Further reflections on Peirce's Scotism

Reflexões adicionais sobre o scotismo de Peirce

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Abstract: This article explores the various ways in which Charles Peirce adapted some of John Duns Scotus's ideas for his own philosophical purposes. Extending beyond the much-explored territory defined by Peirce's and Scotus's common embrace of scholastic realism, the purpose here is to identify and explore a variety of ways in which Peirce's thought may have been shaped by Scotus's conclusions. Peirce's Scotism can be discerned in the careful examination of a diversity of topics: the pragmatic consequences of a commitment to realism, semiosis conceived as an essentially ordered process, abduction as form of abstraction, and the fundamentally practical nature of theological inquiry are the particular topics emphasized here. In each instance, there is clear evidence that Scotus's original conceptions have been creatively transformed within the context of Peirce's philosophy.

Keywords: Abduction. Abstraction. Essential order. Musement. Peirce. Realism. Scotus. Theology.

Resumo: *Este artigo explora os vários meios nos quais Charles Peirce adotou algumas das ideias de John Duns Scotus para os seus próprios fins filosóficos. Estendendo-se além do território muito explorado definido pelo abraço comum de Peirce e Scotus do realismo escolástico, aqui, o propósito é identificar e examinar uma variedade de meios nos quais o pensamento de Peirce pode ter sido moldado pela conclusões de Scotus. O scotismo de Peirce pode ser discernido no exame cuidadoso de uma diversidade de tópicos: as consequências pragmáticas de um compromisso com o realismo, a semiose concebida como um processo essencialmente ordenado, a abdução como forma de abstração e a natureza fundamentalmente prática da investigação teológica são os tópicos particulares enfatizados aqui. Em cada instância, há evidência límpida que os conceitos originais de Scotus foram criativamente transformados dentro do contexto da filosofia peirciana.*

Palavras-chave: *Abdução. Abstração. Devaneio. Ordem essencial. Peirce. Realismo. Scotus. Teologia.*

1 Introduction

Most of the scholarly literature devoted to a comparative analysis of the thought of Charles Peirce and Duns Scotus has focused on Peirce's endorsement of an "extreme" scholastic realism linked explicitly to Scotus's medieval deliberations.[1] Indeed, my own early studies of Peirce emphasized his sharp critique of nominalism and defense of a robust metaphysical realism.[2] More recently, however, my attention has shifted

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1 Among the book-length treatments of this topic, consider the early classic by Boler (1963), as well as the later studies by Mayorga (2007), and Cárdenas (2018).

2 Most especially, my discussion appearing in the first chapter of *Peirce's philosophy of religion*, (RAPOSA, 1989). I agree with my dissertation mentor, the late Murray G. Murphey, and also with contemporary

to other possible points of contact between these two thinkers, for example, linking the pragmaticism defended in Peirce's Neglected Argument for the reality of God with Scotus's portrayal of theology as a *practical* science, or understanding Peirce's account of semiosis within the framework supplied by Scotus's conception of essentially ordered causes.[3]

In this article, I propose to review a number of these connections between Peirce and Scotus, while also suggesting further possibilities. My goal is not so much to demonstrate the tangible influence of Scotus on Peirce in every case, as it is to illustrate how Peirce's thought resonates with that of his distinguished medieval predecessor. Consequently, I am less concerned with a direct comparison of Peirce and Scotus than I am with the assessment of Peirce's *Scotism*, his creative modern reformulation of basic strands of thought that were woven into the fabric of Scotus's philosophy and theology.[4] This will involve also my prescinding from the task of trying to interpret Duns Scotus with perfect accuracy, an admittedly formidable task for which—by training and expertise—I am not ideally equipped. In these remarks my attention will be focused on Peirce's thought.

Even when expressing criticism of his distinguished medieval predecessor, Charles Peirce was consistently positive in his evaluation of the thought of John Duns Scotus. If appropriately updated and modified, Peirce was convinced, Scotus's philosophy best suited his own contemporary purposes. It would need to be pruned of any remaining traces of even the mildest form of nominalism, to be sure (CP 1.560). And Peirce had developed the logical tools that he felt were essential in order to make the needed repairs to Scotus's system, especially those created for the purposes of his highly original work on the logic of relatives. Nevertheless, when he identified his own philosophy as an extreme form of scholastic realism, it was Duns Scotus among the medieval thinkers who Peirce most clearly regarded as a kindred spirit. There is a solid indication that he studied Scotus's work quite carefully, that he was impressed by what he found there, and that it had an enduring influence on his own system of thought, even in its most mature formulations. There is also tangible evidence—whether or not it ought to be perceived as nothing more than a "happy accident"—that the bulk of those Scotistic writings that Peirce studied most intensively are regarded by modern scholars as being authentic.[5]

2 Peirce's realism

Peirce shared with Duns Scotus a conviction that the names we use to designate natural kinds or classes of things represent something quite real and not reducible to the individuals that constitute such a class. While the objects of such representations do not *exist* as *things* in the same way that such individuals do, their reality consists in how they function as *laws* determining the characteristics and behavior of anything thus classified. As Peirce conceived of them, these laws are discernibly operative in the world, producing significant effects. Based on the discovery of them, we are able to make reasonable predictions; indeed, this is the primary business of scientific inquiry. As I have already indicated, a good deal of scholarly attention has been directed to this aspect of Peirce's relationship to Scotus, their common commitment to metaphysical realism. I want only to emphasize here how central a component this doctrine was of Peirce's mature pragmaticism. To identify the general nature of a thing is not to isolate some stagnant quality; belief in the reality of such generals was for Peirce a faith that there is a "reasonableness energizing in the world."[6] His theory of semiotic, as well as his pragmaticism, was deeply informed and shaped by that belief.

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commentators like Cárdenas, in rejecting the claim of Max Fisch and many others that Peirce began his career as a nominalist and only gradually came to embrace scholastic realism.

3   See Raposa (2020).

4   This paper represents the précis of a much longer discussion to be included as a chapter in my book-in-progress, entitled *Studies in Scotism*.

5   One notable exception is Thomas of Erfurt's *Grammatica speculative*, which Peirce mistakenly attributed to Duns Scotus.

6   See EP 2:72.

Consequently, rather than examining territory that has already been carefully surveyed by other scholars, it makes more sense here to consider some of the *implications* of Peirce's commitment to realism, the precise form that his Scotism took as certain elements of his philosophy became more well-developed and refined. For example, on Peirce's view, "individuals" are not static, isolated entities to which, as Duns Scotus seemed to suggest, generals or universals can be "contracted" (CP 8.208). Peirce's critique of Scotus on this issue was undoubtedly motivated by his belief that individual things are essentially general, a "continuity of reactions" as he was inclined to put the matter (CP 3.613). It is well known that Scotus posited the "haecceity" as a non-qualitative property distinguishing one thing from another; it plays the role that matter does in Aquinas's metaphysics, serving as a principle of individuation. Peirce appropriated this idea, but on his account the haecceity itself is something general, once again, a continuum of reaction-events displaying dispositional properties that allow us to predict the future behavior of some object.

Extending this view, individual subjects or *persons* are not isolated monads that somehow happen to enter into relationships with others, but rather, they are always already embedded in *communities;* moreover, each individual self is a living law or legisign, its meaning developed and exposed by a narrative logic that reveals itself over time.[7] This philosophy of individuals is built out of raw materials that Scotus's scholastic realism may have supplied, but it has a distinctively Peircean flavor; Peirce's perspective cannot simply be conflated with Scotus's earlier point of view.

Although the extent to which Peirce ought to be regarded as an "objective idealist"—as well as the identification of those phases of his intellectual development to which the label most accurately applies—is a hotly debated topic among scholars, my own judgement has always been that his idealism should be taken quite seriously and that it comfortably complements his realism as it emerged very early in his thinking and evolved almost continuously for nearly half a century. Although seeds of Peirce's idealism might be detected in the way that Scotus talked about "formalities" as realities distinct from either purely logical entities on the one hand, physical or extra-mental entities on the other, Peirce clearly extended and radicalized this way of thinking. Peirce was not employing hyperbole but speaking quite literally when he asserted that a living idea will "create its defenders," using individual thinkers in order to get itself thought (CP 1.216-218). This is another way of stating the claim that a commitment to scholastic realism involves a belief in the presence of a "reasonableness energizing in the world." It also points to the medieval and Scotistic roots of Peirce's account of the nature and importance of final causation.

3   Semiosis as essentially ordered

I want to pick up the threads of an argument recently presented elsewhere,[8] while also attempting to extend the analysis previously developed. This argument concerns the Scotistic distinction between "essentially" and "accidentally" ordered causes and the importance of understanding how that distinction may have informed Peirce's theory of semiotic. On Scotus's view, standing in an essential order can describe both the relationship between causes that unfold in a series and that which exists between a final and an efficient cause. Both types of relationship were of interest to Peirce and his use of this distinction represents one of the clearest examples of both his indebtedness to Duns Scotus and his ability creatively to adapt Scotistic ideas.

The key to Scotus's analysis is his interest in cases where one cause not only produces another cause as its effect, but also empowers the second cause, giving rise to or being responsible for its causal

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7   I have elaborated on this conception of the self as a living legisign in the second chapter of Raposa (2020), on "Signs, Selves, and Semiosis." I do not believe that Peirce ever described persons or selves in precisely this fashion. My usage is a logical extension and clarification of claims that Peirce *did* make about the self as a sign.

8   In the first chapter of Raposa (2020).

efficacy. For example, suppose that A causes B and B in turn causes C. A and B will be accidentally ordered if B does not depend on A for its causal efficacy in bringing about C. I would not exist without my parents, but the act of procreation resulting in the birth of my own children does not depend upon my parent's procreative activity for its causal effect. I might have chosen not to have children or be childless for some other reason. The fact that I am the child of my parents is thus accidental to the causal relationship that exists between me and my children.

To contrast such a case with a very simple counterexample, consider an athlete swinging a baseball bat in order to hit a ball into the center field bleachers. The bat achieves its effect only because the athlete swings it; he might have refrained from doing so in order to take a called "ball" or "strike." It seems clear then that the causal efficacy of the bat hitting the ball is derivative in some sense, dependent upon the baseball player swinging it. No hitting occurs without the swinging. These causal events are essentially rather than accidentally ordered. It is in this sense, as just suggested, that the bat as cause is *empowered* by what the athlete does.

This way of understanding the relationship between items in a series is crucial for interpreting Peirce's account of semiosis as a continuous stream of thought-signs. On that account, every sign not only is determined by the object that it represents, but also acts causally to produce an interpretant. Peirce explained that an interpretant has a relationship to its remote object that is similar to, but mediated by, the sign that determined it. So, each interpretant is itself a sign referring to an object but further determining its own interpretant. In this fashion, semiosis can be conceived as a continuous stream of signs standing in a relationship one to another that is essentially ordered.

On Peirce's view, it is crucial to recognize that such a relationship can be characterized as *purposeful.* It is the athlete's intention to hit the ball when he swings the bat. And the same is obviously true for Peirce regarding semiosis. He was very careful in his deliberations to contrast "the action of a sign" with any kind of "brute force." The causation displayed in semiosis should be perceived, on his account, as "intelligent," which is the case in any instance where "an event, A, produces a second event, B, as the *means* to the production of a third event, C" (CP 5.473; P*eirce's emphasis*). While there is certainly significant force displayed in the hitting of a home run, it is not "brute" in the sense that Peirce specified; rather, it is guided by intelligence and skill, purposeful or—as Peirce himself preferred to express it— "triadic." Essentially ordered causes display this element of thirdness, nowhere more perfectly so than in the operation of signs, or semiosis.

This discussion should help to clarify why, for both Peirce and his scholastic predecessors, being "essentially ordered" is a state of affairs that can describe the relationship *either* between efficient causes in a series or between an efficient and some final cause. Indeed, it is the latter relationship that Peirce evaluated as being far more significant. Causes occurring in a series must always ultimately depend upon some purpose, some final cause, for their efficacy. And the effect of any particular efficient cause will be purely random or "brute" if not guided by such purpose. Peirce was perfectly clear on this issue. He explained that "an efficient cause, detached from a final cause in the form of a law, would not even possess efficiency"; indeed, "without law there is no regularity, and without the influence of ideas there is no potentiality" (CP 1.213). As Peirce illustrated with one of his better-known examples, the court relies on a sheriff to enforce its laws. But without the legal guidance provided by the court, a sheriff's behavior could be regarded as nothing more than brutality. Once again, it is the court that empowers the sheriff.

One can appeal to the example of courts and sheriffs or to the image of athletes swinging baseball bats in order to help explain how causes can be related in a way that is essentially ordered. Nevertheless, it is semiosis, once again, that supplied Peirce with the most perfect illustration of such a phenomenon.[9]

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9   Duns Scotus also conceived of signification as a process that was essentially ordered. See Perler (1993). While Peirce's perspective on this issue may have been informed by his reading of Scotus, however, Peirce's Scotism represents a significant development and elaboration of his medieval predecessor's ideas.

Peirce was never as perfectly clear as his readers might have hoped in spelling out exactly what he meant when he asserted that a sign *determines* its interpretant. Yet, it would surely be a mistake to assume that such determination consists of anything like efficient causation, as if every sign had a single meaning that it mechanically implants like a notary stamp on some succeeding interpretant sign. The kind of causation embodied in a semiotic process, on his account, was much "gentler" than that, a form of final causation, moreover, one much more akin to how a sheriff might interpret a court's ruling than to how a bat "interprets" an athlete's intentions. "Determination" involves a certain delimiting of possibilities without the rigid insistence that a specific outcome must be achieved.

To be sure, even the physical act of driving a ball with a swinging bat is guided by certain laws which a baseball player must understand and to which he must submit in order to perform effectively. Peirce, much like his father Benjamin, was convinced that there is an ideality in nature which human interpreters need to be able to discern in order to achieve even the most basic practical results.[10] Sometimes discernment results in little more than "submission" (although even in the case of something so basic as the law of gravity, skillful dancers can be quite creative with their interpretations.) "Other ideas," Peirce was careful to observe, "the more spiritual and moral ones, actualize themselves first in the human heart, and pass to the material world through the agency of man" (CP 2.149). Insistence on the *reality* of such ideas, not simply as mental constructions but as living symbols "energizing" in the world, lies at the heart of what I have called Peirce's "theosemiotic" and represents the development of his Scotism under the influence of discoveries made concerning the logic of relatives.

4 Abduction as a form of abstraction

Although my intention here is to emphasize the manner in which Peirce developed a variety of Duns Scotus's ideas, I have not wandered terribly far from the topic of Peirce's scholastic realism. Final causes are real and operative in the world; moreover, their reality is in no way reducible to the individual things and cases that they govern. Universals have this law-like character for Peirce. The medieval scholastics were preoccupied with the relation of similarity that exists between all of the members of a certain class. But for Peirce similarity represented only the most degenerate form of generality, so that to limit oneself to such cases is to consider only what he called "monadic" predicates. (All diamonds are *hard*.) There are real and continuous relationships between things that take a very different form from the one captured by the observation that "X is similar to Y." Gift-giving was one of Peirce's favorite examples. "X gives Y to Z" is a dynamic relationship that, just as with similarity, is real in a way not reducible to any individual or collection of individual givers, gifts, and recipients. While the relation of similarity describes a *class,* Peirce understood the dynamics of gift-giving as constituting what he called a *system* (CP 4.5).

I do not think it is an accident that Peirce was attracted to the gift-giving example. His emphasis on semiosis as the exemplary type of law-like phenomenon (what he called "thirdness") would naturally have made this example an attractive one for him. In every semiotic event, there is a "gift of meaning." Each sign "gives" to its interpreter the meaning embodied in its relationship to some object. As already observed, this relationship between object, sign, and interpretant is both real and continuous. It displays an essential order. Peirce explained that if someone lays something down and another person picks it up, this series of events is accidental; it fails to display the sort of purpose that is required in order for us to be able to describe it as a genuine example of gift-giving (that purpose being the conscious transferal of ownership from giver to recipient). There is no essential connection between what one person does and how the other responds, no guiding intention. Semiosis is purposeful in precisely the same way as

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10 See Benjamin Peirce's lectures, published as Peirce (1881).

gift-giving. Even in the case of a rich and complex symbol capable of determining a wealth of different meanings, the relationship between symbol and interpretant is not something that can be characterized as arbitrary or accidental.

Peirce's general theory of signs was capacious enough to embrace an extraordinarily broad range of phenomena; it was by no means confined to an analysis of verbal signs. Verbal signs are of special importance for Peirce however, and he was inclined to perceive "words," also signs more generally speaking, as being ubiquitous in the universe. Persons do not simply *use* words, but they *are* words, on a view that Peirce developed very early in his philosophical career, subsequently refined, but never abandoned (CP 5.314). Laws and habits are signs also. In fact, persons are clusters of habits, not haphazardly arranged, but shaped by a distinctive teleology that Peirce called "developmental" (CP 6.156). All of these features of what it means to be a person—a certain kind of embodied purposefulness, a system of habits law-like in how they determine behavior, with the meaning of the self being best displayed in such behavior—have motivated my choice in defining persons (from a Peircean perspective), as "living legisigns."

For Duns Scotus, the process by means of which the real form or nature of some individual thing can be identified and perceived is called "abstraction." Peirce also thought and wrote about abstraction but, once again, he developed this Scotistic conception within the context of his ongoing treatment of the logic of abduction. He identified as "hypostatic abstraction" the mode of thought that transforms some predicate into a subject ("sweet" into "sweetness" or "beautiful" into "beauty," for example). This transformation permits the movement from consideration of "X is Y" to "X has Y-ness." The latter consideration, in turn, facilitates the task of classifying "X" based on observations concerning qualities that it possesses. If it is known that Y-ness is a characteristic of all things of a certain kind and X displays this particular quality, one plausible explanation of X is that it should be classified as that kind of thing. The formulation or selection of a hypothetical explanation for some phenomenon encountered in experience is just what Peirce meant by abduction.

This connection between abstraction and abduction is also reasonably well-trodden territory within the body of secondary literature devoted to commentary on Peirce's philosophy. Here, I want simply to emphasize the scholastic and Scotistic roots of this way of thinking, moreover, to illustrate how Peirce utilized but then expanded on Scotus's account. Identifying any given thing as the member of a certain class is a hypothetical inference rooted in the observation of similarity. Yet, I have already observed here that relations of similarity represented a limit case for Peirce; in fact, he was far more interested in the relationships that define dynamic systems. To explain some thing or event by identifying it as the fragment of a certain kind of system is also an abductive process, an extension of the insight that things can be explained by establishing the proper class that they belong to. To lean once again on Peirce's favorite example, I may make sense of something by recognizing it as a gift, consequently as the sign of a giver. What previously may not have been fully intelligible is now elucidated by discerning its status as a fragment in some larger system, in this case, the system that embraces the giving and receiving of gifts. That kind of elucidation, that type of discernment, represented for Peirce a very important and also very common form of abduction.[11]

One way to describe the change that occurs when one moves from the perspective of medieval scholastic realism to a Peircean appropriation of that point of view is that it involves a shift in emphasis from the analogical imagination to what we might call the "triadic imagination." That is to say, the emphasis now moves from simply discerning similarities, the "common nature" embodied in some individual thing, to a recognition of the role that an individual plays in a complex system of relations. Recall that Peirce labeled the type of purpose displayed in such systems as "triadic;" however complex

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[11]   I have also argued at some length, in Raposa (2020), that the particular form of abduction resulting in the recognition of something as a gift, consequently, as the sign of a giver, has enormous implications for philosophical theology.

any given system may appear to be, on Peirce's account it can be reduced to a series of triadic relations. This element of thirdness is what determines its character as essentially ordered. It is not simply that A causes B and then B causes C, but that A causes B (quoting Peirce's exact words) "as the *means* to the production" of C. The giver does not lay something down which is then accidentally picked up by someone else. The giver offers something as a gift *in order that* it might be received by the person gifted.

In thinking about the various ways in which Peirce's Scotism represents a significant development of his medieval predecessor's point of view, the emphasis is usually placed on his criticism of Scotus's claim that "universals are contracted to the mode of individuality in singulars" (CP 8.208). But I would contend that it is even more important to consider how Peirce supplanted the "ordinary logic" of the scholastics with his newly formulated logic of relatives (CP 4.5). Peirce observed that "where ordinary logic talks of classes the logic of relatives talks of *systems*." While "a class is a set of objects standing to one another in a special relation of similarity," as already noted here, "a system is a set of objects comprising all that stand to one another in a group of connected relations." Peirce went on to talk about how in ordinary logic, induction moves from the sample of a class to a whole class, but in the new logic "one moves from the contemplation of the fragment of a system to the envisagement of the complete system."

My interest in these remarks is less focused on how they illuminate the process of induction than in their relevance for understanding abduction. In ordinary logic, an abductive inference makes sense out of something by identifying it as the member of a certain class. From the perspective supplied by Peirce's logic, the abductive move is from fragment to system. I understand or explain a given thing or phenomenon by hypothetically inferring the role that it plays in some larger system of relations. Once again (why abandon the example now?) recognition of the fact that a certain thing is not *simply* a thing, but also a gift—once we understand its relationship to giver and recipient—requires abduction. To achieve that sort of understanding, I am also suggesting, involves an act of triadic imagination.

It was by means of abstraction, on Scotus's account, that we grasp the "form," "essence," or "common nature" of a thing. Peirce expanded that account by operationalizing the Scotistic essence. To conceive of a thing's essence is not only to perceive the various ways in which it resembles other things of that kind, but also, to determine how it *would be* disposed to behave under a variety of different circumstances, the *habits of action* that such behavior would display. This determination begins with the observation of behavior and then moves abductively to an act of recognition. X is observed to behave in some fashion. All things that are Y behave in that fashion. If X is a Y, then that fact would explain its behavior. Hypothetically, therefore, one can conclude that X is a Y.

To be sure, this is a dramatically simplified description of what takes place in the process of abduction. It will be accurate only for those very straightforward cases where some category already exists, clearly defined and well-understood, that can be readily employed for the purpose of explaining something. In the case of one's encounter with certain puzzling phenomena, no ready-made category may be available. Abduction will then involve the creation of novel explanatory concepts, perhaps blending the features of existing categories in order to create entirely new ones.

5　Theology and praxis

In my opening remarks I mentioned a possible link, one that I had previously explored, between Peirce's pragmaticism and Duns Scotus's characterization of theology as a *practical* science. If such a link does indeed exist, it might take the form of an intellectual resonance between these two thinkers, rather than constituting a piece of evidence demonstrating Scotus's actual influence on Peirce. I make this observation only because, in contrast to Scotus's work on logic and metaphysics, it is unclear how familiar Peirce was with his more explicitly theological writings. There could be some influence, but with or without it, Peirce surely resembles Scotus in this regard. I am not going to describe that resemblance

in any great detail here; as with my discussion of essentially ordered causes, my hope is to expand upon certain insights previously formulated.

In a nutshell, theology was practical for Scotus because it is governed by a practical *habitus,* one that allows us to conceive of God as one who should be loved and to formulate rules for loving praxis. Indeed, on Scotus's view, loving God should serve as the final cause of everything else that human beings do. It is the ideal end to which all human behavior should be essentially ordered. The purpose of theology is to facilitate loving God more effectively. So, too, in Peirce's Neglected Argument for the reality of God, any person who engages in the practice that he called "musement" will be inclined eventually to fall in love with the idea of God, then to shape all behavior in conformity to this idea as a supreme and living ideal (CP 6.467). How does such a Scotistic insight about theology's practical nature, echoed by Peirce in his portrayal of musement's entelechy, complement and further illuminate observations made earlier in this paper. My *very brief* concluding remarks on this topic are intended to be suggestive rather than conclusive.

Musement was closely tied to the logic of abduction on Peirce's account, while theology, like any other form of rational inquiry, would necessarily have been conceived by Scotus as involving abstraction. Since this discussion is primarily concerned with exposing *Peirce's Scotism,* I will focus attention on the former rather than the latter. The encounter with any phenomenon contemplated in musement might very well result in the recognition of those things observed as being of a certain kind. Peirce's instructions to the muser were simple: without pre-established purpose, be awake and attentive to whatever presents itself in experience (CP 6.458-61). Sometimes recognition will be automatic, with abduction taking the form of a perceptual judgement; in other cases, some curious or unfamiliar phenomenon may be identified only after an extended period of rumination.

In addition to this kind of classification, however, the playful task of abduction in musement will extend to identifying all of the ways in which something might be perceived as the fragment of a dynamic system of relations. Now, any given thing will be likely to enter into many different kinds of relationships, each with its own distinctive purpose. How is it that Peirce was so confident that musement would eventually but inevitably result in the discernment of love's purposes, coming to rest in the contemplation of divine beauty and flowering in the commitment to shape behavior in conformity to a divine ideal?

My best response to this question is one that underscores the detachment, indifference, or (following Peirce's usage) purposelessness that is intended to characterize musement as a practice. While anything observed might readily and typically be perceived as fitting into a variety of dynamic systems and as serving a diversity of practical purposes, the muser is being asked to set these aside, to prescind from this normal, habitual way of thinking about such things. This requires a certain discipline that, once perfected, might enable the muser to see the world in an entirely new way.

Any and every X encountered in musement will be some kind of thing (the member of a certain class). It will also be related to other things in different ways (as a fragment of various systems). The abductive process involved in musement will not be designed to have the muser ignore any of these relationships but rather, following the one "law of liberty" (CP 6.458), playfully to detach from them, softening the typical hegemony that they exercise over our thinking. One result of this process could be a sudden awareness by the muser that any and every X, whatever else it might be, is also a *gift* and thus the *sign* of a Giver. That awareness would likely elicit powerful feelings of loving gratitude as well as a strong commitment by the muser to shape future behavior in all of the ways that love gently requires.

I warned that this conclusion was intended to be nothing more than suggestive, but any careful reader of Peirce's 1908 article will likely agree that the suggestiveness appears in his original formulation of that argument and is not something that has been imposed on it by my commentary.

List of Abbreviations*

The works of Charles S. Peirce are cited as follows:

Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce: volume (v) and paragraph (p) (CP v.p).
The essential Peirce: volume (v), page (p) (EP v:p).

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Acknowledgments

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* Editor's Note: This list of abbreviations follows the rules described at:
  https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Sanders_Peirce_bibliography. Accessed on: 15 Apr. 2022.