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## The keystone of the arch: Peirce's principle of synechism in the wake of Schelling philosophy of nature and post-critical reading of Plato's *Timaeus*

*A pedra angular do arco: o princípio sinequista de Peirce na esteira da filosofia da natureza de Schelling e da leitura pós-crítica do Timeu de Platão*

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**Abstract:** Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and *Freiheitsschrift* as provenance of Peirce's keystone principle of synechism.

**Keywords:** American Transcendentalism. Cosmological agapism. Energetic reasonableness. Plato's *Timaeus*. Post-critical philosophy. Synechism. World philosophical perspective.

**Resumo:** *A Naturphilosophie e a Freiheitsschrift de Schelling como proveniência do princípio fundamental do sinequismo de Peirce.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Agapismo cosmológico. Filosofia pós-crítica. Perspectiva filosófica mundial. Razoabilidade energética. Sinequismo. Timeu de Platão. Transcendentalismo Americano.*

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Two things of opposite natures seem to depend  
On one another, as a man depends  
On a woman, day on night, the imagined

On the real. This is the origin of change.  
Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace  
And forth the particulars of rapture come.

Music falls on the silence like a sense,  
A passion that we feel, not understand,  
Morning and afternoon are clasped together

And North and South are an intrinsic couple  
And sun and rain a plural, like two lovers  
That walk together as one in the greenest body.

In solitude the trumpets of solitude  
Are not of another solitude resounding;  
A little string speaks for a crowd of voices.

The partaker partakes of that which changes him.  
The child that touches takes character from the thing,  
The body, it touches. The captain and his men

Are one and the sailor and the sea are one.  
Follow after, O my companion, my fellow, my self,  
Sister and solace, brother and delight.

(Wallace Stevens, *Notes toward the Supreme Fiction*)



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### 1 Schelling's early philosophy of nature

In this opening section I propose to appreciate Schelling's earliest writing on *Naturphilosophie* as a *kairos* moment in the history of philosophy, a

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moment of genuine incipience having the potency to release new, fresh, modern streams of post-Kantian thought in the *Zeitgeist* of the times. During Schelling's own lifetime, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and others in England (with background in Elizabethan era Cambridge Platonism), and even more conspicuously Emerson (and not to forget Walt Whitman) in Transcendentalist prose and poetic expressions in North America, flourished as literary and philosophical vectors transmitting and transforming recognizable streams of thought traceable to Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* and the several phases of his later career.

My extended thesis here will be to appreciate how Schelling's thought converged in Peirce's cosmological speculations in the mature phases of his career. Schelling transmuted his early phase neo-Platonic Philosophy of Nature into a daring reconfiguration of Plato's *Timaeus*. The developmental stages of his career were in fact so many elaborations on his *Naturphilosophie*. Peirce astutely came to endorse "all phases" of Schelling's career – Schelling's post-critical speculations contributing the deep undercurrent to Peirce's principle of *synechism*, that is to say, of *conrescent, energetic synechism*, which he called "the keystone of the arch" of his mature career-text.<sup>1</sup> And not just coincidentally, I will suggest that this Schelling-Peirce line of post-critical ontosemiosis gains in hermeneutical significance as a key heuristic on the stage of the world history of philosophy.

To begin, then, from the beginning, Schelling's *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797), his initial work on *Naturphilosophie* at age 22, marked his breakout toward a post-Kantian philosophy that eventually struck a decisive path beyond his contemporaries, Fichte and Hegel.<sup>2</sup> After leaving the seminary and plunging into initial studies of medicine, physics, and mathematics, the *Wunderkind* Schelling forthwith formulated a picture of Nature that emphasized polarity and dynamism in connatural relation to the human mind. Taking his point of departure from Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* – while at first still influenced by his mentor Fichte's dialectic of subject and object – Schelling described, in conscious opposition to the Newtonian picture of "matter" as constituted by inert, impenetrable particles, an alternate conception of "matter" as a world of concentrative and expansive forces in dynamic opposition.

In this early phase of his *Naturphilosophie* Schelling published a stream of formulations – *On The World Soul* (1798) that won the acclaim of Goethe and a professorship at the University of Jena; *First Outline for a System of the Philosophy of Nature* (1799); and the significantly titled *Bruno: or On the Natural and Divine Principle of Things* (1802). He then capped this *Naturphilosophie* phase of speculation by way of a revised 1803 *Supplement* to his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* in which he claimed decisively to break with his earlier quasi-Fichtean dialectic of subject and object. This revised *Supplement* signaled his shift toward a more expansive theory which postulated a more thoroughly original conception of Nature conceived in terms of a dynamic polarity of an "Absolute Identity", "Indifference" or "Non-difference" of "the Absolute self-divided upon itself". In the perspective of the future phases of his volatile career, this was only a beginning, but it was quite a beginning.<sup>3</sup>

1 This paper will especially reflect a long-acquired indebtedness to the scholarly studies of Joseph Esposito, Ivo Assad Ibri, Douglas Anderson, Nicholas Guardiano, Joseph Urbas, Michael Polanyi, Michael Raposa, Bruce Matthews, and Owen Polley (see Bibliography).

2 See Bibliography: Hegel (1997); Vater and Wood (2012).

3 Volatile or "protean" in the polemical epithet of Hegel, who accused Schelling of "conducting his education in public". Peirce, then, was consciously contesting Hegel in endorsing "all phases" of Schelling's thought. Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Idealism: An Introduction*, provides an overview in five stages:

(1) Mid-1770s: the period of Schelling's initial enthusiasm for Fichte's revision of Kant's transcendental philosophy, which gave a primary role to the activity of consciousness in the constitution of the knowable world; together with a lifelong preoccupation with Spinoza's conviction that philosophy must begin with a self-contained Absolute.

(2) 1795-99: Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* phase which extended the notion of activity of the subject into the idea of all of Nature as "productivity", together with a rejection of inanimate mechanism in principle.

(3) Schelling's 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism* then sought to square Fichteanism with his *Naturphilosophie*, by promoting art as the medium in which the activity of conscious thought and the "unconscious" productivity in nature can be understood as ultimately the same. Mind and matter are ultimately only different inter-permeating degrees of Nature's productive forces (this position Schelling maintained for the rest of his life). At the end of this period, he finally breaks with Fichte who he regards as failing to move beyond self-consciousness.

(4) *On the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) and three drafts of *The Ages of the World* (1811-1815) break up the former tendency toward a static, balanced relationship of the "ideal" (mind, subject) and the "real" (body, matter, object) expressed in much of his preceding works; Schelling

In effect, I will argue, Schelling's transitional 1803 *Supplement* advanced his speculation in the direction of reprising the time-honored tradition of neo-Platonic metaphysics – in general terms, of the “One or Good diffusive of itself” in infinitely unfolding and enfolding layers, degrees, and interpenetrating dimensions of receptive and productive concrescences of world-causations.<sup>4</sup> In historical retrospect, it already sowed the seeds for Coleridge's, Emerson's, and Peirce's later articulations of connatural synechism in nature and experience.

Schelling's momentous turn (*Kehre*) in post-Kantian modern philosophy briefly rehearsed, his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) first associated a concept of nature as a balance of opposed forces in a perfect abstraction of non-conflictual equilibrium. But such an abstraction of perfect equilibrium reduces to a concept of “dead and inert objects” devoid of philosophy's categorical obligation to theorize *living matter* and the *higher analogues of active mind* which – in Schelling's more adequate conceptualization – must be formed and evolved from the disturbances, conflicts, and qualitative intensifications of Nature's basic forces of contraction (concentration) and repulsion (expansion). Such a *dynamical polarization* of opposite forces of subjectivity and objectivity – Schelling declared – is not available to empirical science's methodology of tangible weights and measures but should form the basis of the “higher science” of philosophical axioms.

With respect to Nature's *living matter and the higher analogies of mind*, Schelling elaborated his *Naturphilosophie* in terms of three levels of potencies. A thing or class of finite thing that is *in essence* infinite and undifferentiated appears as a *form* of limitation and determination, even while Nature as *formless form of all forms*, unifies this limitation and finiteness with infinite essence in an absolute identity and self-differencing of the One and the Many. It is in such terms that Schelling's 1803 *Supplement* ostensibly featured a version of traditional neo-Platonism's ultimate expression of *hen kai pan* – “the One is all things and not a single one of them” – though Schelling only read Plotinus in 1804 and Proclus only in 1820.<sup>5</sup> Such a *holistically organic* – as distinct from *mechanistic*, or *parts outside*

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turned to Plato's *Timaeus* to articulate a condition of “dark ground” together with “an ideal principle” as interpolent principles which constitute the manifest world.

(5) From the late 1820s, the “Positive Philosophy” already implicit in *The Ages of the World*, concerned Schelling for the rest of his life. It seeks to go beyond “Negative Philosophy”, which, as in Kant's categories and in Hegel's *Logic*, explicates only negative *a priori* concepts of pure thought that determine *what* (Was) things are – in order positively to come to terms with the fact *that* (Das) things are in the concretely *real* historical emergence and movement of consciousness. “For it is not because there is thinking that there is being, but rather, because there is being, there is thinking”.

Other instructive approaches. James Gutman's 1936 translation of *Philosophical Investigation into the Nature of Human Freedom* emphasizes a single developmental thread of human freedom, while referring to the periodizations of Windleband, Zeller, Kuno Fischer, Eduard von Hartmann, Drews, Nicolai Hartmann, and Heinrich Lisso (Schelling, 1936, xxvii-xxviii). Michael G. Vater in “Schelling's Neo-Platonic System-Notation”, (in R. Baines Harris, ed., 1976), parses “relative distinctions” of Schelling's development: (1) the young Schelling's original concern for a Philosophy of Nature of the years 1794-1800; (2) for a System of Identity of 1801-1806; (3) System of Freedom of 1809-1815; and (4) Late Positive Philosophy of 1821-1854.

Jason M. Wirth, in his “Forward” (p. vii-xiii) to *F. W. J. Schelling, Historico-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (Wirth, 2007) supports a single developmental trajectory. Wirth sees Schelling's “middle period” as a “mediating interval” linking Schelling's early vitalistic naturalism and his later-phase Positive Philosophy. The latter begins with the 1804 appearance of *Philosophy and Religion* (written before Hegel's consummate form of “negative philosophy”, his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*); Schelling then pursued further nuances by focusing upon the central concepts of “freedom and necessity” in his 1809 *Freiheitschrift* and in the several drafts of *The Ages of the World* (1811-1815), on the way to the culminating articulations of his Berlin lectures on the Positive and Negative Philosophy and his *Historico-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (from the 1840s). Wirth's reading captures the thrust of Dale E. Snow's still fertile reading of Schelling's “protean” career in *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (1996).

For direct textual evidence, Schelling provided his own self-interpretation of the essential thread of his career-trajectory in the Preface to the *Freiheitschrift* (1809) – where he declares that after the Kantian opposition of nature and spirit having been overcome in his earlier writings focusing on *Naturphilosophie*, he is now proceeding on to “a higher, or rather, more genuine opposition of necessity and freedom”. (*Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Love and Schmidt (2006), p. 3-4, and extended footnote n.1, 135-136.) He consciously drew these foundational concepts of “nature and freedom” from Plato's *Timaeus*.

The suggestion of my paper is that Peirce generalized all of Schelling's career-phases in terms of the developing continuum of his initial *Naturphilosophie*.

4 Robert Stern, “Introduction”, in Schelling (1998, xxii.). Schelling employed the term *Indifference* synonymously with *Gleichgewicht*, “balance or equilibrium”, in the sense of “an ultimate non-difference or togetherness of irreducibly different aspects of one and the same thing” (Schelling, 1984, p. 101). In his 1827 *Munich Lectures on Recent Philosophy*, Schelling offered a balanced evaluation of his Identity-philosophy, saying that while it was a breakthrough moment in post-critical speculation, it had a crucial limitation in failing to recognize that it was “mere thought” (Schelling, 1984, p. 71, 78-79).

5 Vater (Schelling 1984, p. 228). It was in the same year of 1804 that Schelling thanked Windischmann for his German translation of Plato's *Timaeus*, saying he is tempted to read it as a “late or Christian” document, not a product of antiquity. In his *Freiheitschrift* of 1809 Schelling probed

of parts, worldview – represented for Schelling “the perfect mirror-image of the absolute in Nature and for Nature”.<sup>6</sup>

We will shortly see, however, that Schelling came to depart from the hierarchical and diremptive emanationism and reversional moral praxis of traditionally systematized neo-Platonism in favor of an *ontosemiosis* of *conrescent polarism* that was provenance to Peirce's forward-prospective cosmology. But for now, Schelling's initial “Introduction” to his 1797 *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* remains highly instructive. It opened with a clear declaration of the “problematic” which an authentic, fully fledged philosophy must solve – namely, to overcome its own dichotomizing penchant for analytical “reflection” on “things in themselves” which are abstractly and one-sidedly conceived in terms of subject and object, mind and matter, nature and freedom, and other such theoretical dichotomies of the Cartesian and Kantian/Critical traditions. Instead, in rather refreshing words that would prove presciently provenant for the line of Emerson, James, Peirce, Bergson, and Whitehead, our 22-year-old Schelling spoke for the seamless fabric of lived experience:

Whoever is absorbed in research into Nature, and in the sheer enjoyment of her abundance, does not ask whether Nature and experience be possible. It is enough that she is there for him; he has made her real by his very *act*, and the question of what is possible is raised only by one who believes that he does not hold the reality in his *hand*. Whole epochs have been spent in research into Nature, and yet one does not weary of it. Some have devoted their entire lives to this avocation and have not ceased to pray to the veiled goddess. Great spirits have lived in their own world, untroubled about the principles of their discoveries; and what is the whole reputation of the shrewdest doubter against the life of a man who has carried a world in his head and the whole of Nature in his imagination?<sup>7</sup>

The “shrewdest doubters” here are the Descartes, Hobbeses, Lockes, Kants, Fichtes, Hegels, et al. who deal with Nature in “mere reflection”, which, Schelling declared, is no less than a “spiritual sickness in mankind” that must be overcome by a “true philosophy” which assigns reflection only a “negative value”. The bottom line of every such “negative philosophy” which dichotomizes subject and object, mind and matter, nature, and freedom, into different denominations of “things in themselves” – (in current postmodern parlance, “presences and absences” of one-sidedly oscillating subjective or objective components of theoretical discourse?) – is “mechanistic”, and hostile to an authentic philosophy of the connatural self-differencing immediacies of our seamless experience of reality.

Hume – Schelling observed – shrewdly sidestepped the issue of “things in themselves” in refusing to go the distance of Locke's dichotomy of mind and matter at the basis of Newton's physics; but in the end Hume stopped short of genuine philosophizing beyond a bland reference to “custom or habit”. The “great Spinoza” advanced the problematic in his Cartesian reflection upon a *Deus sive Natura* as Infinite Substance but conceived only in an *impersonal pantheism* inadequately accounting for the co-implicative modalities of subjectivity and objectivity in experience. Leibniz's perceptive monads, Schelling opined, made a key step forward beyond Spinoza's impersonal infinite Substance, but only to fall back on a reflective “causality principle” of a pre-established harmony.

So again, Schelling's initial Philosophy of Nature averred that a principle of tensional vitality of the subjective and objective is required to overcome the spiritual sickness of “mere reflection”:

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the implications of the *Timaeus* beyond his own earlier Identity philosophy if not also beyond the tradition of Christian theological documents. In this regard, an excellent scholarly literature has recently appeared accounting for Schelling's provenance to Whitehead (Bibliography, Grant, 2008; Segall, 2023); this recent literature, however, bypasses the chronologically prior line of Emerson and Peirce in favor of certain rapprochements with Continental authors.

6 Schelling (1988, p. 51).

7 Ibid, p. 9-10. The passage reminds of James's theory of “pure experience” before subject and object in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, as well of Peirce's definition of the “firstness” of experience in “A Guess at the Riddle”.

No wonder that language, used dogmatically, soon lost sense and meaning. So long as I myself am identical with Nature, I understand what a living nature as well as I understand my own life; I apprehend how this universal life of Nature reveals itself in manifold forms. As soon, however, as I separate myself, and with me everything ideal, from Nature, nothing remains but a dead object, and I cease to comprehend how a life outside me can be possible.<sup>8</sup>

Schelling's bottom line here: *Life* is the “co-implication” of nature and freedom in one and the same being. *Symbolism* of the living organism and of creative human art replace dead mechanism in expressions of completely reciprocal, interpenetrative coalescences – as both “passive” product of Nature and at the same time “active” production of an ordering mind. Such a coalescent connaturality is not just “regulative”, ala Kant, but *constitutively purposive*, and thus beyond both the empirical and transcendental *a priori* structures of physical causes. In our human enjoyment of the sheer abundance of concrete experience, this absolute purposiveness of the Whole of Nature is an *Idea* which we do not think arbitrarily but *necessarily*; we feel ourselves related to every individual in such an encompassing purposiveness of the Whole – in such a “secret bond” by which we also share individually and racially, i. e., consanguineously in shared heredity:

For what we want is not that Nature should coincide with the laws of our mind by chance (as if through some third intermediary), but that she herself, necessarily and originally, should not only express, but even realize, the laws of our mind, and that she is, and is called, Nature only insofar as she does so.

Here should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature. Here then, in the absolute identity of Mind in us and Nature outside us, the problem of the possibility of a Nature external to us must be resolved.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned, Schelling's *Supplement* to the Introduction of 1803 took it to a higher level of articulation, calling his *Naturphilosophie* an “Exposition of the General Idea of Philosophy as Such, and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular, as a Necessary and Integral Part of It”. Rejecting both Kant and Fichte, he argued that the “first step” of a *necessary and integral ontosemiosis* of Nature is the “insight” that the “absolute-ideal is also the absolute-real”. This “first step” alone constitutes philosophy as “an absolute science”, such that it cannot itself turn into “a subordinate science”.<sup>10</sup> Thus “the first idea” of philosophy already rests “on the tacit presupposition of a possible indifference between absolute knowing and the absolute itself, and consequently on the fact that the absolute-ideal is the absolute-real”. This is not a matter of empirical psychology but of a higher scientific attitude, not only in philosophy, but also in geometry and the whole of mathematics.<sup>11</sup>

Now here, I also want to draw attention to the fact that Schelling's youthful expression of Nature in terms of the unmediated coalescence of opposites rested on, or was grounded in, an articulation of its logical form – namely, the disjunctive-cum-conjunctive logical form of *neither-nor and both-and* that was affine with the general logical operator of classical neo-Platonism. Schelling re-articulated such a “system-notation” (in Michael Vater's word) in post-critical terms, namely, of the “self-differentiation of the undivided absoluteness into subject-and-object” as a “self-producing” of “essence and form” eternally converting itself in its totality as Idea of sheer Identity into the Real, that is, into the form, and conversely, resolving itself as form, and to that extent as object, into the essence or subject.<sup>12</sup> And thus

8 Ibid, p. 36.

9 Ibid, p. 42. Schelling's principle of holistic purposiveness absorbed and transmuted Kant's third Critique's brilliant concept of *Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck* functioning as the critical postulate of aesthetic, mathematically and dynamically sublime, and teleological judgments.

10 Ibid, p. 44.

11 Ibid, p. 45.

12 Ibid, p. 47.

“the infinite” is “embodied” in the “finite”, and reciprocally the finite is “re-embodied” in the infinite: the expansion of the infinite into the finite is co-implicatively the contractive “re-embodiment” of the finite into the infinite.

This very *logic of reciprocal disjunct-cum-conjunct*, I will argue, was provenance to the baseline concept of “connaturality” in Coleridge, Emerson, Peirce, Whitehead. Functioning as a semantic, or sense-making, presupposition in the terms of interpollent “adequation” of the subjective and objective sides of experience, such a *logic of dynamic tensionality* sheds a heuristic light on the conceptualization of the inter-saturating co-implications of the One and the Many, Identity and Metamorphosis, that are the diffusions of the Good in *Nous* (Mind), *Psyche* (Soul), and *Physis* (Nature) of mainstream neo-Platonic traditions. But what is more, it gains hugely in hermeneutical significance in the wider noetic space of the world-history of philosophy. Schelling’s dynamically equilibrating logic of the “Pure Identity of Non-difference” not only re-expresses the system-notation of Western neo-Platonism, it also has an essential affinity with the “non-duality”, or “co-origination”, logics of Eastern traditions, as for example in Hua-yen and Zen schools of Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, I will suggest that Schelling’s essentially bipolar logic and diaphanous perspective of concrete “intellectual intuition” informed Emerson’s epistemology of “transparent eyeball” and also Peirce’s “Buddhist-Christian religion” which he recapitulated in the affine categorical terms of his agapistic cosmology of “energetic reasonableness” in “the logic of things”.<sup>14</sup> With Schelling consciously in mind, Peirce developed, and arguably advanced, the theoretical implications of this logical operator in the terms of a concretescently synechistic hyperbolic worldview.

But this is running ahead. Even here in his original *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797), the young Schelling advanced his categorical obligation as to the *scientific form* of the possibility of concrete experience in which “Nature is *a priori*”. In such a post-critical project which he referred to as the “natural history of the mind”, Schelling transformed the general trajectory of traditional neo-Platonic philosophy’s mainstream conceptualization of *Natura naturans natura naturata* (as in Plotinus, Erigena, Cusanus, Boehme, later in Spinoza, Leibniz, Goethe, Emerson), in which phenomenal nature appears as the *symbolic*, or *conjectural* (Cusanus) embodiment of essence in forms of particularity.<sup>15</sup> The “absolute non-difference” of Nature’s metaphysically dynamically conjugative polarity required a post-Kantian conception of “philosophical Idealism”, an Idealism comprising both idealism and realism, save that the first, “Absolute Idealism”, must not be confused with the other, “but both are of one world in an “aether of absolute ideality”:

[...] so that, with the perfectly real image of the absolute in the real world, the most perfect organism, the completely ideal image also immediately enters, as reason, although even this again only for the real world, the two sides of the absolute act of cognition show themselves as archetype and ectype of each other, just as they do in the absolute; reason symbolizing itself in the organism, just as the absolute act of cognition does in eternal Nature; and the organism transfigured into absolute ideality in reason, just as Nature is transfigured in the eternal resumption of the finite into the infinite.<sup>16</sup>

13 Soren Brier (2017). I intend to develop this cross-cultural archetype in a future writing. Derived from the original *Prajnaparamita* literature of first-century BC India, and articulated in the form of the “non-duality of samsara and nirvana” by the first-century AD scholar Nagarjuna, the Chinese Hua-yen doctrinal tradition of the “unhindered mutual interpenetration of essence and phenomenon”, traditionally associated especially with the celebrated Silk Road pilgrim Fa-Tsang’s teaching, carried over into the many institutional forms of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, notably in Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism, as well as of Japan, for example, in the Shingon master Kūkai (774-835) and the Sôtô Zen master, Dôgen (1200-1253). Nishida Kitarô (1870-1945), founder of the Kyoto School, re-articulated the same foundational Mahayana logic in Schellingian terms. See for example Nishida’s essay “The Self-Identity of Absolute Contradictions” (1935) and his *Nothingness and the Religious Worldview* (1945). Nishitani Keiji, who succeeded Nishida as *doyen* of the post-war Kyoto School, did his dissertation under Nishida’s mentorship at Kyoto University.

14 See Dilworth (2009); and Peirce’s remarks on “The Presuppositions of Science: Common Sense and Religion” in John J. Stuhr (ed.) (1987), p. 38-44.

15 Ibid, p. 50.

16 Ibid, p. 51.

In sum, in such breath-taking articulations, the young Schelling departed from the tradition of British empiricism and physical mechanism but also stepped beyond the “reflective” Critical philosophy (Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer), moving his ontosemiosis in the direction of what later Peirce called “Objective Idealism”, “the one intelligible theory of the universe”.<sup>17</sup>

So, to employ Peirce’s words again, Schelling’s *Supplement* (1803) of *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1787) already involved his readers in dense retroductions of a new (and yet ancient) *physis*-philosophy – namely, of *natura* as a tensional “birthing” in physical and chemical, astronomical and geological, dimensions – enfoldments and unfoldments, convergences and divergences, in qualitative degrees and dimensions of contracting and repulsing forces of gravity and light, in the scientific language of his own day – grounded in a higher level metaphysical physics. No wonder that Emerson, inspired by Schelling’s ontosemiosis of “absolute ideality in Nature” (as in Emerson’s episteme of “transparent eyeball” or “intellectual intuition”), was to speak of “Nature’s method” as “ecstatic” (Emerson, 1841).<sup>18</sup>

For present purposes, let me simply conclude this briefest encounter with Schelling’s initial *Naturphilosophie* by way of taking cognizance of the remarkable “last word” of his *Supplement* (1803) to *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1787):

The final goal of all consideration and science of Nature can only be knowledge of the absolute unity which embraces the whole, and which allows itself to be known in Nature only from one side. In Nature, therefore, the whole is absolutely knowable, although appearing Nature produces only successively, and in (for us) endless development, what in true Nature exists all at once and in an eternal fashion.

The root and essence of Nature is that which combines the infinite possibility of things with the reality of the particular, and hence is the eternal urge and primal ground of all creation. [...] there now stands open to us, in the disclosures of organic Nature, that path into the true interior whereby we penetrate at last to the most perfect knowledge of the divine nature, in *reason*, as the indifference wherein all things lie in equal weight and measure as one, and this veil in which the act of eternal producing is clothed, itself appears dissolved in the essence of absolute ideality.

It is the highest pleasure of the soul to have penetrated, through science, to contemplation of this most perfect, all-satisfying and all-comprehending harmony the knowledge of which is as far superior to any other as the whole is more excellent than the part, the essence better than the individual, and the ground of knowledge more splendid than knowledge itself.<sup>19</sup>

The young Schelling’s contemplative “last word” *does seem* right out of Plotinus, even though he only read Plotinus in 1804! Be that as it may, I shall now contend this “last word” remained foundational, albeit transformed, in Schelling’s more theoretically advanced phases. In particular his masterwork in the history of philosophy, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), transmuted the trajectory of traditional neo-Platonism’s hierarchical emanationism into a post-critical ontosemiosis of the irreducible tension between the world’s contractive and expansive forces, played out in terms of the essence of human freedom. And in due course – my argument goes – Peirce endorsed Schelling’s transvaluation of the issues, replacing hypostasis with hypothesis, so to speak, by way of postulating foundational tenets of connatural synechism and agapistic cosmology in his more advanced

17 Later stages of this paper parse the chief expressions of 19<sup>th</sup>-century ontosemiosis. Using their own terms, Kant called his philosophy a critical idealism; Fichte, a subjective idealism; Schelling, an objective idealism; Hegel, an absolute idealism; Husserl, a transcendental idealism; Schopenhauer followed Kant’s critical idealism in a pessimistic form that also had resonances with Schelling’s objective idealism; Emerson and Peirce elaborated Transcendentalist and “mellonistic” (Peirce) expressions of objective idealism.

18 I argue below that Peirce and Whitehead, who are philosophers with backgrounds of mathematical expertise, converted Platonic and neo-Platonic conceptualization of “creative” Nature into their respective cosmologies that are so many footnotes to Plato’s *Timaeus*.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 273.

ontosemiosis of mankind's capacity to participate in the world's "energetic reasonableness". Peirce gradually evolved architectonic expressions of these postulates in his "Guess at the Riddle" (1887-1888), *Monist* metaphysical essays of 1891-93, and Cambridge Conference Lectures of 1898.

## 2 Schelling's 1809 Reconfiguration of Plato's *Timaeus*

Now, in first approximation to a vast and dense topic – one that will gain in even greater significance when set in the wider noetic space of the world-history of philosophy – I propose to grasp how Peirce followed the bottom line of Schelling's ontosemiosis inscribed in his 1809 *Philosophical Investigation into the Essence of Human Freedom* (or *Freiheitsschrift*) – by way of his (Peirce's) endorsing Schelling's post-critical reconfiguration of the essential issues of Plato's *Timaeus*. This theoretical upgrade laid the basis of Peirce's "irreversible and finious", "hyperbolic" worldview of open-ended "psychic causations" of the idea-potentialities of the Platonic World.

Peirce, in the due course of his own philosophical maturity, declared he was a "Schellingian, of some stripe", while admiring the electric volatility of Schelling's career's genuinely "scientific character", so "untrammeled" by the *a priori* fixations of a set system. In the carefully considered declaration of his personal intellectual biography in the opening paragraph of "The Law of Mind" (1892), he expressed his having grown up in "the neighborhood of Concord" where "Emerson, Hedge, and their friends were disseminating the ideas that they caught from Schelling, and Schelling from Plotinus, from Boehm, or from God knows what minds stricken with the monstrous mysticism of the East", while having modified the Concord transcendentalism "by mathematical conceptions and by training in physical investigations".<sup>20</sup> There Peirce astutely indicated that the Concord Transcendentalism of "Emerson and friends" traced back to Schelling and, through Schelling, deeply back into the neo-Platonic tradition. My thesis here is Peirce, in consciously tying his own intellectual lineage to that tradition mediated by Schelling, also reprised the essential components of Schelling's post-critical reprisal Plato's *Timaeus*.<sup>21</sup>

To this end let us take another exegetical dive. Schelling *Freiheitsschrift* of 1809 appeared in only a generation or two before Peirce's day (and conveyed to Emerson and Transcendentalist friends by Coleridge, Frederic Hedge, and others).<sup>22</sup> Its *essential provenance* to Peirce's mature philosophy is inscribed in the *Freiheitsschrift's* "Introduction", and carried over as well into the concluding division of the text, labeled "God's All-Unity of Love".<sup>23</sup>

Schelling's "Introduction" begins by pointedly re-focusing Spinoza's exemplary pantheism of a one-sidedly conceived Infinite Substance, the bottom line of which obliterates a concept of a *divine personality*, and concomitantly, fails to account for philosophy's categorial obligation to account for *human thinking in mankind's spiritual modality of human freedom* as well.<sup>24</sup> Schelling's text proceeds

20 EP1: 313. Guardiano (2017).

21 Here following the concluding words of Ibrri's *Kosmos Noetos* (2017). Ibrri has advanced this interpretive perspective in the face of a general dearth of commentary with regard to the deep undercurrent of Platonic thought in Peirce's mature text.

22 See Polley (2021). Emerson's "friends" include Charles's father, Benjamin Peirce, and his contemporary critic of nominalism, Francis Ellingwood Abbot, and others.

23 "God's All-Unity of Love": following the tentative use of divisional headings (not in Schelling's original) of Thomas Buchheim (1997), as per the note 4 of the translators. Jeff Love and Johann Schmdit (Schelling, 2006, p. 135).

24 Ibid, 9-16. Schelling's relation to Spinoza remained a key feature of his career. For example, six years after the *Freiheitsschrift*, in *The Ages of the World* (third draft, c.1815): "But others find the true archetype of pantheism in the doctrine of Spinoza. Spinoza deserves serious consideration. Far be it from us to deny in Spinoza that for which he was our teacher and predecessor. Perhaps, of all the modern philosophers, there was in Spinoza a dark feeling of that primordial time of which we have attempted to conceptualize so precisely. Spinoza knows that powerful balance of the primordial forces that he opposes to one another as the extended primordial force (hence, no doubt originally contracting) and the thinking primordial force (no doubt, on account of the antithesis, extending, expansive?). But he only knows the balance, but not the conflict that emerges out of the equipollence. Both forces are juxtaposed in inactivity, without the reciprocal excitation or intensification. Hence, the duality is lost in favor of the unity. Consequently, his substance, or the common being of both essences, persists in an eternal, immobile, inactive parity. Again, the unity is itself a pure Being that never transfigures itself into that which has being and never actively (*in actu*) comes forth. Because of the assumed antithesis, he can only be regarded as a realist, although he is this in a higher sense than Leibniz is an idealist. Instead of the living conflict between the unity and duality, of both the so-called attributes and substance being the main object, Spinoza only occupies himself with them as both



to transmute Spinoza's depersonalized infinite Substance to beget a veritable human subjectivity qua spiritual personality in the terms of his former *Naturphilosophie's* tensional concept of an absolute self-differencing identity of subjectivity and objectivity, not of insensate and lifeless, but dynamically causative.<sup>25</sup> In a famous expression:

God is not a god of the dead but of the living. It is not comprehensible how the most perfect being could find pleasure even in the most perfect machine possible. However one may conceive of the way in which beings proceed from God, the way can never be mechanical, nor mere production or installation whereby the product is nothing in itself [...] or by emanation.<sup>26</sup>

With regard to the co-implicative causality of human freedom, "The self-revelation of God can only occur to beings that are like Him [...]" Accordingly – Schelling continues – "The concept of a derived absoluteness or divinity [in humanity] is so little contradictory that it is rather the central concept of philosophy".<sup>27</sup>

Schelling goes on to typecast Spinoza's as an "one-sidedly realist system", with its "mechanistic physics", and its "deterministic fatalism" brought to a peak in French atheistic materialism and its spread to Germany, as well as in the dualistic Romantic reaction and, worse, in Jacobi's fideism – against which he contrasts his own *idealism-realism* from his early writings on the Philosophy of Nature – that is to say, postulating a "pure physics", the "real part" to be completed by the "ideal part in which freedom rules".<sup>28</sup> Even in the "real part" Schelling's claim was for "the final empowering act"

through which *all of nature is transfigured in feeling, intelligence, and, finally, in will. In the final and highest judgment, there is no other Being than will. Will is primal Being to which alone all predicates of Being apply: groundlessness, eternity, independence from time, self-affirmation. All of philosophy strives only to find this highest expression.*<sup>29</sup>

Consequentially, rather than the one-sided Fichtean way of combatting Spinoza, "it is required that the reverse also be shown, that everything *real* (nature, the world of things) has activity, life and freedom as its ground". And thus "to spread it through the entire universe accomplishes the complete revolution in philosophy". Even the great Kant got no further than achieving a "negative concept" predicated on the dichotomy between appearances and things-in-themselves – "the negativity that is the character of his theoretical philosophy".<sup>30</sup> Such a "negative philosophy" (ala Kantian, Fichtean, and Hegelian "reflection") describes only formal structures considered exclusively as possibilities, as *a priori* conditions, but without reference to whether or not they actually exist. Not the formality of the *Was* but the actual *Das* of *real existence* must be intuited directly, in concrete immediate existence, and as the basis of establishing God's existence *a posteriori* – (this theme, pointedly anti-Hegel, further elaborated in the "progressive empiricism" of Schelling's later writings on Positive Philosophy.)<sup>31</sup>

Even the "rational" negative philosophy – Schelling observed, – endeavors to take up the irrational components of a non-rational ground (i.e., dark, blind, miscellaneous nature, contingently chaotic) in

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opposed, indeed, with each for itself, without their unity coming to language as the active, living copula of both substance and attribute. Hence the lack of life and progression in his system". (translated by Jason M. Wirth, 2000, p. 104-105)

25 Ibid, p. 17.

26 Ibid, p. 17.

27 Ibid, p. 18.

28 In passing we should recognize Schelling's rejection of mechanistic materialism sets a bottom line basis for rejection of the secularization of culture in our 21<sup>st</sup>- century cyber-world.

29 Ibid, p. 21, (emphasis added).

30 Ibid, p. 22.

31 See Bruce Matthews (2007); Dilworth (2021).

respect to a super-rational divine purpose, – “though both are inconceivable”, – thus of a *struggle* of the forces of unreason and of reason that is revealed in human history. In the larger moral trajectory of the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling addressed this key post-critical issue of “struggle” (Goethe’s “*Streben*”) in his own articulation: it is not just formal [Kantian, Fichtean, Hegelian] freedom which does not go far enough, but rather the “real and vital concept of human freedom as the capacity for good and evil”.<sup>32</sup> In this regard, the “negative” philosophies which “reflect” on God as an abstract *actus purissimus*, or on a merely formal moral world order, have to be rejected in favor of a “living realism”.

## 2.1 Enter Plato's *Timaeus*

Now, it is crucial to see that Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift*'s “living realism” proceeded as no less than a post-critical reconfiguration of the foundational concepts of Plato's *Timaeus* – which he transposed into the terms of the project of progressive idealization of the “dark ground” of recalcitrant “matter” by way of retelling the “story” of the cosmic work-ethic, so to speak, of Plato's Craftsman (*demiurge*, both divine and human).<sup>33</sup> Here in 1809 he averred: “The entire new European philosophy [already culminating in Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant before Hegel] has the common defect that nature is not available for it and that it lacks a living ground”, – or again, lacks “a living foundation”, the veritable “living force and richness of reality” in terms of an “indivisible remainder eternally in the ground” of a “living Whole” build out of opposed ways of Being, ideal *and* real. His terms “ground and existence” metaphorically reconfigured earliest *aperçus* of his *Naturphilosophie* – “living ground” as principle of inwardness or contraction and “ideal existence” as principle of expansion, – “ground” tending to retreat into darkness, “existence” tending toward light as Nature's creative unfolding. As treated below, these terms are Schelling's variations on Plato's World-Soul and Receptacle (*chora*), respectively.

It is in such terms of a densely ambiguous opposition in *God's* self-revelation and in *life's* processes of organic struggle that Schelling transposed consideration of human freedom as the tensional form of creaturely being, thus uniting the determined (Nature) and autonomous (Freedom) co-implications of human beings in a Platonic drama of the human soul's' agonistic life.<sup>34</sup> His retrieval of Plato's *Timaeus* explicitly appears in the text's own words: “Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance”. [...] “It moves, divining itself, like a wave-wound, whirling sea, akin to Plato's matter, following dark, uncertain law, incapable of constructing for itself anything enduring”, – until “the eternal spirit impelled by the love that it itself is, proclaims the word [of intelligibility] so that the understanding and yearning together now become a freely creating and all-powerful will and build in the initial anarchy of nature as in its own element or instrument”.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Revelant here is Peirce's concept of a “forlorn hope”, which is traceable to Kant's third Critique's Second Introduction (and *passim* thereafter), namely the heuristic assumption as to “the lawfulness of the contingent”, which Kant then featured as the regulative principle of *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck* in aesthetic, sublime, and teleological judgments. This heuristic principle recurs as a prominent methodic feature in Peirce's *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, that is, his Cambridge Conference Lectures of 1898. In “Grounds of Validity of the Laws of Logic” (1877) Peirce spoke of “[t]his infinite hope” which “from its very nature is unsusceptible of any support from reasons”: it is “something so august and momentous, that all reasoning in reference to it is a trifling impertinence”, such that “the question is single and supreme, and ALL is at stake upon it. We are in the condition of a man in a life and death struggle; if he have not sufficient strength, it is wholly indifferent to him how he acts, so that the only assumption upon which he can act rationally is the hope of success”. Not any determinate fact, not any private interest, “but when its object is of a nature as wide as the community can turn out to be, it is always a hypothesis uncontradicted by facts and justified by its indispensableness for making any action rational”. (EP1: 82) The heuristic significance of this infinite hope reappears in Peirce's 1878 “The Doctrine of Chances” where he analogizes the three Pauline theological virtues of Charity, Faith, and Hope to “three sentiments” motivating scientific inquiry, namely, of interest in an indefinite community, recognition of the possibility of this interest being made supreme, and hope in the unlimited continuation of intellectual activity, “as indispensable requirements of logic”, – and, here, the first two supporting and accessories of the third (EP1: 150). In “A Guess at the Riddle” (1877-1888) Peirce re-developed the theme in reference to Kant's “regulative principle”, that is to say, an “intellectual hope”. “Despair is insanity”. “We must therefore be guided by the rule of hope”, and consequently “we must reject every philosophy or general conception of the universe, which could ever lead to the conclusion that any given general fact is an ultimate one” (EP1: 275). Below I will argue via Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* (1809) that Plato's *Timaeus* anticipates Kant's (and Peirce's) heuristic of the “the lawfulness of the contingent” in its “creation story” of the Craftsman's engendering the World-Soul in polar relation to the irrational contingencies of the Receptacle.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

“All-powerful will” turns out to be *essentially ambiguous* in this context of such a tensional ontosemiosis of human freedom Schelling is adducing here – and will remain “problematic” in Peirce’s fallibilistic heuristic of concrescent synechism and agapistic cosmology. The very essence of Schelling’s *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* centered in the concept of “Spirit” or “Personality” consisting in the duality of the separation of man’s selfhood from God and at the same time its unity with the ideal principle – the same as in Peirce’s synechistic cosmology of “evolutionary love” which prioritizes the principle of agapistic love over deterministic (anacastic) systems.<sup>36</sup> No longer a mere instrument of the universal will in nature, *spirit is personal*, rising above all nature in its complete freedom while still remaining in the dark ground: “just as in a transparent body the matter which has been raised to identity with the light does not for that reason cease being matter (the dark principle) – yet it does so merely as a carrier and, as it were, receptacle of the higher principle of light”.<sup>37</sup> The most fitting comparison for falsity and evil, on the other hand, is that of disease, a kind of *nichts Wesenhaftes* having no inherent being, thus only an apparent picture of life, “merely a meteoric appearance of it, an oscillation between Being and non-Being – yet announces itself nevertheless as something very real”.<sup>38</sup>

Accordingly, the not just the human but the universal activity of evil Schelling accounts for in clear echo of the *Timaeus*. As the dark condition of the ground breaks out everywhere locked in struggle with the good, “it was from the outset necessary for the revelation of the real distinction between God and creatures”. “Without it, there would be no revelation and no motility of love. For every essence can only reveal itself in its opposite, love only with hate, unity in conflict”. And thus, without such a universal *Begeisterung* for evil, “[...] love would not become real”.<sup>39</sup> It is Man who *acts* out of his free nature in accord with the Center, or in misuse of self-will to the level of selfhood as “false imagination”. Here again Schelling explicitly refers to the *Timaeus* (49a-53b) in depicting the “false imagination” of sin “as borrowing colors from the light as the serpent from the light of the sun, employing mirror-like images that seduce man by false pleasures in his imagination”, inducing him to transgress “from authentic Being into non-Being, from weakness or incapacity, but with fear and horror, a feeling that is only explicable on the basis that sin turns truth into lies, from the light into darkness”.<sup>40</sup> Schelling’s profound articulation of the essence of human freedom here is another rendering of his *Naturphilosophie*’s logic of the tensional dynamics of contraction and expansion.

Turning now to the culminating section of the *Freiheitsschrift*, the “All-Unity of Love”,<sup>41</sup> Schelling addresses the question: “Will evil end and how? Does creation have a final purpose at all, and, if this is so, why is it not reached immediately, why does what is perfect not exist right from the beginning?”. The only answers to these questions – Schelling declare – have already been given: “God is a *Life*, not merely a *Being*”. “All life has a destiny, however, and is subject to suffering and becoming. God has freely subordinated himself to this as well, ever since he first separated the world of light from that of darkness in order to become personal. Being becomes aware of itself only in becoming”.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, “Without this concept of a humanly suffering God, one which is common to all mysteries and spiritual religions of earliest time, all of history would be incomprehensible”.<sup>43</sup> The “final purpose of creation” is “that the good should be raised out of darkness into actuality in order to live with God everlastingly, whereas evil should be separated from the good in order to be cast out eternally into non-Being”. [...]

36 As I reference elsewhere, this theme of the polarity of necessity and freedom is the burden of Emerson’s “Fate” (1860) in a nutshell.

37 Ibid, p. 33.

38 Ibid, p. 32.

39 Ibid, p. 41. Clear anticipations of like tenets in Peirce and Nishida Kitarô, the latter having first-rate philosophical credentials in speaking for the entire Mahayana Buddhist tradition. See also Brier (2017).

40 Ibid, p. 55.

41 Ibid, p. 66-77. Love and Schmidt’s translation of the middle divisions of the text are labeled Deduction from the Philosophy of Nature (p. 27-33), Deduction from the Possibility of Evil (p. 33-40), Deduction of the Reality of Evil (p. 40-58), and The Freedom of God (p. 58-66). This final section James Gutman’s translation renders as “The Purpose of Creation”.

42 Ibid, p. 66.

43 Ibid, p. 66.

“Hence the necessity of birth and death”, for sake of the reconciliation of independent selfhood with the spirit of God in the complete actualization of God. In dying evil is separated from everything good, retaining its state of non-Being [...]” And “[h]ence the end of revelation is casting out evil from the good, the explanation of evil as complete unreality”.<sup>44</sup>

“We reach now” – Schelling declared – “the highest point of the entire investigation”. What should serve this primary distinction between Being in so far as it is “ground” and in so far as it “exists” [as ideal spirit]? *Dualism is disallowed*. “We have, then, one being [*Ein Wesen*] for all oppositions, an absolute identity of light and darkness, good and evil, and for all the inconsistent result to which any rational system falls prey and which have long been manifest in this system too”.<sup>45</sup> Remarkably here he reintroduces his non-dual and diaphanous logic of the “Identity” of a “non-ground” [*Ungrund*] as the “absolute indifference” [*Indifferenz*] of both light and darkness, which is “a disappearance of all opposites, but not a product of all opposites, nor are they implicitly contained in it [...] Indifference as its own being separate from all opposition”, having no predicates including those of good and evil, real and ideal, darkness and light as opposite predicates”. “But nothing prevents them predicated as non-opposites, that is, in disjunction and each for itself whereby, however, precisely duality (the actual twoness [*Zweiheit*] of principles) is posited. In its total indifference it is neutral to both”. This duality qua non-duality which dissolves a one-sided absolute identity “breaks forth therefore immediately from the Neither-Nor, or Indifference, and without indifference, that is, without a non-ground [*Ungrund*], there would be no two-ness of principles”.<sup>46</sup>

These powerful and dense articulations, however, should again be appreciated as importing more than a rendering of traditional Christian neo-Platonism in diaphanous logical form. Schelling's mid-career text transcended, or, in any case, transmuted, his former *Naturphilosophie* and Identity Philosophy in its explicit turn to the *personalistic concept of divine and human love*. The “non-ground divides itself into the two exactly equal beginnings [of ground and existence]. [...] so that there may be life and love and personal existence. For love is neither in [mere] indifference nor where opposites are linked which require linkage for their Being, but rather [...] *this is the secret of love*, that it links such things of which each could exist for itself yet does not and cannot exist without the other. For this reason, as duality comes to be in the non-ground, love comes to be as well, linking that which exists (that which is ideal) with the ground of existence”.<sup>47</sup>

So, once again as a first approximation, I recommend all this should be appreciated as a precedent for Peirce's “Evolutionary Love”, which premises the doctrine of St. John, the “ontological gospeler”, that “God is Love and Light”, against “the gospel of greed” and Bernard Mandevillian self-interest in Social Darwinism that, in Peirce's analysis, was presupposed in Darwin's theory of struggle for existence in the *Zeitgeist* of the times. For Peirce, as for Schelling, Agape has no Empedoclean opposite. It is a higher Eros – that which characterizes the “initial yearning of mankind's crossing over to clarity”. In Schelling's “hopeful” words: “everything true and good in this yearning is raised into bright consciousness, while everything false and unclean dissolved into the darkness, as *caput mortuum* of his life process and as potency left behind, so that *in the end love is all in all*”.<sup>48</sup>

44 Ibid, p. 67. In the three drafts of *The Ages of the World* (1811-1815) Schelling endeavored to reconfigure the same variables in terms of Christian Trinitarian symbolism. Once again, I suggest, close resemblances of these articulations are to be found in certain Eastern *apercus* of spirituality, the bottom line consisting of “Enlightenment” or “awakening” as to the synechistic “non-duality of samsara and nirvana” (i. e., the non-duality of “nature” and “freedom”) realized in an ultimate philosophical generalization. And so I also want to re-interject here that Schelling's words take on significance as heuristic interpretant of the plurality of world religions, spiritualities, and philosophies. Peirce's “Buddhisto-Christian” religion is then to be considered as another *theoretical heuristic* – and both his and Schelling's in the sense of *post-critical ontosemiosis* (or, in Michael Raposa's word, *theosemiosis*) generally lacking in dogmatic theological and scholastic circles of East and West.

45 Ibid, p. 68.

46 Ibid, p. 69.

47 Ibid, p. 70 (emphasis added). Peirce's opening pages of “Evolutionary Love” (EP1: 352-354) are remarkably to the same effect – continuing Schelling's articulation played out in terms of a synechistic principle of “God is Love and Light” in refutation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century utilitarian “gospel of greed”, as well as of reductionistic tychistic (Darwin) and anancistic (Hegel) theories of evolution.

48 Ibid, p. 70 (emphasis added). I re-interject here that Schelling's words take on further significance as interpretant of the plurality of world religions,

Schelling here rejects the “conspirators and factionists of pantheism” who will misconstrue his meaning: whatever can be meant by regarding “the immanence of all things in God”, it comes down to “Only man is in God and capable of freedom exactly through this Being-in-God. He alone is a being of the *centrum* [*ein Centralwesen*] and, for that reason he should also remain in the *centrum*.<sup>49</sup>

Schelling then concluded on an ontological gospeler’s note prescient for Peirce’s Agapism. “Nature”, he says, “is the first or Old Testament”, since things are still outside of the *centrum*, and “hence subject to the law”, while “Man is the beginning of the New Testament through which man as mediator, since he is himself tied to God, God (after the last division) also accepts nature and makes it into *himself*. Man is hence the redeemer of nature toward which all typology (*Vorbilder*) in nature aims. Hence, the portents (*Vorbedeutungen*) that contain in themselves no interpretation and are explained only by man. Hence, the general finality of causes that, likewise, become understandable only from this point of view”.<sup>50</sup>

To be sure, all these dense *aperçus* of *categorical implications of the essence of human freedom* have the status of theoretical postulations – so many ontosemiotic “guesses at the riddle” – obliging the intense philosophical interpretants. How many contemporary philosophies are up to the task?

I will now propose that Peirce, in his capping metaphysical essay “Evolutionary Love” (1893) and his Cambridge Conference Lectures (1898), proved himself to be “a Schellingian, of some stripe” in the same post-critical *ontosemiosis*. We will be concerned here not just with formalistic *ontology* but with *ontosemiotics* in the sense of *H. Sapiens as H. Narrans (H. Semanticus)* with regard to “Man-sign’s” *discovering role* in evolutionary creation – that is to say, as presciently metamorphized in the “story” of the *Timaeus*, mankind’s designated capacity for participation in the “irreversible” and “finious” nature of psychic evolution.<sup>51</sup>

(And, by the way, let’s add Friedrich von Schiller to Peirce’s Schellingian package. Nor should we forget Ivo Ibrí’s sense of the *kairos* moment, the poetic incipience of “new time”:

Conceptions of new mornings of new worlds,  
The tips of cock-cry pinked out pastily,  
As that which was incredible becomes,  
In misted contours, credible day again.

(Wallace Stevens. *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*<sup>52</sup>)

### 3 Peirce’s concrescent synechism and agapistic cosmology

After this brief exegetical dive into Schelling’s refashioning of the *Timaeus*, I now propose to transpose the fundamental variables into Peirce’s language of synechism and agapism. As noted above, Peirce’s

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spiritualities, and philosophies. Peirce’s “Buddhisto-Christian” religion is another *theoretical heuristic*. The Eastern as well as the Western legacies must be synechistically *re-thought*, not employed in the old East-West polemical sense.

49 Ibid, p. 70-71.

50 Ibid, p. 72-73. Needless to say, Emerson’s writings, intermediary between Schelling’s and Peirce’s, are famously replete with expressions of Nature’s *Vorbilder* and *Vorbedeutungen*. The great 20<sup>th</sup>-century paleontologist and Transcendentalist writer, Loren Eiseley, began his first book, *The Immense Journey* (1957), by quoting William Temple, “Unless all existence is a medium of revelation, no particular revelation is possible [...]” (Eiseley, 2016, vol. 1, p. 5).

51 Adapted from Simon Conway Morris (2022). Others in this *Homo Narrans* line (Man-sign, or “Man as God’s research assistant”) are Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Polanyi, and Heidegger. These authors continue the Schellingian line already carried forward by Emerson and Peirce.

52 “Reality is the beginning not the end,  
Naked Alpha, not the hierphant Omega,  
Of dense investiture, with luminous vassals.  
It is the infant A standing on infant legs,  
Not twisted, stooping polymathic Z.  
He that kneels always on the edge of space  
In the pallid perception of its distances”.  
(Wallace Stevens, *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*)

reference in “The Law of Mind” (1892) to Emerson, Frederic Hedge and their Transcendentalist friends (among whom I suppose included his own magisterial father, Benjamin Peirce<sup>53</sup>) recognizes Hedge’s key role in transmitting Schelling’s re-fashioning of Plato both through his personal studies in Germany as well as by his celebrated articles on Samuel Taylor Coleridge which greatly impacted Emerson in the early years of American Transcendentalism.<sup>54</sup> Hedge’s mediation is then arguably pertinent to Peirce’s declaration that he subscribed to “every phase of Schelling’s career”.

So let us now explore these deep undercurrents of influence on Peirce’s end. A significant cross-reference occurs in his letter to Wm. James (November 25, 1902), which recalls his recent Cambridge Conference Lectures of 1898, while also referring to his later-phase conceptualization of Normative Sciences – Esthetics (Schiller!), Ethics and Logic – which prioritizes “Esthetics” (not to be confused with the tradition’s “Aesthetics” from Longinus to Burke and Kant). As for Logic, or Thought, the domain of the Third category, Peirce wrote to James: “Only one must not take a nominalistic view of consciousness. Consciousness may mean any one of the three categories. But if it means Thought *it is more without us than within. It is we that are in it, rather than it in any of us*”. And Peirce concluded: “*This then leads to synechism, which is the keystone of the arch*”.<sup>55</sup>

We might pause to savor the apt symbolism of this epistolary metaphor of “keystone of the arch” for the interpollent dynamics of the human mind’s participation in Mind in the universe. It images the inter-dynamical physicality of the two weighted pressures of a stone wall – think of the awesomely imposing

53 Polley (2022). Polley highlights how both Emerson and Benjamin Peirce were charter members of the Boston-based social and literary Saturday Club. Both were men of genius, Benjamin in mathematics and science, Emerson as poet and philosopher. Benjamin doubled-tasked as scientist-philosopher in delivering his Lowell Lecture in Baltimore in 1879 at which Charles Peirce, then teaching at John Hopkins, attended. Subsequently published in 1881 as *Ideality in the Physical Sciences*, Benjamin Peirce’s Lowell Lecture contributed his magisterial voice to New England Transcendentalism’s central tenet of “ideal-realism”. Recalling Benjamin’s “primal” fatherly influence on Charles’s own mathematical, scientific, and philosophical career dating back to his early childhood years, it can be surmised that Charles’s own Cambridge Lectures delivered at Harvard in 1898, in Polley’s astute words, “may be thought to resemble, as well as upgrade, his father’s precedent in articulating a worldview of cosmogonic idealism”.

54 Throughout his career, from his maiden work *Nature* (1836) on to “Poetry and Imagination” in *Letters and Social Aims* (1876), as well as in the composite essay “Natural History of Intellect” (1893), Emerson articulated his philosophy in the terms of the “compensation” polarity of “intellectual intuition” and “empirical tuition”, directed indebted to Coleridge. Emerson’s first encounters with Coleridge’s writings dated back to his mid-twenties, in 1829 via James Marsh’s extensive introduction to Coleridge’s *Aids to Reflection* and then in 1833 and 1834 via Frederic Hedge’s review of “Coleridge’s Literary Character” in the *Christian Examiner*, which Emerson highly praised at the time. The *Christian Examiner* followed up with a series of articles on Coleridge, Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Swedenborg, and other idealist philosophers, all of whom greatly impacted Emerson at the beginning of his career. And not only through the mediation of Coleridge, several other Transcendentalist friends, including James Eliot Cabot, had, like Hedge, sojourned in Germany, attending Schelling’s lectures and carrying back translations of Schelling’s writings to Emerson. They may have attended some of the same Berlin lectures of Schelling as Engel, Feuerbach, Bakanin, and Kierkegaard. (See the alphabetized entries in Tiffany K. Wayne, ed., 2010).

Presumably well known to Charles and his father Benjamin Peirce, the first section, “poetry”, of Emerson’s *Poetry and Imagination* (1876), after citing Goethe that “science does not know its debt to imagination”, developed Coleridge’s key doctrine of the “primary and secondary imaginations” that trace back to Schelling. Emerson wrote: “the primary use of a fact is low; the secondary use, as it is a figure or illustration of my thought, is the real worth”. The next section, “Imagination”, further clarified the function of Coleridge’s secondary imagination, in the terms that it is a penetrating “second sight”; whereas “Fancy” is superficial, for amusement, “secondary imagination” is “a perception and affirmation of a real relation between a thought and some material fact”. Emerson then rehearsed the tenets of his signature essay *The Poet* (1844) which depicts the poet’s function of completing Nature’s flowing metamorphosis in his “second sight” – a “transparent” sight that “melts the land the sea” – in further Coleridge-inspired sections on Veracity, Creation, Melody and Rhyme, Morals, and Religious Transcendence. (This Emersonian doctrine captured in so many of Wallace Stevens’s renderings of “the plain sight” of things.)

In his celebrated *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge wrote: “I hold [the primary imagination] to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM”. The secondary Imagination is “an echo of the former”, like the primary Imagination in kind, only differing in degree and mode of operation which “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create”. Fancy, on the other hand, “has no other counters to play with, but futilities and densities [...] is no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space”. (*The Portable Coleridge*, ed. by I. A. Richards, 1950, 432-516).

For Emerson, poetry precedes prose in human expression. We recognize rhythm and rhyme in the facts of nature before they are given in human expression; and they are organic, deriving from the rhythms of the body and in nature.

These Emersonian tenets, indebted to Coleridge, had another life in Peirce’s conception of synechism; and arguably, his doctrine of the forms of probable inference, inductive and abductive, correspond to the functions of primary and secondary imagination – the latter of which Peirce thematized as the *kairos* moment of uberous discovery in the sciences and arts.

In a future study I propose to complicate this, taking into account Peirce’s three categories as requiring the discrimination of *three imaginations*: 1) the Firstness of feeling in Peirce’s tychistic universe; 2) inductive perception, corresponding to Coleridge’s and Emerson’s sense of objective, perception in Secondness, 3) uberous, creative abductive imagination in Thirdness, corresponding to Coleridge’s secondary imagination and Emerson’s transparent intuition. See the later Part Four of this paper: 1) relates to Plato’s Receptacle (*chora*) and Schelling’s “the irreducible remainder” of radical contingency; 2) and 3) relate to Plato’s World-Soul, as in Peirce’s “would be” modality of Thirdness.

55 CP 8.254-257 (Emphasis added).

archways of the Roman aqueducts or of the stone gateways of China's Great Wall! – the opposing *pressures* of which “hang” in the strenuously reciprocal “hold” of simultaneously contracting and repulsing forces. San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, or any such engineering marvel of tensional dynamics, also comes readily to mind. Schelling's early-phase *Naturphilosophie* and his upgraded *Freiheitsschrift*, played out theoretical versions of the symbolism of dynamic struggle of competing forces.

It is fair to add that Peirce's non-nominalistic sense of thought's “participation” in the Mind of the universe traces all the way back to Schelling's “Concluding Note” of the 1803 *Supplement to Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1787) where he accounts for *reason's* energetic function as “the true interior whereby we penetrate at last to the most perfect knowledge of the divine Nature, [...] as the indifference, [...] and this veil in which the act of eternal producing is clothed, itself appears dissolved in the essence of absolute ideality”.<sup>56</sup>

Peirce's metaphorical subscription to Schelling's sense of the dynamics of “absolute ideality” appeared in several instances of his “abjuring, from the bottom of my heart” the Kantian “thing-in-itself” which programmatically separates and divides the seamless concrescences of consciousness. The reverse side of the Kantian tenet of “things in themselves” would pointedly obliterate Peirce's signature doctrine of the connatural discoveries of abductive or retroductive reasoning, passages on which lace through his career text. So to speak, the “negative” critical philosophy in the line of “reflection” in Descartes, Kant, Fichte, and even Hegel, erect formalistic stone walls without the dynamical “hold” of a synechistic keystone.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, *contra* James and various other advocates of American, British, and Continental nominalism, Peirce's letter expressed his architectonic postulate as to the seamless anthropomorphic-cum-cosmomorphic “mellonization” of representational generalization in general signs or symbols. All this follows too from Schelling's critique of Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Fichte, as failing in authentic philosophical expression of the *vital intensionality*, that is, *world-concrescent intensifications and complexification* of subjectivity and objectivity.

In like manner, in his Cambridge Conference Lectures of 1898 Peirce conceived his principle of synechism as *concrescently ontosemiotic*, that is to say, as principle of *symbolic co-expression* of Nature's own uberously heuristic inductive and retroductive processes. So then, in another letter to William James the next year (June 8, 1903), he penned the following description of cosmosymbolical expression:

The essential thing [of a sign or symbol] is that it is capable of being represented. Whatever is capable of being represented is itself of a representative nature. The idea of representation involves infinity, since a representation is not really such unless it be interpreted in another representation. But infinity is nothing but a peculiar twist given to generality. There is not anything truly general that does not make irrational existences conform to itself. That is the very heart of the idea.<sup>58</sup>

To this same effect, and in the same time frame, among the many sterling pronouncements of his career-text, Peirce epitomized his contribution to the entire history of philosophic speculation in the following exemplary passage:

The very being of the General, of Reason, consists in its governing individual events. So, then, the essence of Reason is such that its being never can have been completely perfected. It always must be in a state of incipiency, of growth. It is like the character of a man which consists in the ideas that he will conceive and in the

<sup>56</sup> Schelling (1998, p. 273).

<sup>57</sup> It will be crucial to recognize, however, that in his *third Critique* the “great Kant” developed a nominalistic “regulative only” concept of “the lawfulness of the contingent” in aesthetical and teleological judgments, a principle of heuristic inquiry Peirce transformed in his logic of objective inquiry. Schelling, we will see, harvested this principle of probable inquiry from Plato's *Timaeus's* “second beginning”.

<sup>58</sup> CP 8.268.

efforts that he will make, and which only develops as the occasions actually arise. Yet in all his life long no son of Adam has ever fully manifested what there was in him. So, then, the development of Reason requires as a part of it the occurrence of more individual events than ever can occur. It requires, too, all the coloring of all qualities of feeling, including pleasure in its proper place among the rest. This development of Reason consists, you will observe, in embodiment, that is, in manifestation. The creation of the universe which did not take place during a certain busy week in 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done, is the very development of Reason. I do not see how one can have a more satisfying ideal of the admirable than the development of Reason so understood. The one thing whose admirableness is not due to an ulterior Reason is Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness, so far as we can comprehend it.<sup>59</sup>

Peirce's mature-phase writings contain many such expressions which articulate the "pragmaticist" doctrine of "energetic reasonableness" in tritistic variances in a "universe perfused by signs".<sup>60</sup>

And so, back to Peirce's letter to James of November 25, 1902, where Peirce critiques the psychologism of James and F. C. S. Schiller. In this letter Peirce says, "I seem to myself to be the sole depositary at present of the completely developed system, which all hangs together and cannot receive any proper presentation in fragments".<sup>61</sup> Peirce's *career-text* naturally matured in phases of developmental teleology from his early Pragmatism to later Pragmaticism, which at the same time he acknowledged as being "some stripe" of Schellingian *Naturphilosophie*. Along the way, a key upgrade toward "a completely developed system" – which was necessarily an abductively postulational system – was his *Guess at the Riddle* (1887-1888) which precisely set *synechistic conjugative mediation* within a tritistic categorology for generating a neo-Aristotelian architectonic for the burgeoning branches of metaphysics, psychology, physiology, biology, and cosmological physics.

The "Guess" was the surviving "fragment" of an unpublished project Peirce opined would be "one of the births of time".<sup>62</sup> In the projected table of contents, Peirce explicated the trajectory of his three co-valent categories of First, Second, Third which overcome "The dual divisions of logic [that] result from a false way of looking at things absolutely. Thus, besides affirmative and negative, there are really probable enunciations, which are intermediate. So besides universal and particular there are all sorts of propositions of numerical quantity". He projected the same tri- and inter-valent heuristic in "physics" such that it would be a "germinal chapter" for a new tychistic cosmology of "The necessity of a natural history of the laws of nature" in the perspective of "The universality of the principle of habit". But as well, it would be a new "pneumatology" – namely, "[t]hat consciousness is a sort of public spirit among the nerve-cells. Man as a community of cells; compound animals and composite plants; society, nature. Feeling implied in firstness", as well as such a "triad in theology" in which "Faith requires to be materialists without flinching".<sup>63</sup>

Great stuff! The mature Peirce is always elaborating the "great Kant's" heuristic of "the lawfulness of the contingent" in a not merely regulative but determinative heuristic of inquiry. *Mutatis mutandis*, all of Peirce's "keystone" retroductive projects stem from the spores of Kant as transmuted in Schelling's post-Kantian dynamically tensional *Naturphilosophie* that was wafting over the 19<sup>th</sup>-c. landscape in the

59 *What Makes a Reasoning Sound*, 1903 (EP2: 254-255).

60 "It seems a strange thing, when one comes to ponder over it, that a sign should leave its interpreter to supply a part of its meaning; but the explanation of the phenomenon lies in the fact that the entire universe, – not merely the universe of existents, but all the wider universe, embracing the universe of existents as a part, the universe which we are all accustomed to refer to as "the truth", that all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs. Let us note this in passing as having a bearing upon the question of pragmatism" (*The Basis of Pragmaticism in the Normative Sciences*, 1906 [EP2:394]).

61 CP 8:255.

62 EP1:245.

63 EP1:246.



so-called “Century of Darwin”. We can go on to understand Peirce as having carried the Schellingian line to a maximal architectonic effect in his own day.<sup>64</sup>

With respect to Darwinism and other scientific and cultural developments in his day, Peirce spelled out the implications of his own evolutionary worldview in a series of metaphysical essays published in the *Monist* between 1891 and 1893. In the first of these, *The Architecture of Theories*, Peirce joined with Schelling (and others, as per his brief personal intellectual biography in the opening paragraph of *The Law of Mind*) in declaring for a theory of the *universal ideality of the laws of nature* conceived in terms of “a [first] element of indeterminacy, spontaneity, or absolute chance in nature”.<sup>65</sup> In such terms, Peirce patently echoed Schelling’s early-phase *Naturphilosophie* in declaring: “The old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, as two radically different kinds of substance”, has to be discarded in favor of “some form of hylopathy” – read: Schelling’s logic of organic interpenetrative concrescence of matter and form, body and mind, necessity and freedom – resulting in the bottom line tenet that “The one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws”.<sup>66</sup>

Here Peirce explicitly declared that matter is “effete”, or “partially deadened mind”, as his conscious reconfiguration of Schelling’s “objective idealism” – traceable all the way back to Schelling’s 1797 *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* and then to his more advanced anti-mechanistic pronouncements as to the degrees of interpenetrating vitality and inexhaustible analogies (*Vorbilder* and *Vorbedeutungen*) of mind in Nature. To expand on a point, I have already entered: Peirce’s world of the “past” is not a “thing-in-itself”. *H. Sapiens* as *H. Narrans* (Man-Sign as *Mit-Dichter*) plays a privileged role of concrescently transmuting the “story” of a “quantum past” as well as “quantum future” in self-discovering uberous retroductions of *kairotic*, that is, *evolutionarily organic* time.

Peirce’s “completely developed system” of concrescent synechism – or *kairotic ideality of evolutionary nature* – played out further in the ensuing *Monist* essays of 1891-93: thus, in his keystone essay, *The Law of Mind* (the law of generalizing synechism in the intensifications of “feelings” into “ideas” in the intra- and inter-communicative forms of *vital* consciousness); in *Man’s Glassy Essence*, (extending the principle of synechism to the habit-formations of organic life and societal *esprit*); and in the series-capping article, *Evolutionary Love*, which developed his projected “triad in theology” announced in *Guess at the Riddle* in the theosemiotic terms of St. John, the “ontological gospeler”. It is here that Peirce expressed a corresponding synechistic principle of “Sentimentalism” in moral (non-selfish) and evangelical terms of agapistic *aperçus* deeply redolent of Schelling’s post-Identity Philosophy.

Another key formulation of the architectonic ontosemiotics Peirce rendered (though never actually published) for a weekly magazine of 1893, just five months after the January 1893 appearance of *Evolutionary Love. Immortality in the Light of Synechism* (1893) was redolent with the issues of his “keystone of the arch” letter Peirce penned to Wm. James in the same contemporaneous time frame. Applying the stem-words *materialism*, the doctrine that matter is everything; *idealism*, the doctrine that ideas are everything; *dualism*, the philosophy which splits everything in two; he characterizes his own doctrine as “*synechism*, or that everything is continuous” – as a purely scientific philosophy that will help reconcile science and religion.<sup>67</sup> (“Materialism, without flinching”) Synechism applies to the tychistic inexactitude of continuous mathematical quantities as well as to any and every “thing-in-itself”, such as a Parmenidean One, one-sidedly conceived. Even in less stalwart forms, Peirce averred, “it can never abide dualism, properly so called, which is the philosophy which performs its analyses with an axe”.

64 Ivo Ibrri’s *Kosmos Noetos: The Metaphysical Architecture of Charles S. Peirce* stands out as the most comprehensive rendition of Peirce’s accomplishment.

65 EP1:288.

66 EP1:292-293. Peirce’s and Schelling’s hylopathy in direct contradiction to Kant’s rejection of hylomorphism in the antinomy of the telological power of judgment of the third *Critique*.

67 EP 2:1.

In particular – Peirce continued – “the synechist will not admit that physical and psychical phenomena are entirely distinct, – whether as belonging to different categories of substance, or as entirely separate sides of one shield [as in Spinoza’s neutral monism], – but must insist are of one character, though some are more mental and spontaneous, others more material and regular. Still, all alike present that mixture of freedom and constraint, which allows them to be, nay, makes them to be teleological or purposive”.<sup>68</sup>

There then follows another memorable paragraph in which Peirce recapitulates the essence of his agapistic “Sentimentalism” with its deep ties to Schelling’s consideration of the essence of moral freedom in the *Freiheitsschrift*:

Nor must any synechist say, “I am altogether myself, and not at all you”. If we embrace synechism, you must abjure this metaphysics of wickedness. In the first place, your neighbors are, in a measure, yourself, and in far greater measure than, without deep studies in psychology, you would believe. Really, the selfhood you like to attribute to yourself is, for the most part, the vulgarest delusion of vanity. In the second place, all men who resemble you and are in analogous circumstances, are, in a measure, yourself, though not quite in the same way in which your neighbors are you.<sup>69</sup>

Finally (for my limited exegetical purposes here), we should turn to Peirce’s *Reasoning in the Logic of Things*, his Cambridge Conference Lectures that extended over two weeks at Harvard in 1898, to appreciate his “completely developed system” rooted in Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* and later articulations.

In his Cambridge Conference Lectures, Peirce called his cosmogonic theory “Synechism because it rests on the study of continuity” (which he says is the “very hardest of concepts”!); and he added it could alternately be called “Tritism”.<sup>70</sup> Peirce’s three categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness function co-valently, just as Plotinus’ three hypostases *which slide into and transform one another* – such that everything is both “yonder” and also “here”.<sup>71</sup> Peirce’s version, however, is not emanational, rather a kind of hyperbolic neo-Plotinism, so to speak, in which uberous hypothesis replaces diremptive and hierarchical emanationism and introverted moral praxis. Peirce’s version rather endorses Schelling’s systematic sense of tensionally coalescing experience of *reality* in struggling scenarios of world-formation: “some beginning of a *habit* has been established by virtue of which the accidental acquires some incipient saving quality, some tendency toward consistency” (*Kairos moment* as “the firstness of thirdness”). The essence of Peirce’s mature philosophy (and “the essence of human freedom”) Peirce puts in the form of a huge generalization of the *Timaeus*: “*This habit is a generalizing tendency, and as such a generalization, and as such a general, a continuum or continuity. It must have its origin in the original continuity which is inherent in potentiality. Continuity, as generality, is inherent in potentiality, which is essentially general*”<sup>72</sup> (Emphasis added). His bottom line here configures the essential variables of the world’s “energetic reasonableness”.

So again, my contention here is that Peirce’s theoretically brilliant cosmogonic speculations of “continuity”, “the hardest of concepts”, do recapitulate the groundbreaking trajectory of Schelling’s original version of *Naturphilosophie* and his subsequent expressions of tensional organicity of mind and matter, freedom, and necessity, in his later-phase expressions of his *Freiheitsschrift* and Positive Philosophy. Indeed, they illumine the entire mainstream of world-philosophy’s classical expressions of ontosemiosis. Peirce’s cosmogony featured what he called “finious” and “irreversible” “psychic causation”, as distinct from the abstract action of conservative force – connaturally conceived in

68 EP 2:2.

69 EP 2:2.

70 RLT 262.

71 Cf. the subtitle of Schelling’s *Bruno: or On the Natural and Divine Principle of Things* (1802).

72 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

evidence of Nature's "*psychic causation*" which is "a real, and fundamental, and vital element both in the outer and in the inner world". "Finitous" and "irreversible" express a "determinate tendency toward a "general", but not pre-determined – "final state", thus conceived in affine terms of Schelling's post-critical objective idealism of the tensional organicity of infinitely interpenetrating synechistic dimensions of realization as "the purpose of creation". The agenda of the Cambridge Conference Lectures amounted to an *upgrading of his later-phase Pragmaticism* into such a realistic cosmology of the Platonic World.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, in sum and substance, we should note that Peirce wrote (with perfect resonances of Schelling's several phases of *Naturphilosophie*): "Moreover, in all its progress, science vaguely feels that it is only learning a lesson. *The value of Facts to it*, lies in this only, that they belong to *Nature, and Nature is something great, and beautiful, and sacred, and eternal, and real, – the object of its worship and its aspiration*" (Peirce's emphasis).<sup>74</sup> Though densely difficult to grasp, I repeat that in such *normatively Esthetic* terms Peirce's mature philosophy patently transmuted Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* in which – metaphorically speaking – mankind's freedom, eternally rooted in God's "divining will" (*ahnende Wille*) of the "dark ground", participates as well in God's "loving will". In Peirce's "materialism without flinching", after the eternal act of God's self-differencing self-revelation, anarchy still lies in the "indivisible remainder in the ground", such that order and form are not original, but consequent.<sup>75</sup> (Whitehead, the modern Cambridge Platonist, carried on the same tenet of the *Timaeus* in the next generation after Peirce.)

This *Timaeus*-fashioned worldview was the seasoned import of Peirce's later phase formulation of his Pragmaticism. The ontosemiosis of the world's "energetic reasonableness" must be articulated as an "inside" *Wissenschaft* – or better, *Mitwissenschaft* – of an active and processive and theoretical nature, not available in the short-termed nominalistic forms of empirical or of *a priori* transcendentalist epistemes.<sup>76</sup>

In the post-critical philosophies of Peirce and Schelling, "pure theory" overtakes "praxis" (of the classical Socratic, neo-Platonic, as well as modern Fichtean and Jamesian sorts). Hypothesis overtakes

73 The following parses the array of major forms of idealism in Peirce's century. Employing the author's own term, Kant's philosophy achieved a bottom line *critical idealism*; Fichte, of *subjective transcendental idealism*; Schelling evolved an *objective idealism* (inherited in the line of Emerson and Peirce); Hegel, a system of *absolute idealism* (transmuted by Marx into a *dialectical materialism*); Schopenhauer (and his disciple Santayana) rethought Kant's *critical idealism* in certain pessimistic respects; Husserl declared for a *transcendental idealism*; Nietzsche began with Schopenhauer and ended with Emerson. A comparative hermeneutic of the paradigmatic kinds of 19<sup>th</sup>-century idealism is required to form a fuller estimate of the essential semiotic or sense-making parameters of Peirce's pragmatism and agapistic cosmology. And it is indispensable in Peirce studies for understanding the interpretive practices (and mis-practices) in the secondary commentarial literature of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century scholastic circles.

74 Ibid, p. 177. The present author provides a more detailed exegesis of the "vertiginous sweep" (in James's characterization) of the Cambridge Conference Lectures, now published as *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, in Dilworth, 2022, p. 1-35).

75 Ibid, p. 30.

76 For Schelling's expression of *Mitwissenschaft* (which arguably opens up the profounder registers of Peirce's category of the cosmic primordially of Feeling), see the Introduction of the first draft of *The Ages of the World* (1811). The reader immediately encounters such theme as the following:

- a) The past is known [by the unconscious heart, not the head], the present recognized, the future divined (p. 55);
- b) Only now has philosophical science becomes productive *Naturphilosophie* – of the *original living being (Wesen)* (56);
- c) Philosophical *Wissenschaft* in form of *Mitwissenschaft*, based on the soul's participatory knowledge of creation [synechistic affinity] consisting of the principle of the soul's reach over the world (*das ueberweltliche Prinzip*) which, however, no longer dwells as it did in its original purity (*Lauterkeit*) (p. 57);
- d) But this archetypal knowledge slumbers in the soul as an image, perhaps never to awaken again except for the intimation and yearning of perception (*die Ahnung und Sehnsucht der Erkenntnis*) (p. 58);
- e) The One doubles (*Scheidung*) in this division in ourself, a clandestine intercourse, the higher knowledge to return home to the original freedom and to be revealed to itself, the lower, not knowing, struggling to be impregnated by it. But not by mere dialectic formality, rather by interior striving, a *Streben nach dem Wiederbeburtswerden*, to that original knowledge, a radicalization of Plato's doctrine of anamnesis struggling to recollect what is forgotten, emphasizing the heart, *Gemüt* – and totally at odds with Hegel's claim concerning the dialectical system's achievement of "actual knowledge", or any other formulaic method) (p. 59);
- f) This by way of mastery of the art of discrimination (*Scheidungskunst* or critique), to free ourselves of the concepts and foibles of our times. The writer of history must draw it out of his own interiority, the life inside himself. No stage has been abandoned without having left behind a distinguishing mark (p. 60);
- g) Not by an immediate vision, *Schauen*, but a constant persevering effort; all experience and feeling and gazing is itself mute, in need of a mediating organ if it is to gain expression. The external principle is thus not to be surrendered at any price. This is the boundary between theosophy and philosophy – the former richer in immediacy, the later moving forward more slowly in mediated objectivity. As in Plato, who was dialectical throughout, but at point of transfiguration "becomes the simple telling of a story" [myths of the Phaedrus and *Timaeus*].

Not the philosophy of abstract thought, but *Naturphilosophie* beginning with the unconscious experience of the eternal, philosophy leading it upward toward its highest transfiguration in a consciousness of the divine – toward the peace of the golden age (p. 61). (trans. Joseph P. Lawrence, Schelling, 2019).

hypostasis. We are God's "research assistants" and "designated hitters" in our evolutionarily privileged status of *Homo Narrans* (the Man-sign), that is to say, in our open-ended capacity for projecting symbolic idea-potentialities of world-creating ontosemiosis in the gamut of our sciences and arts. In different expressions and with tritistic variances of emphases, realizations of the same ideal-realism are to be found in the wider noetic space of world philosophy, ready for re-interpretation in the "mellonistic" spirit of Schelling's and Peirce's post-critical ontosemioses, which stand out as "uberous" interpretant keys to this larger heritage and possibilities of world philosophy.<sup>77</sup>

## 4 Peirce's Version of Schelling's Version of the *Timaeus*

In this final section I propose to regard Peirce's mature-phase synechistic cosmology as a modern re-interpretant of Schelling's post-critical restoration of Plato's *Timaeus*, and therefore of Peirce's reconfiguration of Plato's ancient classic as well.<sup>78</sup>

### 4.1 Transcendentalist Sign-Posts

First, as to certain sign-posts along the way. Let me repeat that Charles Peirce and his father Benjamin, together with a whole generation of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Transcendentalists, took inspiration from the stream of Emerson's double-tasking prose and poetic writings. In his first collection of *Poems* (1847), Emerson published one of his most popular poems, "The World Soul", composed between 1843-1845 just after his first and second volumes of *Essays* (1841, 1844).<sup>79</sup> Emerson's "The World Soul" poem had a clear provenance in Goethe's earlier "World-Soul" poem of 1801 and in many other *Gott und Natur* variations on the theme in his poetical career. From his early years Emerson was a keen student of Goethe; the intellectual milieu of the two Peirces, father Benjamin and son Charles, grew up under the same influence of Goethe and other leading figures of the *Jena-Zeit* years of c.1800 efflorescence of genius in German Romanticism and Idealism (in which Goethe emerged as the towering figure.) In England, too (e.g., Wordsworth and Coleridge), restorations of Plato's World-Soul conspicuously emerged. Schelling's *Von der Weltseele* (1798), republished 1806 and 1809, was one resource and inspiration of Goethe's *Weltseele* (1801) and F. Schlegel's *Weltseele* (1800) poems.

In broader historical perspective, of course, there is so much more to it. Miklos Vassanyi has provided an expanded perspective on the deeper currents of philosophical and spiritual tradition that Schelling mediated on the way to Emerson and Peirce.

As far as the early period of German Romanticism is concerned, the ultimate synthesis of the world soul theory seems to be SCHELLING'S The Ages of the World (Die Weltalter), in which Jewish (LURIA, HERRERA) and Christian (BÖHME, OTTINGER), Cabbalistic, theosophical, Trinitarian, mystical (MEISTER ECKART, BRUNO), and natural philosophical conceptions (of "Creation" as the result of a divine chemistry) merge to form a speculative, systematically expounded though not always convincing theology, of the divine potencies.<sup>80</sup>

That is so very much more indeed! But leaving that broader and deeper historical perspective for now, let us turn to Plato's own kairotic moment in his stunning metaphors of the *Timaeus*, which became the *fons et origo* source material for these later streams of post-Kantian tradition.

77 Wallace Stevens captured this sense of authentic "world semiosis" in his poetic words, "the Complicate, the amassing harmony".

78 In another study I propose to establish how, in the generation after Peirce (1839-1914), Whitehead's major philosophical writings, such as *Science and the Modern World* (1925), *Process and Reality* (1929), *Adventures of Ideas* (1933), and *Modes of Thought* (1938), essentially followed the line of Schelling and Peirce as modern re-interpretant of Plato's *Timaeus*.

79 Tiffany K.Wayne. ed., *Critical Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2010, p. 291-292).

80 Miklos Vassanyi, *Anima Mundi: The Rise of the World Soul Theory in Modern German Philosophy* (2011), p. 387.

## 4.2 The *Timaeus*'s Two Stories

It is imperative to bear down on the actual deliverances of Plato's text. Synoptically told, Plato elaborated the core tenets of this work of his old age *in two stages*. The first of these consisted of the generation of the World-Soul.<sup>81</sup> The Demiurge generates the World-Soul by putting it together from Being (*Ousia*), the Same (*Tauton*) and the Different (*Heteron*) in two steps. First, *Ousia* is prepared from a mixture of the indivisible and divisible kinds of substance; then the god draws two circles, one belonging to the Same, the other to the Different. He then places the material substance of the world inside the two circles, so that they pervade it on the inside and cover the world from the outside. The World-Soul is thus everywhere in the material frame of the world, interwoven (*diaplekeisa*) within it and embracing it, while retaining its hierarchically superior property. It begins an unceasing (*apaustos*) intelligent life by beginning to move harmoniously under its own power of vegetative, sensitive, and rational capacities. It is therefore the most excellent among things that have been called into existence and are not unchangeable.

So, in this first version of Plato's text, the function of the World-Soul is to recognize the identity and difference, the proper place and function of each individual substance (*Ousia*), in relation to the things that come to be, as well as those that are eternal and unchanging. It carries on a constant internal inaudible discourse inside itself as it imperceptibly circulates around itself and comes into contact with every single thing, changing or unchanging, that constitutes the Universe. The World-Soul expresses, first, that being and cognition are correlated ontologically according to a certain proportion (from coming-into-being up to the unchanging being), and with corresponding epistemological scale (by a gradual transition from opinion into true knowledge), and, secondly, that the ensouled beings are higher than the inanimate ones. The proportional, connatural correlation of existence and cognition is expressed in the World-Soul's coming to know and to make (conjectural or categorical) judgments on the identity and difference of every finite thing in the course of its circular movement in and around the world (37 a 2-c 3). Hence the respective orders of being and cognition are interdependent and interlaced even in the sub-lunar world. The physical frame of the world is an *ectypon* of the more divine, transcendent archetypal ideas; and the cosmos is thus itself divine, a living being possessed of soul and even reason (*zoon empsychon ennoun*, 30 b8-c1).

But then, in the middle of the *Timaeus*, Plato famously announced a "new beginning"<sup>82</sup> – (which, as we have noted, Schelling came to reenact in his *Kehre* of mid-career writings). "The lover of intellect and knowledge", Plato wrote, "ought to explore causes of intelligent nature first of all, and secondly, of those things which are deprived of intelligence and always produce chance effects without order or design" (46e). After a brief encomium on the powers of eyesight and of music, which are "secondary or cooperative causes" that contribute harmonious resonances akin to the revolutions of our souls, Plato surprisingly expatiates the side of the "things which come into being through necessity for the creation of the world as the combined work of necessity and mind". "Mind, the ruling power, persuaded necessity to bring the greater part of created things to perfection, and thus and thus after this manner in the beginning, through necessity made subject to reason, this universe is created" (47e). So to tell the "whole story", Plato insisted on "including the variable cause as well" – one that obliged him to "find another suitable beginning" (48a-b).

This "fuller division" to include "the variable cause" – Plato declared – involves "a strange and unwonted inquiry", one that brings us "to the haven of probability" (48e). (As Schelling was to gloss the same consideration in the drafts of *Die Weltalter*, probability is a matter of "history" not of "dialectics".<sup>83</sup> In fact, this new turn in the *Timaeus* was Plato's own "violent breakout" from his former dialectics – Schelling's words always carrying the undercurrent of polemical rejection of Hegel's systematicity of discursive sublation.) Plato's newer kind of explanation, "which is difficult of explanation and dimly

81 In *Timaeus* 34 b 3-37 c 5, to which he returned to in *Laws*, 896 d10-898 c8.

82 *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (NY: Pantheon Books, 1961), 1174-1179.

83 See references to *Die Weltalter* in this paper's Part Four.

seen”, involved a *third kind of being*, namely, of “the receptacle, and in a manner the nurse, of all generation” (49b). This “receptacle” and “nurse” (*chora*) is a “universal nature which receives all bodies” – a kind of formless and free *suchness* that underlies and destabilizes the *this* and the *that* of the world’s components (such as earth, air, fire, water, and the rest). Such a receptacle (*chora*), the “natural recipient of all impressions”, may be also “likened to a mother, while the source of spring of the eternal realities can be likened to a father, and the intermediate natures to a child” (50c). Plato also imaged this *female* principle with the making of perfume whose makers contrive “the mother substance” to be as inodorous as possible (50e); the image brings out its “formlessness” which “in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and yet is most incomprehensible” (51b).<sup>84</sup>

So now, Plato’s new verdict is that “being and space (*chora*) and generation, these three, existed in their three ways before the heaven”, so that:

the nurse of generation, moistened by water and inflamed by fire, and receiving the forms of earth and air, and experiencing all the affections which accompany these, presented a strange variety of appearances, and being full of powers, which were neither similar or equally balanced, was never in any part in a state of equipoise, but swaying unevenly hither and thither, was shaken by them, and by its motion again shook them, and the elements when moved were separated and carried continually, some one way, some another. (52e).

As we have seen, Schelling’s post-Identity Philosophy mounted an attack on Hegel’s and all other rational systems for framing internally discursive resolutions of concepts. The left-wing Hegelian Marxism’s techno-scientific (i.e., engineered political power) model is only one other example; reductive positivistic epistemes of the contemporary academy are others Schelling instead restored Plato’s sense of an irreducibly contingent “receptacle”, self-grounded in its unbounded freedom underpinning the concrescent idealizations of the World-Soul. His *Freiheitsschrift* (1809), three drafts of *Die Weltalter* (1811-1815), and ensuing Positive Philosophy (1841) gathered momentum in theoretical renderings of such an “irreducible remainder” affine with Plato’s sense of the “nurse” of all becoming of being and cognition.

Let me interject here the conflictual relation between Schelling’s and Hegel’s worldviews may well be considered as the Ur-paradigms of all of the streams and sub-streams of post-Kantian philosophy up to the present day.

With regard to the *Timaeus* itself, however, the story is not entirely told until we realize Plato’s text has two versions of *only one* creation story—the first primarily about the generation and function of the World-Soul and the second about the Receptacle, the nurse of all becoming of being and cognition—that is to say, *two sides of the same story*. Peirce’s agapism, I will suggest below, takes Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift*’s “All-Unity of Love” theme in tow in his cosmological agapism of a universe perfused with signs, which categorically encompasses Plato’s Receptacle and World-Soul as two sides of the same cosmogonic story—namely, in the terms of the *Firstness of the Receptacle* and the *Thirdness of the World-Soul*.

### 4.3 Schelling’s “Daring” Interpretation of the *Timaeus* in the three drafts of *Die Weltalter*

Before reaching Peirce’s encompassing cosmogony of Receptacle and World-Soul, I propose a brief interlude which takes further cognizance of Schelling’s intermediary contribution. Here I only peer into

<sup>84</sup> The femininity of the *chora* opens up an important correlation with the female principle of the *Tao* of classical Chinese Taoism, also with the iconography of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and even with Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess in Japan’s Shinto mythology. In another study I hope to pursue these correlations in further reference to Schelling’s *The Ages of the World*, where he thematizes such a female principle in a number of respects.

one of the many more daunting subject matters of Schelling's three unpublished drafts of *The Ages of the World* (1811-1815). And I do so only as a first approximation to seeing how they contained Schelling's explicit remarks on the *Timaeus*, which, together with the general trajectory of his thought in these drafts and his contemporaneously published *Freiheitsschrift* (1809), reveal his daring revival of Plato's ancient teaching. The astuteness of Peirce's endorsement of "all the phases" of Schelling's career is also adumbrated in the following brief synopsis.

In the first draft of the *Die Weltalter* (1811), Schelling interpreted Plato's text in the thematic perspective of expressing a new emphasis on *striving* (cf. Goethe's *Faust's* thematics of *Streben and Entwicklung!*) as distinguished from Plato's former dialogues' Socratic moralistic episteme of recollection (*anamnesis*) of the Forms (p. 59). He rather featured Plato's "new story of creation" as a *history, not a dialectical system* – rather, a "history" which, as well, reversed the trajectory of later neo-Platonic interpretations of hypostatic emanationism and Socratic moral inversion.<sup>85</sup> "Daringly", as he said of Plato, Schelling associated Plato's *chora* with the "Other Will" of "matter", namely, admitting "matter" as a *feminine principle* co-existing with or in God, into the heart of what preceded time.<sup>86</sup> And, most daringly, he conceived the project of revelation and redemption as being directed to the whole of nature (as also expressed most famously in the end section, "The All-Unity of Love", of his contemporary *Freiheitsschrift*).<sup>87</sup>

In the second draft of *Die Weltalter* of 1813 (Schelling, 1997) Schelling re-inscribed the same doctrine of the *chora*, now in an abstracter language of "the Other" as "What is Not", – the "Darkness" of the latter as the necessary basis of probabilistic truth and error, therefore again turning systematic dialectical emanationism on its head.

In the third draft of c.1815 (Schelling, 2000), Schelling reasserted the probabilistic episteme in association with the ontosemiotic implication of the *chora's* "darkness" as "What is Not". "Plato" – Schelling averred – "already showed in the magnificent dialogue about *what does not have being* how *that which has no being is necessary* and how, without this insight, certainty would be entirely indistinguishable from doubt and truth would be entirely indistinguishable from error" (p. 14-15). He then further expanded this probabilistic episteme in opposition to "[...] the Neo-Platonists, who no longer understood Plato's real meaning. We, following the opposite direction, also recognize an extremity, below which there is nothing, but it is for us not something ultimate, *but something primary, out of which all things begin, an eternal beginning*, not a mere feebleness or lack in the being, but active negation" (p. 31-32. Emphasis added).

85 Schelling (2019, p. 62; 97; 143). We should recognize here that Schelling's frequent criticism of traditional neo-Platonic emanational and moral inversion concepts do not entirely and comprehensively render the ambiguous, and elusive expressions of Plotinus's own *Enneads*, which later received more specifically systematic consolidation in Proclus, more particularly in Iamblicus (Hegel's favorite), and in the soteriological agendas of the Christian neo-Platonists.

86 Schelling (2019, p. 74; 106; 161). "And in truth, who is not happy to remember in this context the sublime Plato? He was the first who dared to admit into the heart of what preceded time, what preceded even the free and sober spiritually ordered nature (*Wesen*) of divinity, a condition of wild movement that follows no rule and strives against all order. If what is similar to our own view is not able to escape the condemnation of the times, then let his name stand by our side as our protector [...] Plato speaks of matter as a principle that coexists with God. When doing so he seems to have had that standpoint before his eyes whereby God, although liberated (*gescheiden*) from his being, hovers up over this own shell as clarified spirit. If, however, one were to inquire into an earlier unity, in which God and matter were one, then one will have no other place to look except in that long-ago first nature that God has overcome in the process of first becoming God. For God too had to lift himself up out of a prior condition when he was not yet God, just as humans beings were long trapped in a condition in which, possibly human, they were not actually so. And already for the longest time, we have declared that everything that lies beyond the true personal being of the Divinity should properly be called nature. Only the spirit of God is to be called God himself. In the same way, only the spirit in human beings can rightly be called human" (Schelling, 2019, p. 161-162).

87 *Ibid.* p. 161. See also: "There is thus an eternal exchange between what arises and what disappears until the whole of time, embracing everything, and equal to eternity, is developed into one living being that at the highest stage of the developmental process emerges with necessity. Once this is attained, all the works of time receive their final confirmation. For everything has been completely unfurled, the contraction, henceforth posited in its entirety as past, can once again operate in complete freedom". "After being has thus been unfolded to its highest point, and after it has been completely taken apart and articulated (*auseinandergesetzt*) by time, the contracting force that bears all things emerges fully justified. The last effect through which the entire process closes itself off is this: that, as if in the ultimate grand finale, it posits as a unity everything that has been unfolded (without its being able to retract anything). In this way it brings forth the simultaneity between whatever has come into being, so that the fruits of different times live reunited in one time, circling about the leaves and organs of one and the same blossom, all gathered together around the point in the middle" [An image taken from Dante's *Paradiso*.] (*Ibid.*, p. 147).

The following sentences of the third draft of *Die Weltalter* (c.1815) do not explicitly refer to Plato's *Timaeus* but quite recognizably continue Schelling's thematics of the "All-Unity of God's Love" he expressed in the consummating section of the *Freiheitsschrift*:

There is only a feeling of health in the healthy body when the unity that presides over it continuously holds down the movement that deviates from and conflicts with its harmony. Likewise in God, there would be no life and no joy of life were the now subordinated forces not in constant possibility of fanning the flames of the contradiction against unity, albeit also unremittingly calmed anew and reconciled by the feeling of the beneficent unity that holds the forces down.<sup>88</sup>

Among other things, this passage is redolent with Schelling's speculative Trinitarian conception of the purposive activity of the Holy Spirit (World-Soul!) in its loving and joyous function of beneficent unification of life's contingencies – a conception of revelatory and redemptive immediacy *toto caelo* different than Hegel's *Geist*'s dialectically mediated "end run" toward Absolute Consciousness. And arguably once again, Schelling's revolutionary theosemiosis of Plato's *Timaeus* here qualifies as provenance to Peirce's soon to be declared Buddhisto-Christian religiosity of God as "Cherishing Love". As well, it looms as the smoothly functioning key to unlock the millennia of fundamental teachings and spiritual practices of the world-religions which are premised on a bottom-line logic of non-dichotomy of the world and the divine – (for one example, as in Nagarjuna's classical Mahayana synechistic logic of "the non-duality of samsara and nirvana").

We have seen that Schelling was working on this synechistic logic from the earliest pages of his *Naturphilosophie*. So then, in another such extension of this theosemiotic interpretant of millennia of philosophical and spiritual traditions, Schelling's third draft of *The Ages of the World* daringly cites Plato's dialogue: "Hence, here is the moment where, according to Plato [citing *Timaeus* 30A], God can be thought of as in a struggle with wild, unruly matter or nature. But the God for which this can be said is only the possible God, or God insofar as God is just nature and hence, not actually God".<sup>89</sup>

*Timaeus* 30A refers to a "wild, unruly matter or nature" (*eine wilde unbotmässige Materie*) that is the Receptacle (*chora*), generative of all becoming of being and cognition. Schelling's actual God, on the other side of the interpollent non-divide, constitutes the ideal pole of this doctrine of objective idealism.

I will now speculate that both poles are co-implicated in Peirce's interpollent agapistic thematics of Firstness and Thirdness in *Evolutionary Love* (1893) which endorsed Schelling's "daring" reconfiguration of Plato's *Timaeus* by way of theoretically advancing the single thread of a dynamically synechistic logic of interpenetrating opposites that is traceable to his earliest *Naturphilosophie*. And as we will further see, Peirce's tritistic categorology, from *A Guess at the Riddle* (1887-1888) on, patently absorbed Schelling's redefinition of Plato's *Timaeus* in scientifically and mathematically grounded terms of a cosmogonic "universe perfused with signs". Peirce's earlier episteme of pragmatism grew into a fully-fledged though necessarily "vague" or apophatic pragmatism of Transcendentalist transparency which in effect synthesized the two versions of the *Timaeus*.

#### 4.4 Peirce's Version of Schelling's Interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*

In a first approximation, Peirce's endorsement of "all phase of Schelling's career" consisted of articulation of a "keystone" principle of synechism underpinning his cosmology of "energetic reasonableness" which strive to subsume the spontaneous, ungroundable "variescences" of Firstness and the resistant "outward clashes" of Secondness in open-ended "world"-realizations of Thirdness –

<sup>88</sup> Schelling (2000, p. 47).

<sup>89</sup> Schelling (2000, 94).



Peirce's hyperbolic "universe perfused with signs" as symbolizations of the inexhaustible continuum of the Platonic World.

Which is to say that in endorsing Schelling's career Peirce's mature worldview rendered the key variables of Plato's *Timaeus* in even more comprehensive registers. In short form, the essential variables are as follows. In Schelling's terms of Nature's *agon* of unsublatable creativity (the radical indeterminacy of the *chora*), combined – I venture to add – with Kant's heuristic of "the lawfulness of the contingent" considered, however, via Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, as not only subjectively but also objectively regulative, Peirce cosmosemiosis synechistically reconfigured both the radical Firstness, i.e., "raw energy" indeterminacy, of the Receptacle (*chora*) and the "would be" character of intelligible Thirdness (corresponding to Plato's World-Soul).<sup>90</sup> Among many other places, Peirce expressed his version of the *Timaeus* in his ingeniously conjured "fairy-dream" of MS 310:

Now what will you dream? How would you like to have it, a dream of the perfume of attar of roses, or just a pure unalloyed sense of bliss?" If it were me, I should say, "Not a bit! On the contrary, it must be a dream of extreme variety and must seem to embrace an eventful history extending through millions of years. It shall be a drama in which numberless living caprices shall jostle and work themselves out in larger and stronger harmonies and antagonisms, and ultimately execute intelligent reasonablenesses of existence more and more intellectually stupendous and bring forth new designs still more admirable and prolific". And if the fairy should ask one what the *denouement* should be, I should reply, "Let my intelligence in the dream develop powers infinitely beyond what I can now conceive and let me at last find that boundless reason utterly helpless to comprehend the glories of the thoughts that are to become materialized in the future, and that will be *denouement* enough for me. I may then return to the total unanalyzed impression of it. I have described it. Now let me experience it". My taste must doubtless be excessively crude, because I have no esthetic education; but as I am at present advised the esthetic Quality appears to me to be the total unanalyzable impression of a reasonableness that has expressed itself in a creation. It is a pure Feeling but a feeling that is the impress of a Reasonableness that Creates. It is the Firstness that truly belongs to a Thirdness in its achievement of Secondness. As a matter of opinion, I believe that that Glory shines out in everything like the Sun and that any esthetic odiousness is merely our Unfeelingness resulting from obscurations due to our own moral and intellectual aberrations.<sup>91</sup>

Plato's *Timaeus* in a nutshell, displayed here in this fairytale of cosmosemiosis!<sup>92</sup> Elsewhere Peirce very convincingly argued for the primacy of our phenomenological consciousness of Firstness in examples of canopies of trees and other natural phenomena which we naturally take for granted as "irregular" [Schelling's *regel-los* "irreducible remainder"], in contrast to the slighter instances of regularity which alone call for reasonable scientific explanation. He conveyed a strong sense of the *non dicitur* or *pre-dicitur* Primans of pure feeling and the Secondans of recalcitrant otherness that are components of the non-nominalistic "would be" nourishing character of nature's habit-forming generalities discoverable in

<sup>90</sup> See Guardiano (2017), *Aesthetic Transcendentalism*, which connects Plato's *chora* to Peirce's cosmogony in the same way. In another paper I propose to spell out the corresponding doctrine in Emerson's essay *Fate* (1860) which in fact Emerson wrote after receiving a translation of Schelling's *Freiheitschrift* (See Greenham, 2015). Emerson articulated the binary of the Receptacle and World-Soul in the terms of "fate" and "power", and combined the two together in the terms of "building an altar to the Blessed Necessity". His essay "Illusions" (1860) articulated the same theme traceable to Schelling and Plato's *Timaeus*. Joseph Urbas's "Emersonian 'Casualty': A Platonic 'Wandering Cause'?" has already surveyed this textual ground in an astute analysis of Emerson's text. (Urbas, 2022).

<sup>91</sup> MS 310.

<sup>92</sup> Nicholas Guardiano (2017, p. 68-74) in *Aesthetic Transcendentalism*, and passim has an expanded commentary *par excellence* on MS 310 in the focus of Peirce's cosmology of the possibilities of ever-increasing aesthetic "variescences" of the Platonic World.

connatural relation with our scientific intelligence. As in the *Timaeus*, Peirce's Firstness of Thirdness (of the Receptacle) and the Thirdness of Firstness (of the World-Soul) are the two complementary sides of *the same story*.<sup>93</sup>

Peirce also expressed this doctrine in the complementary terms of *Omne symbolum de symbolo*, while importing his "keystone" logic of conresent synechism that constitutes the very "life" of the sign – that is, the sign's "SOUL" or PSYCHE, as the animating principle of cosmo-semiotic life:

Symbols grow. They come into being by development out of other signs, particularly from likenesses or from mixed signs partaking of the nature of likeness and symbols. We think only in signs. These mental signs are of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts. If a man makes a true symbol, it is by thoughts involving concepts. So it is only out of symbols that a new symbol can grow. *Omne symbolum de symbolo*. A symbol, once in being, spreads through the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows. Such words as force, law, wealth, marriage, bear for us very different meanings from those they were to our barbarous ancestors. The symbol may, with Emerson's sphinx, say to man,

Of thine eye I am eyebeam.<sup>94</sup>

Here too, in its synergy of growth, Peirce's *Omne symbolum de symbolo* functions as a semiotic "Emersonian eyebeam" correlate of Plato's World-Soul in the face of the Receptacle's unbounded possibilities of determinacy.

But more. Peirce conspicuously implicated the essential legacy of the *Timaeus* – mediated by Schelling, Goethe, Emerson, and others – in his celebrated *A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God* (1908), for which he took three months diligently writing and rewriting (EP2: 435). In speaking of "the three Universes of Experience", Peirce declared:

The third Universe comprises everything whose Being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes. Such is everything which is essentially a Sign, – not the mere body of the Sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the *Sign's Soul*, which has its Being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind. Such, too, is a living consciousness, and such a life, is the power of growth of a plant. Such is a living institution, – a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social "movement".<sup>95</sup>

Here Peirce's *intermediary* Sign-Soul – which made its debut in the phenomenological language of "Man-Sign" in *Some Consequence of Four Incapacities* (1868)<sup>96</sup> – absorbed Schelling's career-long foundational tenet of symbolically organic interpollence, transmuting it in his cosmo-symbolic process philosophy which prioritizes "psychic causation" – the Life of the Spirit – in syn-energetic evolutionary realizations of the "idea-potentialities" of the Platonic World.

As well, the *intermediary* nature of the Sign-Soul predicates Peirce's "vague" apophysis of origination in a "pure zero" of Nothingness and consequent possibilities of habit-forming evolutions of cosmic reasonableness. In such terms the nature of the underpinning "pure zero" of Nothingness is

93 The confines of this paper do not allow me to explore here a tangential subject, namely of the complementary contrast between Ivo Ibrí's astute rendering of a Schellingian *poiesis* of "the nameless things", and Emerson's doctrine of *The Poet* (1844) which represents the poet as humanity's representative "New Namer". I suggest interpretation of Ibrí's sense of *poiesis* (Ibrí, 2022) as grounded in the *Timaeus*'s Receptacle, Emerson's Poet in the civilizing function of the World-Soul. Ibrí's "nameless things" has a classical precedent in the Tao of Taoism ("The Tao that can be named is not the Tao") and its many variations in Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu.

94 *What is a Sign*, 1894 (EP2:10). Guardiano, "Transcendentalist Encounter with a Universe of Signs", (Guardiano, 2021); Dilworth, *The Sphinx* (1841), in Wayne (ed., 2010, p. 246-248); Nöth, *Peirce's Guess at the Sphinx's Riddle: The Symbol of the Mind's Eyebeam* (Nöth, 2014).

95 EP 2:435.

96 EP 1:38.

itself a *Symbol!* – namely, *the nameless Ur-Symbol!* – of the Receptacle’s open possibilities for cosmic evolution in a hyperbolic universe:

But this pure zero is the nothing of not having been born. There is no individual thing, no compulsion outward nor inward, no law. It is the germinal nothing, in which the whole universe is involved or foreshadowed. As such, it is absolutely undefined and unlimited possibility – boundless possibility. There is no compulsion and no law. It is boundless freedom.<sup>97</sup>

Peirce astutely expressed this *synergy* of the radical indeterminate “nameless” Firstness (the Receptacle) and of the Thirdness function of the World-Soul in “New Elements” (1904), which was another expression of irreversible, finious, psychic causation (and of the participatory Man-sign) in terms of *the symbolic entelechy of reality*:

But the most characteristic aspect of a symbol is its aspect as related to its interpretant; because a symbol is distinguished as a sign which becomes such by virtue of determining its interpretant. An interpretant of a symbol is an outgrowth of the symbol. [...] A symbol has a power of reproducing itself, and that essentially, involves a power of the symbol to cause a real fact; and though I desire to avoid metaphysics, yet when a false metaphysics invades the province of logic, I am forced to say that nothing can be more futile than to attempt to form a conception of the universe which shall overlook the power of representations to cause real facts. What is the purpose of trying to form a conception of the universe if it is not to render things intelligible? [...] If we are to explain the universe, we must assume there was in the beginning a state of things in which there was nothing, no reaction and no quality, no matter, no consciousness, no space and no time, but just nothing at all. Not determinately nothing. For what is determinately not A supposes the being of A in some mode. Utter indetermination. But a symbol alone is indeterminate. Therefore, [the pure] Nothing, the indeterminate of the absolute beginning, is a symbol. That is the way in which the beginning of things can alone be understood. Now it is the essential nature of a symbol that it determines an interpretant, which is itself a symbol. A symbol, therefore, produces an endless series of interpretants. [...] The symbol represents itself to be represented; and that representedness is real owing to its utter vagueness. For all that is represented must be thoroughly born out.

[For reality is compulsive. But the compulsiveness is absolutely *hic et nunc*. It is for an instant and it is gone. Let it be no more and it is absolutely nothing. The reality only exists as an element of regularity. And the regularity is the symbol. Reality, therefore, can only be regarded as the limit of the endless series of symbols.

A symbol is essentially a purpose, that is to say, is a representation that seeks to make itself definite, or seeks to produce an interpretant more definite than itself. For its whole signification consists in it determining an interpretant; so that it is from its interpretant that it derives the actuality of its signification.

[...] A symbol is an embryonic reality endowed with power of growth into its very truth, the very entelechy of reality. This appears mystical and mysterious simply because we insist on remaining blind to what is plain, that there can be no reality which has not the life of a symbol.

[...] A chaos of reactions utterly without any approach to law is absolutely nothing, and therefore pure nothing was such a chaos. Then pure indeterminacy having developed determinate possibilities, creation consisted in mediating between the

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97 CP 6: 215-217.

lawless reactions and the general possibilities by the influx of a symbol. This symbol was the purpose of creation. Its object was the entelechy of being which is the ultimate representation].<sup>98</sup>

Just the year prior, in *Seven Systems of Metaphysics* (1903), Peirce penned what may be interpreted as another synthesis of the essential import of Plato's *Timaeus*, combining the ever-incipient Firstness of the Receptacle with the qualitative realizations of the World-Soul. I should, furthermore, propose here to intimate that Peirce's doctrine of the symbol as "the purpose of creation" resonates with and conveys Schelling's theme of "the all-unity of love" in the fullness of time, as per previous citations of Schelling *Freiheitsschrift* and *Die Weltalter*.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, if you ask me what part Qualities can play in the economy of the Universe, I shall reply that the Universe is a vast representamen, a great symbol of God's purpose, working out its conclusion in living realities. Now every symbol must have, organically attached to it, its Indices of Reactions and its Icons of Qualities, and such part as these reactions and these qualities play in an argument, that they of course play in the Universe, that Universe being precisely an argument. In the little bit that you or I can make out of this huge demonstration, our perceptual judgments are the premises for us, and these perceptual judgments have icons as their predicates, in which icons Qualities are immediately presented. But what is first for us is not first in nature. The premisses of Nature's own processes are all the independent uncaused elements of fact that go to make up the variety of nature, which the necessitarian supposes to have been all in existence from the foundation of the world, but which the Tychist supposes are continually receiving new accretions. Those premisses of nature, however, though they are not the perceptual facts that are premisses to us, nevertheless must resemble them in being premisses. We can only imagine what they are by comparing them with the premisses for us. As premisses they must involve Qualities.<sup>100</sup>

Dense as it is, the challenge is to understand that Peirce's sense of the Universe as a vast symbol of God's purpose working itself out in living realities corresponds to Schelling's agapistic complementarity of the revelatory and redemptive dimensions of creation.

Now, Plato's earlier Dialogues already inscribed foresights of the *Timaeus*'s double story. As Socrates describes in the *Phaedrus* – a dialogue set outside the city walls in the scenic countryside – PSYCHE is the fundamental source and origin of change immanently residing within all living beings. (*Phaedrus*, 245-246a; *Phaedo*, 105d).<sup>101</sup> But Plato eventually outgrew his early doctrine of the Forms, changing them into mathematical forms aligned with Aristotle's criticism of the Divided Line in the *Republic* and other earlier dichotomized Socratic tenets of the Forms. Plato's "second beginning" in the *Timaeus* bears witness to his transition to his later position concerning the double nature of WORLD-PSYCHE played out in the complementary terms of the Firstness of Thirdness and the Thirdness of Firstness – and to its enduring truth exhibited in its post-critical modernization by Schelling, Peirce, and Whitehead.<sup>102</sup>

Along the long way to post-critical (post-Kant) modernity, the symbolical significations of Plato's Receptacle/World-Soul carried over into the texts of the Stoic traditions of later antiquity. The Stoics advanced the Platonic and Aristotelian tenets of qualitative registers of animating soul against the materialistic hedonism of the Epicureans. Plotinus then absorbed Stoicism's own materialistic metaphoric of World-Soul in his *Enneads*'s Third Hypostasis of Soul. The World-Soul, as the "elder sister" of the

98 *New Elements*, 1904 (EP 2:322-324).

99 See fn. 87 above.

100 *Seven Systems of Metaphysics*, 1903 (EP2: 193-94).

101 I am indebted to Nicholas Guardiano for this reference and for his ongoing elaboration of Peirce's poetics.

102 EP 2:35; see Harris (1976); Dilworth (2022).

Third Hypostasis, arranges, moves, vivifies, and unifies the cosmos, whereby she is also the principle of a universal (magical) sympathy in it (IV/4:32). She is “above yet one” with particular souls (IV/9), “one and many” at the same time, accounting for how the lower reflects the higher as well as the determined places and harmonious organicity of living beings (*Enneads* IV/1-2; IV, 7; IV, 9, V/1). Schelling, we saw, adapted this “elder sister”, while rejecting hyperstatic emanationism, which he construed as the reverse mirror image of Hegelian dialectics. When shorn of its emanationist and Socratic moralism – which Peirce also accomplished in interpreting the later-phase Plato as having mathematized the Forms, – it is possible, ala Schelling, to understand Plotinus’s One as the principle of ecstatic creativity coinciding with the “prime matter” of the Receptacle.

A fuller tracing of the influence of Plato’s *Timaeus* – in Plotinus, Proclus, and Iamblicus, in medieval Christian neo-Platonism (Augustine, Eruigena, Bonavenure, Cusanus), in multiple Arabian schools of neo-Platonism, in Renaissance neo-Platonism (Pico della Mirandola, et al.) and in the Rhineland mystics (Meister Eckhart, Boehme, et al.). – leads through Spinoza on to Schelling and to Peirce’s endorsement of Schelling.

Schelling’s contribution to this recombinant Platonic line consisted in rejecting the orthodox neo-Platonic emanationism and moral introversion – which carried on in Kant’s Fichte’s, and Hegel’s “negative” “reflections” and moral/political priorities – in favor of an affirmative ontosemiosis of the Life of the Spirit. Synechistically, the Receptacle is the *concentrative*, the World-Soul the *expansive*, forces in God’s Life and Personality, and in human freedom’s partaking of both aspects in its capacity to do good and evil. In contrast to the right- and leftwing Hegelians of his day, Schelling, not Hegel, can be said to have invented the *history of philosophy*, placing the “great Kant” as its strategic second founder after its origins in classical antiquity, but considering Kant as having opened the door to the “negative” trajectories of criticality in philosophical modernity. In contrast, Schelling’s historicist revival of the “story” of the *Timaeus* opened maximally “positive” vistas to such authors as Coleridge, Emerson, Peirce, Bergson, Whitehead.

Of the modern inheritors of this mainstream, I argue, Peirce’s mature conceptualization of the Sign-Soul, based on his “keystone” cosmo-semiosis of the concrescent synechism of hylopathic psychic causation in a radically tychistic universe where the Man-sign discovers he has a participatory *Mitwissenschaft* role to play, achieved the *par excellence* modern re-interpretation of Plato’s *Timaeus*. Peirce re-gathered the two versions of *Timaeus*’s creation story in terms of the Receptacle’s Firstness of Thirdness and the World-Soul’s Thirdness of Firstness. His tritistic version bids fair to constitute the gold standard expression of evolutionary bio- as well as cosmo-semiosis in today’s republic of letters – programmatically undercutting, by the way, contemporary nominalistic practices of “dead object” empirical positivism and cybernetics, not to speak of the deflationary moral and political cant in the “rhetorical” mal-practices of postmodern humanism.<sup>103</sup>

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103 One of the best places to find Peirce’s overall critique of nominalism is in his 14 March 1909 letter to Lady Welby, See CHARLES S. PEIRCE’S LETTERS TO LADY WELBY, ed. by Irwin C. Lieb (New Haven, Ct.: Whitlock’s Inc., for the Graduate Philosophy Club of Yale University, 1953).

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