worldhood. Insofar as we wish to use Christian trinitarian language we can say that the first two divine dimensions are manifestations of God as spirit. The third divine dimension is an expression of God the Father, recognizing that the true depth logic of this dimension actually reveals the material maternal (sustaining ground), rather than the patriarchal realm of encoded and circumscribed semiosis. When we move into an examination of the fourth and final divine dimension we encounter God as the Christ (child to itself).

The fourth divine dimension lives as an unfragmented goal that moves toward something that eclipses the divine itself. Nature natured, as the encompassing that can never be delimited or plumbed, surrounds the divine and goads it toward its own self-transformation within the world. Medieval theologians argued that God was that than which nothing greater could be conceived. In our century, Charles Hartshorne has transformed this thesis by adding the further stipulation that God was also infinitely self-surpassable (Hartshorne 1948). The current perspective is concerned with one final stipulation that brings the ontological argument to completion. God is indeed that than which nothing greater can be conceived (in terms of the realms of nature natured), and is infinitely self-surpassable, but God is also, and more importantly, incomplete in the face of that which eclipses even its own nature. Nature natured lives as the ultimate abyss within which the divine must continue to grow.

In its fourth dimension, God must continually become a child to itself so that it can experience its own birthing in the face of the unconscious of nature. While God is coextensive with the domain of nature natured, God remains radically incomplete in the face of the encompassing reality of nature natured. Is the unconscious of nature indifferent to its greatest product, the divine being? We can never hope to answer this question. But we can gain some access to the inner rhythms of the divine life by a sympathetic participation in the divine travail. God remains restless in the face of the abyss of the unconscious of nature and struggles to enhance and deepen its own scope and power. God's plenitude is not exhausted by its participation in the orders of nature natured. There remains a divine surplus that moves toward the ever receding abyss of nature natured and attempts to come closer to the mysteries of the unconscious of nature. Each stage in divine evolution represents a self-birthing in which God lives as the material maternal for itself. On a deeper level, nature natured lives as the lost object for the divine life. Insofar as we can speak of divine melancholy, we can do so in terms of God's own struggles to recover the lost object that lies just beyond its reach. God lives as the lost object of the world while nature natured lives as the lost object for God. The momentum of the fourth divine dimension is toward the unconscious of nature.

The first two divine dimensions are temporal, the third dimension is pretemporal, while the fourth dimension is post-temporal. This dimension is post-temporal in the sense that it is not a dimension that exists prior to semiosis or the emergence of the world, but one that exists on the 'Other' side of all virtual and attained semiotic orders. When God gives birth to itself, and longs for the lost object, it enters into a radically different order and leaves temporal flow behind. Yet this domain is not that of the pretemporal which remains mute and potential, but the post-temporal domain that lives on the other side of the robust semiotic speech of the world.

Nature's God lives in and through these four dimensions and participates in both sides of the ontological difference. God is presemiotic, semiotic, and post-semiotic in its ways of being and lives within and behind the semiotic structures of the world. For us, God is the true material maternal and grounds the biological mother in the more primal sustaining power of Being that nurtures all things. The true depth logic of psychoanalytic categories points ineluctably toward the momentums of the divine life. The biological mother represents an extremely important point of concrescence of the divine life, but cannot exhaust it or replace it. By looking at the unsaid within these psychoanalytic categories we move past and through anthropocentrism and enter into the self-giving ground of the divine life. At the same time, we transform Peirce's key concept of ground to show just how it reveals the depth

structures of the world and the divine natures. At the heart of all forms of religious semiosis is the divine life that hungers for manifestation within the world. At the same time, God hungers for its own transfiguration in the face of the encompassing power of an inexhaustible nature. We enter into the mystery of the divine travail whenever we become sensitive to the traces of nature naturing, and allow those traces to quicken our own longing for the material maternal.

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The designation W followed by volume and page numbers with a period in between abbreviates the ongoing *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. Max H. Fisch, Vols. I-IV, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982-1986).

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