The Reach of the Aesthetic and Religious Naturalism: Peircean and Polanyian Reflections

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ABSTRACT Key words: religious naturalism, aesthetic dimension, non-theism, religious world models, Charles Peirce, Michael Polanyi, R. W. Hepburn, Frederick Ferré, John Dewey, Susanne Langer, cosmic vision. *In this article I reflect upon the problem of the aesthetic intelligibility of the world in connection with an aesthetic approach to religious naturalism. Taking the work of R.W. Hepburn as conversation partner, I bring it into relation to the work of Charles Peirce and Michael Polanyi. Admitting the ambiguous nature of their own religious commitments, I try to sketch, with no claim to completeness, how they help to illuminate just what would be entailed in beginning the process of translating religious forms of attending into aesthetic forms and what would be gained and what would be lost in doing so.*

Posing the Issues

Charles Peirce and Michael Polanyi have been appropriated in multiple, and perhaps not quite compatible, ways for theological and religious purposes. Besides the problem of their own religious commitments, which is mainly of contested biographical relevance, there is the further issue of the heuristic fertility of their conceptual schemes to illuminate core themes of a comprehensive philosophy of religion, the starting point and upshot of which may or may not be in agreement with their own premises and substantive positions. Peirce, belonging most of all to the American tradition of pragmatic naturalism and source of a specific and powerful approach to semiotics, has been received by a rather different set of readers than Polanyi, a philosophical outsider. Peirce's and Polanyi's theological relevance is, when all is said and done, not as closely wedded to traditional theistic positions as many of their interpreters have contended. Both Peirce and Polanyi, however, share not just a deep scientific background, which informed their work at every level, but also a quite reticent, maybe even systematically ambiguous, attitude, when all is said and done, to orthodox or familiar theological positions.[1]

I do not intend to enter into the thicket of controversial claims about the personal religious positions of Peirce and Polanyi, interesting as they may be. Polanyi's and Peirce's philosophical projects clearly share many points in common that merit close examination: (a) a concern to delineate the nature of abduction and discovery, (b) a foregrounding of processes of articulation and semiosis, that is, sign-production and interpretation, (c) an assertion of the essentially social nature of human inquiry and the role of tradition(s) in forming interpretation communities or societies of explorers, (d) an insistence on the paradigmatic role of science and its epistemological lessons while maintaining an essential openness to other forms of meaning-making, (e) a nuanced vision of a stratified universe marked by process and emergent novelties, and many others. All these clearly have religious relevance, although there are manifest and significant differences or at least weightings in the philosophical projects of Peirce and Polanyi.[2] But in this paper I do not intend to schematize abstractly and in a general way the points they have in common and their points of difference.

Rather, I want to explore the bearing of intellectual tools supplied by Peirce and Polanyi to a quite specific issue: the mutual informing of the aesthetic and religious dimensions of experience and the cognate

demand for an aesthetic intelligibility of the world. I will employ what I will call the "method of interpolation," using as the focal point of my discussion a set of reflections on the "reach of the aesthetic" by R. W. Hepburn, whose philosophical orientation is not informed by either Peirce or Polanyi.[3] The main questions posed by Hepburn that I will engage are the following: How far, and in what ways, does the aesthetic "reach" into the religious dimension of life? And how far, and in what ways, does the religious "reach" into the aesthetic dimension of life? The notion of "aesthetic intelligibility" as I am using it in this paper refers not to the intelligibility of aesthetics but to the problem of the *religious import and scope* of the drive to make the world aesthetically intelligible. Hepburn rejects, for theoretical reasons, a theistic explanation of the universe, but he nevertheless holds that there is room for an aesthetically configured religious relation to it. While a theistic context has generally been presupposed for exploring the religious implications of Peirce's and Polanyi's thought, this is not the only direction their thought can be taken and shown to have religious relevance. Religious naturalism, such as that represented by Hepburn, also elicits Peircean and Polanyian reflections. How deeply do their concerns and conceptual frameworks "reach" into and help to clarify this religious orientation?

A Schema of Religious Naturalism

Religious naturalism, in the form that frames this paper and Hepburn's work, posits no reality "outside" of nature. It rejects a universe antecedently planned and centrally organized by a cosmic intelligence or will. It does not reject a universe with emergent orders and emergent systems of meaning. But this ordering does not derive from, or necessitate the inference to, any orderer who integrates, on a cosmic scale, the various orders into a superordinate order or order of orders. The meanings of these orders are embodied in ramified systems of signs or sign-processes that, in the words of Peirce, "perfuse" the universe, whose sign-constituted origins and structures it is the task of semiotics to discover and of hermeneutics to interpret.[4] The universe, for such a form of religious naturalism, is self-assembling and self-meaning, a system of systems of spontaneous ordering and meaning-originating processes, processes that while subject to law or rule are nevertheless not controlled all the way down by law or by rigid antecedent constraints, a position sustained by both Peirce and Polanyi. It manifests what Peirce thought of as the "sporting" nature of firstness, the inexhaustible domain of possibility, which along with secondness (actuality) and thirdness (mediation or synthesis) make up Peirce's triad of metaphysical categories.[5] There is, on the Peircean position, a deep spontaneity or creativity in nature, akin to Scotus Eriugena's or Spinoza's *natura naturans*, that, like Polanyi's "heuristic field," pulls it forward, luring it in fact by a kind of *nisus* informed by "evolutionary love," but without in any sense trying to push it somewhere by efficient action *ab extra* and thus break the unity of nature.[6] At the same time, religious naturalism is a *religious* naturalism. It responds with reverence and rapt attention to such a world. It explores it intellectually, acts in response to its values, and attunes itself affectively to its various forms of appearing in which its structures and orders of meaning are embodied and expressed.

Donald Crosby, in his version of religious naturalism, has argued that nature is both *metaphysically* ultimate and *religiously* ultimate.[7] For Crosby, nature is the ultimate *context* of explanation, but in itself it defies and does not need an explanation, even if, as Gordon Kaufman in his theologically oriented version of religious naturalism sees it, we are then confronted with the ultimacy of mystery, indeed, an ultimate mystery, beyond which we cannot go.[8] On these views, nature understood as the union of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* is the locus of originations and the ultimate exemplification of continuous origination. But no-thing is responsible for its origin. It is self-originating, however one ultimately interprets this theoretically or responds to it religiously. It does not depend in any way on an antecedent or concurrent "other" reality that is responsible for its origin. For religious naturalism, nature is the context as well as the object of distinctively multidi-

mensional religious forms of apprehension of this ultimacy and processes of origination.[9] It is the gathering matrix of our being-in-the-world and of our orienting ourselves in it. Of course, all forms and structures of religious consciousness, whether theistic or not, involve ultimacy, akin to, but not necessarily identical with, what Tillich, with whose work Polanyi was familiar, called being grasped by and committing oneself to an ultimate concern. The sense of the "sacred" or of the "holy," which Hepburn discusses and reconstructs, is a prime exemplification of this ultimacy as is Tillich's affirmation of "the God beyond God" or "the nothingness beyond God" proposed by Nishida Kitarō.[10] What is ultimate for us is god, though not necessarily God.[11]

The history of religions has left a trail of elaborate conceptual systems, ritual and meditative practices, moral precepts, and pregnant images, in all modalities, that are supports of what in the last analysis is an ultimate disposition of ourselves toward "ALL THAT IS."[12] A fundamental problem is whether and how a religious naturalism, and not just Hepburn's, in the non-theistic version (or even an "immanentist" theistic version), can appropriate and reconstitute in its own terms the religious lessons and permanent insights of these traditions and what is, perhaps, the best way of doing so. This would entail, of course, fundamental and thoroughgoing conceptual reconstruction and thus impose severe hermeneutical as well as existential tasks on us.[13] Some essential claims, in their traditional senses, would perhaps have to be abandoned, such as the notion of "revelation" itself, or "salvation," or "redemption," or "creation," as well as some long-standing descriptions of our existential structures, states, and predicaments, such as "sinfulness" and "disobedience to God's will." Religions are composed of multiform ways to make the ultimate context(s) of our lives intelligible and to justify forms of life. They clearly have or imply different metaphysical visions of "ALL THAT IS." The great revelatory monotheisms of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are combustible mixtures of levels of articulation and are marked by fateful relations to philosophical categories, including attempts at rejection of philosophical categories altogether.

Revelatory theisms "start high" in their content even if they "start low" in their religious needs. They are formulated in "sacred scriptures" and they in different ways locate the sources of insight outside the realm of human powers, even if human powers are needed to receive the revelation. But the intrinsic authority of the revelation comes *ab extra*, although the revelations clearly manifest marked historical features that "date" them and require a community of interpreters to keep them alive—just as traditions based on insight do, too. The scriptures must be interpreted and, in fact, subjected to criticism, even as they in their proposals subject us to criticism and seek to inform us at all levels of our being. Peirce schematized this interpreter self in terms of his triadic schema of categories: the self is an open system of feeling, reacting, and synthesizing or mediating thought processes. It engages the world affectively in terms of feeling-qualities, dynamically in terms of real connections, and "logically" in terms of concepts. It is attuned to and is grasped by immediate qualities, it reacts to the interruptive features of experience that shatter its everydayness and conceptual schemes, and construes the world ideationally in a continual process of attempts, as Peirce put it, to "fix" beliefs in light of the constant irritation of doubt. But this interpreter self—and interpretation community—is likewise present when we start at the bottom, so to speak.[14]

The purely philosophical theisms, and non-theisms, "start low," with the world and the flux of existence, which is then subjected to deep reflection upon the conditions of its possibility.[15] While they reject the authoritative claims of the religions of revelation *ab extra*, though not religions of enlightenment, they nevertheless consider them as sources of insight and data for reflection in as much as they manifest the focal concerns of the religious orientation, however "ultimate reality" is to be understood in the end. Religious naturalism of a non-theistic sort, of which Hepburn's is only one representative position, starting "low" like

philosophical theism, also engages these focal concerns and indeed refocuses them, but without identifying the "ultimate" with the "divine." Clearly, we are wanderers in a veritable labyrinth of alternative frameworks, with different starting points and conceptual weightings. There is no avoiding, as Polanyi points out, the perils of commitment and conceptual decision.

Frederick Ferré wrote that "whatever provides the context for all other contexts is functionally religion."[16] This context is embodied in what he calls "religious world models," or RWMs. As Ferré puts it (p. 146):

> … (1) an RWM is a *model*, which indicates that it stands for or represents something else, and (2) a RWM represents the *world*, which means that it is comprehensive in its reference to the entire universe, and (3) an RWM is *religious*, which entails that it is emotionally 'hot,' engaging intense valuational affect.

It is clear that the RWM of religious naturalism *models* the *world* as a self-originating system of systems. And it is clearly "hot," in Ferré's sense—or maybe even, from some points of view, decidedly "cool."

Religious naturalism, as a RWM, aims to provide a context for other contexts. Its goal is to render the world religiously intelligible. But if there is no specifically theoretical way to support theism and its attendant religious affections oriented toward a personal, transcendent source, as religious naturalism affirms, is there perhaps another way that brings us into forms of consciousness that while not making the world theoretically intelligible in a theistic form makes it intelligible in another form and still orients us in a "hot" manner toward the world? How would the world be religiously represented then and what types of experiences would we undergo, be receptive to, and pursue? Religious naturalism, from the philosophical side, is a *theoretical* vision embodied in articulated conceptual systems. It engages us on the level of effective *action* by demanding real responses. And it elicits from us forms of genuine *attunement* on the affective level.

Ferré develops, upon the basis of what he calls a Whiteheadian personalistic organicism, a naturalistic religious position centered on kalogenesis, that is, the generation or creation of beauty, specifically, rich and coherent forms of experiencing that prehend, receptively and actively, the intrinsic values of the experiential continuum, "realizing" them in every sense of that term.[17] The live creature (John Dewey's term), or the Polanyian sense-reading and sense-giving inquirer, is inextricably bound to the flux of experiencing, dividing it at its significant joints, that is, and giving rise to coherences filled with significance, wholes saturated with meaning, both existential and representative.[18] On Ferré's conception, the experience of beauty is the beauty of experience, an experience that is attuned to the qualities of the world with their distinctive "affective tones." Hepburn argues that among these affective tones are those that are clearly "religious" or bear upon the religious, and in paradigmatic cases they are likewise "aesthetic," even if they are not necessarily "artistic," although they clearly can be when we turn to the great stream of symbolic images articulating the fundamental existential stances of the religious traditions.[19] Susanne Langer wrote in her *Philosophy in a New Key* that "meaning accrues essentially to forms."[20] And religious meaning is adherent in specific forms of experiencing oriented to distinctive features of objects and situations. Hepburn wants to foreground the affinity between the aesthetic and the religious forms of experience once the notion of a transcendent ground of the universe is given up.[21]

A religious world model, looked at from a Peircean point of view, is expressed in sets of signs of different types, each type being oriented to a specific "aspect"of the world. Following Peirce's schematization,

we could say that such a model is composed of differentially weighted sets of signs, both natural and artificial, functioning iconically, indexically, and symbolically. These sets of signs are *indwelt* as subsidiaries in Polanyi's sense. They have what Peirce calls a "material quality" or "distinctive feel." They are the embodied semiotic roots of our lives, our ultimate existential and cognitional supports or subsidiaries.[22] The basis for the signs' relationships to their objects is, according to Peirce, (a) *resemblance* in the case of images, diagrams, and metaphors, founded on a shared quality between image-sign and object, (b) e*xistential or real connection*, in the case of indexes, which are primarily pointers or vectors, and (c) *convention or agreement* in the case of symbols. Icons are signs that embody the felt qualities of the world. Indexes are signs that bind us dynamically to the world. Symbols are signs that specify the conceptual content, the "idea," of the sign-configurations. But such a view of signs also implies that there are real resemblances, real dynamic connections, and real immanent intelligible structures in experience and in cosmic process. These meaning-full dimensions give rise in us to what Peirce called "interpretants," understood as the proper significate effect of signs or the signifying powers of nature. [23]

Aesthetic Reach of Religious Naturalism

Let us now turn to the focal issue to be confronted in this paper, using as our test case the religious reach of the aesthetic as sketched by R. W. Hepburn, seen through the eyes of Peirce and Polanyi.

Hepburn's, and our, point of departure is the experienced unlimited *wonder* (*das Erstaunen*, *thaumazein*) of a finite being at the universe, a wonder that, in one of its forms, takes on a distinctively aesthetic, as well as religious, tone and configuration, not restricted by any means solely to the "sublime." On Hepburn's reckoning the "reach" of wonder, akin to Peirce's play of "musement," is unlimited in that it is a complex wondering about "the sense of it all," but, unlike Peirce, Hepburn does not think it leads to theism.[24] The core of such a wondering, according to Hepburn, is what he calls the "aestheticized sense of contingency or of numinous awe" (*Reach*, p. 98), what Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his *On Religion*, equated to "creature consciousness" or the feeling of "absolute dependency" that arises from an "intuition of the universe." This is, I think, the ground floor of any religious orientation.[25]

The goal of such wondering, and of its explication, is different from a distinctively conceptual wondering about contingency. It is "*making* sense" in many intertwined and groping modes, with emphasis on the constructive, interpretive nature of the processes, what Polanyi, as I have already noted, called sense-giving and sense-reading and the Peircean tradition unlimited semiosis or the play of signs.[26] The existential aspect of wondering concerns the ground features, following Peirce, of our orientation toward the cosmos: cognitively, action-wise, and affectively. The metaphysical aspect that haunts all of Hepburn's deepest and most pertinent reflections pertains to another dimension of the "reach" of the aesthetic, that is, how far the deep features of the universe itself display, or can be accessed by recourse to, an aesthetic intelligibility which is different from a theoretical or explanatory intelligibility, which itself, as many have argued, has an aesthetic component. But theoretical construction is not aesthetic or religious apprehension. Nevertheless, "rational religion" or a "religion of reason" is open to an aesthetic complement. Such a thematic unity is more akin to the Plotinian thematization of an intellectual beauty that is the ground of the very unity of the cosmos and the model luring the wonderer or, clearly, if we follow St. Augustine's lead, the *wanderer*, toward unity. As Hepburn says, rightly and rather laconically, "It is not easy to determine what exactly is the relation between religio-metaphysical belief and doctrine, on the one side, and aesthetic-religious 'vision,' on the other" (*Reach*, p. 97). In this he is paralleled by Schleiermacher's remark that "religion and art stand beside one another like

two friendly souls whose inner affinity, whether or not they equally surmise it, is nevertheless still unknown to them" (*On Religion*, p. 69). What is the nature of this inner affinity and not just between art and religion but between the religious and the aesthetic, a problematic affinity which has vexed the many different traditions of religious aesthetics embedded in very different conceptual frameworks?

Hepburn poses the issue we are concerned with in the following way: What is revealed, or achieved, by extending the "reach" of the aesthetic to encompass or constitute *an* irreducibly ultimate, if not *the* ultimate, religious context for orienting ourselves in the world, different from, but inextricably intertwined with, a conceptually grounded ultimate context, which it cannot duplicate, but which it presupposes and maybe even, in a certain sense, supplants? The conceptually grounded context that furnishes the philosophical background to Hepburn's reflections, clearly different from Peirce's and Polanyi's, is a nonaggressive, and non-nostalgic, form of non-theism, a metaphysical position that, along with religious naturalism in its many other manifestations, rejects all appeals to a transcendent sphere separate from cosmic process itself, but does not "lapse" into pantheism.[27] Whatever transcendence is to be found in nature or the cosmos is, for Hepburn, with a gesture toward Karl Jaspers, an "immanent transcendence," not an objectively existent "transcendent" domain outside the world that would fuse the functions of an "ultimate religious object" and an "ultimate explanatory principle" to ground a radical aesthetic unity of the cosmos. Such a unity is clearly not apparent to us, caught up as we are in the perplexing web of the problem of evil. Hepburn, however, is sensitive to religious forms of consciousness and wants to conserve them—in the aesthetic mode—to the degree that that is possible but without identifying the two modes *tout court* and also recognizing what is lost, indeed must be lost, in the process. That there are deep affinities between the aesthetic impulse and the religious impulse and the various metaphysical visions in which they are embedded does not entail that they are identical.

Hepburn traces, as many others such as Schleiermacher and the Romantics have, an arc from "nature" experienced as a not completely orderly immanent system of reciprocal relations to aesthetic experiences, both natural and artistic, marked by a distinctive felt quality of "transcendence" and sense of the "sacred," features foregrounded by Rudolf Otto as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* and described as "sacred folds" in the ecstatic naturalism developed by Robert Corrington. These are epiphanic moments, breaks in the normal course of experience, whether induced by natural experiences or by symbolic artifacts that take us out of ourselves, as Polanyi so eloquently writes. But while, it is clear, the actual existence of nature is not in doubt, it is precisely the problematic status, both conceptually and experientially, of the transcendent or the sacred, whether attached to nature or to art, that confronts us, even as, so it seems, we find them unavoidable no matter how we name them. Nature is "beyond" us even as we are "within" it. While nature as a whole, the cosmos as a vast panorama of processes and structures, is clearly an "object" of aesthetic as well as speculative wonder, one can ask whether religious and aesthetic wondering in the case of the transcendent or the sacred have any real work to do if there is no "object" independent of our forms of apprehension.

Hepburn raises this question against the background of a personalistic theism, which he finds unacceptable on metaphysical grounds, a topic we do not need to enter into here.[28] The problem Hepburn forces us to face is, if we cannot reach, make, or ground the transcendent or sacred philosophically, in the explanatory or theoretical mode, can we perhaps do so aesthetically and in this sense make them real? Does the "reach" of the aesthetic extend to a real experience of transcendence that merits cultivation and distinctive practices of attending? And what type of transcendent dimension do we reach and what is its object? Or, if there is no transcendent dimension in the personalistic sense that Hepburn gives to this term, conditioned for him by a

repudiated metaphysically grounded theism, is there any way to salvage the aesthetically religious imagination such that it is not a mere projection of human subjectivity onto a cosmos devoid of any objective aesthetic features? While, as Hepburn puts it, "imagination speculates, with freedom and passion, but is necessarily checked and controlled by critical reason" (*Reach*, p. 90), such checking, leading to acknowledging a failure to reach a metaphysically transcendent unity of a cosmic consciousness, can nevertheless "be seen as signaling a necessary stage in religious understanding, a requirement of imaginative logic in the religious sphere. Even though it may be one that negates an 'objectified' view of the divine, it is far from negating the life of religious imagination itself" (*Reach*, p. 94). We recall how Tillich exploited, under the guise of Christianity, the "non-objectified" view of the divine and attempted to find out the place of the aesthetic within our relationship to it.[29]

Of course, the great non-theistic traditions of the East and closer to home, Emerson, among others, have already shown us how to do this and they constitute a vast reservoir of significant images and a corresponding set of hermeneutical practices. They, too, are embedded in highly diversified conceptual systems and exemplify the appropriate existential attitudes and forms of attunement proper to them. And they manifest features of a "deep" aesthetic, "deep" as in "deep ecology." Indeed, it has been claimed, in many quarters, that the universe or world process manifests a deep aesthetic *structure* or that a *demand* for such a structure is justifiable in order to compensate aesthetically for systemic and moral disorder and evil (process theology in theistic form).[30] However, as Hepburn remarks, "to take evil with full seriousness must involve setting resolute limits to treating it in aesthetic terms" (*Reach*, p.106). But this would seem to be precisely what Whitehead and Hartshorne saw as needed to handle the *ultimate integration of order and disorder* in God's consequent nature. Evil presents itself as something "ugly," a central point in Frederick Ferré's development of a kalogenic evolutionary naturalism (Ferré, *Living and Value*).[31]

There *must* be *some* way, it has been claimed, for the universe to be an aesthetic whole or to be apprehended in such a way that it is an aesthetic unity, and therefore "good" or an "intrinsic value," even if it is not apparent to us but something taken on faith. This seems to be a postulate or an ultimate premise. The problem, of course, is how one would establish the actual existence and nature of such a structure and the ontological implications of such a demand. Can it be done aesthetically, however we want to define such a term? For religious naturalism, in its multiple and culturally diverse forms, and clearly for Hepburn, the aesthetic intelligibility of nature is, for the most part, a *construction* rather than a *construal* and, in essence, it is an *event* or *process*, a constitutive habit, or set of habits, of attending that *gives rise to what it intends*, to which, as Polanyi writes, we submit and which we "serve." It is constituted by *participation through contemplation* but not by contemplation or speculative thought alone, which has already preceded it and been left behind. While it involves *recognizing* aesthetic *orders* of the world, or aesthetically apprehended orders, it accepts the radical perspectival character of all forms of apprehension and makes no attempt to totalize it or think it has to be, or even can be, grounded in an integrating and totalizing consciousness. Is, then, a cosmically oriented religiously tinged aesthetics doomed "unless the overall fabric of the world were itself an intelligible, rational structure or also the work of an infinite intelligible mind" (*Reach*, p. 103)? This is a further problem, however. In what senses does an intelligible, rational structure of the world have to be the work of an infinite intelligible mind? Is this a working hypothesis or a theorem? Or can we separate the two sides? Peirce and Polanyi would allow us to do so, even if some of their followers quite strongly argue the opposite.

In the case of the appearance of the "transcendent," of an "open beyond," the problem, as Hepburn sees it, is precisely the "revelatory" or "disclosure" power of the experience of such a beyond and what is

its status if the "transcendent," or the "sacred," is not anything separate or distinct from the very forms of experiencing in which it occurs, that is, if it comprises existential stances that do not so much reveal as *enrich* the universe, that is, *add new features to it*, features it, in light of "the God-emptiness of nature" (*Reach*, p. 104), would not have were it not for us creatures, who are ourselves inside, not outside, of nature. In short, the aesthetico-religious "taking" of nature has an undeniable object and the forms in which we experience nature clearly both reveal and enrich—and do so precisely in the aesthetic, not the explanatory, mode. But if, one could ask, the "transcendent" or the "sacred" in some ways *appear* in specific forms of experiencing, do they really have to have any reality other than their forms of appearing and the distinctive kinds of "logics" that determine them? Or are they, rather, as philosophical theism asserts, merely *primary analogues* of a type of unity that marks a unifying cosmic consciousness that can be established in another way, that is, argumentatively? What is their status if, as Hepburn proposes, they can be detached from the metaphysics of theism and from the dogmatic claims of the religions of revelation?

The prime question we are confronted with, then, is complex and, indeed, exceedingly strange. Is aesthetic intelligibility (a) *discovered* already in the universe, (b) *added* to the universe, (c) a theoretical, that is, metaphysical *demand* or *requirement*, (d) a psychological/intellectual desire … or what? Peirce and Polanyi, with their realist views of science, allow us to answer "yes" to (a) and (b), which really are not in opposition, but (c) and (d) require closer discussion.

There is clearly operative in us—at out best moments—not just a desire for intelligibility but a desire for *aesthetic* intelligibility, a desire for the cosmos, like a work of art, to display both an immanent and a transcendent sense of order, a cosmic aesthetic order, an order that is not just a projection of our desires, pushing us *a tergo*, but a *lure*, pulling us *de fronte*. Peirce explores this possibility in his "neglected argument" essay. But why do we think we *need to have* a cosmos as an intrinsically *aesthetically* ordered whole if the cosmos is to have religious relevance? Is this a reasonable demand? How would it be accessed? It is clear that from one point of view the cosmos—in order to be the universe—must be a unity, even if it is not an "object" presented to us in perception. Looked at objectively, the universe displays laws that "hold it together." But, on the religious naturalist position, no one holds it together. There is no actualized and grounding cosmic vision of the whole. Our apprehension of the world is irretrievably finite. But, faced with what Mikel Dufrenne called "the plenitude of the perceived" and "the total immanence of a meaning in the sensuous" (*In the Presence of the Sensuous* p. 83; cited in *Reach*, p. 108),[32] we have to admit that, notwithstanding the absence of such an *actualized* vision of the whole, we still intend or try to achieve a kind of cosmic vision. This is the motor of religious longing.

What is the actual object—the effective object—of this vision? Is it something, in the words of Schiller, "for which mind has no concept nor speech any name" (Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, p. 109; cited in *Reach*, p. 110),[33] that is, something that transcends all definite description, something that Dewey characterizes as "the mysterious totality of being the imagination calls the universe."[34] It is "no thing at all." Writing from a thoroughly naturalistic position, Dewey claims that "the idea of a whole, whether of the whole personal being or of the world, is an imaginative and not a literal idea. The limited world of our observation and reflection becomes the Universe only through imaginative extension. It cannot be apprehended in knowledge nor realized in reflection"(*Common Faith*, pp. 18-19). In his *Art as Experience*, Dewey also writes:

> We suppose that experience has the same definite limits as the things to which it is concerned. But any experience … has an indefinite total setting … in a whole that stretches out indefi-

> nitely…. Any experience becomes mystical in the degree to which the sense, the feeling, of the unlimited envelope becomes intense – as it may do in experience of an object of art. … This sense of the including whole … is rendered intense within the frame of a painting or a poem. … A work of art … accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive whole which is the universe.[35]

Religious images, and experienced forms with religious import, do precisely this. They formulate experience in such a way that they are experienced as "samples from the sea" of existential attitudes. Dewey further writes, with echoes of James, of "the religious feeling that accompanies intense aesthetic perception: … however broad the field, it is still felt as not the whole; the margins shade into that indefinite expanse beyond which imagination calls the universe" (*Art as Experience*, p. 195). This applies not just to religious artworks but to our experience of nature apart from, even if informed by, our experiences of such artworks.

But, what if, without having recourse to any Kantian-type regulative principles or the Whiteheadian-Hartshornean ontological postulate of a cosmic appreciator, the desire for aesthetic unity is best seen as an *enabling device* to stabilize and preserve the intrinsic values of the universe, *emergent with us*, but without an ultimate preservation/preserver of value who would also be the object of an aesthetic regard? What if the distinction between *projection* and *lure* is not ultimate? And what if our deepest fiduciary commitment is to this?

Peirce and Polanyi would admit that a price is to be paid if the aesthetic intelligibility of the cosmos as a support of our religious orientation is a feature of our demands and not a feature of the world independent of these demands, *which are themselves objective*. There is also a price to be paid if we give up the demand for the religious context of the aesthetic intelligibility of the world: extreme impoverishment of our experience. So, we could ask what is to be gained if we *accept the demand* without any way of either accepting or being able to prove the aesthetic intelligibility of world itself *independently of our responding* to it? Would this make the aesthetic intelligibility of the cosmos any less objective? Can we *reconstitute the values* intrinsic to the demand and intrinsic to our position in the universe while discarding the metaphysical claims of a transcendent (or transcendental) grounding? Do Peirce and Polanyi really need such a grounding outside the processes of *natura naturans*? Is, indeed, a human grounding all that we need and in fact a constitutive component of our response to objective features of the world? Hepburn speaks of "aesthetic reworkings of religion" (*Reach,* p. 106) and of the need for "placing aesthetic concepts against a background of religious concepts"(108).

Religious naturalism in "displacing God" from the focal point of life and of metaphysical explanation needs, however, as Ferré says, something else to occupy "the logical space of God" as context of contexts (*Living and Value*, p. 178). Within the frame of religious naturalism it is nature as a union of process and pattern not the God of theism that functions as the metaphysical and the religious ultimate. Religious images and religious affections are not directed toward such a God and consequently religious naturalism is faced with a comprehensive re-reading, reconstruction, and filtering of the great vortex of sacred symbols. In this, of course, religious naturalism is not alone, since there are even non-theistic forms of Christianity and of Judaism which retain the "experiential logic" of the Jewish and Christian form of life and all the existential attitudes, shorn of their dogmatic context, belonging to it.[36] The fertile ambiguity of Schleiermacher is only one great and still relevant "high theological" instance of such an approach, with Spinoza lurking in the background. Tillich, and maybe even Peirce, are also put into play with their own Schellingian background.[37] The major systems of Eastern thought exemplified in the philosophical traditions of Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism,

and Advaita Vedanta find the anthropomorphic and dualistic position on the "divine" or "ultimate" reality that permeates all Western "onto-theology" inadequate. They elicit and inform very different "spiritual exercises." The function of God in the Western metaphysical tradition is to *ground* or *integrate* the complex diversity of the cosmos, without itself being identical with it, except within a pantheistic frame such as Spinoza's, where God is identified with the laws of nature and is worshipped by a philosophical intellectual love. The ultimate premise is that the universe needs a *ground* to support it by reason of its radical contingency and that it needs an *integrator* to hold it together by reason of its centrifugal variety. While the ground is often conceived as an antecedent rational order—Plato's ideas, the logos of the Stoics, the divine ideas of Aquinas, Whitehead's eternal objects—the universe itself is seen, from our side, to be a heterogeneous and often powerfully and overwhelmingly disordered, yet creative, field, which nevertheless displays profoundly attractive features that pull us toward it (and repel us, too) in the deepest ways. Stuart Kauffman has foregrounded this side of things in his *Reinventing the Sacred*.[38] Kauffman's position is remarkably close to Polanyi's, but without a commitment to or a need for theism.

Further Considerations

The universe is, it must be admitted, a *source* of aesthetic delight and almost unspeakable sublimity purely on the level of experience. Both Peirce and Polanyi bear witness to this in their insatiable openness and interest, as does Chet Raymo in his attempt to construct a non-theistic sacramental Catholicism, developed in his *When God is Gone Everything is Holy*. Our experiences of the universe are marked by properties that are distinctively aesthetic, properties that mark our own consciousness and forms of apprehension, that constantly and permanently pull us "beyond the finite."[39] We, surface dwellers that we are, are still perplexed by systemic forms of disorder. The cosmos does not appear, and in fact is not, entirely benign and its aesthetic, that is, harmonious, order is not unproblematically apparent. We *want* by pure spontaneity of mind for there to be such an order and orderer, as Peirce opined. We want the cosmos, or at least central parts of it, to be not just intelligible on the explanatory level—the level of laws, theories, formal symmetries captured in equations and the periodic table and the statistical processes of genetic replication—but we want, on the affective level of ontological attunement, a deep intrinsic harmony that ultimately "accepts" the presence of intrinsic elements of disharmony, integrating them into a higher, even if hidden, unity. Theism, in whatever form, and the philosophical position embodied in the *Dao de Jing* share the desire for "acceptance," but divide on the meaning of "accepts." Accepting in the sense of "allowing for," as in Taoism, is quite different from accepting in the sense of the necessary consequences of a personal decision of a creator or orderer God. This latter sense is the aesthetic-metaphysical thrust of the Whiteheadian tradition in its theistic form, a form that has been challenged by Donald Sherburne in his classic examination and (de)construction of a Whiteheadian theo-aesthetic and by Frederick Ferré's development of the notion of a kalogenic universe and the appropriate practices for living and creating value in it, especially values immanent in types of experiences.

The desire for an aesthetic unity of the cosmos—for an ultimate aesthetic unity—is, then, clearly a deep *affective demand*. Such a demand is exemplified in paradigmatic occasions of experiencing marked by what Whitehead called "affective tones" of a special sort and which we have already seen Dewey gesturing toward in his notion of an open spiral of experiencing. These "aesthetico-metaphysically" tinged affective tones have, in the long term, a focal object that, depending on the theoretical context and even if intrinsically vague, is both metaphysically and religiously ultimate. But, one could ask, is there any real difference in the "quality" of the affective tones if the thematic "object" of such cosmic affective intentional structures can be

construed in radically different ways? One is once again reminded of, and challenged by, Schleiermacher's ambivalent characterization, deeply influenced by Spinoza, of the ultimate object of a religious consciousness marked by "creature consciousness" or the sense of "ultimate dependency": *God or the universe*. This ambivalence is the root of the charge of pantheism against Schleiermacher. Both—God and the universe—are totalities. The question is, What happens to our aesthetico-religious appropriation of them, if they so clearly belong to such radically different contexts?

Further, how, or in what sense, does an aesthetic attitude, rooted in a wondering sense of finitude and ontological dependency, contribute to rendering God or the cosmos intelligible and hence *worthy* of our regard, that is, a thing of value and beauty, displaying, to have recourse to Aquinas's formulation, (a) *claritas sive splendor formae*, (b) *integritas sive perfectio*, and (c) *consonantia sive debita proportio* (shining, wholeness, and harmony—*Summa Theologiae* I, 39, 8c)?

Aquinas's formulation applies clearly to finite instances of beauty, which he considers to be reflections in nature of (a) the beauty of the divine being and (b) the beauty of the cosmos as a whole as *ordered*, in spite of its recalcitrance, and *enjoyed*, in spite of its irretrievable losses and tragedies, by the divine being, the cosmic poet or dramatist, according to Hartshorne and Peirce (for Peirce the universe is "God's poem"). But neither God nor the universe is a puppet master, since the creative process is not under the rule of strict necessity. In the theistic form of process thought God is, or can be, surprised by the course of creation. Frederick Ferré, writing out of the same tradition, denies the need for a cosmic integrator. "Monotheism," he writes, "is a possible but not a compelling aspect of Whiteheadian organicism. Perhaps the universe is not centrally organized, after all" (*Living and Value*, p. 209). Neither Peirce nor Polanyi have established this on theoretical grounds. Maybe nobody has.

One could ask, further, in what sense(s) can one really say then that God takes, and so should we, *aesthetic* satisfaction in the course of creation, that God finds the cosmos beautiful, that God *integrates* the cosmos *aesthetically* and weaves it into the prehensive field of his consequent nature so that it makes up a "divine order"? This is, of course, not the infinite act of understanding of the classical theistic tradition, God's eternal act of omniscient understanding, an ecstatic vision marked by "delight." The delight, from the classical theistic point of view, seems to be a purely intellectual one, marked by a transparency and lack of opaqueness, which are the exact opposites of our forms of consciousness. Process thought, in its theistic form, of course, attacks this, transforming the delight into an aesthetic delight, an unsurpassable or maximal aesthetic delight, in that everything can be brought into a felt unity, with maximal contrast, and has been done so in all its felt particularities. But what we finite beings actually have in experience are fragmented and perspectival harmonies that we both uncover and create. The universe, from the experiential side, as the pragmatists have shown, is made up of local integrated systems that follow their own trajectories within the creative womb of time and the boundaries of cosmic law, which binds order and chaos together. Novalis's remark that "chaos, in a work of art, should shimmer through the veil of order" has real resonance in this context, especially if we think of chaos as not merely disorder but dynamic and serendipitous creativity, the perpetual shimmering of cosmic process itself. The veil of order, Polanyi establishes, is an achievement, on both the ontological and the experiential levels. It marks nature and it marks our efforts to apprehend it adequately.

The veil of order arises and is grasped in what Hepburn calls "visionary glimpses" which characterize imagination's "stammering after transcendence" (*Reach*, p. 82). This stammering never stops or reaches full and total articulation, in accordance with Polanyi's notion that articulation always remains incomplete.

This stammering after transcendence is composed of the "attitudes and evaluations that now constitute the religious orientation" (*Reach*, p. 87). Hepburn agrees with George Steiner's claim in his book, *Real Presences*,[40] that "the aesthetic is the making formal of an epiphany," (p. 226; cited in *Reach*, p. 100), but gives it a substantially different interpretation. Steiner was enamored of the fact that the meaning of an artwork, whether poem, painting, a piece of music, emerged out of its underlying carriers: words, brush strokes, tones. This emergence of a novel quality out of an antecedent set of conditions is meant to show that meaning "transcends" its supports, that the supports have no meaning in themselves but need a generative consciousness that animates them, which is precisely Polanyi's point. Steiner wants to say that this model of emergent meaning grounds the transition from the emergence of meaning on the experiential plane to the emergence of meaning on the cosmic plane. While not claiming that God is emergent from the world, Steiner still claims that God is the guarantor and ground of the emergent higher order meanings of the world. The seems to be an experientially unwarranted conclusion. Of course, the question is whether higher order meanings either need God, as guarantor, conservator, and condition of possibility, or even point to such a higher meaning. Meaning is the "soul," or animating principle, of a set of particulars, but this does not entail that God, as world soul, is needed to inform the materials and endow them with meaning. It is not evident that either Peirce or Polanyi think so. It is clearly quite foreign to Polanyi's own conceptual framework.

But I think, with a gesture toward Polanyi, that we can go in another direction here with a differently weighted distinction between *emergence* and *embodiment*: the emergence of novel forms of feeling and their embodiment in pregnant symbols. Hepburn speaks of "religiously toned aesthetic experiences" (*Reach*, p. 110) wherein the "extrapolatory, transcending movement of the mind may have no actual terminus" (*Reach*, p. 110). Such a movement culminates in what seem to be "time-transcending moments," Polanyi's ecstatic vision, of aesthetic integration where "everything comes together" and there is a sense of primal unity and of being caught up in an ecstatic moment. The screen of concepts falls away, as Polanyi says, and we are poured directly into experience. Paradigmatic examples of this, as charted by Hepburn, are experiences of music (think of Bach's B-Minor Mass or St. Matthew Passion, Mozart's great Mass in C Minor, Beethoven's late quartets, Mahler's 9th Symphony, and so forth) or peak experiences such as those charted in Wordsworth's account of the ascent of Mount Snowdon. But they are also clearly shown, with startling and overwhelming power, in such images as Bellini's *St. Francis in the Wilderness* in the Frick Museum in New York and Ma Yuan's *Mountain Path in Spring*.[41] These two paintings, from radically different traditions, present images of being "placed" in the cosmos. But are their "affective tones" or "defining qualities" really inseparable from either their implicit or explicit metaphysical contexts, the one of theism and the other of a Taoist religious naturalism? Do they not have something deeply in common? Both St. Francis and the walker are in and out of the landscape, are *embodied*, just as the images of their embodiment are themselves embodiments. These images arise and are not just "about" or thematize philosophical and theological positions but express, or present, the "morphology" of ecstatic vision, of being caught up in what Karl Jaspers called "the encompassing." Every particular in each image is a vector pointing toward a focus, which is the "import" of the total configuration. These images belong to both the aesthetic and the religious dimensions of experience and of meaning-making and show their deep affinity. In both these cases we see the validity of Dufrenne's comment that "Art's task is to bring the spiritual before our eyes in a sensuous manner" (*Presence of the Sensuous*, p.83; cited in *Reach*, p. 74), witnessed to by the powerful vortices of symbolic images spiraling out of religious traditions that are haunted by the irresolvable tension between absence and presence on both the semiotic and metaphysical levels.

Symbols, according to Dewey, "afford the only way of escape from submergence in existence."[42] This is, in the present context, the role of aesthetic and religiously toned symbols, which always contain an

interpretation, or are themselves interpretations in the presentational (Langer) or exhibitive (Buchler) mode. They lift us out of immediate existence as they orient us toward participation in a novel dimension of reality. But it is not their explicit subject matter that is at issue, which is subject to bitter dispute; it is the felt qualities of the encounters that are engendered by a subject matter that remains discursively beyond our grasp or at least beyond universal agreement. When Hepburn speaks of "the way in which aesthetic experience approaches experience delineated in theistic language" (*Reach*, p. 104), he is trying to find "an aesthetic home for the sacred … neither demonizing nature nor divinizing it, but concerned to contemplate and celebrate nature as it is, so far as that is a coherent objective" (*Reach*, p. 158). *Contemplation* and *celebration*: are these not the paradigmatic acts that spread the aesthetic lattice over the experienced world, independently of whether there is a cosmic contemplator celebrating creation?[43]

What do the acts of contemplation encounter? First and foremost, the unsettling realization that there is a world, the *es gibt* of a massive presence, the experience of the world as *gift* and as bearing physiognomic features of mysteriousness, hiddenness, and sublimity that elicit respect, reverence, wonder. The sacred and the transcendent on a naturalistic view must be, as Hepburn puts it, connected with fragility, with cosmic insecurity (*Reach*, p. 118) manifested in our recognition of the "dysteleological side of the world" (*Wonder*, p. 152). This leads to the wonderment that we began with, a wonderment that arises spontaneously in the receptive mind, but not in the mind which is closed and hardened. Hepburn writes: "Wonder may well become the core of the component of "strangeness and mystery," in place of the dumbfounded response to the supposedly supernatural" (*Reach*, p. 125). As Hepburn says, "to be evocative of wonder, an object need not be seen as filtering the perfections of deity" (*Wonder*, p. 144). What Dewey points out in the case of our perception of a painting, that "there is an impact that precedes all definite recognition of what it is about" (*Art as Experience*, p. 150), is also the mark of our encounter with the *fact* of nature and its combination of processes and patterns including the affect-drenched images which, arising out of the symbolic world of human creativity and forms of apprehension, hold the whole world before us in a kind of sacramental vision. Do they not show the aptness of Schleiermacher's remark that "to be one with the infinite in the midst of the finite and to be eternal in a moment, that is the immortality of religion" (*On Religion*, p. 54)? And of Goethe's remark from his poem, *Gott, Gemüt und Welt*: "If you want to reach the infinite, stride in the finite in all directions." In this sense infinite wondering, but not wondering about an ontologically transcendent infinite, becomes "*life-enhancing*" (*Wonder*, p. 144) and takes on an ethical tone that complements the existential tone arising from the sense of radical contingency.

Wondering and its modes, and its distillation in intense experiences, cause nature in all its modes, Hepburn writes, to "burgeon forth in the light of our consciousness" (*Reach*, p. 161) in all its "freshness and radiance" (*Wonder*, p. 143). In the process we summon objects and ourselves "out from the everlasting darkness in which they had been interred" (*Reach*, p. 111). It is this summoning, and the sense of this summoning, that gives rise to the "feeling qualities of the sacred" (*Reach*, p. 127) that are embodied in our "sacred signs."[44] Iris Murdoch alludes to Plato's suggestion in the *Timaeus* that man "saves or cherishes creation by lending a consciousness to nature."[45] But if religious naturalism is right in at least one thing, it is that the saving and cherishing is something that we do and ought to do, and it is manifested in a creative symbolic consciousness that has left not just a rich heritage of symbolic images for us to explore, reconstruct, and live by, but capacities to read the great cipher-script of nature itself in terms of its symbolic pregnance and its magnetic power to pull us toward it in rapt acts of attention. The power of symbolic transformation turns the objects of experience themselves into symbols, as Susanne Langer saw and exploited in her great semiotic project.

Polanyi writes that "the universe of every great articulate system is constructed by elaborating and transmuting one particular aspect of anterior experience … in terms of its own internal experience" (*PK* 283). Religious naturalism takes the *es gibt* of nature as both the starting point and the end point, elaborating and transmuting it in terms of sought for forms of participation. This internal experience is marked by a distinctive "quality" in the Deweyan sense, in this case at hand, the *quality of wondering*, of existential perplexity and of contemplative participation in *natura naturans*. In the words of John Dewey, "the gist of the matter is that the immediate existence of quality, and of dominant and pervasive quality, is the background, the point of departure, and the regulative principle of all thinking."[46] Polanyi writes that "a valid articulate framework may be a theory, or a mathematical discovery, or a symphony. Whatever it is, it will be used by dwelling in it, and this *indwelling can be consciously experienced* " (*PK* 195, my emphasis). The construction in images, image-schemas, and metaphorical networks of a religiously toned aesthetic frame may be in service of a theory, exemplifying it, but it is not itself a theory and indeed may even supplant or dispense with theory. Dwelling in the flux of experience in a self-focusing manner in participatory contemplation, Polanyi says, "dissolves the screen (of theory), stops our movement through experience and pours us straight into experience; we cease to handle things and become immersed in them … As we lose ourselves in contemplation, we take on an impersonal life in the objects of our contemplation" (*PK* 197). Is this not what is exhibited in the Bellini and Ma Yuan? These images *frame* a paradigmatic cosmic experience, exhibiting a form of feeling immanent not just in the relational configuration of the frame, but in the circle of our own experience. They are to be validated and not verified, if we can follow Polanyi's critical distinction here.

Polanyi speaks of our being *carried away* by the sets of subsidiary particulars, functioning as vectors, which support our processes of sense-making. It is precisely this process of being carried away that marks the kind of aesthetic intelligibility I have been grappling with, one that admits its radically constructive nature without having to commit itself to the metaphysical conclusions of an objective integration of the cosmos as opposed to an integration of the self over against and in relation to the cosmos and its emergent features and values. Climbing Mount Snowdon "framed" a nature-oriented perceptual occasion for Wordsworth just as his poem frames a perceptual occasion, an event of meaning, for us, and just as Bach's B-Minor Mass does or any work of art with religious resonance, independent of its factual claims or dogmatic commitments. Such frames are reservoirs of authentic religious feeling. While the experience of climbing Mount Snowdon is the experiencing of a natural object, that is, Mount Snowdon itself as a symbol of ascent, the second experience, of Wordsworth's poem, is clearly, in the most literal sense, of an "unnatural object," a symbolically pregnant form in which we see embodied the deepest forms of response to the mystery of life and of the world. This is the case of all those frames that we use as instruments of self-integration and orientation. They manifest specific morphologies of feeling, in Langer's sense, wherein each element of the frame has a role in the configuration, functioning as gradients informing our subjectivity at all levels.[47]

They are, in Polanyi's terminology, symbols. Consider the following passage from *Meaning*:

> The symbol, as an object of our focal awareness, is not merely established by an integration of subsidiary clues directed *from* the self to the focal object; it is also established by surrendering the diffuse memories and experiences of the self *into* this object, thus giving them a visible embodiment. This visible embodiment serves as a focal point for the integration of these diffuse aspects of the self into a felt unity, a tacit grasp of ourselves as a whole person in spite of the manifold incompatibles existing in our lives as lived. Instead of being a self-*centered* integration, a symbol becomes a self-*giving* one, an integration in which not only

> the symbol becomes integrated but the self also becomes integrated as it is carried away by the symbol—or given to it.[48]

The theme of the religious dimension of aesthetic intelligibility, as I have been posing it, is precisely what symbols and what features of experience, what symbolically pregnant experiences, we are to give ourselves to and what their proper significate effects are and their ontological reach. Polanyi's foregrounding of self-giving and participation is complemented by Peirce's account of the multileveled self that is given to the play of meanings and that strives to integrate itself in linkage to the world.

Looked at in Peircean terms this self-integration occurs by means of iconic, indexical, symbolic (in Peirce's sense) elements that make up the constitutive factors of the symbolic configuration, in Polanyi's sense of that term. The self-integration takes place on the affective, actional, and "logical" levels, corresponding to the schematization of Peircean interpretants, what Peirce, as we have seen, called the "proper significate effects" of signs and of the sign-functioning dimensions of experience.

First of all, looked at iconically, the cosmic vision, as expressed, is composed of a set or field of images or rather affect-laden images in the semiotic mode or features of experience. What image-field or perceptual-field informs the cosmic vision? One source is clearly the "scientific imagination," the best possible imaginative vision of the universe, as Polanyi pointed out, upon which an appropriate religious imagination is built. Religious naturalism, in the discursive mode, supplies this. Another source is the religious imagination, with its various background conditions and conceptual commitments. This imagination is clearly not always theistic and its imaginal supports have what Nelson Goodman referred to as a split or double reference: "down" to the thematic contents they are denoting and "up" to the existential attitudes they are expressing and which are embodied in them. The world as a field of pregnant objects and images, joined in and grounded in the deep play of resemblances, gives rise to Peircean emotional/affective interpretants.

Secondly, from the indexical side, the cosmic vision has a vectorial power to direct both perception and action. It gives rise to Peircean energetic interpretants. The elements of the cosmic vision, its affect-laden particulars, interrupt us in our everydayness and pulls us out of ourselves, ecstatically, and directs us, in stipulated ways, to the object of our cosmic focus. It forces us to "pay attention" to the world, in Simone Weil's conception of the task. The indexical side makes up the vectorial particulars, directed perceptual lines of force, that point to a focus, just as Polanyi schematized. Polanyi would call them subsidiary particulars separated by a logical gap from what they "mean." The distinctiveness of these particulars, however, to follow Polanyi's lead, is that they are "parts" of ourselves. The prime religious symbol, or symbolic image, is something we are forced to give ourselves to, something that we pour ourselves into, something that we find ourselves in—or refuse.

Thirdly, continuing the Peircean schematization, from the symbolic side, there is an intelligible core, an integrating unity, that is, a *content* (albeit a qualitatively defined content) that holds the elements of the cosmic vision together and that "refers" to something "objective." The cosmic vision, on the symbolic side, is a semiotic lattice, a conceptual frame. It is a grid through which, or a system within which, we apprehend the cosmos itself as a content. The cosmos is apprehended in a global fashion and other objects in it are apprehended in more specific, focused fashion, with its individual properties and expressive features proper to the links and linkages of the religious vision. The religious vision, rooted in attending to the world, points up

to and exemplifies existential attitudes and points down to and denotes some scientific, historical, or dogmatic claim. It is the very nature of these claims that a religious naturalism puts into play. Religious naturalism is established on the symbolic level of argumentation, but it is practiced on all three levels.

Conclusion

At the end of his *Human Nature and Conduct,* John Dewey wrote that "to be grasped and held … consciousness needs … objects, symbols." The objects and symbols induce, in his words, "reverences, affections, and loyalties which are communal." Religion, he goes on to say, "as a sense of the whole is the most individualized of all things, the most spontaneous, undefinable and varied. For individuality signifies unique connections in the whole."[49] The challenge set to us by religious naturalism is to develop habits of attending that open us up to the sense of the whole and show us how to engage the web of unique connections. Peirce and Polanyi supply powerful and complementary tools for clarifying just what these habits of attending consist of and what attending to the world in this manner does to us.

Endnotes

[1]On Peirce's undeveloped, fragmentary, and ambiguous theological positions see for fundamental orientation and extension Donna M. Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God: A Developmental Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), Michael Raposa, *Peirce's Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) and his "Peirce's Theological Semiotic," *The Journal of Religion* 67/4 (October 1987): 493-509, Vincent Potter, *Peirce's Philosophical Perspectives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), Robert S. Corrington, *An Introduction to C.S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993) and *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Robert Neville, *Realism in Religion: A Pragmatist's Perspective* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), and most recently Leon Niemoczynski, *Charles Sanders Peirce and a Religious Metaphysics of Nature* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011). They give a taste for the variety of conclusions to be drawn from Peirce's scattered remarks. Joseph Brent, *Charles S. Peirce: A Life,* Revised and Enlarged Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) puts us on ground level of Peirce's religious experiences.

Polanyi's religious positions have been explored and debated in many places, as readers of *Tradition and Discovery* are clearly aware. Ground level for discussion of Polanyi's religious affiliations and implications is William Scott and Martin Moleski, S.J., *Michael Polanyi: Scientist and Philosopher* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Thomas Torrance explored the implications of Polanyi's work in his *Belief in Science and in Christian Life: The Relevance of Michael Polanyi's Thought for Christian Faith and Life* (Edinburgh: Handel Press, 1980) and *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985). See the references to "God" in Drusilla Scott, *Everyman Revisited: The Common Sense of Michael Polanyi* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1985). Harry Prosch, *Michael Polanyi: A Critical Exposition* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986) confronts more orthodox appropriators of Polanyi's work in a critical manner. See also William Poteat's *Polanyian Meditations: In Search of a Post-Critical Logic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985) and his *A Philosophical Daybook: Post-Critical Investigations* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990). Tony Clark writes: "The debate about Polanyi's views on religion reflects a substantial uncertainty about whether the God of whom Polanyi speaks has an existence which is independent of human imagination. The secondary literature only serves to show that Polanyi's position on this question is far from clear" [*Tradition and Discovery* 32/3 (2005-2006): 28].

[2]I have discussed Peirce and Polanyi together in a number of formats: in relation to models of consciousness in my *Consciousness and the Play of Signs* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), in relation to the perceptual roots of linguistic meaning in my *Pragmatism and the Forms of Sense* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002), in relation to ritual in my "The Tacit Logic of Ritual Embodiments," in *Ritual in its own Right*, edited by Don Handelman and Galina Lindquist (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 197-212, in an aesthetic context in my "Dimensions of an Aesthetic Encounter," in *Semiotic Rotations* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2007), pp. 113-134, and in the context of an exploration of the cultural matrices of meaning-making in my "Meaningful Connections: Semiotics, Cultural Psychology, and the Forms of Sense," in Jaan Valsiner (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Culture and Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 255-276. I have treated the nature of religious naturalism in another context in my 'Royce and Religious Naturalism,' forthcoming in *Cognitio* 12/2 (2012).

[3]The two works that constitute the foil to these comments are *"Wonder" and other Essays: Eight Studies in Aesthetics and Neighboring Fields* (Edinburgh: at the University Press, 1984) and *The Reach of the Aesthetic: Collected Essays on Art and Nature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

[4]See for the general background of these comments Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Signs of Meaning in the Universe*, translated by Barbara J. Haveland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) and *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs*, translated by Jesper Hoffmeyer and Donald Favareau (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2008).

[5]As we will see, Peirce's love of triads will illuminate a number of issues: metaphysical, psychological, and semiotic. But any detailed discussion of these triads is not needed in the present discussion. See, however, the compact and accessible account in John K. Sheriff, *Charles Peirce's Guess at the Riddle: Grounds of Human Significance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) and James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[6]The reference to lure is to a central feature of Whitehead's account of how God influences the world.

[7]Donald Crosby, *A Religion of Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002) and *Living with Ambiguity: Religious Naturalism and the Menace of Evil* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

[8]See especially Gordon Kaufman, *In the beginning ... Creativity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004) and *In Face of Mystery: A Constructive Theology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[9]Crosby in his *A Religion of Nature* (p. 118) writes that "any basic object of religious concern … can be characterized by six 'role-functional' categories and their interrelations": uniqueness, primacy, pervasiveness, rightness, permanence, and hiddenness. He shows quite clearly that nature as process and pattern can fulfill these roles. That nature is the only object to fulfill these roles is certainly not the case: God, the Tao, Brahman, and so forth can likewise. But, we are faced with making a conceptual decision as to what characterization of the ultimate we are to choose. No matter which terminus we propose, Crosby points out, it will still have to fulfill these functional roles in the religious life. The question we will be facing is how these role functions are accessible in the aesthetic mode, without claiming, of course, that that is the only way.

[10]Robert E. Carter, *The Nothingness Beyond God* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 1997).

[11]This is an important point that lies at the base of Frederick Ferré's proposals in his profoundly stimulating *Living and Value* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

[12]See Joseph Grange, *Soul: A Cosmology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011) where this term functions in a central way, against the background of rather unorthodox use of Spinoza.

[13]Robert Neville has charted in accessible form the scope of such a reconstruction in his *Realism in Religion: A Pragmatist's Perspective* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009) fundamentally under the rubric of a philosophy or theology of symbolic engagement, using pragmatist conceptual and semiotic tools, primarily derived from Peirce. This is not the place to examine his defence of a theistic naturalism as opposed to Crosby's

non-theistic naturalism. A powerful exemplification of oscillation between frameworks is Paul F. Knitter, *Without Buddha I Could not be a Christian* (Oxford: One World, 2009), with the dedication "For my atheist brother, Don, who did his best to keep me honest." See also the moving work of Richard Holloway, *Looking in the Distance: The Human Search for Meaning* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2004), devoted to reflecting upon Vasilii Rozanov's aphorism: "All religions will pass, but this will remain: simply sitting in a chair and looking in the distance." How we look is the crux of the matter.

[14]See Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989) and chapter one of my *Consciousness and the Play of Signs*.

[15]This is a constant theme in Neville's *Realism in Religion*.

[16]*Living and Value*, p. 146.

[17]It should be mentioned that Ferré was well acquainted with Polanyi's work and used it to great advantage in his *Knowing and Value* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998). It is interesting that he made no use of Polanyi's work in his discussion of religious world models.

[18]"The distinction between two kinds of awareness allows us readily to acknowledge these two kinds of wholes and two kinds of meaning. Remembering the various uses of a stick, for pointing, exploring or for hitting, we can easily see that anything that functions effectively within an accredited context has a meaning in that context and that any such context will itself be appreciated as meaningful. We may describe the kind of meaning which a context possesses in itself as existential, to distinguish it especially from denotative or, more generally, representative meaning. In this sense mathematics has an existential meaning, while a mathematical theory in physics has a denotative meaning. The meaning of music is mainly existential, that of a portrait more or less representative, and so on. All kinds of order, whether contrived or natural, have existential meaning; but contrived order usually also conveys a message," Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 58; cited hereafter in text as PK .

[19]A general methodology for "translating" into religious naturalist terms the religious import of this stream of images is beyond the scope of this paper. Different traditions embody very different thematic contents and configure very different existential orientations that express our ultimate concern. Religious naturalism, in the form examined in the present essay, obviously has a greater affinity to the "high" non-theistic traditions than to the theistic. But, of course, even the type of theism engaged will also impact how the paradigmatic symbols of any tradition are interpreted. The liberal theology of the Chicago School still presents a challenge of a high order. More immediately, see Barbara Dee Bennett Baumgarten, *Visual Art as Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), where Tillich and Polanyi are examined together. I plan to return to the general hermeneutical and methodological problems on another occasion where the analytic framework will be broadened to encompass other conceptual resources.

[20](Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957; third edition), p. 90.

[21]This is also the practice exemplified in Chet Raymo, *Natural Prayers* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Hungry Mind Press, 1999), *Honey from Stone: A Naturalist's Search for God* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Hungry Mind Press, 1987), and *Once God is Gone Everything is Holy: The Making of a Religious Naturalist* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Sorin Books, 2008). Ursula Goodenough's classic book, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) explores the same issues in depth from a slightly different angle and in a most accessible and moving manner.

[22]I am referring to Polanyi's comment in *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009; originally published 1966) that all our thinking, and *eo ipso* our lives, "are necessarily fraught with the roots" that they embody (p. xviii).

[23]Peirce distinguishes multiple triads of interpretants. For our purposes, I restrict reference to what we can call the affective, energetic, and logical interpretants. The "interpretant" of a sign can be a feeling or

affect, a mode of reaction or existential connection, or a "thought" or "idea." These are the significate effects of the iconic, indexical, and symbolic dimensions of a sign or sign-configuration.

[24]See Potter, pp. 169-194, on Peirce's neglected argument as rooted in the play of musement.

[25]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, translated and edited by Richard Crouter (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996; originally published 1799).

[26]See my *Consciousness and the Play of Signs* for an extended treatment of this theme.

[27]John Dewey's *A Common Faith* is also marked by such a non-nostalgic position.

[28]See especially chapters 9 and 10 on "God and Cosmos" of his *Christianity and Paradox* (New York: Pegasus, 1996).

[29]See Baumgarten and Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture*, edited by John Dillenberger and Jane Dillenberger (New York: Crossroads, 1989). Tillich's reflections have to be brought into dialogue with others, with rather different theological visions, in order to be fully evaluated. The same comment applies to other reflections on the theological implications of aesthetics such as Jacques Maritain on the one hand and Ananda Coomaraswamy on the other, who represents one strand of the *philosophia perennis*, itself a problematic notion.

[30]See John Barrow, *The Artful Universe Expanded* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[31]Donald Crosby has explored the problem of evil extensively in his *Living with Ambiguity*.

[32]Mikel Dufrenne, *In the Presence of the Sensuous: Essays in Aesthetics*, edited and translated by Mark S. Roberts and Dennis Gallagher (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1987).

[33]Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, edited and translated with an introduction, commentary, and glossary of terms by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1967).

[34]John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. 85.

[35](New York: Perigee, 1980; originally published 1934), pp. 193-195.

[36]I am thinking of the work of Don Cupitt, Lloyd Geering , John Shelby Spong, and Mordecai Kaplan.

[37]I am referring to Niemoczynski's book. See note 1.

[38](New York: Basic Books, 2008). Kauffman says that "if we are members of a universe in which emergence and ceaseless creativity abound, if we take that creativity as a sense of God we can share" there results a "sense of the sacredness of all life and the planet" that functions as both base and goal of our fundamental religious orientation (p. 9).

[39]See Roald Hoffmann and Iain Boyd Whyte, *Beyond the Finite: The Sublime in Art and Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[40](Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[41]Hepburn speaks of Bellini's painting on p. 143 of *Wonder*.

[42]*The Quest for Certainty* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988; originally published 1929), p. 129.

[43]Simone Weil in *Waiting on God,* translated by Emma Craufurd (London: Collins, 1951): "Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object, it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts, as a man on a mountain who, as he looks forward, sees also below him, without actually looking at them, a great many forests and plains. Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it" (p. 72). Weil, speaking of school exercises, thinks of paying attention as an "image of something precious,"

which certainly applies to the cases we are discussing here. She writes: "Every school exercise, thought of in this way, is like a sacrament" (*Waiting*, p. 73). So much more so is attending to nature, the context of contexts. This is also the message of Chet Raymo's wonderful books.

[44]Ori Z. Soltes, *Our Sacred Signs: How Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Art Draw from the Same Source* (Cambridge, Mass: Westview, 2005).

[45]*Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 252.

[46]"Qualitative Thought," in John Dewey, *Philosophy and Civilization* (New York: Putnam, 1931), p. 116.

[47]On Langer's model of mind see my *Susanne Langer in Focus: The Symbolic Mind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). On Langer and Polanyi see my essay, "Between Articulation and Symbolization: Framing Polanyi and Langer," *Tradition and Discovery* 36/1 (2009), pp. 8-20.

[48](Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 74-75.

[49](Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), p. 226.