
Review article

**World making, world taking: The artifactual
basis of worldhood and its unruly ground***

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My claim in this essay is that the phenomenon of *world semiosis* exists in its own right whether human or zoösemiotic systems prevail or not. In other words, the universe would traffic in signs even if it never transgressed into the sphere that we call the organic. Such a claim can be made in any system that posits panpsychism or a form of absolute idealism (such as that of Josiah Royce), but I wish to further compound the felony by maintaining this claim from the standpoint of a philosophical naturalism. My own perspective of *ecstatic* naturalism has been developed precisely to enter into that dark crevice within nature where meanings emerge outside of and prior to the profligate and potentially self-organizing sphere of zoösemiosis. The ground of world semiosis will show itself to be unruly, to use the term of Schelling (*das Regellose*), and the ground to consequent relationship will in turn show itself to be qualitatively different from any other such relation in the worlds of signification.

The virtue of the text under investigation is that it comes remarkably close to an understanding of these categorial and pre-categorial dynamics through its analysis of the unconscious basis of the artifactual structures of the world of human culture, the world that Danesi refers to as 'world three', as it complements the first world of physical impaction and the second world of more robust semiotic processes involving cognition as it emerges from physical processes. Danesi has very carefully probed into many of the regnant layers of semiosis and has woven a fabric that captures in a genuine way what is happening when human sign users become permeable to culture. Yet he also has opened up a door to the underground of culture in his analysis of narrative and myth, but more of this later.

First we need a definition of worldhood. The pedigree of this term comes from the phenomenological work of Husserl and above all Heidegger where it denotes the most basic structures of the self/world correlation. The

*Marcel Danesi, *Messages and Meanings: An Introduction to Semiotics*. Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1993.

clearing in the opacity of being known as the *Dasein* is what it is because worldhood gives the human process the unique gift (in the known semiotic universes) of an openness to nothingness and the fundamental structures of beings. We are thrown into this clearing by that which underlies anything that we do, say, or make, and this thrownness is a gift that has an elusive whence and whither. Hence worldhood is the enabling fore-structure of anything encountered in any way by finite and death-bound human sign users. It makes it possible to become open to both being and the most important genera within the unlimited sphere of beings. That is, both sides of the ontological difference between being and things in being (through their genera) become open to circumspect probing and reception.

But what of semiosis? The concept of *world* semiosis seems to entail that the worlds that we encounter are themselves active in the encoding, transmission, redundancy, and decoding of signs. Thanks to the work of von Uexküll and Sebeok (1991) we have grown more comfortable with the idea that zoösemiotic organisms traffic in signals (if not always full-blown signs), and that all living things have a species-specific *umwelt* within and through which to work out adaptive patterns. But it is a big step, some would say a leap of faith, to go from this plateau of semiosis to something even more attenuated and lower down in the terrain of signification. If we use the term 'world semiosis' does it follow that there is something that is a non-world semiosis, or extra-worldly in its semiotic unfolding? Naturalism rules out anything that is not a part of nature or of the world (as the manifest dimension of nature). We cannot, given the presuppositions of anti-supernaturalism in naturalism, affirm something akin to St. Bonaventura's *vestigia* or signatures of an infinite being who lies beyond the world. All signatures are of and about intra-worldly orders of relevance, and only, as Peirce argued, in certain respects (grounds). It follows from the presupposition that whatever world semiosis turns out to be, it can only be about the one world, or the one nature that prevails. This is not to say that there aren't innumerable worlds within the world, for example, baby universes in the worlds of space and time, but that all worlds, whatever their contour, are part of *the* world that has no outside. Container analogies and metaphors continue to cloud thinking on the nature of worldhood and should be purged from thought. They should be replaced by an image of the world that involves endlessly shifting ellipses and trajectories that have no center or circumference.

How do we go from a Heideggerian notion of worldhood, which is tied to the self/world correlation, to a notion of the world that is not confined to the structure of only one type of sign user? Heidegger, in spite of his heroic efforts, remained bound within the orbit of a lingering neo-Kantianism in positing worldly structures as structures of the *Dasein* rather than seeing

them as the part of an infinite nature that is turned *toward* the self. For all of the grandeur of his *Sein und Zeit* he turned his back on the true depth-dimension of worldhood, and confined signification to human tool use within circumscribed equipmental totalities. The result is a kind of peasant Kantianism that seeks the primal and the original but which still swallows up the world into the temporality of the self and its projects. His 'worldhood' is not *the* worldhood, even though it represents an important first step toward it, although the idea of 'toward' here becomes deeply problematic.

Perhaps it is premature to give a definition of worldhood (and its structures of signification) at the outset. After all, to define something is to locate it in a genus with a specific difference. This makes sense if you are dealing with something that is in a genus. But in what sense is worldhood *in* something else? What genus would it occupy and what would its specific difference be? If there is no non-worldly order, divine or otherwise, then there is no contrast term, no genus that could encompass or complement the unique status of worldhood. We have orders of relevance that are part of worldhood and we have that which is not an order of relevance, namely, worldhood. Relevance and non-relevance are intra-worldly terms, or terms that have intra-worldly meanings. But worldhood is neither relevant nor non-relevant. It prevails in its own way but never as an order.

Put differently, worldhood has no location but all locations, spatial or otherwise, occur 'within' it. How do we escape container imagery when so much of our metaphoric description is iconic and bound by visual contours? The strategy of *via negativa* has continued to be compelling to thought when that which transcends the genera is probed for its own elusive form of obtaining, but this strategy may represent sheer laziness rather than the 'strenuousness of the concept'. Something must always be said, even if only to bring thought toward what shows itself. The early Wittgenstein's transcendental solipsism, the child of Schopenhauer, gives us a partial sense of the mystery of worldhood, and thus represents an advance upon Heidegger, but still confines its sense of the mystery of the world to what is self-giving in human language and human systems of signification.

Again we seem to be at an impasse, a blocked pathway that won't allow us access to the most encompassing of all realities. Perhaps another approach is needed, one that is neither neo-Kantian nor one that makes a Wittgensteinian frontal assault on the edges of language. If the only quasi-spatial imagery that makes sense here is that of an infinite number of crossing and entangling ellipses, then perhaps an elliptical approach in thought is appropriate, namely, an approach that rides on the back of the self-unfolding of worldhood as it impacts on the human process,

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and as it obtains in its own right. This would be an approach that seeks neither the self-limitations of the *Dasein* nor the transcendental ego of Schopenhauer, Husserl, and Wittgenstein. Yet this is not the whole tale because there lies another prospect within the transcendental schema, that attempted by Schopenhauer.

It is surely significant that there has been a general silence about Schopenhauer's unique metaphysical vision in the contemporary period, especially since he exerted such an importance influence in the previous century. My sense of that this failure to enter into his perspective is a function of an unwillingness to probe into the structures of world semiosis in their own terms because of a still dominant, if unnamed, neo-Kantianism that confines signification to some form of mentality. Schopenhauer's concept of the will, which is the noumenal sphere underlying all phenomenal appearances, can provide a corrective for neo-Kantianism by showing how the depth-dimension of the world (worldhood) is something uniquely pre- and post-significative.

There is, of course, a paradox in appealing to Schopenhauer as a key to overcoming neo-Kantianism in semiotics. He was thoroughly Kantian in his analysis of the structures of space, time, and causality, although he dropped out the modal and other categories in his appropriation of the first *Critique* of Kant. Yet he pushed beyond Kant when he penetrated into the underlying rhythms of the real to unveil the fierce momentum of the will. The trick is to appropriate his underlying naturalism while removing his Kantian epistemology and theory of the phenomenal self. Can this be done?

Schopenhauer argued that we have direct access to the thing in itself through a special kind of introspection. In this special act of seeing, the self sees that its own volitional universe is identical to the volitional structure of the world itself. The microcosm mirrors the macrocosm. What is revealed in this primal intuition is a non-teleological striving that has neither beginning nor end, not to mention no divine plan. Put in the terminology of my ecstatic naturalism, Schopenhauer somehow gained access to nature in its uncanny dimensionality of *naturing*. Nature *naturing* underlies any and all acts of the human will, as well as all acts of knowledge. His contemporary Hegel utterly failed to enter into this underground vision, perhaps because of a native fear of the power of the irrational on the edges of thought (Olson 1992). Schopenhauer's metaphysical courage, flying in the face of almost all of Western philosophy, brought him to the place where the depth-mysteries of signification unfold.

We seem to have come the long way around in weaving our narrative of worldhood and the pervasive structures of signification, but this is only a semblance. We need to spend a little more time in the nexus where

Schopenhauer and the early Wittgenstein left thought if we are to probe successfully into the unruly ground of worldhood, and in turn, of Danesi's 'third world' of human culture.

What does it mean to say that we have access to the thing in itself, whether in the guise of 'will' or of 'nature naturing'? Have we fallen into the trap of ignoring the role of signifying in shaping any and all immediacies into signs that have a mediated status? Have we simply picked a congenial metaphysical perch from which to view a merely fictional sense of the fundamental momentum of the world? Or has something else been hinted at here that has been lost in the twentieth century?

What has been lost is an encompassing sense of nature as that which makes any and all forms of signification possible. This 'nature' has no one fundamental quality per se, but is the nexus out of which any quality can emerge. There is a rough family resemblance between the depth-dimension of nature (naturing) and Peirce's category of firstness. Like firstness, nature in its naturing is self-othering and productive of seconds, which are also part of nature. Thirdness too is an eject from the primal ground of nature, and its status is reinforced in a non-Kantian form of naturalism in which reals are part of the structure of things rather than being mere linguistic artifacts that are generated by only one type of sign user in the known universe.

Here we see how a naturalism and a realism can be grafted onto the position of Schopenhauer by showing that the ground of nature is like his irrational will, while the manifest dimension (worldhood) is filled with seconds and thirds that shape the human process. Put simply, nature is the measure for the self and its projects, not the other way around, except in very limited senses. We do have access to the thing in itself though an encounter with the irrational ground of the self. This uncanny presence, Kristeva's stranger within, is found in the heterogeneous momentum of the human unconscious which is the microcosmic analogue to the unconscious of nature naturing.

The sign using self is not so much split between a phenomenal and a noumenal dimension as it is stretched across a polarity in which it rides on the back of deep unconscious momenta while also negotiating through and among the objects and signs of the manifest world of nature. Most forms of metaphysics in the Western traditions have devised means for abjecting and covering the pole of the self that is embedded in the unconscious of nature. And, as we shall see, this very abjection has its own counter momentum that covers over some of the regnant structures of the manifest worlds of meaning.

In theological terms, the classical doctrine of the highest being is one that purges thought of any sense of an irrational surd within the godhead

itself. This has well served religious abjections that have given us only a half-way god. In South Asian thought, in contrast, the irrational can be fully incorporated into both the godhead and the many manifestations of the holy. Shiva in particular is the one manifestation of the holy that is capacious enough to embrace both nature naturing and nature natured (worldhood). When we deal with the narrative and mythological structures of signification, Shiva will return as a sign post of forms of signification that are rooted in the unconscious of nature.

Wittgenstein had a less clear sense of the irrational ground of the world than did his mentor Schopenhauer, yet he also was fully aware in his own way of the limitations of what might be called conscious signification within the denotative functional of language. While no one has ever seen a Wittgensteinian 'object' as it was posited in the *Tractatus*, we have all entered into the tension between what can only show itself and what can be said. Wittgenstein's transcendental ego, as the limit of vision and thought rather than an intentional object ala Sartre, is what it is because it finds the limit of worldhood as it encompasses objects within the world. Transforming his perspective somewhat we can say that to view the world *sub specie aeternitatis* is to enter into the darker rhythms of nature naturing, even though, as noted, Wittgenstein refused to open the door onto what lies beyond his artificially crystalline vision.

Thus far we have seen that worldhood is not something that can be an intentional object like structures or orders within the world. It can show itself elliptically through such phenomena as the human will and the unconscious, but we are always looking through a glass darkly. Western thought has for the most part erected a series of abjections against both worldhood *and* its irrational ground. One recurrent strategy is to use container metaphors and analogies that circumscribe that which cannot be circumscribed. But nature can not be reduced to a container, either in its uncanny self-othering as nature naturing, nor in its encompassing totality as nature natured. Yet the depth dimension of nature does give itself to thought when we probe into the logic of our abjections and find what drives them. To paraphrase Kristeva, if you wish to seek the truth, seek the most animated yet unconscious abjections that drive the self away from its own unconscious and the unconscious of nature. If you wish to remain in the domain of semiotic semblance, then skate over abjections and confine inquiry to what is manifest and easily contained by a metaphysical schema blind to the true self-giving of worldhood and nature.

A sense of dualism seems to remain in this analysis. Is the polarity between nature naturing and nature natured the same kind as that between the noumenal and phenomenal dimensions of the world as posited by Kant, Schopenhauer, and Wittgenstein? And should all forms of dualism

be rejected, especially when they seem less militant than the phenomenal/noumenal distinction? The answer to the first question comes from a rethinking of Peirce's concept of continuity along the lines of ecstatic naturalism, and this in turn sheds light on how we can retain non-vicious forms of dualism in thought that allow for a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity. The key comes from his concept of the infinitesimal as a proto-reality that straddles the divide between nature naturing and nature natured.

The infinitesimal is a curious creature. On the one hand it is infinitely small, while on the other hand it is greater than zero. In having this dual quality it is a perfect candidate for something that is both presignificative and significative, i.e., as something that is 'part' of nature naturing while also being 'part' of nature natured. In Peirce's rendering, the infinitesimal is a possible point that is fully self-othering. It gives birth to what 'eventually' becomes a point and a line. But it is not clear that this is a fully temporal process. Perhaps in keeping with its dual nature we can say that the infinitesimal is both temporal and pretemporal, both prior to time and an emergent that enters into time. Hence the infinitesimal is prespatial and spatial, pretemporal and temporal, infinitely small, yet real as a *kind* of quantity. It has a unique dual passport that enables it to live in the heterogenous momentum of nature naturing while also having at least an analogous domicile in the world of nature natured.

The depth-logic of continuity (that of both Kantian divisibility and Aristotelian limits) lies in the infinitesimal that connects the two dimensions of nature together. The link between the realm of signification and that which is always prior to signification has a dual nature, but this duality is part of the inner logic of the infinitesimal, not something introduced from outside, hence we can call it a non-vicious form of dualism. The infinitesimal is a pulsation that works in two dimensions simultaneously, the one having its dark roots in the unconscious of nature, the other rooting itself in signs and objects as they emerge from proto-points into tri- and n-dimensional orders of relevance. The infinitesimal is thus the hinge upon which nature opens out into worldhood.

We have now come full circle. World semiosis is that ever available momentum that is fully encompassing of any and all orders of relevance. It has its ultimate roots in the irrational ground of nature naturing and its connection to those self-othering momenta through the infinitesimals that are both pre- and post-significative. Whenever we encounter a sign and an object we are already in the domain where the infinitesimals have done their work of world building. What we take from this world is parasitic upon what is already given from the depth-dimension of nature. The semiotic structures of worldhood are generic and archetypal

structures that are forms of thirdness that are ultimate ejects from the firstness that is the seed bed of the infinitesimals.

The concept of abjection has been introduced to point to the loss of the unconscious dimension of experience in our theories of signification. But there are also losses on the conscious side, particularly in the domain where semiosis becomes, as noted, *world* semiosis. What has been abjected on this side of the divide? What has been abjected are those forms of thirdness that insult our narcissistic desire to make worldhood in our own image, specifically, those archetypal structures that represent thirdness at its most concrete and intense. True semiosis, as opposed to semblance (the linguistically driven postmodern forms of semiology), is archetypal semiosis, entering fully into the rhythms of thirdness as they punctuate and transform the human process both consciously and unconsciously. What most contemporary semiotic or semiological theories settle for is a kind of degenerate thirdness which leaves thought with little more than bare consciousness or forms of negative identity through external negation. True thirdness becomes as much an abject as the unconscious of nature, and in fact, there is an inner logic of abjection linking the two forms of abjection.

In abjecting nature naturing (firstness or the unconscious of nature), thought is abjecting that which is the ultimate enabling condition for the human process to be at all in a world of signification. This in turn redounds into an abjection of the forms of thirdness that encompass and permeate everything that the self does, makes, or says, whether the self acknowledges it or not. Both firstness and true thirdness are abjected by the same momentum of thought, the one side mirroring the other. The psychological determinate is, as noted, the contemporary form of narcissism that refuses to acknowledge that which is given over to signification from a point outside of the self. Metaphysics, theology, and semiotics all conspire in this process of dual abjection, which is actually one primal act of abjection in two complementary modes. The 'world' part of world semiosis gets covered over by the same act that effaces the ground of the infinitesimals in nature naturing. The answer to this side of the abjection is to work past and through narcissism to recapture, and be captured by, the *world making* that actually underlies our *world taking*.

In his own way, Wittgenstein understood part of this logic when he struggled toward generic structures of meaning in the *Tractatus* so that they could become the measure for both the phenomenal self and the self as will, which is not part of the phenomenal world. But even in his intense flirtation with Freudian psychoanalysis in his post-*Tractatus* years he did not grasp the inner logic of abjection and the role of narcissism in thought. If there is hubris in the *Tractatus* it lies in the notion that a categorial array could still the pressure coming to the self from the depth of the world.

In fact, genuine presignificative pressure intensifies the conflicts in the self rather than effacing them under the guise of the eternal.

World semiosis has its unruly ground in the uncanny self-giving of nature naturing and its own fulfillment in the archetypal structures that cannot be outflanked by human will or some sense of the omnipotence of thought. Here Freud corrects Wittgenstein rather than the other way around, although the true depth logic adds one more layer by having Jung correct Freud. This move toward *true* thirdness, as the matter of worldhood, brings us to the domain of culture where semiotics has spent most of its most important energies in the past several decades. And it is at this point in the tale that we rejoin our dialogue partner Danesi.

For it is in the domain of culture that the final 'product' of the great crevice within nature comes home to roost. From the proto-points of the infinitesimals to the great myths that found whole civilizations, there is a kind of semiotic continuum that can be entered into at any point along the line. It is on the cultural and mythic level that the dialectic between world making and world taking unfolds with archetypal force. In what follows it must be remembered that it is nature that is 'behind' world *making*, not the human process, and that it is the human process that is entwined with world *taking*, not nature per se. And ultimately, it is nature in its dimension of firstness that is the unruly ground for both.

What constitutes the domain of culture for the semiotician? On the simplest level it is the domain of the artifactual, of that which is made by human sign users as they translate physical impulses into meaning structures that can be shared with other sign users. Physical and factual states are converted into artifactual structures when they enter into human codes that involve encoding, transmission, redundancy, and decoding. Culture is one great criss-cross of such forms of coding and decoding, and the artifactual, especially in postmodern culture, crowds out the factual, indeed effacing it as an enabling structure. There is something fundamentally narcissistic about culture being at all insofar as the self seems driven to convert everything into manageable codes that dispose of the world of the factual along smooth lines of transmission and decoding. The rough edges of secondness and undesired thirdness are smoothed away by the artifactual as it makes its triumphant march through all orders of the human process. For Danesi, this process has been accelerated through the world of television and the narrativity of visual media that cut into the more pristine world of the factual. Everything is mediated several times over so that the very fact of mediation is itself effaced. This has produced a level of alienation that is so intense that it might reawaken some sense of original semiotic sin, a sin

that has blinded culture to the sheer scope and unrelenting sweep of world taking in the postmodern era.

No matter what semiosis turns into, it starts its journey toward culture from the physical and transforms it in direct ways '... semiosis is a complex process that transforms the world of physical, perceptual-organismic reality, into one of reflective, conceptual-cognitive reality. The factual mind inheres in a biological program based on signal interpretation that the human organism can apply to environmental events and objects so as to employ them for some adaptive advantage' (p. 148). There are deeply embedded evolutionary reasons for moving from the factual to the artifactual, tied to the need for a greater range of adaptive responses to shifting and complex *umwelten* that become lifeworlds in the human order. No lifeworld can exist that is not rooted in a prior *umwelt* and no human *umwelt* seems to resist the challenge to become a full-blown lifeworld. There is a kind of surplus semiotic value that pulls the self from the factual into the artifactual, yet still within the evolutionary parameters of random variation, natural selection, and rudimentary self-organization on the edges of chaos. World three, the artifactual world, is both human and prehuman in its way of functioning.

The evolutionary value of the third world of the artifactual is not always clearly delineated. In the overall neo-Darwinian synthesis it has at least become allowed to admit some form of self-organization when organisms attain a level of complexity that generates chaotic internal conditions that seek amelioration on another level of complexity. But there is a further step that can be taken toward an acknowledgment of the contribution of unconscious forms of organization in the human order. A recent perspective, labeling itself 'immanent Darwinism', has attempted to show that adaptation is what it is because the human unconscious shapes the ways in which the organism can adapt to highly complex environmental variables. Evolutionary biologist Michael R. Rose applies the concept of immanent and unconscious determinants to the problem of pathology:

If the preeminent feature of human nature is unconscious immanent Darwinism, then there should be occasional individuals that have failure of this adaptation. Thus, we know that sight is an adaptation in part because of the grave consequences of being blind. A test of unconscious immanent Darwinism, is that there should be individuals that exhibit normal conscious function, but lack properly organized lives due to the absence of the unconscious Darwinian regulator. The psychiatric category of "sociopath" includes individuals that usually lack conscious mental deficiencies, such as retardation, neurosis, or psychosis, yet are unable to sustain successful families or careers. These individuals may therefore lack unconscious mental faculties that coordinate behavior in such a way as to foster enhanced fitness (Rose 1998: 181-182).

④ [By bringing the unconscious into evolutionary theory, Rose makes it possible for the semiotician to probe into those determinates that are truly part of the survival and adaptive strategies of this most complex of all sign users. This in turn makes it possible to show that the great mythic and narrative structures of culture, which have their roots in the unconscious, both personal and collective, serve the organism in its overall adaptive strategy.

We live in the third world of the artifactual because we *must* do so to satisfy the rules set out by immanent Darwinism that insists on acknowledging those depth structures of adaptation that permeate the human process. The issue of pathology is, of course, only one side of the coin. Our general linguistic and mythic strategies are adaptive in the deepest evolutionary sense and the human unconscious is one of the crucial players in the schema of human evolution. Danesi argues that there is a depth grammar behind experience, 'Cassirer pointed out that ordinary cognition and cultural mythologies sprang from an unconscious grammar of experience, whose categories were not those of logical thought, but rather of an archaic mode of sensorial thinking that continues to exert enormous control over our routinized thought processes' (p. 131). The path from the sensual to the mythic is through the unconscious that can use metaphor and analogy to build up a kind of world schema that is rooted in the needs of the organism.

What all of this means is that there is a kind of evolutionary 'fit' between at least some of our founding myths and the needs of the organism to transform physical sensation into a full-blown third world of meanings. Cassirer tended, almost in spite of himself, to privilege the language of mathematical physics as the ideal 'narrative' but there is no intrinsic reason why this must be so. Narratives other than the mathematical do somewhat commensurate jobs in building up the realm that Peirce called the percipuum. Perceptual judgments can function in modes beside the assertive, and can do so in highly complex ways.

What a founding myth can do is to bridge the domain between nature naturing and nature natured by evoking some sense of a hidden yet operative whence with the differently elusive domain of the whither. In keeping with the categorial delineations above, the whence, which is felt as a kind of basal feeling tone surrounding experience (Peirce's 'spiritual consciousness'), is irrational (unruly) and enters into the unconscious structures of the self. The convergence between the perspective of immanent Darwinism and that of the archetypal/mythical should be clear, namely, that the roots of myth are basal forms of feeling and attunement (adaptation) that shape and groove experience even when not acknowledged or consciously apprehended. Myth is an unconscious

grammar that works within personal and social space, although certain mythic structures may activate or embody that grammar more successfully than others. Which brings us back to the problem of fecundity.

Above, Shiva was introduced as a mythic being or structure that was held to be more capacious than, say, the mythic structures of the three Western monotheisms. Part of the task of any theosemiotic (Raposa 1989) is to trace out the various unconscious determinates of mythic consciousness as they become embodied in public space. But at a certain juncture the descriptive task gives way to the evaluative. One way to judge the fecundity of a given myth is in terms of its ability to sustain several seemingly incompatible humanly relevantly traits simultaneously. Of all of the great gods and goddesses of the various world traditions, Shiva seems most capacious as a mythic structure that embodies a vast array of traits. The primary triad of traits is well known: creation, preservation, destruction. But Shiva is also manifest as male/female, the source of knowledge and ecstasy, and the preserver of dharma or law. In his/her dancing form, Shiva represents the primal momentum whereby the universe is held into what Hegel called the 'Bacchanalian revel in which no one is not drunk'. At the same time, Shiva is also eternal repose, the stillness that overcomes all of the manic flux of the world of experience.

Given the array of traits exhibited by Shiva, the question becomes, what other contender can be found for the mythic consciousness and its evolutionary structures? My own sense is that there are no such contenders, which is not, of course to say that all persons should enter into this mythic structure, or live on the mythic level in all respects. Perhaps what is required is an aesthetic or exhibitivie sensibility that lets the mythic structure have a less direct and literal form of manifestation.

Going somewhat further down into the heart of narrative, Danesi presents his own definition of 'text' that sheds light on the unconscious and conscious determinates of the third world, 'The word "text", ... means something very specific. It is literally a "putting together" of signifiers to produce a message, consciously or unconsciously, osmotically or mimetically. The text can be either verbal or nonverbal. In order for the text to signify or to be decoded, one must know the code to which the signifiers in the text belong' (p. 44). It seems to follow from this definition that there can be osmotically learned codes that surround and define a given text and that these codes have some evolutionary value. Imitation may even be a species of the genus osmosis, although this perhaps goes too far in privileging the unconscious structures of encoding and transmission. It does raise the question of the ubiquity of codes in semiosis and this is an issue worthy of some reflection at this point.

Two questions can be raised. Must all codes be conscious, and must all semiosis be in codes? The answer to the first question should be fairly clear from the preceding. Codes, as formal principles or rules for the transmission of semiotic data, need not always be conscious, indeed, some of the most important codes, genetic or mythic, are unconscious. From the standpoint of immanent Darwinism, which fits in well with the general metaphysical tone of ecstatic naturalism, codes are often hardwired into adaptive structures that have an ancient lineage. Semiotic theories that privilege the very late evolutionary product of language fail to understand the depth-structures from which codes come, and compound the crime by reducing non-linguistic codes to mutated versions of complex written texts. If a code is more generically understood to be a rule for the movement of signs, then there are innumerable pre- and post-linguistic codes that may actually have more value for the organism than written artifacts.

The second question is a bit more difficult to answer, but not impossible. Refining the question we can ask: are there forms of semiosis that do not directly involve rules or the transmission of information, binary or otherwise? The answer to this question is in all probability shaped by how one understands the nature of the unconscious in semiosis. Peirce was willing to talk of underwater 'skeletal sets' in the 'bottomless lake' of the unconscious, and these sets certainly function as rules for the gathering and transmission of signs and interpretants. Was he also willing to entertain some sense of semiosis that was not tied to rules? This is a very difficult question to answer but my sense is (shared by few in the Peirce community) that he had some inkling of forms of semiosis, tied to firstness, that were pre-codified. That is, on this reading, he sensed that out of the ground of firstness some form of semiosis would leave traces in the manifest world of representamens, signs, and interpretants.

My own answer to the question of the ubiquity of codes is to say that not all semiosis need be in codes, and that codes represent only the tip of the iceberg. This is not to say that we are not learning more and more about unconscious and biological codes as scientific inquiry advances, but that there will always be an infinite sphere of the pre-codified that is rooted in nature naturing. And semiotic theory will never have a proper metaphysical foundation until this fact is acknowledged and allowed to transform its analysis of coded forms of semiosis.

None of this is meant to saddle Danesi with structures never intended in his analysis, but rather to pull out some of the presuppositions in the text in ways that might be found compelling to fellow semioticians. What is being challenged is his specific definition of the scope and nature of semiotic theory. He argues, 'Semiotics, thus, is directed to the study of the different varieties of signs, to the codes into which these signs are

organized, and to the culture within which these codes operate. Semiotics studies *signification* first and *communications* second' (p. 5). While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this definition, it falls short, so I would argue, of what semiotics *ought* to be about, and that involves the world (nature natured) within which codes occur and which measures and limits them. And this brings us full circle again, namely, to the issue of the difference between world *making* and world *taking*.

Semiotics rarely makes its own codes and it certainly never makes worldhood. Codes are disclosed by probing into evolutionary structures that have long been in place. Codes that *are* made are highly artificial and have very limited applicability, for example, the Morse code. Archetypal structures, as embodiments of genuine thirdness, can be decoded in rough and ready fashion, but they have elements that can frustrate the effort to translate them into information packets. The premier example here is that of the dream work that often frustrates analytic intervention because of the polyvalent quality of the dream material, especially when it is archetypal in nature. Put simply, dreams are not codes merely awaiting a straightforward decoding, but highly variegated structures that are elusive in principle.

Let me be bold enough to give an alternative definition of semiotics. The field of semiotics deals with both the enabling conditions for any form of semiosis and the manifest forms of sign unfolding (sign roots and blooms) as they may or may not be constricted in codes. Further, semiotics recognizes the importance of immanent unconscious Darwinian principles in locating and understanding the more regnant forms of signification in the human order. Finally, semiotics makes the metaphysical claim that whatever is in whatever way it happens to be is significative or virtually significative. In this sense, the line dividing semiotics from metaphysics is very thin indeed, and this is as it should be.

Finally, what is the metaphysical status of Danesi's third world of artifactual structures, i.e., the domain of human culture. We have seen that he has a strong place for narrative and myth, both with unconscious roots, in his analysis. He has also probed into the alienating features of these structures in the postmodern era in which mediation has been layered upon mediation to such an extent that all commentary is intra-cultural rather than between culture and its enabling conditions. His examples, such as Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* and the film *Blade Runner* (a nightmare world of robotics) are very well chosen and show his sensitivity to the reigning narratives of our culture. But has he also fallen into the trap of missing Godot just when Godot appears on the edges of the lifeworld?

His stress, as is so often the case in semiotic theory, is on the ubiquity of world taking, on the process where physical stimuli are transliterated

into feeling and metaphors and in turn erected into categorial structures that cover over the innumerable orders of the world. What would happen if the focus were suddenly to shift to the world making 'done' by firstness, by the unconscious of nature as it ejects, via the infinitesimals, the worlds of signification that represent the outer clothing for semiotic analysis? Or does this language sound hopelessly metaphysical in the bad sense, namely, mythological and crudely poetic without the cadences and dignity of poetry? Perhaps I flatter myself to think that the stakes are high here and that the choice between world making and world taking is a genuine choice for a sign using self that is, after all, deeply finite and without an archimedean point from which to fully view the mysteries of nature and the depths of signification. On the other hand, perhaps the stakes are just high enough to warrant a sustained look at what continues to bind thought to the postmodern obsession with codes and forms of communication that are increasingly about less and less.

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