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Materialism without flinching: beyond the pleasure principle in Freud, Peirce, and Wallace Stevens

Materialismo sem hesitação: além do princípio do prazerem Freud, Peirce e Wallace Stevens

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Abstract:¹ This article investigates the theoretical convergence between the philosophy of Charles S. Peirce and the metapsychology of Sigmund Freud through the guiding notion of “materialism without flinching.” Its primary objective is to demonstrate that, despite their distinct intellectual projects, both thinkers developed complementary accounts of mind, affectivity, and civilization grounded in a realistic and anti-dualistic understanding of human experience. The central hypothesis is that Peirce’s semiotic pragmatism and Freud’s psychoanalytic theory converge in their rejection of Cartesian introspection, metaphysical apriorism, and conceptions of psychic fulfillment based on states of absolute quiescence or transcendental certainty. Through a comparative hermeneutic approach, the article examines Peirce’s categories, objective idealism, fallibilism, and doctrine of evolutionary love alongside Freud’s theories of the pleasure principle, the death drive, the unconscious, and the civilizing function of the superego. It argues that both authors conceive human life as an open-ended process of semiosis in which pleasure and suffering, Eros and Thanatos, creativity and conflict, are constitutive dimensions of personal and cultural development. The analysis further highlights the privileged role of science and art as expressions of humanity’s highest civilizational ideals, capable of transforming affective energies into increasingly complex forms of reasonableness and social cooperation. The article concludes that Peirce and Freud share a common vision of civilization as a hopeful yet fallibilistic project, sustained by inquiry, symbolic mediation, and the continuous cultivation of higher forms of human life.

Keywords: Freud. Peirce. Pragmatism. Psychoanalysis.

Resumo: Este artigo investiga a convergência teórica entre a filosofia de Charles S. Peirce e a metapsicologia de Sigmund Freud a partir da noção orientadora de “materialismo sem hesitação”. Seu objetivo principal é demonstrar que, apesar de seus diferentes projetos intelectuais, ambos os autores desenvolveram concepções complementares da mente, da afetividade e da civilização, fundamentadas em uma compreensão realista e antidualista da experiência humana. A hipótese central é que o pragmatismo semiótico de Peirce e a teoria psicanalítica de Freud convergem na rejeição da introspecção cartesiana, dos apriorismos metafísicos e das concepções de realização psíquica fundadas em estados de quietude absoluta ou de certeza transcendental. Por meio de uma abordagem hermenêutica comparativa, o artigo examina as categorias peirceanas, o idealismo objetivo, o falibilismo e a doutrina do amor evolutivo em paralelo às teorias freudianas do princípio do prazer, da pulsão de morte, do inconsciente e da função civilizatória do superego. Argumenta-se que ambos os pensadores concebem a vida humana como um processo aberto de semiose, no qual prazer e sofrimento, Eros e Thanatos, criatividade e conflito constituem dimensões fundamentais do desenvolvimento pessoal e cultural. A análise destaca ainda o papel privilegiado da ciência e da arte como expressões dos mais elevados ideais civilizatórios da humanidade, capazes de transformar energias afetivas em formas cada vez mais complexas de razoabilidade e cooperação social. Conclui-se que Peirce e Freud compartilham uma visão comum da civilização como um projeto



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simultaneamente esperançoso e falibilista, sustentado pela investigação, pela mediação simbólica e pelo cultivo contínuo de formas superiores de vida humana.

Palavras-chave: Freud. Peirce. Pragmatismo. Psicanálise.

*Only the real, rare, true scientific minds can endure doubt,
which is attached to all our knowledge.*

(Sigmund Freud)

1 Introduction

You well recognize “materialism without flinching” as Peirce’s own considered words inscribed in the prospectus to his key essay, “A Guess at the Riddle” (1878-1888). I propose here to enlist the genius of Freud under the same heading. To sweeten the pot, I will add certain poetic *aperçus* of Wallace Stevens to illumine this effort of comparative hermeneutic.

Admittedly it is a free-fall interpretation. However, I am happy to report on the pioneering—and now vintage—work of Vincent Colapietro’s several sterling articles devoted to what he termed the “intense cross-fertilization between Peirce and Freud”.² More recently, Ivo Assad Ibri, in addition to his magisterial writings on Peirce’s architectonic metaphysics, has devoted several stimulating contributions of theoretical interfaces relevant to this topic.³

As a first approximation, let me cite Freud —the “man who came uninvited to dinner” who sometimes says unexpected, unwanted things. The theme of Guess at the Riddle actually surfaces in a number of authors (for example, in Kant, Goethe, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and very prominently of course in Emerson and Peirce.) Freud contributed his unexpected “guess,” in the perspective, he says, not of “theoretical but practical interests,” in the regard to the question “what starts the work of a child’s investigation activity.” Freud’s answer: it is “the menace of the condition of his existence through the actual or expected arrival of a new child,”—“a menace which triggers “the fear of losing the care and love which is connected with it.” “Corresponding with the history of this awakening,” Freud continues, “the first problem with which the child occupies himself is “not the question of the sexes, but the riddle: Where do children come from “In a distorted form which can easily be unravelled,” Freud concludes, “this is the same riddle which was proposed by the Theban Sphinx.”⁴

Freud’s metapsychological semiosis as to the origins of human aggression and socialization in the formation and resolution of the Oedipal Complex opens many points of contact with Peirce who, in the generation before Freud, probed the secret of the Sphinx in his own versions of psycho-, bio-, and cosmo-semiosis. The possibility of such a cross-fertilization prompts the premise of my comparative hermeneutic here—namely, that Peirce and Freud ought to be recognized, *and recognized together*, as having contributed more consequential ideas than most other theorists and practitioners in our modern times to the broad assessment of the *biggest of philosophical riddles*—namely, of what human civilization is, and should be, and what we can be doing in it. Accordingly, I propose here to assign myself the possibility of finding significant points of convergence between Peirce and Freud on such a foundational semiosis of civilization—a project which will further require pointing to its key force-multipliers, Science and Art, which arguably are the key manifestations of humanity’s phylogenetically achieved and achievable Super-Ego Ideals.

² See, Colapietro (1988, entries a, b, c, d, e).

³ See, Ibri (2021d)—“On the Bottomless Lake of Firstness: Conjectures on the Synthetic Power of Consciousness”; and IBRI (2018e)—“Reflections on the Presence of Peirce’s Category of Firstness in Schelling and Schopenhauer’s Philosophy.” I owe local thanks to Brian Waldbaum, my personal “philosophical Freud guru” whose co-authorial presence pervades this paper; and to my young colleague, Andre Kolak, always an astute interlocuter on Peirce and Freud.

⁴ *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905), p. 595, in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. by Dr., A. A. Brill (New York: The Modern Library, 1938).

To launch this theme, let me cite certain lines of Shakespeare's artistry:

How like a yonker or a prodigal,
The scarfed bark puts from her native bay,
Hugg'd and embraced by the strumpet wind!
How like the prodigal doth she return,
With overweather'd ribs and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the strumpet wind!
(Merchant of Venice, 2,6.15-18).

"Beggar'd by the strumpet wind"—what a civilizing "bawd of euphony"! (Wallace Stevens)—what a polysemic metaphor telling the story of whoremaster man!

You will recall that Peirce cited the same lines in his initial articulation of his Three Categories in "A Guess at the Riddle" (1887-88). Shakespeare's lines in fact can be read as illustrating all three of Peirce's Categories. Peirce intentionally, while presuming the Shakespearean education of his readership, concentrated on the *hard lesson* of the ships' "overweather'd and ragged sails" in illustration of his Category of Secondness (dimension of brutal otherness, alterity, action and reaction). He elided Shakespeare's salacious synergy of the "strumpet wind,"—itself a rare intra-verse repetition in the literary protocols of English poetic style.)

Now, let us imagine Freud reading the same lines (and Freud was an astute reader of Shakespeare, and, as we will see, of Goethe and Schiller).⁵ Had Freud the occasion, he would have jumped on the same lines, commenting on the implicit "sexual" nuance of the "strumpet wind," which captures Shakespeare's bawdy euphony in fuller libidinal nuance – to wit, cue for his psychodynamics of the equi-primordial powers of Eros and Thanatos, which traces a world of pleasures and pains, frustrations, renunciations, and sublimations of life's ineluctable necessities of "hunger and love" (ego libido and object libido) down to our race's phylogenetic inheritance in the Oedipus complex.

Well, then, the poor yonker-prodigal stands for myself too. "Battered ship, bruised ego"—verily, the story of my life! And perhaps of everyone's life:

5 Freud's serious interest in works of art is my premise here: "I may say at once that I am no connoisseur in art, but simply a layman. I have often observed that the subject-matter of works of art has a stronger attraction for me than their formal and technical qualities, though to the artist their value lies first and foremost in these latter. I am unable rightly to appreciate many of the methods used and the effects obtained in art. I state this so as to secure the reader's indulgence for the attempt I propose to make here.

Nevertheless, works of art do exercise a powerful effect on me, especially those of literature and sculpture, less often of painting. This has occasioned me, when I have been contemplating such things, to spend a long time before them trying to apprehend them in my own way, i.e. to explain to myself what their effect is due to. Wherever I cannot do this, as for instance with music, I am almost incapable of obtaining any pleasure. Some rationalistic, or perhaps analytic, turn of mind in me rebels against being moved by a thing without knowing why I am thus affected and what it is that affects me.

This has brought me to recognize the apparently paradoxical fact that precisely some of the grandest and most overwhelming creations of art are still unsolved riddles to our understanding. We admire them, we feel overawed by them, but we are unable to say what they represent to us. I am not sufficiently well-read to know whether this fact has already been remarked upon; possibly, indeed, some writer on aesthetics has discovered that this state of intellectual bewilderment is a necessary condition when a work of art is to achieve its greatest effects. It would be only with the greatest reluctance that I could bring myself to believe in any such necessity.

I do not mean that connoisseurs and lovers of art find no words with which to praise such objects to us. They are eloquent enough, it seems to me. But usually in the presence of a great work of art each says something different from the other; and none of them says anything that solves the problem for the unpretending admirer. In my opinion, what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist's intention, in so far as he has succeeded in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it. I realize that this cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension; what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create. But why should the artist's intention not be capable of being communicated and comprehended in words, like any other fact of mental life? Perhaps where great works of art are concerned this would never be possible without the application of psycho-analysis. The product itself after all must admit of such an analysis, if it really is an effective expression of the intentions and emotional activities of the artist. To discover his intention, though, I must first find out the meaning and content of what is represented in his work; I must, in other words, be able to interpret it. It is possible, therefore, that a work of art of this kind needs interpretation, and that until I have accomplished that interpretation I cannot come to know why I have been so powerfully affected. I even venture to hope that the effect of the work will undergo no diminution after we have succeeded in thus analysing it." ["The Moses of Michelangelo," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIII (1913-1914), trans. James Strachey. *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10. 172-173.]

MEN MADE OUT OF WORDS

What would we be without the sexual myth,
The human revery or poem of death?

Castratos of moonmash—Life consists
Of propositions about life. The human

Revery is a solitude in which
We compose these propositions, torn by dreams,

By the terrible incantations of defeats
And by the fear that defeats and dreams are one.

The whole race is a poet that writes down
The eccentric propositions of its fate.
Wallace Stevens, “Transport to Summer” (1947)

2 Katastemic pleasure, nirvana, and neo-cartesian epoche

In this limited presentation, I cannot of course explicate Freud’s full meta-psychological theory inscribed in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and other late-phase classics. My limited hermeneutic will focus on certain considerations of bio-, psycho-, and cosmo-semiosis on which Peirce and Freud agreed.

As another first approximation, let me stretch the subject of life’s pleasures and pains to *analogous* issues in ancient philosophies of East and West. Food for historical comparison, take the ancient concept of *ataraxia*, life’s putative possibility of achievement of a consummate “non-disturbance of mind,” versions of which were front and center moral claims in the schools of the Skeptics, Epicureans, and Stoics. Epicurus, for his *locus classicus*, postulated a distinction between the *stormy* “kinetic pleasures” of sensual life and such a *halcyon* “katastemic pleasure»—the latter a veritable kind of “quiescent libido” as the existentially realizable *telos* of the ethical life.⁶

Epicurus’s semiosis of an ataraxic “katastemic pleasure” as life’s consummate *telos* appears to have conflated, if not overrode, his predecessor Aristotle’s distinction between “pleasure” (*hedone*) and “happiness” (*eudaimonia*). Aristotle, for his part, rejected the conflation, as in an early passage of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,

These [bad effects of pleasure and pain] are the reason why people actually define the virtues as ways of being unaffected and undisturbed [by pleasures and pains]. They are wrong, however, because they speak of being unaffected without qualification, not of being unaffected in the right or wrong way, at the right or wrong time, and the added qualifications. (EN II, 3, 1104b)

as well as in extended analyses in Book 7, and again in Book 9, where he devoted the first six chapter to pleasure (*hedone*) and the last three chapters to happiness (*eudaimonia*).

Well, this classical confrontation between Aristotle and Epicurus on the natures of pleasure

6 See Letter to Menoeceus [Diogenes Laertius 10.121-135] in *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, ed. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson, (Hackett, 1988), 23-25.

and happiness has been a force-multiplier of signification in the world history of philosophy. For a conspicuous resemblance, the *telos* of the moral life inscribed in Epicurus's *telos* of "katastemic pleasure" finds innumerable analogues in ancient Eastern religious/moral claims as to a blissful, non-backsliding "Enlightenment" realized in transcendental freedom from life's kinetic desires, actions, and anxieties. It was the common coin of Hindu (Yoga) and Buddhist ascetics to claim such a NIRVANA condition freed from the SAMSAIC world of pleasures and pains.⁷ They "practiced" what Freud called an "ethics of quietude" in abstemious retirement from the world, as did practitioners over centuries of medieval Christian monasticism (not to mention such post-medieval icons of saintly asceticism as Blaise Pascal, among others).

But now let me stretch the historical analogies further. Such a claim of "libidinal quiescence", epistemic and moral, arguably functions as well in certain modern strategies of *epoche*—notably in Phenomenology's putative practice of "bracketing out" qua "suspension of judgment" of the "natural attitude," ministrant to a kind of neo-Cartesian apriorism—a putative transcendental reductionism opening a "pure" noetic lifeworld of essential intuitions of this stamp,—in some instances, I will add, even fueling a one-eyed-Cyclopean DEI radicalized "virtue signaling" morality and politics in contemporary Continental scholastic circles.⁸

The provenance of this style of Continental Phenomenology traces to Descartes's famous deployment of his *cogito ergo sum*, which, overriding common experience's *sum ergo cogito* with regard to belief in the natural attitude, programmatically launches such an *epoche* that brings all possibilities of sensible belief under suspicion. Descartes accomplished such a *finesse de esprit*, a veritable firewall of transcendental consciousness in his First Meditation; followed by a solipsistic affirmation of his own purely innate "finite thinking essence" in the Second Meditation: then with his discovery of a second purely innate essence, namely of an "infinite thinking essence" in the Third Meditation—so as to allow him finally ascertain "he is no longer alone in the world."

It is crucial to note that in this respect of his no longer being metaphysically "alone," Descartes's *epoche* of epistemic introversion reprised the mainstream Platonic paradigm of the soul's *anamnesis* (recollection, remembrance) of his mind's transcendental origin in divine intelligence and noumenal

7 In Mahayana Buddhism this nirvanic freedom is referred to as "a revolution in the personality basis," which is the existential site of Tathagatagarba, "the birthing of the Buddhature." Versions of this teaching run through all the forms of Chinese and Japanese Mahayana.

8 Cf. Santayana on Husserl's *Ideas zu einer reinen Phaenomenologie und phaenomenologische Philosophie*, von Edmund Husserl, Halle, 1922, in George Santayana, *The Realm of Essence: Book First of Realms of Being* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927: "... all the emphasis falls on the word pure; objects, in order to enter the realm of this phenomenology, must be thoroughly purified. This purification consists in reducing the object to its intrinsic and evident character, disregarding all question of its existence or non-existence, or of its locus in nature; or, in my language, it consists in suspending animal faith, and living instead contemplatively, in the full intuition of some essence. This essence may be as complex and as rich in inner perspective as imagination may make it; it may span any depth of specious time, or intuited duration; every idea which science or faith may turn into a creed, or use in the description of existence, is in its spiritual immediacy a pure essence, a term given to contemplation, distinct logically and aesthetically; otherwise science and faith would be mere chatter, verbiage accompanying certain turns into action, not inner possessions or forms of thought. Nothing is therefore removed from experience by purifying it, except its distraction; and an essence, far from being an abstraction from a thing, is the whole of that thing as it ever can be directly given, or spiritually possessed. "Instead," says Husserl, "of setting up a natural world by a transcendental act of naive assertion, and being driven by the implications of that assertion to posit other transcendent things one after another, we put all these positings aside, we refrain from becoming accomplices in that act; and we direct our discerning, scrutinizing, contemplative glance upon the field of pure intuition in its absolute intrinsic being... We live henceforth in these acts of supervening attention, ranging over the infinite field of absolute immediacy—the bedrock of phenomenology."

"Geometry and phenomenology," we read in another place, "being sciences of pure essence, lay down nothing concerning real existences. Hence clear fictions will not only serve just as well for these constructions as do actual perception and experience, but often much better." "Pure or transcendental phenomenology is not a science of fact but a science of essences or forms. The phenomena of transcendental phenomenology are in their nature non-existent (*characterisiert als irreel*). All immediate data (*Erlebnisse*) transcendently purified are non-existent, and are situated out of all local relation (*Einordnung*) to the "real world"." "As the datum of personal experimental perception is a particular thing, so the datum of intuition is a pure essence." "Every science of fact or of experience must needs draw the fundamental terms of its theory from some formal ontology." "Immediate vision, not necessarily sensuous observation of things, but awareness yielding any original datum, no matter of what quality, is the ultimate source of validity for all rational assurance." "All that I believe to exist in the world of things has, in principle, only a presumptive existence." And finally, in answer to the inevitable reproach—as if it were a reproach!—of being a Platonist, the author says: "If 'object' meant 'existing object' and 'reality' meant 'existing reality,' then indeed to call Ideas objects and realities would be to indulge in a perverse hypothesis; but when the two are explicitly opposed, and when 'object' is defined as any theme of discourse whatsoever, what can be the remaining objection?" "Between immediacy and existence yawns a veritable abyss in the quality of being (*Sinn*). Existence is posited in perspectives, never given absolutely as it is, and has an accidental and relative status; whereas being in the immediate is certain and unconditioned, and by its very nature not subject to perspectives or given in an external view." (pp. 172-174)

intelligibility. Namely, his discovery that his mind's essence as finite thinking substance is grounded by what he called "the natural light of reason," which imported a metaphysical form of participation (Platonic *methexis*) through likeness (Platonic *homoiosis*) in the infinite and immaterial thinking substance of God's mind. (Here "Likeness" = Resemblance in the form of Affinity, or Connaturality). Having already put down sensuous imagination (in Meditations I and 2), Descartes's probing of the deep reflective interiority of his own *cogito* thus revealed a higher kind of "Imagination"—i.e. his mind's *imago Dei*, and hence its *imitatio Dei*—in which he claims to realize apodictic, i.e. absolute epistemic certitude of his own *cogito ergo sum*, which he declared to be coextensive with—on an epistemic and ontological parallel with—his mind's God-given power of the certitude of apodictic mathematical knowledge.⁹

Here Descartes is still ever so traditional. He repossessed Plato's super-natural light which had played out for centuries in Christian doctrines of the spiritual "mind's journey into God" (as for example in St. Bonaventure's canonical *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*) to ascend beyond the realm of sensual appearances to grasp the eternal forms of things. The source of this super-natural light is God's «illumination» that enlightens his *a priori* metaphysical eye and is the translucent guarantee of his soul's spiritual immortality. As is well known, while Descartes's "epoche" point of departure of the First Meditation already presaged a break with the authoritarian methods of medieval Christendom, his revolutionary agenda extended to the deliverances of the Sixth Meditation where, at the cost of his infamous metaphysical dichotomy of human mind and human body, he framed the theoretical justification for the Renaissance's new scientific reception (via Gassendi's translation and work on Lucretius's *De Rerum Naturae*) of the Epicurean materialism of "atoms and the void"—thereby postulating a third kind of metaphysical substance, namely of "*res extensae*," a doctrine entailed in the Democritean distinction between "primary" and "secondary" qualities of bodies, which informed the speculations of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo's method of "mathematization of the Book of Nature."¹⁰

9 The following sequence of passages appears in the text (citations from *Philosophers Speak For Themselves*, vol. 1, ed. T.V. Smith and Marjorie Grene, U. of Chicago Press, 1940. – my caps for emphasis): p. 72 – Descartes first says he understands "nature" not in the sense of spontaneous impulse, but as "a natural light that affords knowledge of its truth." p. 74 – This natural light of reason governs representations in the vocabulary of substances and accidents – which is here applied to the idea of God as "actually, formally, eminently" substantial. p. 75–76 – So Descartes "is not alone in the world" – God is indeed the "first idea" that is "clearly taught by the natural light" – here said in a negative fashion that his finite I am is necessarily grounded in God's infinite I am: "God's reality exists in me neither formally or eminently, and as it follows from this I myself cannot be the cause of it, it is a necessary consequence that I am not alone in the world, but there is besides me some other being who exists as the cause of that idea..." (This ontology of "finite I am" grounded in God's infinite "I am" became a favorite of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.) – The idea of God is of an infinite, ergo infinitely perfect thinking substance, leads to "the perception (notion) of infinity is prior to that of my finite thinking substance" – and indeed is "more clear and distinct" than that of my *cogito*. (p. 78) – This epistemic and metaphysical discernment by the natural light takes on the terms of vision qua remembrance (Platonic *anamnesis*, recollection): "but when I allow my attention in some degree to be drawn to reality, while the vision of my mind is still obscured, and, as it were, blinded by the images of sensible objects, I do not remember the reason why my idea of a more perfect being than myself must of necessity have preceded from a reality more perfect." (p. 81) "And so, with respect to my continuous thinking from moment to moment," it is "manifestly a dictate of the natural light that my continuous conservation and creation differ merely in respect of my mode of thinking and not in reality." (p. 81). "Since I am a thinking being, and possess in myself an idea of God, whatever in the end be the cause of my existence, it must of necessity be admitted that it is likewise an in-extended thinking being." [likewise = the Platonic *methexis qua homoiosis*]. (p. 83) "... whence it is sufficiently manifest that God, who is an infinitely perfect being, cannot be a deceiver, since it is a dictate of the natural light that all fraud and deception spring from some defect." And so on to final paragraph of Meditation Three: "I think it proper to remain here for some time contemplating of God himself – that I may ponder at leisure his marvelous attributes – and behold, admire, and adore, the beauty of this light so unspeakably great, as far, at least, as the strength of my mind, which is in some degree dazzled by the sight will permit. Or just as we learn by faith that the supreme felicity of another life consists in the contemplation of the Divine Majesty alone, so even now we learn from experience that a like meditation, though incomparably less perfect, is the source of the highest satisfaction of which we are susceptible in this life." (p. 83).

10 Peirce, we know, assigned all this to the "first grade of clarity" in "How to Make our Ideas Clear" (1878), namely to Descartes' habitual "familiarity" with mathematical reasoning which naturally attracted him to the work of Galileo and Kepler. In "The Architecture of Theories" (1892) he refers to Galileo's "appeal to common sense and il lume naturale" not as illustration of Platonic illumination and contemplation but rather as an instinctive "natural prompting" of abductive inference. "A modern physicist on examining Galileo's works is surprised to find how little experiment had to do with his establishment of the foundations of mechanics"—Peirce's emphasis here is on the "simplicity" of "a few [natural] conceptions to our minds." "Thus it is that our minds having been formed under the influence of phenomena governed by the laws of mechanics, certain conceptions entering into these laws become implanted in our minds, so that we readily guess at what the laws are. Without such a natural prompting, having to search blindfold for a law which would suit the phenomena, our chance of finding it would be one to infinity." (EP1: 287).

3 Peirce and Freud: post-cartesian hylopathic guesses at the riddle of the universe

In a “Guess at the Riddle,” Peirce inveighed against the “contradiction-mongers” who formulate scientific theories of phenomena in a binary logic of qualitative differences (X and non-X, presence and absence), whereas he proposed a Tritic logic to account for “the great steps in the method sciences of every department” (such as in physics and geology), and with further revolutionary implications for philosophy. This rejection of contradiction-mongers was one of his early variations of what he called his “key-stone principle” of “synechism,” namely of the Third category of his Tritic logic. In the final section, “The Triad in Physics” of “A Guess at the Riddle,” his logic of Threeness underwrote his “guess at the secret of the sphynx.” In the same essay, Peirce argued that “the old dualistic notion of mind and matter, so prominent in Cartesianism, has fallen into disrepute.” “Rejecting Cartesianism, we are driven to some form of “hylopathy,” and we have to choose here between three interpretations of physical laws—namely, neutralism, materialism, or idealism—the adjudication of which leading to the signature theoretical abduction of his career, “the one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws.”¹¹

Well now, we already know the young Peirce, pointedly in decade-earlier essays such as “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (1868), “The Fixation of Belief” and “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), had prominently launched his philosophical own career in direct challenge of Descartes’s solipsistic “paper doubt” of the First Meditation, and indeed in wholesale eschewal of every apriorism of “fixing belief” in claims of knowing scientific or metaphysical “things in themselves.” Descartes metaphysical dichotomy of mind and matter, the moral implications of which Kant theorized in his *Second Critique*, loomed as the base line contradiction-mongering obstacle to a hylopathic objective idealism. For the “laboratory-minded” Peirce there are no *a priori*, no “pure essences,”—no such transcendental origins or points of return—only the hard-fought, painfully achieved results of empirical, fallibilistic, ever sublimating cognitive “inquiry”.

And exemplarily also for Freud, who independently invented a new hylopathic science of “couch and transference” requiring sessions over long periods of time in discovery of the poor conscious ego’s service to three masters (Id, Superego, and external world)—in problematic probings of the objective and subjective real worlds.¹²

Here I would especially appreciate Peirce as conspicuous precedent to Freud in the matter of their texts’ *objective empirical perspective*. Though not sufficiently recognized in orthodox Peirce studies, arguably the most significant parallel fallout consisted in the respect that Peirce preceded Freud in relegating the sense-making “enlightenment” claims of “mystics” to the *first* of his four methods of “fixing belief,” i.e. the “method of subjective tenacity.” Throughout his career Peirce disdained the paradigmatic teachings of sages. The God-talking mystics and sages who make personal claims to an ataraxy of suspended belief only exemplify the subjective tenacity of “emotional interpretant”; and historically, such claims tended to be *retailed* in public systems of dogmatic consciousness via a *second* method of fixing belief, namely by external intimidations of “fire and sword” of Church and State, and by allegiances to thought-controlling guilds. But then, in Peirce’s analysis, such intimidating claims as to an intimidating external source of authority could also gain a breakaway *third* life of fixing belief in shared methods of apriorism, such as have been historically achieved in rationalized philosophical systems (fashionable “one-idea’d” paradigms of thought and practice)—as represented by Descartes and

11 “But before this can be accepted,” Peirce continued, “it must show itself capable of explaining the tridimensionality of space, the laws of motion, and the general characteristic of the universe, with mathematical clearness and precision, for no less should be demanded of every Philosophy” (EP1:292-293).

12 “Only the real, rare, true scientific minds can endure doubt, which is attached to all our knowledge”—recorded as “one of Freud’s best quotes” in *Sigmund Freud: The Life and Legacy of History’s Most Famous Psychiatrist* (last line of text without pagination).

Hegel and in fact constitutive in the entire history of nominalistic philosophical systems.

Having rejected the first three paradigms of fixing belief, Peirce arguably consolidated the very logic of inquiry in the history of philosophy as well as of the special sciences in featuring a veridical *fourth* method of fixing belief, namely of empirically anchored fallibilism that predicated a realistic-idealistic theory of unvarnished consequential intelligence. In so doing he again preceded Freud who turned out to be on the same track, converging exemplarily with Peirce's methodic refutation of Cartesian apriorism, as well as in the course of his controversial career methodically probing the full range of blatant forms of emotional interpretants.

Soon after, Wallace Stevens added a poetic version:

Tonight there are only the winter stars.
The sky is no longer a junk shop,
Full of javelins and old fire-balls,
Triangles and the names of girls.

Over and over you have said,
This great world, it divides itself in two,
One part is man, the other god:
Imagined man, the monkish mask, the face.

Tonight the stars are like crowds of faces
Moving round the sky and singing
And laughing, a crowd of men,
Whose singing is a mode of laughter.

Never angels, nothing of the dead,
Faces to people night's brilliancy,
Laughing and singing and being happy,
Filling the imagination's need.

In this rigid room, an intenser love,
Not toys, not things-a-ma-jigs—
The reason can give nothing at all
Like the response of desire.
Wallace Stevens, "Dezembrun," (1942)

Participating in such an inter-generational *Zeitgeist*, Freud's doggedly retroductive-questing career-text—which culminated in his four late-phase "metapsychological" classics, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), *The Ego and the Id* (1923), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930)—in its own terms decisively undercut the *epoche* firewall of a self-clarifying, self-glorifying, anthropocentric consciousness. Freud humbly and cautiously recognized the historical greatness of his new blockbuster paradigm.¹³ Especially in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), he challenged

13 Freud on Copernicus, Darwin and psychoanalysis: "But in thus emphasizing the unconscious in mental life, we have conjured up the most evil spirits of criticism against it, and do not suppose that the resistance to it rests on the understandable difficulty of the unconscious or the relative inaccessibility of the experience which provide evidence of it. Its source, I think, lies deeper. In the course of the centuries, that naive self-love (*ihre naiven Eigenliebe*) of men has had to submit to two major blows at the hands of science. The first was when they learned that the earth was not the centre of the universe but only a tiny fragment of a cosmic system of scarcely imaginable vastness. This is associated in our minds with the name of Copernicus. The second blow fell when biological research destroyed man's supposedly privileged place in creation and proved his descent from the animal kingdom and his irradicable animal nature. This reevaluation had been accomplished in his own day by Darwin, Wallace

the *finesse de esprit* of *epoche* consciousness in the entire historical panorama of the world religions and *a priori* metaphysical systems as a “universal obsessional neurosis” of illusionary Ego consciousness.

Peirce’s scientific fallibilism had in effect already moved epistemic and moral consciousness along the same controversial path (and, as we shall see below, his early epistemic fallibilism grew into a distinctly affective expression of an “intenser love” of agapistic Sentimentalism). What might be said is that while Peirce’s Three Categories reconfigured the implications of the newly burgeoning hard sciences of the 19th-century (“Darwin’s century”) in his architectonic metaphysical fashion, Freud’s *invented, post-Darwin* and *post-Peirce, a veritable new science* in the historical sequence of Renaissance astronomy and dynamical physics (Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton), which in turn came to underwrite the new geology, new bio-paleontology, and new anthropology (as in *Totem and Taboo*, 1913) of the late 19th-and early 20th-centuries.¹⁴

And so here, I venture to say, all glory goes to the possibilities of intense cross-fertilization between Peirce and Freud—that is to say, once their heuristic legacies are freed from the current academic boxes of soft scientific psychology, of activist classical American pragmatism and of the technical abstractions of contemporary semiotic theory. Let us appreciate their career-agendas as so much more significant (sense-making) in the perspective of the annals of world-philosophy, accounting for history’s sorrows of life in emotional bondage as well as addressing the rich possibilities of future civilization.

4 Civilization and its discontents in the bottomless lake of id

As concrete application of these issues central to the sanitizing heuristics of Peirce and Freud, I often ask myself: In what way could the *epoche* of phenomenological introversion confirm (or improve upon) the paleo-ontologist’s empirical discovery of the evidence that the Neanderthals buried their dead? Such evidence (itself fallible, corrigible) cannot be obtained on any *a priori* basis. And more generally, how can phenomenological introspection of a pure noetic immediacy of introverted Ego consciousness comprehend Freud’s “Death Instinct” in the account of life and extinction of life in real time—a Death instinct that flourishes outwardly and inwardly, loudly and silently, in the ubiquitous Secondness of the sorrows of life—such as in the inevitable hospitalization and untimely loss of loved ones; in neurotic and psychotic pathologies of character, personal and societal; in history’s diseases, famines, plagues, the Black Death; in the *bellum omnium contra omnes* ever manifesting in our contemporary world’s religious wars, persecutions, intolerance; in our times” aggressive outbursts of street violence, mass murders; in the tensions of national and regional differences; in genocide, slavery, sadistic cruelty?¹⁵

and their predecessors, though not without the most violent contemporary opposition. But human megalomania (*die menschliche Grossensucht*) will have suffered its third and most wounding blow from the psychological research of the present time which seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even the master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind.” *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, 1917, lecture 18, reprinted in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Freud*, vol. 16 (1974).

14 Here it seems crucial to note (with Colapietro) that when Eduard von Hartmann’s *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (itself traceable to Schopenhauer, a key point of departure for Freud’s own *Totem and taboo* (1913) and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), was introduced into the United States in 1902; it was rejected by Wm. James and John Dewey, but positively endorsed by Peirce. James’s lukewarm reception of Freud’s visit to the United States in 1909 might be considered as background to Freud’s devastating critique, in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), of “Pascal’s wager” of the religionist’s “will to believe” James inscribed in his *Pragmatism* (1907) and other writings.

15 As Freud emphasized, the ubiquitous binary forces of Eros and Thanatos can be traced throughout world literature and philosophy. Freud often drew astutely from Shakespeare and Goethe. In “Faust’s Study” of Part One, Goethe identifies Mephistopheles with the universal Death Instinct: “I am the spirit of perpetual negation: / And rightly so, for all things that exist / Deserve to perish, and would not be missed—/ Much better it would be if nothing were brought into being.” (lines 1338-1342). “The earth, the air, all give birth: / It germinates a thousandfold, / In dry or wet, in hot or cold! / Fire is still mine, that element alone— / Without it, I could call no place my own.” (lines 1372-1378). In Part Two, Mephistopheles expresses his allegiance to the “Eternal Void” (*Das ewig Leere*): “Why ‘over’? What can be / ‘Over’ is just not there; it is all the same to me! / Why bother to go on creating? / Making, then endlessly annihilating? / ‘Over and past.’ What’s that supposed to mean? / It’s no more than if it had never been, / Yet it goes bumbling round as if it were. The Eternal Void is what I’d much prefer.” (lines 11594-11662), Trans. David Luke, Oxford World Classics, 1987). Goethe’s classic of Faustian Man, the phases of which occupied him over almost six decades, centered on his prescient repudiation of the pathologies of technocratic and political modernity, as especially manifested in the Fichtean-Romantic Idealism of the French Revolution.

How indeed *must* the modern scientific and philosophical consciousness configure the relation between Eros and Thanatos? Are they to be conceived as co-existing in an eternal tension, as Freud spoke ambivalently in the concluding words of *Civilization and Its Discontents*? Or is it possible that an evolutionary ascendant force of Eros/libido/love, —i.e., of an *evolutionary Pleasure Principle*—may still be prioritized as the more effective psycho-, bio-, and cosmical causality? Which is further to ask: while Freud's agonistic dialectic of Eros and Thanatos does play *such an incessant role in every one of the zillion particular life-processes existentially realized or conceivable*, how does it account for *the spiraling ascendancy to higher and higher forms of intensification and complexification of mental life* over the billions of years of lithospheric, biospheric, and noospheric evolution?¹⁶

Of course, so much more needs to be said and elaborated—and finally, I should think, in Peirce's cosmogenetic terms of a “universe perfused with signs”—but let me search for a brief interim conclusion here. I read Peirce and Freud as undercutting both ancient and modern epistemes of “katastemic pleasure”—or again, of phenomenological *epoche*—in their rejection of *a priori* strategies of transcendental introspection—rather, in favor of realistic-idealistic disclosures of the “strumpet wind,” i.e. the ineluctable tangle and challenges of kinetic pleasures and pains ever and always experienced in the “discontented” Secondness of conscious and unconscious evolutionary life and mind,—and yet, as well, in favor of their “hopeful” projection of the “reasonable” possibilities of realization of the higher Super-Ego-ideals of “Civilization.” Wallace Stevens, I venture to suggest, captures and generalizes both sides of this equation in an allusion to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*

The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage

But not on a shell, she starts,
Archaic, for the sea.
But on the first-found weed
She scudders the glitters,
Noiselessly, like one more wave.

She too is discontent
And would have purple stuff upon her arms,
Tired of the salty harbors,
Eager for the brine and bellowing
Of the high interiors of the sea.

¹⁶ Here Peirce has the more encompassing cosmological speculation. We have seen that Freud contributed his psychoanalytical interpretation of “the riddle of the Theban Sphinx”. Precedent to Freud, we have noted certain parallels between Freud's and Peirce's “the secret of the sphynx” in the final Chapter VII, “The Triad in Physics” (pp. 273=279) of “A Guess at the Riddle” —Peirce's “cosmogonic guess” that is said to be “his greatest and most original contribution to speculative philosophy” (EP1 245)— which appears better to account for the increasing complexification, regularity, and mutuality of interpenetrating dimensions of the universe's habit-formations in higher registers of cosmogenesis.

In Freud's ingenious naturalistic speculation, at the beginning of life when creatures were microscopic aggregates of cells, subsets of these cells broke free. A residual creature, aware of its loss, dedicated its energy to reuniting with its lost members,—that is to say, was spurred on by love/libido to “know” (Biblically speaking) its original partner. But now, such a libidinal consciousness, of itself alone and yet striving for conjunctive interaction with a partner, must transcend the inertia of matter. Which is to say, ala Peirce, something of complexifying *mind* must be in all *matter*—mind in the form of libido/love transcending the entropic pull of matter. Freud says the instincts never die or lose strength. This is foundational for both the Death Instinct and the Life Instinct. As for the latter, the complete cellular creature, stimulated by its external environment, must feel an erotic impulse to merge by “mental” or “pleasure” impulse of “conceiving” itself in relation to other libidinal entities.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (pp. 100-102), Freud recognized that his conception appears in Aristophanes spoof on the god Eros in Plato's *Symposium* where Zeus is said to have split originally double creatures, male-male, female-female, or male-female, into two, resulting in the predicament that each goes through life seeking its other half. Or in Aristotle's and Peirce's profounder metaphysical versions, this is the beginning of the evolutionary truth that Life as libido/love is a mutual flourishing, if not also the truth of the Life-process as partaking in Thought Thinking Itself. What is love but the libidinal pleasure of commens, shared mindedness, commensurable congeniality, in sympathetic coalescence? What is hate, but the entropically trending opposite?

For Peirce's part, it will be possible to correlate analogous speculations in Chapter 7, The Triad in Physics, of “A Guess at the Riddle” (1887-88) where Peirce first broached his “guess at the riddle” of Cosmogonic Evolution; and again in “Man's Glassy Essence” (1892) where he speculated on life's “protista .i.e. slime molds,” having feelings, as well as reproductive and habit-taking capacities. (EP1: 341-350)

The wind speeds her,
Blowing upon her hands
And watery back.
She touches the clouds, where she goes
In the circle of her traverse of the sea.

Yet this is meager play
In the scurry and water-shine,
As her heels foam—
Not as when the goldener nude
Of a later day

Will go, like the center of sea-green pomp,
In an intenser calm,
Scullion of fate,
Across the spick torrent, ceaselessly,
Upon her Irretrievable way.
Wallace Stevens, "Harmonium," 1923

At first blush, Peirce's "Tritism" of bio- and cosmo-semiosis, which he went on to frame in terms of the "ontological gospeler's" teaching of "God is Love and Light," and then in terms of Lamarkian-type irreversibility of psychic causation in "Evolutionary Love" (1893), reaches a theoretical level of generality that appears to transcend Freud's thematics of "Civilization and its Discontents." Peirce's "bottomless lake of consciousness" elaborated in his signature essay, "The Law of Mind" (1892), seems already to encompass Freud's metapsychology of an unconscious affectability and spreading of ideas into general habits of personality in the broadest terms of tychism, logical realism, and objective idealism—in effect providing manifold tunnels into Freud's account. However, Freud's late-phase classics, in their own distinct vocabulary, tunnel back ever so concretely in parallel to Peirce's own late-phase theoretical agenda—Freud's in his own psychodynamics of the powerful forces of the unconscious affects and of humanity's civilizing Super-Ego-Ideals with regard to open-ended possibilities of "Civilization" *in futuro*.¹⁷ *Wo Id war, Ego will sein*. In effect, Freud created a *new science of realistic-idealistic discovery of the bottomless lake of Id*, opening new variations on Peirce's «one law of mind» in the early 20th-century's *Zeitgeist*.

In succinct form, my approach to the "intense cross-fertilization between Peirce and Freud" (Colapietro) must especially recognize Peirce's declaration of his "Sentimentalism" that he pointedly expounded in "Evolutionary Love" (1893) in the context of his contrast between the "Gospel of Love" and the 19th-century's burgeoning "Gospel of Greed," and where, co-incidentally, he established a crucial precedent to Freud's semiosis in his detailed recounting of the *perverted* (acquired "de-generate" form) development of early Christianity's doctrine of eternal hellfire for the damned, as well as of another *perverse form* which occurred in the few compacted years of bloody Terror in the French Revolution.¹⁸

17 One could argue that Peirce's later formulation, in his 1908 "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" in regard to the "Really" God who, as *Ens Necessarium*, creates "the three universes" discoverable in moments of "Musement," entirely transcends Freud's approach. It certainly complicates it! But Freud, for his part, offers theoretical resources that conceivably encompass Peirce's still ostensibly Christianized construction, in effect rendering Peirce's "creator of the three universes" as none other than Peirce himself in his onto-poetical capacity as philosophical spokesman of Civilization's highest Super-Ego Ideals (of the Beautiful, the Good, and the True which he elaborated in his own three Normative Sciences). In "Evolutionary Love," the very "ontological gospeler" he attributes to St. John is Peirce's personification of his own religious instinct. But as well, as Freud might have speculated, Peirce's lamenting the fact of St. John having written not only the *Fourth Gospel* but also the *Book of Revelation* "under the sting of persecution," contains another side of the same personal and philosophical representation, namely Peirce's sense of the truth of the ineluctable Secondness of the Death Instinct contending against Christianized Eros.

18 Though it is a side issue here for further investigation, undoubtedly Goethe's ubiquitous critical writings on the secular politicization of the

Focusing independently on the same historical “de-generations,” ancient and modern, Peirce’s astute way of conjoining such “tychastic” forms of early Christian hellfire-dogmatism and its more recent condensed outburst in the French Revolution need to be appreciated as one of the significant expressions of his own “Sentimental” genius. In net effect, Peirce’s astute historical analysis joins Freud’s in respect to their common, and very antinomian, consideration of some of the deepest causalities of Western civilization.¹⁹

But again, we have seen that Peirce’s late-phase *sentimental agapism of the human heart* preceded Freud’s emphasis on the deep structure of the affective life that function below the self-delusions of ego-consciousness. In “Man’s Glassy Essence” (1892) he postulated a concept of “living and feeling protoplasm,” the theory of which when fully developed “would call in tychistic idealism as an indispensable part,” such that that idealism “would have no need to dread a mechanistic theory of life”—i.e. would be a “materialism without flinching”. But this biosemiotic evolutionary avowal of Firstness of Feeling in “Man’s Glassy Essence” was itself a variation on his previous essay in the *Monist* series, namely his signature essay “The Law of Mind” (1892), according to which “*the one law of mind*” is that “feelings” are “first,” and thus the pristine basis of our habit-forming minds’ capacity of spreading into general ideas. In the same essay he applies this “one law of mind” as heuristic concept to understanding “personality” as a “developmental teleology”—again, another precedent to Freud’s general metapsychology of the deep structures of the affective life that play out in the habits of healthy and/or neurotic and psychotic personalities. But then, most remarkably, Peirce went on to express culminating implications of his doctrine of “Sentimentalism” where the “one law of mind” equated with our personal intimacies of tending the blossoming flowers of our loved ones’ lives in “evolutionary love.”

Needless to say, at the heart of this comparative hermeneutic of Peirce and Freud on the *primacy of the affective life* is Freud’s insistence that “science is not a subjective illusion.” Science is, rather, along with Art, a distinct form of human Sentiment—no less than of compassionate therapy in the forms of expression of civilization’s Super-Ego Ideals. For his part, Freud was keen to insist “we should not forget how young science is,” and “how difficult its beginnings, and how infinitesimally small the space and time since the human intellect has been strong enough for the tasks it sets it.”²⁰ (Peirce spoke pointedly to the same effect, regarding the very recent emergence of modern science as the “second Gospel” in the history of humanity.) Freud goes on to say: “The transformation of scientific ideas is a process of development, not of revolution,”—and in that regard, “We should take an example from the geologist.”²¹ Against the hostile objections (spearheaded by, among others, the religious establishments), he concludes by expressing, in virtually Peircean terms, the connaturality of the human body-mind in evolutionary nature:

Firstly, our organization, i.e. our mental apparatus, has been developed actually in the attempt to explore the outer world, and therefore it must have realized in its structure a certain measure of appropriateness.; secondly, it is itself a constituent part of that world which we are to investigate; thirdly, the task of science is fully circumscribed if we confine it to showing how the world must appear to us in consequence of the particular character of our organization; fourthly, the ultimate findings of the sciences, just because of the way in which they are attained, are conditioned not only by our organization but also by that which has affected this organization; and, finally, the problem of the nature of the world irrespective of our perceptive mental apparatus is an empty abstraction without practical interest.”²²

Judeo-Christian religions and his repudiation of the French Revolution’s “Fichtean, i.e. “Faustian,” voluntarism’s in regard to the pathologies of technocratic modernity played a major role in Freud’s parallel sense of civilization’s, i.e. modernity’s, “discontents.”

19 Fichte’s *Tathandlung* (“fact-deed”), the subtext of the dramatic scene of Faust’s interpretation of the words of the Bible, *Im Anfang war die Tat*.

20 *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 100.

21 *Loc. Cit.*

22 *Ibid*, 101-102.

In this concluding passage of *The Future of an Illusion* Freud not only programmatically dismisses, as did Peirce before him, any metaphysics of “the thing it itself,” but also accords with Peirce’s bottom-line disposition of *connatural hypothetical intelligence* that takes the form of Peirce’s continuous thread of *proceptive sentimentalist* articulation as to the prospects of human reasonableness to achieve liberating ideas in the “hopeful” progress of civilization.

So back to Peirce. Peirce already expressed this *affective hope* of civilizing intelligence in the concluding words of his first official formulation of Pragmatism in “How to Make our Ideas Clear” (1878): “How to give birth to those vital and procreative ideas which multiple into a thousand forms and diffuse themselves everywhere, advancing civilization and making the dignity of man, is an art not yet reduced to rules, but the secret of which the history of science affords some hints.”²³ In 1893 he re-expressed this same *hopeful prospect for civilization* in a veritable Freudian “dream-talk”—his own “Fairy Tale” of cosmogenesis:

“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 to 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 which are 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.”

Peirce concluded this extraordinary passage as follow:

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 Image 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.²⁴

But again, at still an even early point of his career devoted to inquiring into “the logic of inquiry,” Peirce already expressed his agenda as to the prospective semiosis of qualitatively progressive civilization in a formulation that became another continuous thread of sentimentalist articulation in his mature writings—namely, of his commitment to an anti-subjectivistic, anti-nominalistic, *disinterested* kind of *scientia intuitiva* of “God or Nature’s” beautiful yet severe manifestations. One of the most remarkable expressions of Peirce’s youthful articulations tied such a conspicuously Spinozistic and Goethean (and later, Freudian) *amor Dei intellectualis* to the *objective admirableness* of the world, and thus to a *non-anthropocentric morality* of scientific (and not to leave out *artistic*) human endeavor. It

23 EP1: 141

24 MS 310 (1903).

speaks to the theme of “forlorn, desperate hope”—that is, of the theme of contingently experienced potencies of affective life:

If a man has a transcendent interest infinitely outweighing all others, then, upon the theory of validity of inference just developed, he is devoid of all security, and can make no valid inference whatever... He who would not sacrifice his own soul to save the whole world, is illogical in all his inferences, collectively. So the social principle is rooted intrinsically in logic (...).

But just the revelation of the possibility of this complete self-sacrifice in man, and the belief in its saving power, will serve to redeem the logicity of all men. And that ideal perfection of knowledge by which we have seen that reality is constituted must thus belong to a community in which this identification is complete.

This would serve as a complete establishment of private logicity, were it not that the assumption that man or the community (which may be wider than man) shall ever arrive at a state of information greater than some definite finite information, is entirely unsupported by reasons. (...) This infinite hope which we all have (for even the atheist will constantly betray his calm expectation that what is Best will come about) is something so august and momentous, that all reasoning in reference to it is a trifling impertinence. We do not want to know what are the weights of reason pro and con—that is, how much odds we should wish to receive on such a venture in the long run—because there is no long run in the case; 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 [Eros and Thanatos]; 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. So this sentiment is rigidly demanded by logic. If its object were any determinate fact, any private interest, it might conflict with the results of knowledge and so with itself; 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.²⁵

To the same effect, from his early “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (1868) Peirce defined “Truth and Reality as transcending “what you, I, or any generation, or future epoch,” of human inquiry can conceive in the “infinitely long run.” He concluded the same essay with Shakespeare’s lines concerning man’s “Glassy Essence,” that is to say, man’s “ignorance and error” in egocentric perspective.

And so back to Freud. It’s a not long chronological stretch to note that Freud’s final paragraph of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930) resonated to the same effect, and indeed in the painful context of his own times even more heroically proclaiming against “any private interest”: “I have not the courage to rise up before my fellow-men as a prophet, and I bow to their reproach that I can offer them no consolation; for at bottom that is what they are all demanding – the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers.”²⁶

At any rate, Peirce’s architectonic account of the “*logic of inquiry*” presaged Freud in elaborating his theme of the “second gospel” of scientific intelligence. And Peirce’s own doctrine of the “hopeful” connaturality of the human mind and the universe was the front and center perspective of his early epistemological writings; it took on further clarity in “A Guess at the Riddle” where he referenced Kant’s congenial words in the Introduction to his *Third Critique* concerning our pragmatist heuristic as to “the lawfulness of the contingent.” In “Guess” Peirce propounded the same “hopeful” moral perspective of the future possibilities of civilization. Even prior to “Guess,” he had already adumbrated this perspective

25 Grounds of the Validity of the Laws of Logic (1869); EP1 81-82.

26 *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 92.

in “The Doctrine of Chances” (1878) where he re-christened St. Paul’s theological trio of Faith, Hope, and Charity in terms of the primacy of Hope in the “new gospel” of scientific modernity “in regard to the dispositions of heart which a man ought to have.”²⁷

Mutatis mutandis, then, Peirce’s career-text in fact focused upon the dispositional value of science in terms illustrative of Freud’s Dominance of the Pleasure Principle. (Such a benevolent correlation rings another change on Freud’s *wo Id war, Ego will sein*.) For another instantiation, in “Pearson’s Grammar of Science” (1901) Peirce raised the question in what way Science “increases the happiness of mankind or promotes social efficiency”? In reply he was keen to assert the non-utilitarian value of scientific research. “The man of science,” he avers, is not inspired “by a wish either to support social stability or, in the main, to increase the sum of man’s happiness.” Rather than such utilitarian motives, the man of science “has received a deep impression of the majesty of truth, as that to which, sooner or later, every knee must bow. He has further found that his own mind is sufficiently akin to that truth, to enable him on condition of submissive observation, to interpret it in some measure. As he gradually becomes better and better acquainted with the character of cosmical truth, and learns that human reason is its issue and can be brought step by step into accord with it, he conceives a passion for its fuller revelation.” (...) “The very being of law, general truth, reason,—call it what you will,— consists in its expressing itself in a cosmos and in intellects which reflect it, and in so doing this progressively; and that which makes progressive creating worth doing,—so the researcher comes to feel,—is precisely the reason, the law, the general truth for the sake of which it takes place.”²⁸

Peirce goes on in “Pearson’s Grammar of Science” to discuss this deeply moral impression of and passionate submission to the majesty of truth—(which I have above suggested traces its *locus classicus* to the *Ethics* of Spinoza, and is further mediated by Goethe’s Spinozism)—under the heading of “ethical motivations,” elaborating a long list of possible motives which end with the one he calls “religionism,” namely that “a man be filled with the idea that the only reason that can reasonably be admitted as ultimate” is “that living reason for the sake of which the psychical and physical universe is in process of creation.”²⁹

5 Esthétique du mal

Apart from this complicated matter of comparative hermeneutical convergences and cross-fertilizations, what is essential is to recognize that Peirce’s and Freud’s career-texts shared the same bottom-line “materialism without flinching” of pragmatistic reflection on the substrative wellsprings of the *affective life*. That is to say, they pioneered a “poetico-scientific power” of proactive affectivity that partakes of and envisions the future possibilities of the Super-Ego Ideals of the phylogenetic inheritances of evolutionary intelligence. Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), itself arguably deeply beholden to Goethe, is perhaps one of the most affirmative statement of a civilizational semiosis of such an intrinsic anthropomorphic *affectivity*—in its power of overcoming the “universal obsessional neurosis” of religious infantilism and exposing the pathologies of neurotic modernity—thus also instantiating Peirce’s rejection of nominalistic-metaphysical systems, as well as both promoting progressive sentiments of humanity’s intrinsic rationality’s to replace the neurotic and psychotic illusions of belief by such culturally prospective Super-Ego Ideals phylogenetically inherited and operative in the abductive capacities of human instinct.³⁰

27 EP1:150-151.

28 EP2: 58.

29 EP2: 59.

30 In *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), Freud refers to the civilizational Ego Ideals of the Super-Ego on pp. 1, 17-18, 74, 79-80, 83, and 85; he postulates his sense-governing principle of affective scientific rationality on pp. 47-48, 50, 54-55, 56, 59-60, 68-69; and his own sense of “energetical reasonableness” (in Peirce’s term) underwriting his “hope” for future civilization on pp. 86, 89, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101-02. As we have seen, in his

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
 Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
 Their boisterous devotion to the sun,
 Not as a god, but as a god might be,
 Naked among them, like a savage source.
 Their chant will be a chant of paradise,
 Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
 And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
 The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
 The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,
 That choir among themselves long afterward.
 They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
 Of men that perish and of summer morn.
 And whence they came and whither they shall go
 The dew upon their feet shall manifest.
 Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," (1913)³¹

For understandable historical reasons, Freud couched his economical and dynamical model of ID, Superego, and Ego in physicalist terms (derived, he said, from Fechner and Helmholtz). But in the sense-governing principles of his text, Freud was no materialist. (No true scientist is, Peirce insisted.) Freud was a therapist whose business was compassion. His metapsychology traces to Schelling's *Naturephilosophie*, to Schopenhauer, and to their provenance in Goethe, none of them materialists. He shared with Peirce what he called "the twin gods of Ananke and Logos"³²—and indeed shared the same "twin gods" with their predecessor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose essay "Fate," selected by Emerson himself as the lead essay of *The Conduct of Life* (1860), bottomed out in his own twin Heraclitean principles of "fate and power" in regard to the potencies of unvarnished, self-reliant anthroposemiosis of civilization's Super-Ego Ideals.³³ None of these thinkers—Emerson, Peirce, Freud—conceived of anthroposemiosis in rigorously rationalized political terms, such as now blatantly voiced in modernity's illusionary dreams of cosmopolitan globalism and futurism (Herder, Kant, Marx), but rather in terms of a so-to-speak melioristic *apolitical politics* of compassionate therapy for contemporary loved ones and neighbors, and "hopefully" as well for future civilizations" suffering human beings.

And so, once again (and finally) Freud cross-fertilized with Pierce when, at the beginning of Chapter Two of *Civilization and its Discontents*, he astutely cited Goethe:

culminating classic *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud famously spoke with more ambivalent tone: "I have not the courage to rise up before my fellow-men as a prophet, and I bow to their reproach that I can offer them no consolation; for at bottom that is what they are all demanding – the wildest revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous believers." The question became more "fateful" with the contemporary ascendancy of the Nazi party. "Now it is to be expected that the other of the two "heavenly Powers," eternal Eros will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his eternally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result?"—[the last sentence added in 1931 when the menace of Hitler became apparent]. I construe Peirce to have achieved the same ambivalently realistic prognosis of the future of humanity in the grand articulation of his Three Categories.

31 Canto vii of Wallace Steven's "Sunday Morning," originally published in 1913, republished in *Harmonium* 1924, with its Nietzschean nuance of Zarathustra as prophet of the Over-Man, predates Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* (1927).

32 *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 97.

33 Emerson's "Fate" (1860), the culminating philosophical expression of his mid-career, looms even larger when seen as the outgrowth his stunning "Divinity School Address" (1838) that broke with the "totemic culture" of centuries of Christian liturgy of the transubstantiation of bread and wine, (a totemism to which Freud conspicuously refers and reconfigures in *Totem and Taboo*, 1917). Emerson's foundational principle of "Self-Reliance" (1841) according to which "Nothing is sacred but the integrity of your own mind," patently anticipated Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*. In broader perspective, Emerson, Nietzsche, and Freud carried on Goethe's Spinozism of *scientia intuitiva* as disinterested love of God-Nature (cf. Emerson's "Let is build altars to the Blessed Necessity") that is heart and center of Goethe's *Gott und Natur* poetry and other literary expressions, including his erotic and cynical Roman and Venetian Elegies, the luscious eroticism of his *East-West Divan*, as well as grounded in decades of his (Buffon-influenced, and explicitly anti-Biblical) work in mining, geology, minerology, osteology, and botany.

Der Wissenschaft und Kunst besitzt, hat auch Religion;
Wer jene beide nicht besitzt, der habe Religion.³⁴

I should say Goethe's words express Freud's "civilization and its discontents" in a nutshell.

And so now also in the spirit of Goethe's words, I suggest our appreciating a double reality of the Pleasure Principle—first, the Pleasure Principle to which the Death instinct is ineluctably "alongside of" (*jenseits*) in every existential and conceivable process of life and mind; and second, a veritable "*Esthetique du mal*" (Wallace Stevens) that trends "beyond" that tension in an updrafting of evolutionary life and mind, as manifested in the scientifically discoverable evolutionary ascent of biosemiosis, as well as manifested in the world-wide literary and poetical transmissions of the Super-Ego Ideals of higher civilization, and thus again, as underwriting Peirce's thematics of the incessantly variegated spontaneities qua energetic and intimately "sentimental" reasonablenesses of "evolutionary love."³⁵

Not only in the great paradigm breakthroughs of scientific intelligence, the "Dominance of the Pleasure Principle" underwrites all the literary, artistic, musical, architectural classics of world civilization. (So for example we easily conceive of the career musical texts of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven—or, to a less degree, the 700 songs of Steven Foster—as expressions of cultural Super-Ego Ideals.) Goethe's

34 "He who possesses science and art also has religion; but he who possesses neither of these, let him have religion." Freud cited Goethe at key junctions of his writing. He must have exerted his psychoanalytic powers in probing the essence of Goethe's genius, which is arguably contained in this key citation of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p. 21. Goethe's disposition traces to his admirer Schopenhauer, and then to Einstein who reportedly wrote; "I believe with Schopenhauer that one of the strongest motives that leads men to art and science is escape from everyday life with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness, from the fetters of one's own ever shifting desires. A finely tempered nature longs to escape from personal life into the world of objective perception and thought; this desire may be compared with the townsman's irresistible longing to escape from his noisy, cramped surroundings into the silence of high mountains, where the eye ranges freely through the still, pure air and fondly traces out the restful contours apparently built for eternity." (Here Einstein must be alluding to Goethe's most famous lyric poem in the German language (which he scratched on a hunting cabin wall in pencil):

Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spuerest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Voegelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

[Over all the hilltops / There's peace, / In all treetops / You detect /
Hardly a breath; / The little bird are silent in the forest. / Just wait, soon / You too will rest.]

According to Google's AI, this quote is attributed to Einstein, not Freud. AI also says, "Freud acknowledges similarities to Schopenhauer in his "An Autobiographical Study" (1925), stating that Schopenhauer's philosophy anticipated key psychoanalytic concepts like the dominance of sexuality, the unconscious, and repression, even though he claimed to have read Schopenhauer late. Freud emphasized that his theory of repression was developed independently but was later recognized by Otto Rank as aligning with Schopenhauer's writings on madness and the avoidance of painful reality."

It should be noted, however, that Freud referred directly to Schopenhauer in several earlier contexts. For example, already in *Totem and Taboo* (1913): "The primary obsessive acts of the neurotics are of an entirely magical character. If they are not charms, they are at all events counter-charms, designed to ward off the expectations of disaster with which the neurosis usually starts. Whenever I have succeeded in penetrating the mystery, I have found that the expected desire was death. Schopenhauer has said that the problem of death stands at the outset of every philosophy; and we have already seen [p.76] that the origin of the belief in souls and in demons, which is the essence of animism goes back to the impression which is made upon men by death." [p.87, trans. James Strachey, Norton, 1950]. And then in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), where Freud begins to articulate the "two kinds of vital processes,"... "two instinctual impulses, the life instincts and the death instincts"... "We have unwittingly steered our course into the harbour of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For him death is the "true result and to that extent the purpose of life," while the sexual instinct is the embodiment of the will to live." (p. 88, trans. James Strachey, Bantam Books, 1928).

35 As for the provenance of the agapistic sentimentalism of Peirce's "Evolutionary Love," one could ruminate on the concluding scene of *Faust: Part Two* as involving a heterodox doctrine of a universal love qua *apokatastasis panton* (Origen? Scotus Erigena?), i.e. doctrine of the restitution or restoration of all created things, not just a selection of the worthy (whose enemies, the "bad," go to hell). In the early 1870s the young Goethe wrote a fictional letter between clergymen, one of them (standing for Goethe) expressing his "secret" private belief in Origen's *apokatastasis panton*. [Matthew Bell, *Goethe: A Life in Ideas*, pp. 82, 646.] The very last line of *Faust: Part Two* ends with the mysterious words, *Das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns an* ("The Eternal Feminine draws us on.") This may be conceived as such a universal, cosmic love, "the love that moves the sun and other stars" (in Dante's *Paradiso finale*), and so also possibly may suggest a way of interpreting the deep semiosis of Peirce's "Evolutionary Love," as well as its resonance with Spinoza's "Man's love of God is part of the infinite love with which God loves himself"—only better symbolically understood in terms of an "Eternal Feminine" (the more altruistically loving of the two sexes, as Aristotle and Goethe taught).

apotheosis of Science and Art expands indefinitely in appreciating of Civilization's "immortal works" in which we are called to participate in our own qualitative sublimations of libido.

To conclude then on a pleasurable note, I recommend appreciating the philosophical resonances of an *Esthetique du mal* (qua "Dominance of the Pleasure Principle") in a variety of Wallace Stevens' poems which express his signature theme of "Death is the Mother of Beauty" and "The Imperfect is our Paradise."³⁶ Consider for one last example the mysterious lines of his "The Pleasure of Merely Circulating" as capturing the essential semiosis of Peirce's "evolutionary love" and of Freud's sense of the future possibilities of "Civilization":

The Pleasure of Merely Circulating
The garden flew round with the angel,
The angel flew round with the clouds,
And the clouds flew round and the clouds flew round
And the clouds flew round with the clouds.

In there any secret in skulls,
The cattle skulls in the woods?
Do the drummers in black hoods
Rumble anything out of their drums?

Mrs. Anderson's Swedish baby
Might well have been German or Spanish,
Yet that things go round and again go round
Has rather a classical sound.
"Ideas of Order," (1938)

And one more thing! Let me finally venture to suggest that the cosmo-poetical satisfaction of Stevens's poem resonates with one of my favorite bottomline articulations of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Perceiving that we are alive is pleasant in itself. For life is by nature good, and it is pleasant to perceive that something good is present in us. Living is also choice-worthy, and for a good person most of all, since being is good and pleasant for him; he is pleased to perceive something good in itself together with his own being." [IX, 9: 1170b].

In pursuing the implications of that resonance, we might now also reconsider Shakespeares "strumpet wind,"—i.e. metaphorical bawd of euphony for Peirce's category of Secondness and Freud's Eros and Thanatos—in the way Aristotle defines evil not as a distinct entity, but as a privation or absence of good that is inherently self-destructive and unsustainable. «For life is by nature good.» Pain and Evil encompass things that hinder or destroy pleasure and happiness—such as aggression, envy and hate, vice and criminality, weakness of will, bodily decay and external misfortunes. They are, in Peirce's phrase, "secondary phenomena," and carry the seeds of their own ruin—in contrast with Life's good seeds.

In Freud's terms, life is too hard, has too many pains, except for the good seeds—the Super-Ego Ideals of higher Civilization—which blossom, as Goethe said, in the inheritances and achievements of Science and Art.

36 In "Earthy Anecdote," "Peter Quince at the Clavier," "Sunday Morning," "The Emperor of Ice Cream," "To a High-Toned Old Christian Woman," "Infanta Marina," "The Snow Man," "The Ordinary Women," "Virgin Carrying Lantern," etc., as well of course in his several editions of his later-phase poems.

Science in the form of powerful deflections, sublimating generalizations, solving problems and discovering new truths in humanity's life and death struggles; and Art—when the mordant tooth of *chronos* temporarily surrenders to the precious moments of *kairos* that miraculously appear in the “sudden rightnesses” of rich phantasy.³⁷

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37 “The precious moments of *kairos*” – as for example in the celebrated “Conclusion” and Appendix, “Diaphaneite,” of Walter Pater’s *Studies in the History of Renaissance Art* (1873, 1877, 1888)—writings that are arguably among the sources of Wallace Stevens’s “Death is the Mother of Beauty” theme as well. “While all melts under our feet, we may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems, by a lifted horizon, to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers, and curious odours, or work of the artist’s hands, or the face of one’s friend.” (...) “To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines down.” (...) “To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.” (Walter Pater, *Renaissance Art*, 119-120).

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