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PEIRCE'S ECSTATIC NATURALISM: THE BIRTH OF THE DIVINE IN NATURE

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I.

Peirce was not a gifted philosophical theologian, nor was he at home in the subtleties of Christian dogmatics. Yet as his thought dramatically matured after the death of his father in 1880, he found himself driven to make some sense of the correlation between his developmental cosmology and the status of God vis-à-vis his three primal categories of firstness, secondness, and thirdness. By the 1880s he had already formulated his semiotics, at least in rudimentary form, his metaphysics, and his understanding of mathematics as a hypothetical and constructive activity that can ground logic (a view that places him at the opposite extreme from Russell and Whitehead).

As he focuses on the divine itself, Peirce uses all three frameworks to shape his conception of how God and the world interact. From his semiotics he develops the notion that God is known through the semiotic process of interpretive musement, while also being a sign of something perhaps larger than itself. From his metaphysics he begins the process of showing how God emerges out of firstness and works through secondness and thirdness to transform chaos into concrete reasonableness in the infinite long run. And, finally, he uses his mathematical theories of the infinitesimals to show how the depth structures of the world give birth to points, lines, and tri-dimensional geometric realities, from which other thicker and more complex realities emerge.

For some time I have been persuaded that Peirce felt uneasy about the classical notion of *creatio ex nihilo* and that he was willing at least to open the door to the possibility that God's being was less than it seemed in the context of the march of thirdness in the physical and psychological universes. It is of some historical note that Peirce shaped his cosmology in the era of the steady state universe, while making some bold moves, almost in spite of himself, toward something analogous to Big Bang cosmology. Given that Peirce died about fifteen years before Hubble discovered the galactic red-shift

that showed that the universe is expanding, this is a testament to the intuitive brilliance of his categorial structure. What I shall argue in this essay is that Peirce's conception of a God in and of nature foreshadows an emergentism that may be one of the chief implications of Big Bang cosmology, in spite of some heroic, but misguided and futile, attempts to reconcile the new cosmology with traditional Christian dogma.

Put in the starkest possible terms, we can ask: where, for Peirce, does God come from? Is God some kind of reality that obtains prior, both temporally and logically, to firstness and the infinitesimals, or is God an eject from a primal ground that is antecedent to its life? If God is a consequent of a ground that lies beyond and around it, what traits can we still safely assign to the divine life? In what sense is Peirce's God omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent? Is nature the genus of which God is the species? If so, is God nothing more than one dimension of a self-transforming nature?

We can only begin to answer these questions as we unfold his categorial structure and show how Peirce carefully maneuvered toward at least a preliminary conception of the divine life and its relevance to the human process and the innumerable orders of nature. In some respects, it seems as if his sparse reflections on God represent an afterthought; however, it has now become clear that Peirce was deeply interested in religious questions throughout his life, but that he had great difficulty reconciling aspects of his adult Episcopalianism with his own daring reconstruction of evolution and the primacy of firstness as a birthing ground of the new, i.e., as something that stood outside of the *Logos*. I suspect a certain reticence on his part in probing more fully into things that filled him with anxiety and a fear of further alienation from the human community.

While the semiotic aspects of Peirce's conception of God have been carefully studied and analyzed,¹ little energy has been devoted to an analysis of the relation between God and firstness. In my Peirce book, I argue that Peirce was afraid of firstness and that he made an unconscious identification between firstness and the maternal.² Like Kristeva, Peirce locates secondness

¹ See especially Michael Raposa's excellent *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

² Robert Corrington, *An Introduction to C. S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 1993).

and thirdness within the domain of the father, that is, within the public and scientific codes that govern the mores and attitudes of the community of inquiry. At the heart of semiotics is a tension between the lucidity of public and paternal interpretants, and the darker and secret messages of the maternal, messages that threaten to undo the domain of manifest semiosis. Brent has further argued that Peirce also identified firstness with illicit sexuality, and that he constantly moves away from the birthing ground of firstness toward the relative safety of secondness and thirdness.³ Each sexual encounter lured him toward the hidden and prelogical realm of the material maternal so that he could sink into a kind of "dreaming innocence," to use Tillich's phrase. I think that Brent is correct and that the biographical evidence is fairly conclusive as to Peirce's abjection of the maternal power of firstness.

Be that as it may, firstness represents the most difficult and troubling of the three primal categories precisely because it is impossible to say anything about it except by indirection. To talk about it is to stain it with some content that, by definition, must be consequent to firstness. Of course, sign users, being what they are, will tread on this sacred terrain regardless, and will use analogies, metaphors, and elliptical expressions to gain access to that which is on the other side of the veil.

What does Peirce tell us about pure firstness? It is understood to be a unity that does not actually unify anything. It is pure feeling and spontaneity, a spontaneity that is self-othering and ejecting of actualities and possibilities within the domains of secondness and thirdness. It is unconscious, perhaps even the unconscious of nature itself, that is, that dimension of nature that is conveyed by the term *natura naturans*, or nature naturing. Firstness is the world before Adam named its constituents. It is also a kind of pure quality, but not the kind of named quality of thirdness, which might be termed a firstness of thirdness. In his evocative essay ca. 1890, "A Guess at the Riddle," Peirce presents firstness this way:

³ See Joseph Brent's *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). The correlation that I make between firstness and sexuality has come from several conversations with Brent and from a plenary session at the 1993 meeting of the Semiotic Society of America on Peirce's biography. The papers presented at that session will appear in *Semiotics 1993*, edited by Robert S. Corrington and John Deely (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995).

The first is full of life and variety. Yet that variety is only potential; it is not definitely there. Still, the notion of explaining the variety of the world, which was what they [the pre-Socratics] mainly wondered at, by non-variety was quite absurd. How is variety to come out of the womb of homogeneity; only by the principle of spontaneity, which is just that virtual variety that is the first.⁴

How does one talk about something that is "not definitely there"? The key phase here is "virtual variety," i.e., that spontaneous self-othering that will make variety manifest when firstness emanates into the innumerable seconds that go to constitute the world of causal interaction. It is important to make the hermeneutic point that neither firstness nor secondness has any meaning in itself. They contain the seeds of possible meaning, but these seeds sprout only when thirdness unfolds to gather up the irrational structures of secondness, while, in an ironic inversion, abjecting firstness.

Both secondness and thirdness are dependent on firstness for their very being, and, as such, they contain traces of their origin in that which is only virtual. If one makes a detailed psychoanalytic study of Peirce's semiotics, it becomes clear that these traces of firstness, found in iconic structures, produce a deep melancholy for the sign using organism. The ecstasy produced whenever a sign births an interpretant, at the same time points in the other direction to a melancholy longing for the material maternal, i.e., for the self-othering and ejective dimension of firstness. As we shall see, this melancholy haunts the divine life itself.

II.

It is not often noted that Peirce had a conception of the unconscious that is very close to that of C. G. Jung. In his conception, the unconscious takes on

⁴ CP 1.373. All references to Peirce come from either the *Collected Papers, Vols. 1-8* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1931-1958), or the manuscripts as catalogued in *Annotated Catalogue of Charles Sanders Peirce*, by Richard Robin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967), or *Reason and the Logic of Things*, edited by Kenneth Laine Ketner, with an introduction by Kenneth Laine Ketner and Hilary Putnam (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

some of the features of firstness and thus becomes the fecund ground for the manifest orders of experience and ideation. Given his explicit defense of anthropomorphism in metaphysics, our analysis of the firstness of the unconscious will have a direct bearing on how the divine unconscious is envisioned. This follows from the fact that, like later process thinkers, Peirce always tried to find an analogical bridge from the features of the human process to the features of an evolving God.

Conscious experience is complex enough for Peirce. The basic primal reality of experience is that of the percipuum which divides into two components, the percept and the perceptual judgment. The percept comes to the self as a kind of surd, that is, it is without intrinsic meaning until the mind works on it to convey some sense of universality. The perceptual judgment applies a predicate, as a form of thirdness, to the percept so that it appears to the mind *as* something. The act of predication is unconscious and instinctual at this level. On the conscious level, any given perceptual judgment may be modified, but this is rare given the fact that we do not even acknowledge that such unconscious predication has taken place.

As we move from consciousness to the unconscious, the movement of the mind becomes even more complex. Peirce posited vast underground (underwater) skeletal sets that linked together to form complexes of meaning that have a deep evolutionary and archetypal core.⁵ His most striking simile for the unconscious, and its inner life, is that of the "bottomless lake":

... that our whole past experience is continually in our consciousness, though most of it sunk to a great depth of dimness. I think of consciousness as a bottomless lake, whose waters seem transparent, yet into which we can clearly see but a little way. But in this water there are countless objects at different depths; and certain influences will give certain kinds of those objects an upward impulse which may be intense enough and continue long enough to bring them into the upper visible layer. After the impulse ceases they commence to sink downwards.⁶

⁵ CP 7.434.

⁶ CP 7.547.

There is an intense dialectic between consciousness and the unconscious. Material that falls on the surface of the lake may remain there for a while, but it will inevitably sink below the surface where it will join together with other semiotic matter that takes on a life of its own. Like Jung's feeling-toned complexes, which serve as gravitational fields for signs and interpretants, Peirce's skeletal sets gather new material into their matrix so that the semiotic structures of the unconscious can enhance their power.

The most important corollary here is with the category of firstness. The lake itself is a kind of semiotic womb or *chora* that serves to empower signs and enable them to return to the domains of secondness and thirdness. In the dialectic between consciousness and the unconscious, a given sign series can burst from below the surface and function indexically or symbolically within the structures of consciousness.⁷ The unconscious is the most dramatic manifestation of firstness within the human process and lives as a kind of "virtual variety" birthing prospects of and for a consciousness that may be little prepared for the new interpretants that suddenly come into its orbit.

The unconscious is a kind of virtual field for manifest forms of semiosis. We can perhaps call it a manifestation of firstness, even though such a formulation violates the inner logic of firstness which can have no manifestations of parts. Perhaps a more judicious formulation would be to say that the unconscious is that dimension of firstness that has the most relevance to the human process. Signs go back to the womb of the unconscious and receive a special kind of nourishment that empowers them to reenter the robust domain of public interpretants where each sign must compete with others in an evolutionary semiotic niche that may not provide space for it. Peirce almost always argued as if firstness were a one way momentum, birthing seconds and signs, but not taking them back. Could there be another aspect of firstness that he objected because of his fear of being devoured by the material maternal?

It is clear to me that firstness can take back the foundlings that were cast into the semiotic storms of conscious existence. There is a power of transformation, one might almost say of resurrection, in firstness that can repair the wounds created by secondness. The collective unconscious in the

⁷ CP 7.554.

person, deeply linked by Peirce to the unconscious in nature,⁸ is a healing presence that can support the domain of consciousness which must negotiate the cross currents of secondness and thirdness. The self-othering of firstness appears with particular clarity in the unconscious which serves as an encompassing and shaping reality that renews semiotic life.

The virtual variety in firstness, whether manifest in cosmogenesis or in the collective unconscious, must have its own way of being if it is to move toward secondness and thirdness. Peirce puts the matter succinctly, "Out of the womb of indeterminacy we must say that there would have come something, by the principle of Firstness, which we may call a flash."⁹ What we are after is the "how" of this flash, namely, the mechanism by and through which firstness actualizes its prospects so that the flash can birth seconds and thirds. It is in Peirce's reflections on the infinitesimals that we gain some precious insight into the how of firstness.

In mathematical theory, the infinitesimal is defined as a number that is infinitely small but greater than zero. I am persuaded that Peirce's daring defense of infinitesimals, at a time when most mathematicians had abandoned them, is linked with his explorations of firstness as the self-othering power that can also be seen as something infinitely small, that is, prespatial, but greater than nothingness or zero. The infinitesimal, for Peirce, is not yet an actual point in space, but lives as a self-othering potency that can spawn points. In his 1898 Cambridge Conference Lectures, *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, he opens the door to the how of firstness by contrasting it with realized continuity:

The *zero* collection is bare, abstract, germinal possibility. The continuum is concrete, developed possibility. The whole universe of true and real possibilities forms a continuum, upon which this Universe of Actual Existence is, by virtue of the essential Secondness of Existence, a discontinuous mark—like a line figure drawn on the area of the blackboard. There is room in the world of possibility for any multitude of such universes of Existence. Even in this transitory life, the

⁸ CP 7.558.

⁹ CP 1.412.

only value of all the arbitrary arrangements which mark actuality, whether they were introduced once for all "at the end of the sixth day of creation" or whether as I believe, they spring out on every hand and all the time, as the act of creation goes on, their only value is to be shaped into a continuous delineation under the creative hand, and at any rate their only use for us is to hold us down to learning one lesson at a time, so that we may make the generalizations of intellect and the more important generalizations of sentiment which make the value of this world.¹⁰

In this remarkable statement, we see several crucial themes which point us toward the problem of the divine life. Of initial concern is the distinction between the "germinal possibility" that comes from the self-othering of the infinitesimals, and the developed possibility that comes from the mind-related continuum of thirdness. The infinitesimal is defined elsewhere in the lectures as a kind of exploding possible point that births spatial points through a kind of ontological transfiguration. An infinitely small quantity becomes a realized finite quantity and enters into the realm of secondness, that is, of existence. As a number of these now realized points link together into a line, they become part of a real continuum that, by definition, participates in thirdness.

Peirce's example is clear: when you draw a line or a point on a spotless blackboard (a simile of firstness), that line suddenly introduces secondness and thirdness. A mere "germinal possibility" is now part of the actualized, or better, actualizing, world of secondness and thirdness. The implied link between the self-othering infinitesimal, as a kind of monad of possibility, and the birthing power of firstness, as a virtual variety 'hungering' for manifestation, makes clear that firstness needs the mechanism of the infinitesimals for its successful negotiation of the abyss separating pure possibility from realized continua in nature.

Of particular interest for our purposes is his utter rejection of the notion that the transition from firstness and its infinitesimals to the created world and its innumerable continua was an act that took place once and for all. The world is a continual emergent from the self-othering of the infinitesimals.

¹⁰ RLT, 162-63.

Seconds and thirds are always moving out from, and, so I would argue, back into, firstness and its heterogeneous momentum. God can not stand outside of the world as an extra-natural agent who is somehow responsible for the world's being. The "that" and the "how" of the world come from the infinitesimals that live within nature's unconscious.¹¹

Two years after his Cambridge Conference Lectures, Peirce further clarifies his understanding of infinitesimals and their status as possible worlds in search of instantiation in the macro world of space-time:

Now the points on a line not yet actually determined are mere potentialities, and, as such, cannot react upon one another actually; and *per se*, they are all exactly alike; and they cannot be in one-to-one correspondence to any collection, since the multitude of that collection would require to be a maximum multitude. Consequently, all the possible points are not distinct from one another; although any possible multitude of points, once determined, become so distinct by the act of determination. . . . Every point actually marked upon it [i.e., the line] breaks its continuity, in one sense.¹²

While actual spatial points can be part of a collection and can, as members of a class, share features in common, as well as show discontinuous traits, the infinitesimal, as a mere potentiality, is without any recognizable features whatsoever. And when a mere possible point explodes into space-time and marks a line in a certain respect, it ceases to be an infinitesimal. The deep metaphysical irony is that all infinitesimals fulfill their entelechy only when they cease to be primal possibilities within firstness and become spatial moments within a continuum that is characterized by mentality and growth. In more technical terms, Leibniz's identity of indiscernibles does not apply to the infinitesimals that "are not distinct from one another." Their metaphysical

¹¹ For an innovative rethinking of the nature of infinitesimals, see Carl R. Hausman's *Charles S. Peirce's Evolutionary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 179-90.

¹² CP 3.568.

anonymity can be overcome only when they cease to be prespatial servants of firstness.

III.

In what remains, I shall explore how the divine fits into this correlation of firstness and the infinitesimals, and give some indications of how Peirce can reconcile his understanding of continuous creation with a Big Bang cosmology. As we recall, Peirce was able to bring three special elements to his somewhat truncated work in philosophical theology: his semiotic theory, his delineation of the three primal categories, and his evocative work on the infinitesimals. I have argued that there is an internal connection linking the second and third elements. The how of firstness is through the self-othering of the infinitesimals which make space and time possible in the first place. It is almost as if firstness needed some kind of potential individuality within its rhythms in order to birth seconds. The infinitesimal, which lies on the cusp between the prespatial and the spatial, serves this purpose.

In moving to the God problematic, it soon becomes clear that Peirce was aware of the depth connections between his categories and the unfolding of the divine. Less clear, but present nonetheless is his implication that even God must serve both firstness and its infinitesimals. These thoughts, of course, take place against a backdrop of more conventional thinking on the divine, showing that Peirce was willing to go only so far in his reconstruction. My sense is that he knew where he *could* go had he the courage to undermine the vertical structures of the tradition.

The basic cosmological model is that the universe is moving outward from a state of chaos or heterogeneity toward more and more reasonableness. The concept of firstness serves in several capacities. It relates to the unconscious and to the infinitesimals, while on another level it relates to cosmogenesis. For Peirce, order and reason need to be explained, not chaos, as chaos is a given in the categorial structure. All reason, all forms of thirdness, are consequent upon the cosmogenic power of firstness. No complex in nature is free from this movement from chaos toward thirdness. The divine is also stretched across and through the three categories and can fulfill its own being only when it frees itself, at least partially, from firstness. Even the forms themselves evolve and challenge the divine life. In an 1898

manuscript Peirce renders dubious anything like an atemporal primordial mind of God:

The evolutionary process is, therefore, not a mere evolution of the *existing universe*, but rather a process by which the very Platonic forms themselves have become or are becoming developed. . . . The evolution of forms begins or, at any rate, has for an early stage of it, a vague potentiality; and that either is or is followed by a continuum of forms having a multitude of dimensions too great for the individual dimensions to be distinct. It must be by a contraction of the vagueness of that potentiality of everything in general, but of nothing in particular, that the world of forms comes about.¹³

What is striking here is the reverse directionality. The universe evolves by compressing a plenitude, which is a true wealth of firstness, toward a "contraction of the vagueness" in which forms are constricted out of the plenum. Put in the kind of psychoanalytic terms that we have used, thirdness, i.e., Platonic forms, emerges only insofar as it turns its back on firstness and pushes its indeterminacy into the background. Yet the vagueness remains as a goad to further prospects for the evolving Platonic forms. Firstness serves as the Platonic *chora* always ready to provide nutrient for new or old thirds.

In a 1903 manuscript Peirce simply states that "...God achieves his own being,"¹⁴ by which is meant that God is self-creating along, within, and through the co-evolving universe. In moving away from the dogma of *creatio ex nihilo* Peirce was left with the obvious alternative that God is an emergent product of the self-othering of firstness and that the divine natures were in the process of self-formation. This is of a piece with his above mentioned defense of anthropomorphism in metaphysics, which is most clearly manifest in his panpsychism which mentalizes all complexes and ties them to self-moving continua. God is a self-moving continuum that must interact with the innumerable seconds and thirds that begin to fill up its being through time.

¹³ CP 6.194 and 6.196.

¹⁴ MS 313.

In a remarkable paragraph from his ca. 1890 "A Guess at the Riddle," Peirce ties together his conception of imaginary points on a line with his conception of God. Taken at face value, the following quote might seem to support a more traditional conception of God. But when it is understood that the infinitesimals are lurking in the interstices of the world, the passage makes much more sense as a daring defense of divine evolution out of pure possibility:

The starting-point of the universe, God the Creator, is the Absolute First; the terminus of the universe, God completely revealed, is the Absolute Second; every state of the universe at a measurable point of time is the third.¹⁵

His model is that of an infinitely long yard stick in which there are two imaginary points, neither of which can be given a finite measure. In between, however, finite measures can be made. He refers to the two extreme points as "absolute," that is, without a measure. God as creator is the first absolute point, but is not actually realized or realizable in such imaginary space. In this sense God is riding among the infinitesimals and is out of reach of any measure. But God is not a Christian creator out of the nothing, as God must flee the nothing (firstness) through becoming determinate.

This means that God in the original position of firstness is in a kind of imaginary space and an imaginary time, very much like the imaginary time that Hawking posits for the potentiality 'surrounding' the Big Bang. Hawking contrasts real with imaginary time in a way that is very close to what Peirce means by the special status of firstness and the infinitesimals:

In real time, the universe has a beginning and an end at singularities that form a boundary to space-time and at which the laws of science break down. But in imaginary time, there are no singularities or boundaries. So maybe what we call imaginary time is really more basic, and what

¹⁵ CP 1.362.

we call real is just an idea that we invent to help us describe what the universe is like.¹⁶

I want to argue that God is in both imaginary and real time. God, qua participant in firstness, is part of imaginary time that as yet has no singularities or boundaries. But as God evolves, boundaries emerge within real time, not only the boundary of space-time itself, which, on another level, has no boundary, but the boundaries that punctuate secondness. God is thus both prespatial and spatial, but in different respects. At the same 'time' God is post-spatial in the realized fulfillment of its and the universe's life.

As late as 1905, Peirce continues to rethink the divine natures and their correlation to space and time, as well as to conditions of origin. Peirce does not radically alter his views on God from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century. Rather, he unfolds some of the tensions housed within his categorial scheme as the three categories apply to divine evolution. In a series of self-posed questions entitled *Answers To Questions Concerning My Belief in God*, Peirce tries to reconcile the intrinsic vagueness of our ideas of God with the demands of his own system for some kind of eschatological intelligibility. Specifically, in dealing with the problem of creation and time, he moves in the direction of Hawking's later formulations:

"Do you believe this Supreme Being to have been the creator of the universe?" Not so much *to have been* as to be now creating the universe, concerning which see my articles in the first three volumes of *The Monist* [1891-1892] . . .¹⁷

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,

¹⁶ Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 139.

¹⁷ 6.505.

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.¹⁸

Time, in the view of the later Peirce, is fully real, even though it does not have a definite beginning. It unfolds from a "process" that seems to be akin to Hawking's no boundary proposal, which asserts that it makes no sense to talk of a specific singularity from which the world unfolded, through the inflationary Big Bang. God is an eject from the very vague momentum that is not a point in space/time.

Hence, at the other extreme is the second absolute mathematical point where God, in post-temporal eschatological fulfillment, becomes fully manifest. This second point is not so much secondness as it is the post-spatial infinite of divine fulfillment. This ties in directly with Peirce's sense that God is self-actualizing along with the universe. The measurable God is the God of thirdness, that is, the God that is clothed in the generals and Platonic forms that co-evolve through time. Peirce directly links God with the growth of concrete reasonableness. He does not strictly equate God with reason, but reason is surely one of God's more important traits. Put in more traditional language, God achieves *Logos* through time, but this reason is an evolutionary product and cannot exist prior to divine evolution.

Sharpening our language, we can say that God, like everything else in the universe, is an eject from the self-fissuring of the infinitesimals. God is deeply wedded to firstness, and feels its pull in every outward move toward thirdness. I am persuaded that God feels the melancholy loss associated with its own expulsion from the dreaming innocence of firstness, and must struggle to maintain the outward momentum of thirdness, which always threatens to collapse into the arms of firstness. The nondivine realities in the universe feel this same pull and cling to thirdness as a protection against being devoured by the *chora*. However, the logic deepens because the power of nature, as manifest in firstness, can also renew the foundlings that have been cast into secondness and thirdness.

God is thus an eject from nature naturing (a synonym for firstness) and must make its way in a universe that seems to frustrate divine intent. Like

¹⁸ 6.506.

the infinitesimal, God is infinitely small but greater than zero. When God emerges from firstness, God becomes greater than any attained number, but still of lesser scope than nature itself. How does this God relate to the Big Bang cosmology? God exists in imaginary space-time until the inflationary expansion of the universe. God is a primordial seed within the Big Bang singularity, i.e., within pretemporal firstness, and must expand along with the seconds and thirds of the universe. The self-othering of the Big Bang is also the self-othering of *natura naturans* as it births *natura naturata*. In a metaphorical sense, God is as pervasive as the cosmic background radiation. Yet God is also compressed into particular thirds within the universe. In my 1992 work *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism*, I delineated the four forms of this compression and showed how they correlate to the ultimate fissure between nature naturing and nature natured. These dimensions of God all participate in the momentum of nature as it ecstatically transforms itself in and out of time.¹⁹

Peirce pointed toward this compression, and cleared the way for an understanding of ecstatic naturalism by locating God in the rhythms of nature naturing and their movement toward the orders of the world. He foreshadowed some aspects of Big Bang cosmology, but also provided space for a unique form of continuous creation in which the attained orders of the world could still reach back, as it were, into the plenum from which they have come. While traditional Christian theology will not provide the categorial resources needed for grappling with the Big Bang cosmology, an ecstatic naturalism, attuned to both radical emergentism and continuous creation, will be able to show how nature and nature's God ride the fire storm of cosmogenesis and move toward a fragmentary consummation on the edges of the world.

¹⁹ For an excellent study of my ecstatic naturalism, see Todd A. Driskill's "Beyond the Text: Ecstatic Naturalism and American Pragmatism," *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 15: 3 (September 1994): 259-77. I have developed this perspective in the following books: *The Community of Interpreters* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), *An Introduction to C.S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 1993), *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), and *Nature's Self* (forthcoming).