JONATHAN GRANT GRIFFIN

A Semiotic of Motives:
Kenneth Burke and Deely-Tartu Semiotics

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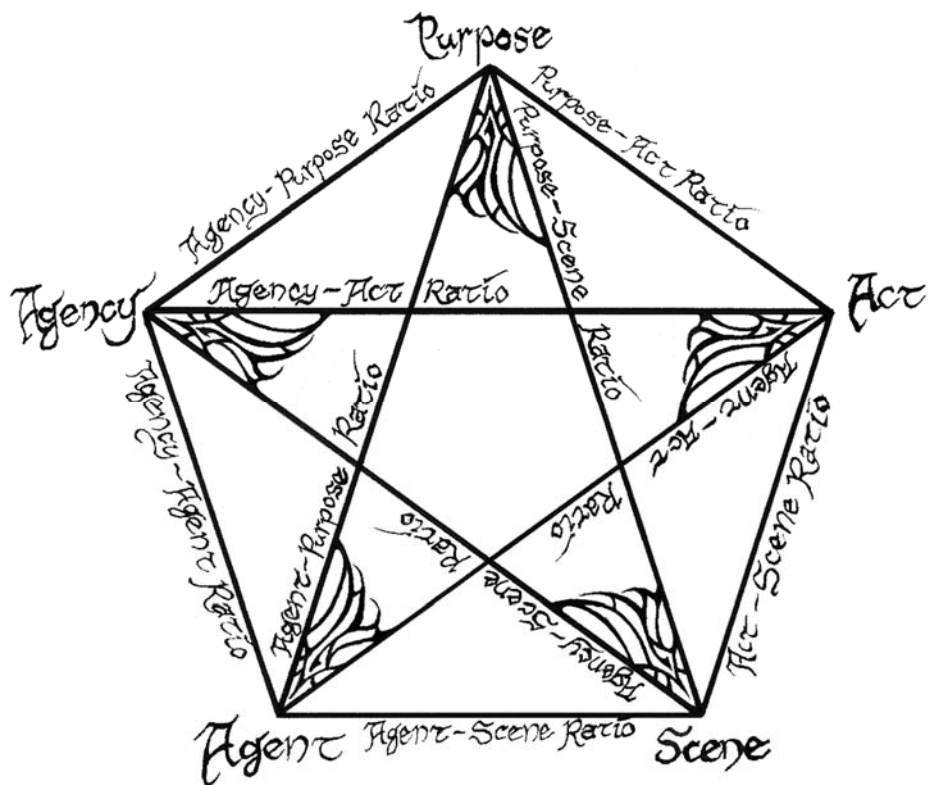
Dramatistic Pentad with Ten Ratios,
inscribed by Elijah Gwhedhú Tamu, 2022

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The roots of this work extend into my undergraduate years when I found John Deely's *Basics of Semiotics* at my first academic conference. I was then introduced to Kenneth Burke during my master's study under the exceptional professors Daniel Mahala and Thomas Stroik. Burke's work synergized with Deely's in a way that broke upon me with power and beauty, and the present work is an attempt to express the picture I first saw in those early days.

I would not be here without the personal sponsorship of John Deely. At the 2011 Semiotic Society of America conference in Pittsburgh, I presented some of my work integrating Deely and Burke, and unbeknownst to me, Deely was there listening. His response afterward was enthusiastic, especially once he realized the presentation was part of a longer article, and he proposed the possibility of publishing it in *The American Journal of Semiotics*. After he read the paper, he invited me and my wife, Julie, to visit him at the University of St. Thomas in Houston to prepare the draft together in person. It was a thrilling experience, especially for my first academic publication.

From that point on, Deely began to urge me to apply for the PhD program in Semiotics at the University of Tartu, for which he also wrote a letter of recommendation on my behalf. His support never wavered. His regular video calls were a source of encouragement until he passed from this life into the next. I last saw him at his new home in Pennsylvania just weeks before his death. We unpacked his books and walked through the beautiful campus of St. Vincent. He envisioned perhaps being one of my dissertation reviewers or opponents, but that was not to be. John Deely believed in me even when I struggled to share his confidence, and I hope he would be pleased with this work. He was my mentor and friend, and I must dedicate this work partly to him.

Deely's friend, Kalevi Kull, has been a friend to me as well. Before ever I flew across the ocean, Kalevi called me to offer guidance and help, and his kindness and generosity toward me have never ceased. The first good memory I have of Estonia is that of Kalevi's kind smile and warm greeting when Julie and I met him for the first time. His encouragement has come at times much needed, he has helped me bring out the work, and I have found in his own writing valuable pieces of the puzzle. I know that of all doctoral students globally, I am exceptionally fortunate. Professors Kull and Lotman both have been patient with me, even when I struggled to communicate effectively. Surely I could not have accomplished this work as I desired it to be under any other leadership in any other program.

Among my peers, too, are those who have helped me finish this work. In particular I want to mention Dr. Tyler James Bennett and Dr. Remo Gramigna. At Tyler's initiation, these two took the burden from my back when I was on the verge of collapse. While still working on their own dissertations, they took up the mantle of reading my draft to give me reprieve. Tyler recognized my critical state and intervened. If he had not, I am unsure I would have finished this work. Lesser men than these would have left me to fail. I honor this demonstration of kindness.

INTRODUCTION

The key theoretical term for this work is *motive* (or *purpose*). We are concerned largely with the defining role that motive plays in the human pursuit and construction of meaning. A robust semiotic view recognizes that whenever we have a choice about meaning, we must make that choice on some basis rather than another, and that basis is a motive. From this point of view, the key question for any act becomes "What *is* that particular motive, and what are its consequences for meaning and experience?"

What follows, then, is a work that considers motive to be the premier factor in semiosis (in meaning-making/seeking) for defining the nature of an act and of the acting agent. We follow several of Kenneth Burke's semiotic concepts, particularly those connected to motivation. Some of the Burkean concepts we consider are the distinction between motion and action (with Burke's emphasis on meaning-making as *action*); the dramatistic Pentad, which identifies the irreducible components of action;[1] terministic screens; God-terms; circumference; reduction; and the entelechial/teleological[2] principles inherent to signs and choices in meaning.

Kenneth Burke was an enigmatic figure who pursued semiotic questions throughout his professional life, beginning with his book *Counter-Statement* in 1931 and continuing throughout most of the 20th century. Burke work was characterized in many ways: literary theory, criticism, philosophy, rhetoric, aesthetics, poetics, communication theory, and so forth. Despite the viability of these classifications, they never quite fit, especially once Burke began to pursue his so-called Motivorum Trilogy: *A Grammar of Motives* (1945), *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1952d[1950]), and works connected to the unfinished third volume, *A Symbolic of Motives* – such as *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) and *Essays Toward a Symbolic of Motives* (2007). Burke's work only maps partially onto genres such as literary theory, largely because he was clearly gesturing toward a more universal conception of meaning that transcended human language and extended into a formal realm, not unlike Peirce. Burke was pushing toward the kind of foundational perspective that gave rise to semiotics as a transdisciplinary project of inquiry. Burke lacked a fully semiotic vocabulary, however, and this may have limited certain connections he was trying to make. In fact, it is possible that he never fully concretized the Symbolic of Motives because it actually needed to be a Semiotic of Motives. Burke scholar and semiotician Richard Fiordo considers

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[1]   Namely, Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. The absence of one aspect of this relation categorically precludes action in its distinction from motion. See Chapter 1's opening and section 1.1 for more detail.

[2]   The entelechial or teleological principle here refers to the development of a process toward its ultimate conclusion or fully developed form. The principle *as* a principle can obtain within both biological and cultural systems. For more detail (especially in relation to biological systems), see sections 1.2 and 1.3, including the relevant subsections.

that Burke himself would have gone much further in this direction if he had lived ten more years.[3]

Regardless, we can consider Burke to be at the very least a strong crypto-semiotician, to use Deely's parlance. With this term Deely referred to those who either "need themselves to become aware of the perspective that semiotic affords or whose work needs to be by others reclaimed and re-established from within that perspective" (Deely 1990: 119–120).[4] Deely attributes the coining of 'crypto-semiotician' to Sebeok,[5] who also seemed to have considered Burke in just this light. Sebeok said that Burke "uses very strong semiotic metaphors, imagery, terminology, and so forth", and he included Burke in a list of literary figures who have "said more interesting things about semiotics than many semioticians" (Sebeok 2003: 88). Appropriately, we push forward to frame Burke and certain key Burkean concepts in explicitly semiotic terms, aiming not to alter what is natural to his work but rather to bring out specific semiotic principles that run throughout all of those concepts.

Ours is not the first work to explicitly approach Burke in this way. For instance, Richard Fiordo's 1978 *Semiotica* article, *Kenneth Burke's semiotic*, is probably the most extensive and direct treatment in semiotics proper, and Fiordo's culminating call for further research prefigures the present work despite differences in overall aim. Another substantial (but less foundational)[6] semiotic treatment of Burke is Michael Feehan's 1989 *Semiotica* article, *Kenneth Burke's contribution to a theory of language*; here Feehan identifies Burke's semiotic definition of the human and draws connections between Burke and Peirce. And before either of these longer articles, Paul Meadows had written on *The semiotic of Kenneth Burke* in 1957; here Meadows employs a syntactics-semantics-pragmatics model to present a concise summary of Burke's motive-focused "analysis of the semiosical situation" (Meadows 1957). We are thus not the first to acknowledge that understanding Burke's work in an explicitly semiotic light does not distort that work but rather helps to clarify its core concepts more effectively. While Burke was largely concerned with human deployments of language, he was also clearly seeking to identify principles that transcend language, and we proceed on the stance that semiotics helps his work to do precisely that.

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[3] As relayed in a letter to the author.

[4] In footnote 50 on this same page, Deely says that the work of reclaiming and recontextualizing such figures "defines the requirements of semiotic historiography" (Deely 1990: 120).

[5] Specifically, the foreword to the 1985 reprint of Sebeok's *Contributions to the Doctrine of Signs* (Sebeok 1985[1976]: x).

[6] From the standpoint of semiotics, Feehan's article is less direct or foundational because he is assessing Burke through the lens of "a general philosophy of language" (Feehan 1989: 245) rather than in relation to semiotics in general. Consequently, it does precisely what Fiordo says authors usually do in regard to Burke: "touch on his semiotic, but only obliquely" – say, by focusing on "Burke's theory of language"; Fiordo's text, on the other hand, "aims to encounter Burke's semiotic directly" (Fiordo 1978: 53). If we are defining relevance to semiotics, this author would recommend Fiordo first.

Therefore, we explore key Burkean ideas in relation to such potent concepts in contemporary semiotics as biosemiosis; goal-directed behavior; scaffolding; semiotic catalysis; Umwelt, Innenwelt, and worlds of experience; incompatibility; semiosis as a process of making choices about meaning; indeterminacy; modeling; and Peirce's contention that human agents (and their entire thought-lives taken as a whole) are themselves complex signs. We trace the role of motive from its minimal necessity as goal-orientation in biosemiosis (that is, in the meaning processes of life in general) to the fuller sense of motive as it functions within human semiosis. We look at how the meanings in signs have their own particular and inherent semiosic trajectories, which is a necessity given the principle of incompatibility underlying the possibility of choice. The act of choosing some meaning rather than another is, of course, an *act*, and this entails that a motive must be involved in order for it to even be an act in the first place; all choices, therefore, are *motivated*. When this realization is investigated in the rich context formed at the intersection of contemporary semiotics and Burke, significant consequences follow. This work aims to develop those consequences, which confront the individual human agent as well as the Modern world of meaning as a whole.

Scope and methodology

The work's scope is already visible above, but we will lay it out explicitly. To say that the theoretical context of this work is the intersection of contemporary semiotics and Burke, we necessarily mean some selection of both has occurred. Any work on Burke should not fail to identify that such a selection has taken place. By *contemporary semiotics*, we have in mind primarily the major nexus comprised by John Deely and the Tartu-Moscow School (TMS). This shorthand contains the major trajectories of such figures as C.S. Peirce, Thomas Sebeok, Augustine, and Aquinas (through Deely) and Jakob von Uexküll, Juri Lotman, and biosemioticians like Kalevi Kull (through TMS). This nexus may be imperfectly labeled as 'Deely-Tartu semiotics', since it includes figures outside of those explicit boundaries (such as biosemioticians Frederik Stjernfelt and Jesper Hoffmeyer, neither of whom are from Tartu), but the semiotic tradition it indicates should be clear enough for initiates. The major academic journals commonly associated with this nexus would be *Semiotica*, *Sign Systems Studies*, and *The American Journal of Semiotics*.

By necessity, a summary term cannot reference all members of a set, lest it no longer be a summary; we intend our shorthand to include (to no doubt varying degrees) all those members of the international semiotics community who operate with the broadly semiotic view found at the contact points between John Deely's historical semiotics and the Tartu School – a view that is at least biosemiotic at its lower threshold, that is distinguished from a "semiological" tradition, and that is not automatically restrained by particular modern (or "postmodern") metaphysical commitments. On a practical level, the narrow frame of 'Deely-Tartu' also gives us a more manageable body of work to draw from. On the one hand,

we pull heavily from Deely's work and historical-conceptual framework, and on the other hand, we pull heavily from concepts and terminologies that are important within Tartu semiotics and its biosemiotic legacy (terms which we articulated above).

The selection behind our incorporation of Kenneth Burke draws primarily from the conceptual constellation found in his so-called "Motivorum Trilogy". Given that this trilogy of works is technically incomplete and open, further selections have been made: specifically, with *A Grammar of Motives* and *A Rhetoric of Motives* comprising the unambiguous part, and with *Language as Symbolic Action* and *Essays Toward a Symbolic of Motives* standing in for the more ambiguous Symbolic of Motives.[7] Of course, other texts from Burke feature in this work. The focus in drawing from Burke is grounded upon conceptual relevance; the Motivorum's prominent featuring is simply due to its thematic focus upon motive as a semiotic concern and the entelechial trajectories inherent within semiosis. Therefore, we are guided by the concepts themselves, drawing from various sources by and about Burke in order to articulate them and to them flesh them out more fully in our Deely-Tartu semiotic light. Thus, we draw upon Burke's works in varying proportion, with the Grammar serving perhaps the biggest role. Our aim is not to exhaustively analyze the Motivorum works because that would entail a different research focus and would probably require more space than would be appropriate here. Nor is our aim to attempt a thorough account of Kenneth Burke's semiotic as such (as Richard Fiordo called for back in 1978, in *Semiotica* 23); such is also a different project, though the work done here would contribute to that endeavor, since this might be the most extensive treatment of Burke within semiotics proper up to this point.

Having developed the conceptual results that arise from how we intersect Burke and semiotics, we apply those results as a theoretical framework to the object analysis of the Modern paradigm or world of meaning. We analyze the development of that world of meaning and its foundational semiotic principle against the background of previous paradigms – tracing out the shift from the ancient, pre-Christian pagan world to the Christian world, and then tracing the shift from the Christian (premodern) world to the Modern world. Using our Burkean-semiotic framework, we tease out the *God-terms* (or ultimate motives underlying each semiosphere), ultimately uncovering the semiotic foundations of Modernism, including those incarnations that affect to be departures from Modernity. We use the results to analyze the meaning problems that have haunted Modernity since at least the Enlightenment, and we show how these problems are both entailments of Modernism's semiotic departure points and are unavoidable as long as those departure points are maintained.

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[7] We will often refer to these works as simply the Grammar, the Rhetoric, the Symbolic, and so forth.

Outline of the work

Part I first affirmatively articulates our theoretical perspective. Chapter 1 begins by defining motive in its broadly biosemiotic sense, considering motive as fundamental for action as such. It connects Burke and the dramatistic pentad with Deely, Peirce, biosemiotics, and cognitive semiotics along the axis of the motion/action distinction. It then looks at biosemiotic goal-orientation at the roots of motive, proceeding along the lines of scaffolding, teleology in living systems, the Agent-Purpose ratio[8] in cellular communication, and the optimality principle (using the work of Kull, M. Lotman, Deely, Hoffmeyer, Uexküll, Favareau, and others). From here, Wilson and Sperber's Relevance Theory (branching off from Gricean pragmatics) is introduced and connected to semiotics proper through its bio/cognitive semiotic implications and gestures. We connect the mechanisms RT describes to what Kalevi Kull has written regarding semiotic catalysis and scaffolding as a process whereby choice "canalizes further behavior" and fixes habits into place (Kull 2014: 116). Proceeding from here along the trajectory of the biosemiotic conception of incompatibility, we connect semiotic catalysis as a process of creating semiotic filters to Kenneth Burke's concept of terministic screens and his family of entelechial concepts, which leads us into the next part.

Chapter 2 begins by first briefly describing the entelechial principle as found in Burke's work and then discussing its perhaps most well-known instance: the terministic screen (Burke 1966b).[9] Underlying the terministic screen is Burke's major concept of *dramatism* – which we describe as both a method and a viewpoint, following the work of Burke scholars William Rueckert, Bernard Brock, and James Chesebro (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.1.1). Burke presents dramatism in parallel to scientism, with the former focusing upon action and the latter upon description. Likewise, terministic screens place emphasis on action, which is motivated by definition. A terministic screen frames reality one way rather than another, so its selection always means a simultaneous deflection of the rejected options.

Thus, we characterize terministic screens as a form of modeling that takes place even on the seemingly inconsequential levels of semiosis – such as the selection of instruments as ways of looking at the world (Burke, Deely, Kuhn, Schiappa, Cobley). Terministic screens involve varying and incompatible *circum-*

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[8]   Burke uses the term 'ratio' to discuss multiple aspects of the pentad as a single relational referent.

[9]   Briefly, 'terministic screen' refers to the way any choice of terminology to describe reality involves not only a selection of some term but also necessarily a deflection of other alternative terms. For instance, from Fredric Jameson we have the term 'the prison-house of language'; to frame human language in terms of a prison-house is already to make implicit evaluations at the outset. At the very least, 'prison-house' is a term with negative connotations that rhetorically "color" the subject in question. Contrast this with, say, 'the universe of language' – a universe also being space that we cannot get outside of, but rhetorically it has a positive or neutral tone rather than a negative implication. For a direct discussion of terministic screens, see the opening of Chapter 2 up through section 2.1.4.

ferences, which is a Burkean concept that emphasizes the different modeling capacities of incompatible signs, not simply their differing semantic ranges.[10] We give the dichotomy 'nature'/'creation' as an example of qualitatively distinct modeling capacities, following a theme Burke himself used. Here one term ('nature') might seem suasively neutral in that it permits the consideration of an object in or not in relation to some creator; however, the term 'nature' is only partly compatible with a conception of the cosmos as creation, for it also introduces the possibility to understand that cosmos as independent of a relation to a creator. That is, the two terms have different circumferences in what they include and exclude. In a pragmatic context, the choice of the term 'nature' in departure from the use of the term 'creation' opens the semiotic door to a quite different meaning result – and possibly involves a motive that can be discovered in the selection of that circumference. Indeed, evidence (as the product of a semiotic act) involves the selection of a circumference and would thus also be a kind of terministic screen.

From here we move into Burke's concept of God-terms as a greater entelechial generalization. God-terms can essentially be understood as more powerful terministic screens. Only where terministic screens in the usual sense govern more local structures, God-terms semiotically govern the whole structure under consideration.[11] The God-term is not a theological concept but a logical form that derives its functional quality from the way it determines the semiotic possibilities of the sign-structure over which it is set (or which it grounds) – allowing some meanings within its circumference and precluding others. We thus refer to God-terms as maximal catalysis (à la Kull) and as the title of titles within some relevant structure (à la Burke).

Since God-terms organize meaning at the highest level, it is through God-terms that metaphysics are generated, whether explicit or not. Indeed, we explore the way that parsimony (as a reduction[12] made in one way or another, according to some motive) can actually be used to generate a particular metaphysics – that metaphysics which Burke says goes by the name 'No Metaphysics'. In the pursuit of Occam's Razor, increasingly narrow circumferences can be chosen until we so greatly reduce "the scope of our motivational terminology" that a change in meta-

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[10]   See section 2.1.3. and related subsections. Let it suffice here to say that a term's circumference is related to its scope – that is, the range of implications or entailed signs within some pragmatic context. However, since 'circumference' is a geometrical term pertaining to spatial objects, we can understand the concept of circumference as emphasizing the modeling capacity of *scope* understood as semantic range. In that case, circumference is scope understood as modeling capacity.

[11]   Sections 2.2 to 2.3.2 explicitly discuss God-terms in depth, and Chapter 3 analytically applies the concept to the Modern paradigm.

[12]   *Reduction* serves an important conceptual role in Burke. The narrowing of any circumference is a reduction. One representative case Burke discusses is in titling a work; to summarize an entire work to some short title is to express a reduction of that work, no matter how representative the title may be. This function is at play in any hierarchical subordination of terms. Burke referred to this principle as *entitlement* (see section 2.2.3 and footnote 56).

physics is entailed (Burke 1945b: 98). This is because key terms have been excluded from the circumference that alter the meaning of the whole. The pre-condition for applying Occam's Razor, of course, is supposedly "all things being equal", but total equality is precluded by the nature of different circumferences in the first place. Thus, the selection of one narrower circumference as being more parsimonious already involves a stance about what is important and what is not – a stance that serves as a motive for the selection itself.

This stance often extends beyond some immediate decision, comprising an overall attitude or disposition toward action: that is, a commitment along one semiotic canal rather than another.[13] We connect this process to autopoiesis, the Agent-Purpose ratio, and the self-creation of the agent as a sign according to some particular God-term. This brings us to Peirce's writings on the subject of the human-as-sign, which he grounded upon the formal principle regarding the process of creating consistency in the sign itself. We clarify that the consistency a human agent builds in themselves over time involves the solidification of a consistency of motives, which becomes increasingly fixed as habit until it becomes maximally fixed at death.

We conclude this section by emphasizing the necessity of signifying some God-term as the most influential motive, increasingly defining all the agent's world of experience by that God-term's circumference – drawing on Chantal Delsol's remarks on the human agent as a sign of that to which it points. Thus, an agent's individual acts within the process of semiotic catalysis finally result in the catalysis of themselves as an overall sign of whatever their ultimate motive is – that motive which won out above all others when placed into contexts of incompatibility. In light of this motive analysis, the most influential factor in how a human agent resolves indeterminacy lies not in unmotivated conclusions about the external world but rather in their own motives.

Our thesis comes into conflict with the Modern account and paradigm, which contradictorily attempts to make both Agent and Scene the ultimate determiner of meaning, so in Part II we turn our attention to that antithesis in order to more fully flesh out our semiotic of motives through an object analysis. This will not only allow us to clarify what our thesis *is* by showing what it is *not* but also to demonstrate its analytical potency by using it to reveal the root of Modernism's (and, thus, Postmodernism's) inherent inability to achieve formal, internal con-sistency – specifically as a problem arising from its choice of God-term.

Chapter 3 begins with this aim in mind, and in order to pursue this aim suffi-ciently, we must be able to clarify Modernism's God-term and its circumferential boundaries; however, we need to know what those semiotic foundations are in truth, not just what Modernity advertises for itself. Therefore, since any act must be defined partly by the scene (or context) in which that act occurs, we need to give some account of the semiosphere in which Modernism's act of departure

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[13]   See sections 2.2.5 and 2.2.5.1 for a discussion of the Burkean conception of attitude in relation to God-terms, the Agent-Purpose ratio, and the biosemiotic understanding of autopoiesis (or self-development) in living systems.

took place. We need to know what Modernism retained and what it rejected in order to identify the proper characteristics of its actual God-term. This means understanding the premodern Christian paradigm and its different God-term, which requires us to look at a few specific factors. Given the modern era's identification of itself as the era of technology and systematic inquiry into the natural world, we flesh out the technological situation in the medieval period and show how the modern period was but a continuation of a premodern development – despite the narratives woven during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. We see that the semiotic quality definitive of Modernism must be something else.

To deepen our analysis, we need to know more about the premodern Christian semiosphere as scene, and we achieve this by further analyzing the early formation of that semiosphere as a departure from the pre-Christian semiosphere of (Greco-Roman) paganism. We look at the meaning foundations of that world and how its people perceived the early Christian departure. This sets up the schema of incompatibilities that underlying Christianity's semiotic framework, built upon its specific God-term and explicitly codified in creedal statements, some of which predate the New Testament writings themselves. From here we are able to trace out the developmental trajectory of the Modern semiosphere (beginning at least as early as 8th century feudalism) and its attempts to transform certain meaning structures of Christianity while leaving others to function unchanged. This of course led to unintended alterations in meaning, many of which were troubling to the early moderns – to the degree that many of its key philosophers, such as Leibniz and Hegel, were occupied with elaborate attempts to remove those problems while maintaining modern commitments. However, the problems recurred because they entailed a critical contradiction in the relation between Scene and Agent.

Chapter 4 identifies this contradiction as Modernism's confrontation with the *paradox of substance* identified by Kenneth Burke. We begin with an introductory definition of this paradox and then pursue a more thorough articulation by looking at the ambivalent conception of "being" in Modernism, which elevates "pure" ideals such as *being as such* and *being in itself* – concepts that end up being indistinguishable from nothingness. Indeed, the paradox of substance concerns the necessity that we must say what something *is* by making an appeal to what it is *not*. This becomes a serious problem for the Modern paradigm, which rigorously attempts to define the whole cosmos and to pin down each object's essence. Different techniques are employed to remove the paradox from view, but it simply resurfaces elsewhere, and attempts to circumvent it through induction are impossible because induction is circular and cannot produce necessity; indeed, induction's role has more to do with a rhetoric of "logic" as a technology for persuasion than as a means for categorically circumventing motive in semiosis.

The unresolvable conflict is perhaps most acutely visible in the conflict between Realism and Idealism, which functions like a house of mirrors in Modernism – precisely because when the analysis is carried out fully, Modern Realism and Modern Idealism are functionally identical. What operates with a realist surface has an idealist core, and what professes idealism contains at its core a realist faith.

We investigate this same conflict under various names: realism versus idealism, realism versus nominalism, substratum theory versus bundle theory, and Realism versus Anti-realism. In addition to these explicitly metaphysical cases, we also find the same problem occurring in the discourse of physics, beginning with Greek atomism and the modern adoption of that reductionism as a motive underlying the materialist commitment. Specifically, we find the problem of infinity arising as the same problem in different terms, as materialist reduction searches for substance but is unable to find.

Part III aims to articulate a synthesis visible through the first two parts: through what it is and through what it is not. Here in Chapter 5, we translate Modernism's implicit (hidden) theological or theosemiotic[14] commitment into a more explicit version. We look at Modernity's embrace of the Multiverse doctrine and the hidden theological commitment involved therein, taking a particular look at Steven Pinker's embrace of the Multiverse model in his 2018 work of Humanist apologetics, *Enlightenment Now*. Applying our previous analysis, we see that the approval of this model is inconsistent with the terms of Modernism's surface professions about its rationalistic motives but consistent with the motive of its God-term as we have laid it out. That is, despite Modernism's claims to categorically exclude signs that are defined by theological qualities, such signs are in actuality only outside its circumference if they appear in an explicitly theological form. They are compatible as long as they do not include the Agent term in the God-term position – for 'Human Reason' is the highest Agent term permitted, which makes Scene the ultimate pentadic term, for the human agent is contained by the cosmic scene. This position, however, arises from a particular set of priorities and motives and cannot be entailed by an appeal to human experience as a given. Thus, the Modern promise of being able to circumvent human motives and semiosic responsibility by deriving conclusions about truth from the external Scene cannot be fulfilled – except as a matter of theological or theosemiotic commitment on the basis of certain desires or motives which that choice will fulfill, at least presumably.

As such, we end with the proposal of a teleological method for navigating indeterminacy in experience: that is, for navigating semiotic crises, especially when one is confronted by an overt sense of uncertainty and when the choice has extensive consequences for meaning and experience. In order to concretize the model and its conceptual framework, we use the trees from the Garden of Eden found in the Old Testament text of Genesis 3. Burke himself engaged with this text, and we employ it here as a kind of *representative anecdote* – another of Burke's terms.

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[14] By 'theosemiotic' I simply mean terms or signs functioning (relative to other terms) in the manner of theological terms. This refers to the hierarchical organization of signs and motives rather than the content of the signs/terms themselves. A term might function for an individual or group in a way that is simultaneously theosemiotic *and* explicitly theological, but a theosemiotic function is often present even when an explicitly theological content is not. 'Theosemiotic' is merely intended as a shorthand reference to the systemic operation of God-terms within the semiosphere. One might say that this term concerns syntax more than semantics and is therefore a formal concern.

We lay out the narrative of this text, disentangling it from unhelpful misunderstandings in popular culture, and then explicate the text, after which we give a final summary and an ending recommendation.

In the Appendix, we include *A survey of references to Kenneth Burke in three semiotics journals*. This text is offered here as an artifact of research for future scholarship. The three journals surveyed are among the most influential and long-standing for semiotics: *Sign Systems Studies*, *The American Journal of Semiotics*, and *Semiotica*. A keyword search was used on PDF documents for four search terms: 'Burke', 'terministic', 'dramatistic', and 'pentad'. These were chosen for their representative breadth. The majority of hits were for 'Burke', and the most results were found in *Semiotica*. It should be noted that although few results were found in *Sign Systems Studies*, a scholar with a reading knowledge of Russian (and perhaps Estonian to be safe) should complete this same search for *Sign Systems Studies* volumes 1–25. The methodology is explained more fully in the Appendix.

I. MOTIVE IN BIOSEMIOSIS

Motive is arguably the most influential factor for defining any act. Consider that many legal cases turn explicitly upon the question of a known action's underlying motive; for instance, the distinctions between self-defense, manslaughter, and murder rest entirely upon the agent's motive. In order to know the nature of the act, we must know the purpose behind it.

Motive is therefore perhaps the most defining factor in biosemiosis generally. Regardless of the specific background of any act, much is always *given*, but some aspects are undetermined or indeterminate. The undetermined possibilities comprise the realm of possible action for any organism (agent). Many of those possibilities are incompatible with one another, which means that the agent can't simultaneously choose both; they are mutually-exclusive within a certain context. Motive determines how we will choose from among those incompatible possibilities. Given the agency to make a selection, how the selection is made relates to motive. It could have been otherwise, so why wasn't it?

We therefore consider it no mere accident that Burke's discussion of motive should be the context for his most potent semiotic concepts. He himself continually emphasizes the importance of one's selection of *terms* to frame reality, with 'terms' being a concept that is broader than 'words' and that can be generalized to 'signs in any relevant capacity'. The selection of terms becomes the selection that an agent employs within semiosis when given the freedom to choose between incompatible alternatives. We consider that this more maximal semiotic generalization is not a distortion of Burke but a fulfillment of his own trajectory and the spirit of his own inquiry: motive (purpose) is at the heart of meaning choices. There is, therefore, justification in holding that motive is the key term for Burke's thought as well, at least where the Motivorum theme is concerned.

This is not to say that Burke would always have agreed, for his preferred emphasis seems to have changed over time. Bernard Brock mentions in *Epistemology and ontology in Kenneth Burke's Dramatism* (1985) that Burke underwent a major shift in his thinking about the key term regarding action. One of Burke's major semiotic concepts was the *pentad*, which says that five irreducible elements are involved in any action: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Initially, in the Grammar (1945), Burke seemed only to prioritize the pentad as a whole, presenting a "method for discovering when any term is featured in discourse"; however, by the time that Burke wrote *Dramatism* in 1968, he made "a major shift in the concept of the pentad and in his philosophy […] making it clear that 'act' will be the featured term" (Brock 1985: 100). 'Dramatism' was Burke's analytical approach for focusing on action itself as distinct from motion, and Burke writes that the "dramatistic approach is implicit in the key 'act'" (Burke 1968b: 445). The act is given priority over the other four terms here. Indeed, he says that 'act' is the "terministic center from which many related considerations can be shown to 'radiate,' as though it were a 'god-term' from which a whole universe of terms is derived" (Burke 1968b: 445). The dramatistic approach necessarily has the act at its core because it's concerned with action.

Nevertheless, as Burke makes clear both in the *Dramatism* essay and in the earlier Grammar, an act (in its distinction from motion) requires and implies four other elements: an agent to act, a scene to "contain" the act, an agency by which the act may be done, and ultimately a purpose, without which it cannot "be called an act in the full sense of the term" (Burke 1968b: 446). Consideration of action leads us to the notion of a purpose motivating the act in the first place in order to distinguish action from motion – by necessity. As Burke goes on to say, "if a support happens to give way and one falls, such a motion on the agent's part is not an act, but an accident" (Burke 1968b: 446). In such a case, the agent did move, but that movement was no an act on the agent's part; it was mere *motion*. It wasn't something they did but something that happened *to* them. In the Grammar, Burke contrasts action with "sheer motion (what the behaviorists would call a Response to a Stimulus)" (Burke 1945b: xx). This is a properly semiotic distinction. Sheer motion is what John Deely calls "a mere physical relation" and a "brute fact at the level of secondness" (Deely 1990: 47–48) – or, following Peirce, "'brute force' or 'dynamical interaction'" (Deely 1990: 23). Mere motion is a relation involving two elements (element *A* strikes element *B*, for instance) and is distinguished from semiosis "as a type of activity [that] is distinctive in that it always involves three elements" rather than just two (Deely 1990: 23). Action involves a third element, purpose, according to which the interaction was undertaken: *A* did *B* in order to achieve *C*.

1.1. The distinction between motion and action

The difference between motion and action is, of course, already a functioning distinction in semiotics. Kristian Tylén makes this distinction in defining "actional agency in opposition to physical/mechanical agency"; only actional agency involves "the spatial and temporal detachment of, or 'distance' between, cause and effect" – as opposed to the mere "transmission of force through direct contiguity" (Tylén 2007: 88). In action we see a kind of disconnect between minimal cause and effect, whereby a strict linearity can be bypassed. Here an action may fail to achieve its goal, but even in failure, action is *intentional* and goal-directed, featuring the component of motivation that sheer motion lacks. That is, an act occurs "when an agent out of internal motivation directs her intentional actions towards a certain goal" according "to the biological and cognitive *values* of the agent" (Tylén 2007: 88). Just as Burke says, the absence of a motive (or purpose) is all that is needed to reduce an act to mere motion.

Burke's pentad is therefore a five-term relation that applies to any action. Inasmuch as action and motives are intertwined, "any complete statement about motives will offer *some kind of* answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done [or any relevant factors of context] (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)" (Burke 1945b: xv). This is a succinct breakdown of the five terms and the implicit questions behind

them – or, we might say, of the "motives"[15] inherent in each term. When it comes to the concrete details (to the particular ways that we answer these questions) people may give very different answers, but this is a question of soundness (that is, of reference to the concrete details of what the world is actually like). The pentad is more fundamentally logical and formal, relating to the way we must conceive of action, regardless of our particular interpretations about the world. It therefore relates more properly to the dimension of validity than to that of soundness. Burke says that we "may violently disagree" about how to affix these values in a specific situation, but any complete statement *must* affix values in some way or another according to these categories (Burke 1945b: xv). Particulars aside, the formal dimension remains: thus, the use of the word 'grammar' in *A Grammar of Motives*, with 'grammatical' intended in this formal sense.

What this ultimately means is that we are constrained to think in this (pentadic) way. We are witnessing an issue regarding "the basic forms of thought which, in accordance with the nature of the world as all men necessarily experience it, are exemplified in the attributing of motives" in any realm of action (Burke 1945b: xv). This is what Wittgenstein means by saying in the *Tractatus* that logical forms concern not beliefs but unavoidable "a priori *knowledge*" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.33).[16] More specifically, the pentad is a logical necessity, which is "the only necessity that exists" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.375). Note that the pentad's being a logical necessity leaves open the question of whether we experience the world pentadically because of a wider principle in the cosmos itself or because of a principle pertaining to our own cognition alone. These characterizations would be two quite different "circumferences", in Burke's terminology – the broadly cosmic or the human only. Recognizing logical necessity doesn't resolve for us these deeper questions about the nature of logical forms and human knowledge. Either way, the pentad applies to the human domain in a basic and unavoidable way and describes a *given* of human experience, regardless of its ontological basis. The pentad is therefore consistent with a variety of incompatible perspectives, including different metaphysical stances.

The pentad's logical necessity is made further visible when we attempt to remove any term from action. If Act is removed, then tautologically no act has taken place; motion ("event") might still be possible, but action is not. If Scene is removed, then there is no context for any action OR motion to be possible in the first place; constituting conditions cannot be met. If Agent is removed, then only motion is possible, for the absence of an agent also distinguishes motion from action; at most we could have merely nonliving existents[17] undergoing brute

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15   Sometimes Burke uses the term 'motive' in this way. We can understand this usage of 'motive' as a sign's qualitative "inclination" toward certain meaning consequences or trajectories, based in the semiotic principle of incompatibility and no doubt connected to a term's/sign's semantic value applied in a living context.

16   References to the *Tractatus* will be in Wittgenstein's subsection numeration rather than page numbers.

17   Or 'subjectivities' in the manner often employed by Deely, where 'subjective' considers the subject position in a relation and 'objective' considers the object position in a relation.

interactions. If Agency is removed, then the means or ability to undertake an act is gone; perhaps the agent *would* do something if they had the capacity, but they do not. And if Purpose is removed, then no goal-directedness is present, which means the absence of a defining feature of action in its difference from motion; we have at most simple cause and effect – contiguous motion. The sum total here is that if we lose even one element of the pentad, we lose the possibility of action as such. It is therefore a formal necessity, an actional grammar underlying the way we must conceive of action generally.

1.2. The biosemiosic roots of motive as goal-orientation

At the very least, the parameters of action and experience that the pentad describes are made necessary by our cognitive constitution as a species. We may be loathe to concede more ontological ground than that; indeed, we are not compelled to hold that the pentad describes anything more than the functions of human consciousness. No particular metaphysical commitment is required on this point. Nevertheless, we are unable to escape the necessity of the pentad even in our consideration of action on the biosemiosic level – that is, action undertaken within the sphere of organismic life generally.

1.2.1. Scaffolding

Indeed, what we know as motive or purpose in the realm of human semiosis has its roots in the goal-directed aspect of life more generally. This is a pattern within semiotic scaffolding, which "is at work on all levels of semiosis, from the origin of life forward" (Kull 2012: 228). Kalevi Kull describes scaffolding as "a general result and function of semiosis", which "as an active meaning-seeking-making process results often with the building of some relatively static or even quite solid structures" (Kull 2012: 228). Subsequently, "we may think of semiosis as a process that results in building scaffolding for further semiosis" (Kull 2012: 229). The process of semiosis builds generally stable products (even in the form of habits in the broad Peircean sense) that can be subsequently built upon. The activities of life result in structures that can then serve as the basis for further building. "Semiosis produces scaffolding that support semiosis", says Kull (2012: 229). As a general category, goal-orientation (or purpose) in action is not created by human semiosis; rather, there is continuity between the basic goal-orientation present in life action at its most fundamental and the more complex or nuanced type of motivation characteristic of human life that has been built up through scaffolding. Goal-directedness has been preserved as a principle of action in its distinction

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Readers interested in more detail might explore the index entries 'subjective being' and 'subjectivity' in works such as *Basics of Semiotics* (Deely 1990) and *Four Ages of Understanding* (Deely 2001).

from motion, becoming the type of motivation and purpose made possible by greater semiotic freedom.

Purpose as a general category applying to life itself is part of a non-mechanistic, biosemiotic understanding of life.[18] Mihhail Lotman says this purpose model functions "in both the systems that we are used to regarding as biological, and those which we consider social or cultural" (Lotman 2012: 251). Biosemiotics makes "analogical conclusions" about the realms often known as nature and culture, treating "living organisms first and foremost as semiotic systems" (Lotman 2012: 252). Indeed, we can say that weaving the threads of this analogy over the historical divide in modern discourse is native to semiotics as such; Deely considers that semiotics "specifically transcends the opposition of culture to nature" (Deely 1990: 72). This, of course, is in concert with Sebeok's thesis, considered fundamental for biosemiotics, that "life and sign processes are coextensive" (Luure 2009: 278) – that the "life process *is* semiosis" (Kull et al. 2008: 43). With an eye specifically toward human evolution (or development through semiosic scaffolding), Sebeok himself says, "Semiosis must be recognized as a pervasive fact of nature as well as culture" (Sebeok 1977: 183). Semiosis unifies the worlds of "nature" and "culture" into an interconnected whole, not reducing the human world to the animal (or even to the so-called material), nor the animal to the human. Rather, understanding all life in terms of semiosis "brings to biology, even at the level of cells, such notions as 'sign', 'meaning', 'communication' and even 'freedom' and 'creativity'" (Lotman 2012: 252).

Thus the semiotic point of view sees the different levels of life developed through scaffolding processes as differences in degree of freedom of action – ranging from systems where functionally "there is no freedom of choice" (beyond the simple freedom to make a mistake, to do or not do) to "systems which are able to reflect over their usage of signs and frequently change sign systems" (Lotman 2012: 253). This means an extension from the most basic instantiation of action and goal-directedness (purpose) to the often convoluted actions and motives (even "pure" desire stripped of everything but stubborn will) visible in human semiosis. Indeed, such a semiotic point of view sees the latter built up in concert with (or perhaps through) the former through scaffolding, meaning that the "growth of semiotic freedom is one of the most important vectors of evolution" (Lotman 2012: 253). Without needing to take any specific stance on hierarchical notions of systemic complexity, we can acknowledge that "it is quite obvious that semiotic complexity or freedom has indeed attained higher levels in later stages [of development], advanced species of birds and mammals in general being semiotically much more sophisticated than less advanced species" (Hoffmeyer 2010: 196). And despite the modern reification of 'freedom' as a desirable substance in and of itself (pursued as a moral value), freedom in its fundamental sense means *freedom to act* – that is, freedom to catalyze or fix in place a motive in action. Freedom means freedom to relinquish freedom by committing to an action. But

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[18]   Mechanism is a metaphysical stance, a particular interpretation of experiential givens according to a certain motive, and we are not required to maintain it.

while evolution results in an increase in semiotic freedom, the basic dimension of the freedom to act must be present in life at the start – as must be the basic dimension of goal-directedness.

1.2.2. Teleological principle in living systems

The awareness that goal-orientation (or the teleological principle of action) is fundamental to life as such extends to the roots of biosemiotics in Uexküll. Due to his growing concern over "the explanatory shortcomings of the 'biological machine' approach to the investigation of living systems [...], by 1909, Uexküll had outlined the basics of his subject-oriented approach to the study of animal behavior in his first major monograph, *Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere*" (Favareau 2010: 83). It was in this work that Uexküll formulated his now famous concept of the Umwelt. To say that Uexküll articulated a subject-oriented approach as opposed to a mechanistic approach is to say that he articulated an *agent*-oriented approach, which puts action at the center of living systems. The concept of the Umwelt is "the notion of a biologically instantiated and causally efficacious set of agent-object relations reducible neither to the organization of the subject nor to the organization of the environment but always as the product of the inter-action between the two" (Favareau 2010: 83). We could say, in Kenneth Burke's parlance, that the Umwelt looks at the biological world with the Scene-Agent ratio firmly in mind. To conceive of living systems from the Umwelt point of view is neither to reduce the agent to the scene (resulting in materialism, physi-calism, or mechanism) nor to reduce the scene to the agent (idealism, nominalism, or the rarely advocated solipsism); rather, this point of view recognizes the living relation that cannot be reduced without losing what is proper to it.

But if machines were not enough in the biological realm – if, indeed, agents were needed – that also reintroduces purpose as an extra-human phenomenon. This means reintroducing a teleological principle into the world beyond humanity. In his anthology *Essential Readings in Biosemiotics,* Favareau (2010: 84) tells us that "along with his friend embryologist Hans Driesch, Uexküll argued for the existence of non-mechanical and teleological principles inherent to living systems (e.g., Driesch's *entelechy*; Uexküll's *Bauplan*)". The entelechial principle, so important to Burke, became important to Uexküll also, for the price of banishing teleology and purpose is the loss of the agent in living systems. Favareau tells us that biosemioticians such as Hoffmeyer, Kull, Søren Brier, and Claus Emmeche have extended Uexküll's work to show how the subjective experience of orga-nisms is "an *organizing principle* in the ongoing co-development, co-evolution and co-maintenance of interdependent living systems: a generative and recursive engine of both evolutionary stability and change" (Favareau 2010: 88). The agent is inextricable from the teleological principle guiding its development. To banish purpose is to banish the agent. Uexküll himself said,

> Meaning is the guiding star that biology must follow. The rule of causality is a poor guide: causal relationships deal only with antecedents and consequences, thereby completely concealing from us broad biological interrelationships and interactions. (Favareau 2010: 95)

In other words, when dealing with biology, we're dealing with agents, and as such, brute causality proper to nonliving entities is not sufficient, for agents traffic in action, not motion only. And once we enter the realm of action, we necessarily enter the realm of purpose, whether this suits our metaphysical preferences or not. After all, as Uexküll also said, while "the honey-gathering bee does not see the meadow with human eyes", neither "is it insensible like a machine" (Favareau 2010: 97). Recognizing that the animal has (or even is) its own telos does not require anthropomorphization, but to deny that telos is not only to banish the agent but also the action, which requires an agent.

Furthermore, to banish the teleological principle is to banish meaning itself. In the most basic sense, without purpose we can have no action, and semiosis *is* action. Andres Luure goes so far as to directly connect purpose and meaning, saying that the "relation between means [agency] and purpose in action is analogous to the relation between sign and meaning" – and the "greater the degree in which the action has purpose", the greater the meaning (Luure 2009: 270). An increase in purpose parallels an increase in meaning. Luure emphasizes the Burkean Agency-Purpose ratio. He starts out having "associated meaning with purpose" (Luure 2009: 276) and then says that he proceeds "from the idea that the structure of action is constituted by variants of 'proportion' of means and purpose" (Luure 2009: 271). The schema here is specifically teleological, for "action grows towards perfection going through different stages, becoming more and more purposeful" – and, as we mentioned before, he emphasizes that purpose in action is "analogous to the role of meaning in sign processes" (Luure 2009: 271). Thus it would seem that action, pursued according to its motive (or purpose), grows denser in meaning as it grows closer to its teleological perfection/completion. Sheer motion or mechanism is not sufficient for meaning; that is, agency is not meaningful (or cannot create meaning) by itself. Instead, the "purpose gives meaning to the means" (Luure 2009: 271). In order to make meaning, agency requires not only agent but also purpose.

1.2.3. The Agent-Purpose ratio at life's simplest levels

The Agent-Purpose ratio is important for and present in life as such, which means life even in its "simplest" forms. Discussing Kalevi Kull's *Copy* versus t*ranslate, meme* versus *sign* (2000: 4), Irene Portis-Winner says that "Kull shows that biological events at the lowest common denominator are not static […] the organism itself selects the appropriate genetic functional genome which will be later fixed by stochastic genetic processes" (Portis-Winner 2009: 156). Kull indicates that what is often thought of as a mechanistic (and essentially magical) process

involving no agent and no action is actually an active process – the organism *selects* [the agent *acts*] in order to achieve a result or goal within the living system. This three way relation of '*A* does *B* in order to achieve *C*' is exactly the kind of relation that Deely says is inherently irreducible to relations between pairs; it does not belong to the realm of mere motion. Kull says further that the "genome does not determine the phenotype"; rather, "the organism *interprets* its genome when producing phenotype" (Kull 2000: 7). Already what we have at this level is semiosis: action, with purpose.

In *The Semiotics of Cellular Communication in the Immune System* (1988), we find specific examples in the microbiotic world of this triadic relation whereby an agent acts in order to achieve some goal. We will briefly give only two. Immunologist Patrick Flood notes that the "immune system is a complex intertwining of individual components who collectively have one major purpose in mind: to recognize and eliminate antigens which are perceived by the immune system to be 'different,' i.e. nonself" (Flood 1988: 119). To achieve its ends, he says, "the immune system has developed a complex mechanism of regulation" which "is based on a system of cellular co-recognition and communication" (Flood 1988: 119). Assuming we excluded the terms 'purpose' and 'communication' as violating our terminological commitments, we still see the more fundamental relational situation whereby "*A* does *B* in order to achieve *C*". The immune system employs a complex process of regulation in order to recognize and eliminate perceived nonself antigens. Terminological choices may allow us to cast this process with different forms of significance, but the relational situation still obtains – one which formally fits with the category of goal-directed behavior.

Another immunologist gives a different example with a different emphasis that centers explicitly on communication. "The means by which parasites evade host defense mechanisms can be construed as 'lying' to the immune system, that is, creating a false sense of balance whereby host protective mechanisms may even serve to stimulate parasite growth" (Mogil 1988: 199). Mogil then asks, "How then do infectious agents subvert host immune responses to their advantage?" The most common methods, we're told, "involve the induction, acquisition or mimicry of host transplantation antigens" (Mogil 1988: 199). Leaving off again the question of using the terms 'lying' and 'agents', we can identify the more important underlying logic. Parasites employ methods of communication disruption, such as mimicry, in order to achieve a viable coexistence with the host: *A* does *B* in order to achieve *C*. Rephrased, *C* is the motivating factor for *A* to do *B*. If not for the presence of *C*, *A* would have no reason to do *B*. This type of activity is not found in the realm of mere motion: a rock in space does not strike another rock in space in order to cause the second rock to strike a third, nor does a billiard ball strike another billiard ball in order to move a third billiard ball. These are instances of mere motion or brute causality; in the case of the billiard balls, it is the billiard-playing agent who strikes the first ball in such a way that the second will strike a third. The ball itself has no such motive. In the cases of the immune system, however, no change is needed to underscore a formal relational similarity with human agentive action. The activities of the immune

system and the actions of human behavior share a category of intentionality. We can consider an action to have taken place in both realms.

Purpose in its minimal sense is needed for life and meaning at their most basic. Discussing "the lowest and simplest semiotic phenomenon" in the context of views basic to biosemiotics, Frederik Stjernfelt says that even "the biochemical foundation of biological indeterminacy or semiotic freedom […] requires a cyclical teleological (functional, final, purposeful […] process in order to display its possibilities" (Stjernfelt 2002: 340). "Biology is thus impossible without the Aristotelian quartet of causes", he says, despite how unpopular final causation in particular has been since the early modern period (Stjernfelt 2002: 340). Stjernfelt clarifies, though, that we should not equate final causes as such with purposes in the full human sense, which are a special subset of final causes. Instead, we should understand purpose in this more general sense as "all processes which are attracted by a future state" (Stjernfelt 2002: 340). In the frame of a biological point of view that has yet to ask theological questions, this entails simply a distinction between living agents (such as insects) and nonliving subjectivities (such as rocks). A teleological dimension in the most minimal sense is needed to distinguish between living and nonliving entities. Through scaffolding, this teleological dimension becomes purpose or motive in the fuller human sense; animals with central nervous systems extend "the bases of meaning in categorical perception to form very complex semiotic abilities" developed through "increasing indeterminacy – or, semiotic freedom" (Stjernfelt 2002: 341). We might say that motive in its highly indeterminate human sense is the telos of biological teleology. This is not due to any appeal to mystical principles but simply to the presence of the purpose principle operative in life as such; if we permit development, growth, or evolution, we see a development of the teleology necessary to action already present in life at the beginning according to increasing degrees of semiotic freedom.

1.2.4. Optimality principle

The ability of an agent to orient itself toward a goal and to undertake an action in pursuit of that goal is of fundamental importance for living systems being able to flourish in their umwelts. Alexei Sharov approaches this subject from the pragmatic standpoint of the optimality principle that "an agent selects a behavior [an action] that generates maximum value" for that agent (Sharov 2002: 253). This pursuit of value is, of course, according to the agent's perspective, for "agents select those actions that are *expected* to increase their value" (Sharov 2002: 245, emphasis mine). It is the expectation that grounds the intentionality, and "the behavior of the agent is consistent with its values (or goals)" (Sharov 2002: 250). Sharov says that an agent's preferred actions have higher values than rejected actions do, and of course the value for the agent is defined in relation to that agent's goals (purposes, desires, and so forth). This optimality principle seems straightforward and uncontroversial, regardless of whether or not one is coming from a pragmatic orientation like Sharov's, and we can agree with Sharov that because

the "role of signs is to help agents to select best actions [*sic*]", the question of motive/purpose in action is an inherently (important) semiotic question from the pragmatic semiotic view (Sharov 2002: 253). However, we can go even further and say that without needing to consider the role that signs play in helping an agent to identify valuable actions correlative to the agent's values, the question of an agent's goals and purposes is already a semiotic question, regardless of the methods used to seek those goals. The goal is already meaningful to the agent, and signs which are meaningful relative to value are mediatively meaningful – they are meaningful because of their association with a goal that's already meaningful to the agent.

1.3. Relevance Theory's agreement with biosemiotics

This optimality principle is no doubt uncontroversial and intuitively sensible, and it speaks in concert with Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber's Relevance theory (RT) of pragmatics. The RT model turns upon a single cognitive mechanism: organisms (agents) orient themselves and their attention based on what is relevant to their motives (interests, goals, ends, purposes, values, desires). RT uses this principle as the basis for a theory of communication and meaning-seeking-making.

1.3.1. Cognitive and Communicative Principles of Relevance

Relevance theory rests on fairly parsimonious grounds. Wilson and Sperber's 2012 *Meaning and Relevance* says that RT "is based on two general claims about the role of relevance in cognition and communication" – the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 6). Wilson's 2016 follow-up article, titled simply *Relevance theory*, adds that RT is also "grounded in a definition of relevance" in addition to the two principles (Wilson 2016: 4). In defining 'relevance', Wilson tells us that Wilson and Sperber "start by defining two more general notions: 'relevance in a context' and 'relevance to an individual'" rather than starting simply with relevance to a purpose, question, or topic – where "the purpose, question or topic is fixed (or sharply delimited) in advance of the comprehension process rather than identified in the course of comprehension" (Wilson 2016: 4). This conception of relevance is too narrow, Wilson says, even though most linguists take this approach when trying to define relevance. RT starts more generally with a notion of context that includes anything which can be a sign for the agent. She says that this is because "considerations of relevance play a fundamental role not only in communication but in cognition" as such; the aim is not to restrict the model to utterances and communication but "to define relevance [...] for any external stimulus or internal mental representation which can provide an input to cognitive processes" (Wilson 2016: 4). That is, potentially relevant inputs include not only the sensory modalities (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) but also "thoughts, memories or conclusions of

inferences" (Wilson 2016: 4). RT is concerned with any possible representamen and thus begins with a much more generally semiotic view than an exclusively linguistic view. Despite being a "broadly Gricean [approach] to pragmatics", RT has a broader scope in mind (Wilson 2016: 1–2). The focus is not solely on linguistic utterances but on human cognition and its meaning-making processes in general; without using the terminology, it seems that Wilson and Sperber are concerned with human semiosis itself.

Actually, however, the Cognitive Principle of Relevance shows that RT is at least partly concerned with the biosemiotic roots of human semiosis. The Cognitive Principle is that human cognition "tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 6).[19] The maximization of relevance is a kind of vector that is fixed "online", as they say, which means in the continual present of experience. According to the way RT understands cognition, "other things being equal, the greater the cognitive effect achieved, and the smaller the mental effort required, the more relevant this input will be to you [to the agent] at the time [in the present context or scene]" (Wilson 2016: 5).[20] In other words, RT seeks to describe a cognitive principle whereby the agent seeks out what is relevant to it (in any sense, determined in general by the agent's particular Umwelt, we could say), while also being biologically constrained by organismic needs and a finite amount of time and energy.

In a basic biological sense, an organism that gives too much attention to inputs of low value will have a low success at survival and continued growth as well. As such, cognition is geared up toward achieving cognitive effects relative to the agent's goals, purposes, or values, but the pursuit of cognitive effects is necessarily constrained by organismic (finite) limitations. Relevance, then, is a kind of balance struck between cognitive effects achieved and the energy or effort required to achieve them. According to the relevance-theoretic comprehension heuristic expressed in *Relevance theory explains the selection task* (Sperber et al. 1995: 51), the agent "should follow a path of least effort, and stop at the first overall interpretation that satisfies his expectations of relevance", which is the key to RT pragmatics (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 7). When insufficient cognitive effects have been achieved in relation to the agent's goals or values in a certain context, the agent is inclined to spend more energy to achieve further effects in order to fulfill those "expectations of relevance"; the overall energy, needs, or resources (including time) available to the agent, however, provide a boundary to the pursuit of cognitive effects. Maximal relevance, then, is defined by the intersection between the greatest cognitive effects for the least (cognitive) effort. Diminishing returns for increasing levels of effort decreases relevance to the agent. Moreover, we can reasonably say that this cognitive principle applies not only to human semiosis but is more generally biosemiotic, given its roots in the functions of biological systems rather than the human Umwelt specifically.

[19]   Also found verbatim in the earlier work *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Sperber, Wilson 1995[1986]: 260–266).
[20]   Also in (Sperber, Wilson 1995[1986]: 260–266).

Indeed, the second foundational principle for RT, the Communicative Principle of Relevance, makes more sense when human semiosis and communication are viewed in the context of biosemiotic scaffolding. According to *Meaning and Relevance*, this principle says, "Every act of overt communication conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 6) – while Wilson's later article simply says, "Every utterance communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Wilson 2016: 7). A basic condition for successful communication is that the addressee must at least pay attention to the "speaker",[21] so the addressee must initially recognize the attempt at communication as "worth attending to"; given that "attention tends to go automatically to what is most relevant at the time" as an aspect of biosemiosis, then "a speaker, by the very act of addressing someone, communicates that the utterance meets this precondition" – whether or not that implicit claim turns out to be true (Wilson 2016: 7). The act of addressing someone in a communicative act involves methods that draw the addressee's attention (regardless of whether or not they are able to then keep that attention). The Communicative Principle of Relevance only makes sense if it is biologically rooted rather than a result of some kind of "social agreement"; indeed, RT holds that this principle is nested in a more general human cognitive principle. This means that it is grounded at the species level rather than a particular social level, which would make it contingent rather than cognitively invariant.

1.3.2. RT's broader implications

We can identify further that the principle rests on broader biosemiotic ground when we note that, for RT, human communication is not specifically linguistic as a whole but is rather an inferential process which often (but not always) involves language. RT denies the "classical code theory" where "the only way to communicate thoughts is to encode them"; this is also the case for the updated form of the code theory, even though it includes inferential short cuts (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 35). Instead, RT "argues that indeterminacy is quite pervasive at both explicit and implicit levels, and provides an analysis that fits well with Grice's intuitive [but unpursued] description" of implicatures as involving indeterminacy (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 16). Many linguistic exchanges involve communicated content that isn't directly encoded in the words used. Wilson and Sperber give an example with fictional characters where Bill says to Sue, "I hear you've moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn", to which she replies, "The rent is lower" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 15). From a purely semantic viewpoint, Sue has not answered the question, even though we understand her to have answered Bill's implicit question about why she moved. RT says this is to be expected as human communication is not a process of exchanging words that exhaustively encode all meaning. We might be able to summarize this simply by saying that human communication (or semiosis generally) does not reduce to semantics.

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[21]   I've put speaker in scare quotes since obviously the condition is true in nonverbal communication as well, as everyone who has ever waved at an oblivious friend knows quite well.

As an alternate view, Wilson and Sperber envision communication as part of a more cognitively fundamental inferential process. "The alternative to a code theory of verbal communication," they tell us, "is an inferential theory" whose basic idea comes from Grice's 1967 *Logic and Conversation* (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 36). Wilson and Sperber develop an inferential theory in detail in *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. According to this theory, "all a communicator has to do in order to convey a thought is to give her audience appropriate evidence of her intention to convey it"; a "mental state may be revealed" by an act of whatever sort or by the traces such an act creates (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 36). All that's needed is for an agent to successfully direct the addressee's attention and to provide "some evidence of her thoughts" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 36). In other words, a communicator just has to produce some representamen of whatever sort that is able in the relevant context to signify the appropriate object to the addressee. What is important is not the particular type of representamen but the representamen's ability to stand in relation to the correct object and interpretant. The representamens then function as evidence in an inferential process that is not fundamentally separate from the agent's ongoing cognitive processes.

For RT, natural language is not the sole province of human meaning-making and communication but is rather one form of evidence among others to be used in the inferential process. "Decoded meaning structures" (or units of natural language) "are not directly adopted by the audience as thoughts of their own" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 87). Such a conception would reduce language to the category of "mere motion" by way of simple direct causation, having more in common with physical interactions, inertia, or relations of brute force. Rather, such decoded structures "provide very rich evidence which can be exploited by largely unconscious inferential processes to arrive at comprehension proper" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 87). Coded structures may not be sufficient to exhaust meaning in communication and may indeed be only one form of evidence available to us, but they are a powerful and rich form of evidence – perhaps richer than any others, despite being underdeterminate for human communication. RT considers that the inferential processes of human semiosis take the rich evidence of coded structures and fine-tune the explicit and implicit meanings. It's not simply a matter of decoding the explicit meanings; inference is involved in both. Explicit meanings are "arrived at by a combination of decoding and inference", while implicit meanings come from inference alone (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 77). Even when arriving at conclusions about a speaker's explicit meaning, "a certain amount of inference (and hence a certain degree of indeterminacy) is involved" (Wilson, Sperber 2012: 78). Where there is indeterminacy, there must also be inference – or choice about how to resolve that indeterminacy. We say 'choice' not because inferences are always conscious but because they always involve an act. But this raises a question: how do we reconcile semiosis (and its inferential processes) as being active – that is, as being action – with the fact that much of semiosis and cognitive inference are unconscious? How can they be both intentional and unintentional? Is a motive present or not?

1.3.3. Potential critique of RT

This brings up a possible question about relevance theory. Despite how much of RT seems accurate and consistent with semiotics, we could ask whether RT attributes too much of an agent's "decisions" about relevance to the present in the comprehension process. This may not be a legitimate critique because, in defining an agent's relevant context, RT takes into account "beliefs, doubts, hopes, wishes, plans, goals, intentions, questions" and other forms of "mentally represented information" (Wilson 2016: 4). This would clearly include previously established motivations, commitments, and conclusions about the world. Further, they do say that the inferential process is largely unconscious. And it also seems correct to say that while many utterances are made in conformity with an already established purpose, this is not always the case for cognition in general. After all, the ongoing learning process of semiosis requires some degree of cognitive openness.

However, at times RT seems to at least be on the verge of overemphasizing the degree to which determinations of relevance are decided in the semiosic present. Wilson (2016) discusses an example where the reader is watching a tennis match on TV and notices that the two players bounce the ball a different number of times before serving. The question is whether it's relevant or not to the viewer. Wilson answers that intuitively, "it will be relevant if it interacts with some contextual information you have available to achieve a worthwhile cognitive effect" (Wilson 2016: 5). So it will be relevant depending upon your goals, purposes, desires, interests, previously held knowledge; we might rephrase it by saying that whether or not you attend to this ball bouncing (as a representamen) and recognize it as significant will depend upon whether or not it correlates for you to some interpretant (and, thus, to some object signified in relation to that). So far this seems uncontroversial.

Less certain is the degree to which Wilson fixes the expectation to the present as a seeming action. She says that the reason the reader paid attention to the ball bouncing in the first place was because

> given the organisation of your cognitive system, of all the potential inputs competing for your attention, this one had the greatest *expected* relevance for you at the time; and you interpreted this input in the context of your knowledge of tennis and tennis players, plans for the afternoon and so on, *because* given the organisation of your cognitive system, of all the potential contexts available to you, *this was expected* to enhance its relevance most. (Wilson 2016: 5, emphases mine)

Perhaps what Wilson means is simply that the agent already had expectations in place (given the organization of their cognitive system) which the objects encountered in the experiential present did or did not satisfy. However, the way it's worded makes it sound like Wilson may be describing a process of analysis about whether something is relevant. When it says that in light of the available inputs, one input has "the greatest expected relevance for you at the time" (Wilson 2016: 5) and that this is why you chose to pay attention, it seems to imply that a cognitive

process of evaluating the relevance always happens right then in the present of semiosis: "because [...] this was expected to enhance its relevance most" (Wilson 2016: 5). This would contrast to simply feeling interested in the moment because of some interpretant it produced, which might still be consistent with subconsciously held expectations of implicitly held desires. Perhaps this is not her (or RT's) intent and is simply a matter of terminology and an implication of the word "expect", but terminologies do shape meaning, and the way this process is phrased does indeed make it sound suspiciously like a constant analytical process process of deciding between a variety of inputs as the one that's most relevant. If this is not Wilson's intent at all, and if indeed she's envisioning the "cognitive context/ organization of the agent's cognitive system" as having a very active and constraining role in the establishing of what is relevant to the agent, then there may be no problem here.

However, if she (or RT, or our own reader) is envisioning a constant analytical process whereby the agent arrives at a conscious conclusion, we need to emphasize the degree to which previously held motives and meaning choices have shaped the "cognitive environment" of the agent and influenced or partially determined what objects that agent will attend to or what those objects can mean. Indeed, the notion that the analysis (or the weighing of all available inputs and contexts and making a selection of how to direct your attention) always happens "online" or "in the present" (as is emphasized in *Meaning and Relevance*) seems both to not describe some aspects of our experience of semiosis and to also propose a cognitive mechanism that requires extra energy – which is not maximally economical for the agent.

Indeed, it seems like on the whole that would be a significantly additional cost to cognitive effort and energy. And that would be contrary to RT's cognitive principle of relevance, whereby "what makes it *maximally* relevant to the individual is that it yields greater effects, for less effort, than any alternative input available to him at the time" (Wilson 2016: 5). Of course, this principle would mean that for any given situation, the same cognitive functions would be at play, and a specific input would necessarily be maximally relevant. But the extra effort required to process expectations of what is most relevant as a constant aspect of the semiotic present would raise the cost of all inputs, resulting in a significant decrease in efficient and effective use of energy and time for the organism (agent).

1.3.4. The need to automate choice in determining relevance

Given RT's cognitive principle of relevance, it would be surprising if organisms didn't develop techniques for increasing the efficiency of evaluations of relevancy and selections from the various (incompatible) inputs. Given the biosemiotic perspective, we would no doubt expect more efficient processes for navigating the search for maximal relevance – a more cognitively efficient mechanism for directing the attention than a constant, conscious assessment of available inputs. It would be more efficient for the agent's cognitive organization to include structures for optimizing evaluations of relevance – perhaps even for automating that

process. Indeed, this is how it must be, not just for learning (which may also be "mislearning") but also for autopoeitic, self-developing systems – "where systems really do have locally teleological 'purposes and ends'" (Favareau 2010: 20). This process of automation is precisely what we see in Kalevi Kull's treatment of semiotic catalysis – a process whereby agents catalyze or fix into place certain motives through choice.

1.4. Semiotic catalysis

In *Catalysis and scaffolding in semiosis* (2014), Kalevi Kull follows Kenneth Cabell in treating semiosis in terms of a catalytic process.[22] If an enzyme is the catalyst in enzymatic catalysis, semiotic catalysis is where "the catalyst is a sign process" (Kull 2014: 111). If we take Sebeok's thesis seriously that the "life process is semiosis", then we could actually say that "*semiosis is the general catalyst*" in living systems (Kull 2014: 114). This becomes available with the perspective of semiotics, which doesn't give metaphysical priority to the concept of matter,[23] meaning that a reduction of life to non-life is not a metaphysical commitment that semiotics must make. While a prioritizing of chemical catalysis over semiotic catalysis may be an entailment of materialism, semiotics recognizes that brute causality is not sufficient for the province of life, which traffics in action, as we have seen. As such, Kull identifies three corollaries to this rule. First, "life is always from life", meaning that life itself propagates life, and "each sign is from a sign"; this closure is what Juri Lotman sees as being the basis of the semiosphere (Kull 2014: 114). Second, semiosis "involves scaffolding and is dependent on scaffolding", which is of course also how the semiosphere itself is built up (Kull 2014: 114). As we have seen, scaffolding is a relational (we could say even a nested) process, since semiosic "systems are relational systems" and "any semiosic system is dependent on catalytic relations between signs" (Kull 2014: 114). Semiotic catalysis therefore has an important role in semiosic systems, especially since catalysis is closely linked with scaffolding.

1.4.1. Catalysis and scaffolding

Semiotic catalysis makes the most sense in the context of scaffolding. Kull says that scaffolding is both a result and a function of semiosis. Semiosis itself is

> an active meaning-seeking-making process [that] results often with the building
> of some relatively static or even quite solid structures that somehow embed in

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[22] Kull gives (Cabell, Valsiner 2011) as the earliest reference.
[23] We treat matter as a particular metaphysical characterization of the physical aspect of experience. Even divisions such as 'matter/spirit' or 'matter/mind' arise through an attempt to conceptualize experience. Some relevant sections are 2.2.4.1 (with footnote 60) and Chapter 4 (section 4.4 in particular).

themselves the findings of that active searching-event of semiosis. The resulting structure is a scaffolding. It canalizes further behavior. It is the frame for habits. (Kull 2014: 116)

When organisms (agents) engage in semiosis in the activity of life, they learn and act, creating products (artifacts) and building structures. Actions become habits. "Semiosis is a learning process that produces scaffolding that forms habits that results in codes" or fixed structures of meaning (Kull 2014: 116). It is the business of semiosis to design and produce new structures, which "are combinations from an immense number of possibilities that come about only due to life" (Kull 2014: 118). Such rigid (or semistable) structures include artifacts like organismic bodies, tools, and machines, which are produced by the activities of life. From Hoffmeyer's generalized notion, scaffolding "is what results from learning. Semiosis produces scaffolding", the structures of which support further semiosis in return; "catalysts in living systems – in organisms *and* cultures – are just special kinds of scaffolds" (Kull 2014: 117, emphasis mine). Thus semiosis is not only a learning process but a building process. Not only organismic bodies but also cultures are products of scaffolding built through semiosis.

But the concept of scaffolding, like the concept of semiosis, is non-deterministic. This means that semiosis is not determined to build just one scaffolded result, even though scaffolding "is a reduction of degrees of freedom […], a constraint" (Kull 2014: 116). A reduction in freedom here does not invoke the pejorative implication associated with the modern Humanist metaphysical commitment, where 'freedom' means 'good' and its negation means 'bad'. Strictly speaking, an absence of total freedom also applies to situations of *constraint*; in Burkean parlance, 'constraint' is a *scenic* word – that is, pertains to context. Context makes action possible in the first place. The given characteristics of boundaries *as such* are not exhausted by the characterization 'limit of freedom' but also 'definition of context'. 'Walls' applies not only to 'prison walls' but also to the defining boundaries that create the space of a room, which subsequently becomes a scene for possible action. A "loss" of freedom also creates new freedom in the form of action that wasn't possible before. Having a body in the first place means being limited by a host of constraints, but the accumulation of these constraints becomes not just a scene for possible action but also the agency to undertake new action.

This establishing of constraints (through a reduction in freedom) that simultaneously creates new possibilities (new freedom) is a quality that Kull identifies as inherent to semiosis. He says that semiosis has two tendencies. One is singularization, which "reduces the number of meanings, increasing the dominance of its one meaning over the others, making signs more rigid, evolving habits (as C.S. Peirce would formulate)", and diversification, which "introduces new distinctions, creating new codes, thus creating the means to distinguish between more meanings" (Kull 2014: 117). We can understand both as learning, he says, and I would add that we can understand both as creation. Even the reduction in freedom can be creative, forming new constraints that are also new contexts for new action;

"this is how scaffolding works" and is "the reason it is useful" (Kull 2014: 116). To characterize constraint as inherently negative is to emphasize one aspect of its reality and to deflect another equally real aspect.

1.4.2. Incompatibility in semiosis

Here we see a hint already of how motives are worked out through the particular way we build scaffolding through selection in semiosis. Kull describes semiosis inherently as a "process whereby at least two codes that are mutually incompatible meet and interact" (Kull 2014: 117). Signs, in order to be signs, must have the capability of carrying multiple meanings. That is, a single representamen (object-become-representamen) must be able to function as a sign of multiple incompatible objects. A given representamen can be used as a terminus of a relation to multiple different objects. The resulting meanings are incompatible with one another because "meanings are qualitative by their very nature" – meaning that "meanings are incommensurable and irreducible to each other – or, in a more general formulation, they are incompatible; although, they can be related to each other – any sign is such a relation" (Kull 2014: 117). An example would be a tree outside my window; is this tree a sign of God's cosmic creative activity which (being an act) was undertaken with a purpose,[24] or is it a sign of an unintended and undirected series of events which are not acts and therefore occurred without transcendent purpose? The tree in its given aspect as an object of experience and representamen can be established in a relation to both meanings, each of which is incompatible with the other.

This type of question is precisely what we run into when we ask about the nature of semiosis, not just in the sense of different incompatible meaning possibilities but also regarding the necessity for us to choose between these very incompatibilities. Kull says that in its very nature, "semiosis is a decision-making between different coexisting meanings"; it's a process of finding a solution "in a controversial situation, in a situation of incompatible codes. Semiosis is the search that appears due to the unpredictability (or, a piece of freedom) that results from an incompatibility situation" (Kull 2014: 117). The process of semiosis is explicitly a process of having to choose between different options in meaning for the various aspects of our experience in the world and the cosmos as we encounter it. The different meaning options from which we have to choose – where and when we have the freedom to do so – don't fit with one another, for they are mutually incompatible. Their "simultaneous application would lead to logical incompatibility" (Kull 2014: 118). This is necessary, for the incompatibility situation is what creates the freedom to choose between options in the first place; it's a "fundamental precondition for semiosis" (Kull 2014: 118). And this is the root of meaning: choice between different options that are qualitatively distinct from one another. Each *means* inasmuch as it means *differently*, which is a semantic principle.

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[24]　That is, a purpose that supersedes and transcends the tree's own organismic teleology.

In deploying the term 'incompatibility', we emphasize the sense of being mutually exclusive in certain respects that are relevant in certain contexts, which is related to the sense of the term that Kull identifies from Juri Lotman's *Culture and Explosion*:[25] "mutual untranslatability" or "limited translatability" (Kull 2015: 259). This untranslatability means that certain fundamental aspects of their characters are not contained by the other *and* cannot be removed without changing their semiotic nature. Incompatibility, then, is defined relative to certain aspects in a certain context rather than in the sense that *A* and *B* are incompatible if and only if they are mutually exclusive in every respect in all sets in which they both appear. That's not necessary and would be fairly useless for semiotics, for few (if any) terms/signs are mutually exclusive in this extreme sense. However, different terms/signs do have different scopes or circumferences inherent to them, giving rise to at least limited translatability.

Incompatibility is related to both the possibility of meaning and to the possibility of freedom to make choices. Referring to *the principle of incompatibility*, Kull says that the "principle of incompatibility (or inconsistency) states that there should exist a partial non-translatability in order to have a meaningful communication" (Kull 2015: 258). Further, incompatibility is needed for more than communication between one agent and another. Indeed, meaning-making in general requires incompatibility because that "is the source of indeterminacy, non-predictability and semiotic freedom. (Kull 2015: 258–259). Without incompatibility, there's no freedom to make meaning. There could be no alternatives for choice possible in the first place. Consider three hypothetical objects *A*, *B*, and *C*. If *A*, *B*, and *C* were alike in every respect, they would be indiscernible – which is related to the ontological principle called the *identity of indiscernibles*.[26] That is, if *A*, *B*, and *C* were the same in all respects (that is, if they have all the same properties), we would only have one object: *A*. And if we only have *A*, then we have no choice – tautologically. It's only to the degree that *A*, *B*, and *C* are incompatible (inconsistent) regarding some of their properties that we (1) have distinct objects and (2) have a choice between them. Multiple objects are incompatible to the degree that they differ in their properties – to the degree, therefore, that they do *not* reduce to one another. Incompatibility, then, opens up the possibility of choice. We might speak of the *non-identity of incompatibles*.

However, incompatibility does something more for our semiotic of motives than simply open up the possibility of choice. Because incompatibility "gives rise" to the situation where different objects[27] are qualitatively distinct from one another,

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[25] Lotman 2004.

[26] This principle is generally accepted as a key metaphysical principle, and we'll not consider outlying arguments like that of Max Black's 1952 article *The identity of indiscernibles*. But we also won't be exploring the issue of the principle itself, such as by arguing about whether numerical identity counts as a property. Here we're stipulating anything that *would* count as a property that would serve to make two objects qualitatively distinct.

[27] Objects in Deely's sense, meaning that we don't have to be talking about "physical" objects: that is, objects that are also things. Objects in this sense could be completely abstract,

it also "gives rise" to the possibility of meaning behind a choice when these incompatible objects are placed in a context that makes their distinctive qualities relevant and where selection is therefore possible or necessary. To rephrase, a choice between distinct objects achieves its meaningfulness based upon the foundation of the qualitative difference in those objects from one another. This incompatibility will be the initial (though partial) basis that determines the semiotic nature of the choice between the various options. The qualitative differences (mutually exclusive properties) between multiple objects become the basis of incompatibility in relation to a shared context that emphasizes or makes relevant those differences. While such a context is needed to create a true situation of incompatibility where a choice is possible, incompatibility is a logical, semiotic principle, so it needs to be understood in that most fundamental sense. Incompatibility becomes the background on which choice (and ultimately motive) expresses itself.

1.4.3. Catalysis creates semiotic filters

The particular result for human semiosis is that the way we choose to navigate this incompatibility determines the manner in which we build the scaffolding of our lives. This is semiosis itself. An attempt to escape the responsibility for such action would be a mere pipe dream, for the only escape is to escape semiosis itself, which means to escape from life. As we choose between various incompatible ways to resolve semiotic controversies, we catalyze new meaning structures that shape us, building the scaffolding of our lives some ways rather than others. This sign catalyzes different patterns of meaning because "semiotic catalysis is a qualitative relation" (Kull 2014: 119). As we build in some ways *rather than* others, the result over time is a particular kind of semiotic structure of the self. As Kull attributes to Jaan Valsiner, catalysis is the main way that "signs influence other signs" (Kull 2014: 119). Agency is required to make this qualitative distinction, he says, and human agency only intensifies this process as biosemiotic goal-directedness becomes motive in its fuller sense.

As we catalyze our choices regarding how to resolve semiotic controversies (simultaneously catalyzing motives), thus building up the scaffolding of the self, we shape our subsequent semiosis. That is, the meanings we catalyze increasingly shape the meanings we will subsequently catalyze. It is possible for a sign to "become very rigid", such that "the plurality of meanings has decreased and can ultimately collapse into a single meaning" (Kull 2014: 118). We might say that the plurality of possible meanings – or the possibility of alternate meanings – can ultimately collapse into a single meaning. This isn't necessarily a bad thing in all contexts. We could view genuine commitment as precisely this "extreme" case where no new meanings are permitted or considered. A person for whom all

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entirely conceptual, intangible, etc. What matters is the semiotic function, as it were, not whether or not the object of experience exists outside of human experience.

meanings are renegotiable is probably the sort of inconsistent person most people would avoid as untrustworthy or of low integrity.

But regardless of our own qualitative assessment of such a complete catalysis of meaning, what's important to note here is that in such a case, "the process becomes automatic (mechanical) and semiosis itself disappears" (Kull 2014: 118). This doesn't mean that all semiosis has ceased for the agent but that in this particular area (or where the specific choice of meaning is concerned) no new semiosis is taking place. Instead what has been created is a fully catalyzed structure (we might envision a crystal lattice for concrete purposes) that is employed by or within semiosis for automatic meaning resolution. In this case, we can say that such a fully catalyzed meaning structure becomes a permanent part of the agent's perspective, continuously shaping their subsequent semiosis – for as long as that catalyzed meaning structure remains in place. We can refer to such a rigid product of catalysis as a *semiotic filter* for the agent that affects the landscape of possible meanings and the agent's perspective, experience, scaffolding, and developing character – as well as the agent's impact upon the surrounding semiosphere. In the case of motives, this process means increasingly fixing one's motives and ethos for action; choosing to prioritize the money principle over one's ethics, for example, results in a situation more conducive to further subordination of ethics to increased wealth – especially the longer such a hierarchy is maintained.[28]

1.4.4. Catalysis and terministic screens

The notion of semiotic filters catalyzed through choice is precisely what Kenneth Burke is reaching for with his concept of *terministic screens* – a term for such filters as are found primarily in human semiosis. The terministic screen is related to multiple concepts deployed by Burke, all of which function according to an entelechial principle whereby chosen signs influence subsequent sign-action according to their particular semiotic characters. We are in a position to generalize Burke's concept further from a semiotic point of view, so we will now turn our attention to terministic screens and the family of related concepts that appear in Burke's treatments of motive.

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[28] See section 2.2.1 for further discussion using an example of the money motive versus the family motive.

II. MOTIVE IN HUMAN SEMIOSIS

Underlying terministic screens, God-terms, entitlement, circumference, and related concepts is what Burke calls the entelechial principle (or the principle of perfection). He has in mind here "the need of symbolic systems as such to move 'freely' toward the 'necessity' of ideal consistency" (Burke 2007: 309) – for such systems to carry out "terministic possibilities 'to their logical conclusion'" (Burke 2007: 301). This means that signs will influence the scaffolding of the system (or context/scene) in which they are deployed, and this influence will be according to their particular semiotic (or you could say "semantic") character. Burke is drawing from Aristotle's "concept of the *entelechy*, with its peculiar stress upon 'fulfillment'" (Burke 1952c: 377).[29] A term works out its "logos" toward its "telos", which is perfected/completed upon reaching its logical conclusion.

Different terms (signs) have different entelechial characters in large part because of incompatibility. Michael Feehan draws a connection between Burke's approach to "the formative structures of language consciousness" and Jakobson's polarity principle, which "begins by simply recognizing the fact of difference between two features" or "two governing poles" (Feehan 1989: 248). This principle manifests in two ways: as "opposition and contrast" (Jakobson, Halle 1971[1956]: 15). As is the case with incompatibility, contrast here "is no longer [merely] the motive for (associative) selection, but rather a prerequisite, a condition that makes selection possible" (Holenstein 1974: 107).[30] Thus, the distinct characters of different terms/signs are the foundation for their being able to give rise to different semiotic trajectories in the first place.

Entelechy, however, says that this particular semiotic character not only gives rise to the possibility of specific development according to its telos but that signs "press themselves" toward that telos when they are deployed in a living, active context. This need not be seen as a mystical principle whatsoever but as simply being the result of logical necessity; signs contain their own entailments or grounds of entailment. When they are chosen by a particular agent, certain consequences arise from their incompatibility with other signs. The exclusions happen by necessity, with the incompatible sign structures resisting one another; this touches upon what Wittgenstein said regarding the a priori nature of logic: that what "makes logic a priori is the *impossibility* of illogical thought" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 5.4731) and that "we could not [even] *say* what an 'illogical' world would look like"
(Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 3.031). This is because two conflicting sign structures prevent the formation of a single proposition with sense "that affirms them both" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 5.1241); the selection of one negates the other, and this results "from the structure" of each (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 5.13). Thus, the deployments of particular terms/sign structures give rise to particular results,

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[29] I found this discussion from Burke's "Form and persecution in the *Oresteia*" in (Williams 2001: 10).

[30] Holenstein's text, *A new essay concerning the basic relations of language*, is found in *Semiotica* 12. Feehan refers to this work himself.

for a "proposition affirms every proposition that follows from it" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 5.124). If a sign structure's particular character in the schema of its incompatibilities is understood as its logos, then its developmental trajectory along the propositions it affirms *and* those it negates are its telos – or its entelechy. In that sense, for Burke terms themselves contain their own internal "motivations" according to the logos functioning at the intersection of their semantic dimensions and the actual pragmatic context in which they are deployed.

2.1. Terministic screens

The concept of terministic screens arises from this entelechial principle, and it emphasizes precisely that a selection of one term rather than another incompatible option results in certain consequences in meaning. Terministic screens are incompatible signs considered in pragmatic contexts; the selection of some signs *rather* than others creates a screen for meaning and perception within experience. This is the kind of choice Kalevi Kull had in mind when he said that "semiosis is a decision-making between different coexisting [but mutually incompatible] meanings" (Kull 2014: 117). Burke uses the word 'terms', stemming from his focus primarily on human (and mainly linguistic) semiosis and the persuasive nature of terminological deployments in general – even those that are supposedly "unmotivated" or neutral. Yet Burke uses the word 'term' as more general than 'word', gesturing toward a broader semiotic.

Indeed, Burke begins his discussion of terministic screens in *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) by talking about iconically rooted signs. He tells us that he has in mind some photographs he once saw:

> They were *different* photographs of the *same* objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here something so 'factual' as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded. (Burke 1966b: 45)

In the case he describes, the perception of the object is filtered in different ways that alter the perception itself, emphasizing some aspects of the picture and deemphasizing others. In terms of the object as experienced, each color filter produces a different result.

Following this precedent, we can speak about the way that signs/terms *color* or filter our perception and experience; we might say that they have a certain semiotic tone to them. This figurative image is employed as a way to ground an abstraction. So while Burke's dominant focus is on language, he makes gestures toward signs in a broader sense, beginning not with words but colors as semiosic filters.

In the case of terms themselves, Burke emphasizes the incompatibility between codes or meanings, telling us that since we must make a selection of *some* terms rather than others, we necessarily must also make certain deflections – choosing

to reject meanings we do *not* want. Burke gives us this formula: "Even if a given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality" (Burke 1966b: 45). Burke leaves open whether or not a given terminology (sign structure) is an actual reflection of reality or to what degree. Such an emphasis itself requires navigating incompatibility through choice. What we *can* say, however, is that even if a chosen deployment of language is an accurate reflection of reality, it must necessarily reflect only a *part* of reality. In such cases, what often presents itself as a matter of "just the facts" is actually the agent enacting motive (even simply as desire).[31]

While language may be the dominant realm where this terministic principle applies, it can be generalized to *semiotic* screens. This generalization emphasizes that terministic screens function in human semiosis as a result of scaffolding, rooted in more general biosemiotic processes, including catalysis.[32] This is to be expected since Burke roots terministic screens not only in entelechy but also in the previously explored distinction between motion and action. For Burke, this distinction means Dramatism.

2.1.1. Dramatistic roots of 'terministic screens' as a concept

Dramatism emphasizes action. Its perspective filters everything relevant through action, where the emphasis is placed on the act, is seen through that lens, and is defined in relation to it. Other emphases are obviously possible. Burke tells us in the Grammar that, on a broad scale, each of the pentadic terms can be emphasized with a corresponding change in meaning. When one term subsumes the other four in a choice of hierarchy, a different philosophic terminology results. He says that when scene is emphasized (is chosen as the terministic center), "the corresponding philosophic terminology is materialism"; an emphasis on agent results in idealism; emphasizing agency results in pragmatism; when purpose is featured, the terminology is mysticism; and an emphasis on act corresponds to realism (Burke 1945b: 128). The overall point is clear, though I think the characterization of an emphasis on purpose as resulting in mysticism is possibly too simplistic; as we've noted, a teleological focus from a biosemiotic point of view appears necessary in order to understand the agent in what is proper to it. Further, characterizing a focus on purpose as mysticism seems like an instance of hidden modern metaphysical commitments defining the outlook. After all, the pentad features purpose

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[31] Burke recommends that we should be aware of the persuasive nature of signs, particularly when they are deployed as supposedly neutral, non-persuasive signification – that is, "even on occasions that may on the surface seem to be of a purely empirical nature" (Burke 1945b: 78).

[32] We will, of course, still often follow Burke and use 'terministic screens', but we intend to push the concept to a formal level where its identification follows the satisfaction of its conditions rather than a metaphysical predetermination about where it can appear. Regardless, 'term' already seems more general in Burke than 'individual word'.

as an irreducible component of action and meaning. We can therefore raise the objection that characterizing the pentad as a whole in terms of act is itself an example of the very terministic selections to which Burke is trying to draw our attention. That is, the choice to prioritize act is motivated; why should we give precedence to that term, and what is the motive behind its selection? When Burke emphasizes act in his later years, he may be expressing a form of modern realism; since that stance is not a formal necessity like the pentad, we are not obliged to make this emphasis.

Nevertheless, the basic idea of emphasizing act in some sense is solid, for regardless of our metaphysical stances, action is tautologically involved in the pentad. We're talking about action as opposed to motion; if anything, Burke's choice of emphasis is to counter imbalances created by the overemphasis upon scene within modernity. Dramatism emphasizes action in proportion to its recognition that action and human (agentive) relations are inextricable. If one's concern is language (or semiosis) and the motivations behind its deployment, then one must consider language in terms of action as well.

Terministic screens are connected to Burke's conception of language as *action* – specifically, symbolic action. He calls this a "dramatistic" approach to language itself, as opposed to a "scientistic" approach that stresses language as definition – indeed, that "begins with questions of *naming*, or *definition*" (Burke 1966b: 44). Notice that Burke says *begins*, emphasizing that this emphasis is fundamental to and consistent with the scientistic approach, which restricts itself to the declarative, propositional dimension. It "builds the edifice of language with primary stress upon a proposition such as 'It *is*, or it *is not*'" (Burke 1966b: 44). No doubt this is why Burke tells us that the scientistic approach "culminates in the kinds of speculation we associate with symbolic logic" – with 'symbolic logic' here meaning not logical forms themselves but a reductive metaphysics about language (Burke 1966b: 45).[33] He says that even the arrival at symbolic logic (at least in the positivist sense) is but a spinning out of the semiotic trajectory of approaching language in a scientistic way. There is nothing necessary or unavoidable about it.

Burke often uses scientism to oppositionally define dramatism. This is partly due to the motion/action distinction, which defines the different concerns of dramatism and scientism. Burke also draws this contrast because the dramatistic approach (as a semiotic focus) is capable of assessing ideological or philosophical commitments such as scientism, which the scientistic approach cannot do. An analytical paradigm operating on the basis of motion is inherently unsuitable for addressing certain aspects of semiosis. An orientation emphasizing action will

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[33]   Note, however, that symbolic logic and the *scientistic conception* of symbolic logic are not the same thing. We will discuss this distinction later, consulting again with Wittgenstein, but suffice it now to say that symbolic logic is not metaphysically determinate nor committed. Symbolic logic reveals a priori forms that tell us *some*thing but that do not entail conclusions about the empirical details of the actual world – including the ontology of language and abstract reference. The proper domain of logic is widely misunderstood, even by the highly educated, with its initial distinction between validity and soundness being a common impediment at the outset.

yield results that a motion-based orientation cannot, especially when it comes to analyzing motive. In any given paradigm according to which "scientists develop their professional vocabulary and 'world-view'" (Schiappa 1993: 405),[34] the focus on action could indeed vary. Nevertheless, the dramatistic approach is one that always focuses explicitly on action as its defining trait – as its native analytical lens.

2.1.1.1. Dramatism as both method and viewpoint

For Burke, the result of a dramatistic point of view is that language becomes symbolic action. He sees "a basic polarity of existence […] between the realm of nonsymbolic motion and the realm of symbolic action" (Bertelsen 1993: 232). Burke seems to have in mind a semiotic conception of symbolic action as broader than mere verbal communication, for he identifies the "realm of symbolic action" as "the realm of social existence or communal context" (Bertelsen 1993: 233). This realm is a larger set than merely verbal/linguistic communication, even if Burke does mostly talk about language. Indeed, in his *Field guide to Kenneth Burke – 1990*, Rueckert defines Burke's symbol as "meaning both verbal and the usual something that is both itself and stands for something else" – in other words, a sign (Rueckert 1993: 17). This semiotic conception is behind by what Rueckert calls "the most fundamental of all dramatistic assertions: that humans are symbol-using animals" (Rueckert 1993: 26). This premise underlies Burke's dramatistic methodology:[35] the best way to study humans is to study what is distinctive about them, which means stressing symbol use (and semiosis generally) as action. Semiotics agrees with this general principle, making the basic dramatistic view compatible with a semiotic view. Indeed, it would be appropriate to follow the precedent set by Deely when he recommended including semiology *within* "semiotics as a part thereof, a *pars semeiotica*" (Deely 2001: 685). That is, we could consider dramatism as a type of semiotic view, as a *pars semeiotica*, even though it would be inappropriate to make the two synonymous.

We can understand dramatism partly as a method (precisely for drawing out the motives and implications behind terminological deployments). As Michael Overington (1977: 132), dramatism is "a method for analyzing human relation-ships". Indeed, Burke himself refers to dramatism as "a method of analysis and a corresponding critique of terminology designed to show that the most direct route to the study of human relations and human motives is via a methodical inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions" (Burke 1968b: 445). We could say that as a method, dramatism essentially allows us to trace interpretants in reverse to discover the motives underlying semiosis.

Of course, dramatism involves more than methodology. In *Epistemology and ontology in Kenneth Burke's dramatism,* Bernard Brock clarifies that dramatism is both a method *and* a characterization of reality. On the one hand, "dramatism is a method that allows for a variety of perspectives to exist" – a method "which

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[34] Schiappa is referencing Thomas Kuhn's *The Essential Tension* (1977).
[35] As well as his logological method for tracing the entelechial paths of signs in semiosis.

provides multiple understandings of 'human motivations'"; on the other hand, "dramatism is 'reality' because Burke argues" in favor of "a philosophical stance which identifies the essence of 'human motivation' as an act" (Brock 1985: 100–101). For Burke, this philosophy is dominant. This is why Brock's article title refers to both epistemology and ontology: dramatism is both a method (epistemology) and a characterization of reality (ontology). This characterization of reality says that "drama" – by which Burke means to emphasize the pentadic aspects of action – "is not a metaphor for but rather a model of human relations" (Feehan 1979: 405). According to Michael Feehan, this fundamental conception of reality was already in place in the 1930s when Burke wrote *Twelve propositions by Kenneth Burke on the relation between economics and psychology* (1938); it was here that Burke gave his "first, clear discussion of the relations among the key elements of Dramatism" (Feehan 1979: 405). This suggests that dramatism was already ontological early on, though that emphasis increased over time. Brock says that his focus "gradually shifted from epistemology toward ontology" (Brock 1993: 309). He notes that Chesebro, in his *Epistemology and ontology as dialectical modes in the writings of Kenneth Burke* (1988), "argued that since 1968, Burke's philosophy has functioned dialectically with ontological and epistemic dimensions operating simultaneously" (Brock 1993: 309). Nevertheless, we can see that as early as 1938, Burke seemed to consider his work to be identifying an underlying reality, not just advocating for a method. Indeed, Brock says that at the very least, "while Burke's early writing developed an epistemology, it simultaneously *reflected* an ontology" (Brock 1993: 309). Dramatism, then, is both a method and a model; it seeks to describe reality, at least regarding how humans must experience it, and to identify the ways in which motive catalyzes and is catalyzed through symbolic action.

The dramatistic viewpoint stresses that all human action is necessarily motivated inasmuch as it is action. Motivations are catalyzed in action as a semiotic function. The acquiring and holding of motives, therefore, is an active process for the (human) agent. An agent must *act* on motives, but acting on motives further catalyzes them into the scaffolding of the agent's character and subsequent semiosis, which becomes more inclined toward that trajectory in meaning-seeking-making, for the motives behind action are increasingly "solidified" or fixed in place, moving more and more toward an automatic process of interpretation-becoming-perspective. The motives behind human action are the invisible part of semiosis, but they shape the created artifacts which can in turn become representamens that can be analytically followed "back" to the motives behind their creation – because the relations between motives, actions, and the products of those actions are formal, logical, or structural rather than physical in their proper being.

This "motivated" nature of human semiosis is one of Burke's primary concerns and is a fundamental key to the notion of terministic screens. He specifically tells us that the "dramatistic view of language, in terms of 'symbolic action,' is exercised about the necessarily *suasive* nature of even the most unemotional scientific nomenclatures" (Burke 1966b: 45). Despite affectations of such a nomenclature

to be simply an unmotivated method of "just the facts" definition, its use of language is necessarily still *suasive* – a term which is of the same root as what we find in the English word *persuasion*. This Latin root invokes a sense of re-commendation, of giving support or affirmation to a certain perspective or position – to urge someone *toward* something. While a particular use of language may not be deployed as an intentional act of persuasion, the terminology selected necessarily contains its own inclination to semiotically "color" its subject matter with a judgment, even passively "encouraging" the audience to side with its "per-spective". This suasive nature is tied to incompatibility, which makes possible the "decision-making between different coexisting [but mutually incompatible] meanings" that *is* semiosis (Kull 2014: 117). This entails that the different incom-patible meanings have their own built-in semiotic trajectories, entailments, or consequences for meaning.

2.1.2. Terministic screens as modeling

The notion that a selected term is both a selection and a deflection of reality applies to more than words. The artifacts and structures created by human semiosis are also implicated. In the Grammar, Burke says that even "*our instruments are but structures of terms, and hence must be expected to manifest the nature of terms*" (Burke 1945b: 313). The same basic rules apply because the production of dis-course and the production of instruments come from the same place. He says this should be considered a corrective to empiricism. After all, it entails that "we must always be admonished to remember, not that an experiment flatly and simply reveals *reality*, but rather that it reveals only such reality as is capable of being revealed by this particular kind of terminology" (Burke 1945b: 313). Inasmuch as instruments are not structures of words, this is another case where 'term' seems to indicate 'sign' in a more general sense than 'word'. As structures of signs, instru-ments are ways of looking, themselves constructed through ways of looking. Thus, even instruments (techniques, technologies, etc.) both involve and result in selections of reality.

Thomas Kuhn's concept of scientific paradigms may come to mind here. Edward Schiappa (1993) directly draws a connection between Burke and Kuhn in *Burkean tropes and Kuhnian science*. Schiappa writes that he believes "that a juxtaposition of Burke and Kuhn demonstrates that the primary tools or strategies with which we seek to order 'reality' through language are the same for scientists and non-scientists" (Schiappa 1993: 402). This is an insight that Deely attributes to a semiotic point of view. Discussing Deely's work in *Realism for the 21st Century*, Paul Cobley reminds us that the "'objective' world, then, is a world of experienced things sometimes presenting itself as a world of 'just things'" (Cobley 2009: 9). In the usual Deely usage, 'objective' indicates not 'unbiased' but 'being an object of experience'. All that we encounter within experience is neces-sarily already an object of that (or within that) experience. Of course, like all animals, "Humans live in the world of signs" (Cobley 2009: 10). Once again we're

in the territory of Uexküll's umwelt. Perhaps the key insight here is that an "animal's *umwelt* is its 'objective' world" – "where an animal relates to 'objects'" (Cobley 2009: 8). But of course, a thing can only be an experiential object for an agent if that thing is perceivable and meaningful for that agent. If it's not a (possible) sign for an agent, it can't be an object of that agent's experience.

As a result, all of our experience is already "mediated" through semiosis. As Deely demonstrates, "the world that seems to be wholly independent of humans [...] can never be such. Rather, it is a specific kind of mixture of that which is independent of, and dependent on, humans" (Cobley 2009: 8). A total extrication is impossible. In any observation, experience is mediated through signs. This doesn't entail the type of idealism to which Deely is so opposed. Signs also give us access to the world, and it is fully appropriate to say that signs *connect* us to rather than separate us from our contextual world. To perceive signs as separation is a choice of emphasis that's not entailed by our experiential givens; our experience could be no less characterized as connection and enmeshment in an extremely dense and complex semiosphere. To this end, Cobley references "Peirce's statement that 'to try to peel off signs & get down to the real thing is like trying to peel an onion and get down to the onion itself'" (Cobley 2009: 11).[36] The other side of this, though, is that we cannot approach an unexperienced *thing* and have it remain a thing which has not become an *object* (of experience). Even once experience renders a thing into an object as soon as we encounter it, "the sensations [that object] provokes, the feelings about them and its consequence" transform the object into a sign. We can only access the object as a sign.[37]

Thus, regardless of what methods or technologies (agencies) we construct through semiosis in order to remove our "interfering" experience and render the object back into a "pure thing" or "raw data", it is impossible to transform an entity that's partly mind-dependent (the object) into an entity that's entirely independent of mind (the thing). We cannot make that separation. In one of his more famous statements, Deely calls this one of the fundamental insights of the semiotic perspective; he says that "the whole of our experience, from its most primitive origins in sensation to its most refined achievements in understanding, is a network or web of sign relations" (Deely 1990: 13). This unifies all human activities on a fundamental level, despite their differences. After all, signs "are required not only for any given method in philosophy or in the sciences, natural or human, but for the very possibility of there being such a thing as method or inquiry of any kind" (Deely 1990: 11). The same species-specific process of discovering and rendering the world meaningful through semiosis underlies every form of human activity. On a fundamental level, science and technology cannot fully separate themselves from all other forms of meaning-seeking-making. All involve semiosis, which is not only a process of the possibility of revealing but also "the possibility of deceit or betrayal" (Deely 1990: 11). Thus, even the supposedly unmotivated

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36 Cobley is referencing (Brent 1993: 300 n. 84).
37 This inability to peel away the sign and discover the "real thing" in a primary sense is related to what Burke calls the paradox of substance. We will discuss this problem in depth later.

construction of instruments carries the possibility of the lie or of reality distortion within some pragmatic context. For instance, a technological filter for perception could be interposed in order to alter a population's perspective in accordance with some agent's motives – seeking to direct attention to or away from some aspect of reality. Additionally, technologies that place the focus on increasingly microscopic observation may implicitly contain a metaphysical presumption of materialism – or be used to reinforce such a commitment when the perceptions experienced through such instruments are encoded with a categorically higher truth value than other means of perception (a tactic that reinforces the power structures and motives of those who control such instruments).

This possibility of deceit is always in the background when it comes to terministic screens – if not conscious deceit then at least a hidden selection. In order to use terms (signs), we have to choose some rather than others. We must make choices of meaning, but if we must choose, then there are other possibilities that we must *not* choose (or even purposefully reject). Choice means multiple options that do not reduce to one another, owing to some qualitative distinction between them. Qualitative distinctions mean different meanings when selected in relevant contexts. Different meanings entail different results for scaffolding.

It's at the intersection of this incompatibility where agency can enact action (choice). This type of intersection conceptually connects what Kull calls "a controversial situation", "a situation of incompatible codes", with what Burke refers to as "strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise" (Burke 1945b: xviii) and possibly what Dale Bertelsen calls "dialectical contradictions" (Bertelsen 1993: 244).[38] Indeed, Bertelsen seems to have in mind a process very much like what Kull described, saying that as human beings we are always "processing the competing symbols of our own particular reality. Each symbolic identification we make is an act of discrimination that transforms sensory awareness into and according to our individual orientation or belief system" (Bertelsen 1993: 246). The different semiotic incompatibilities from which we must choose in a controversial situation are in that sense competing signs, and our selection is an act of discrimination or judgment-making between them. The result will have a transformative impact upon experience and even at times upon sensory awareness or perception. Consider the account that Jakob von Uexküll relates in *A stroll through the worlds of animals and men* (1992[1934]):

> When I spent some time at the house of a friend, an earthenware water pitcher used to be placed before my seat at luncheon. One day the butler had broken the clay pitcher and put a glass water bottle in its place. When I looked for the pitcher during the meal, I failed to see the glass carafe. Only when my friend assured me

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38 Dialectical contradictions, however, may be a special case of incompatibility, where the contradiction can be resolved through a dialectical process where the two incompatibilities are ordered in a hierarchy "beneath" a more ultimate term/sign – that is, where a third term itself becomes the context or scene for the other two terms. Those two terms would then have been "reduced" to the scope of the third term, in which context their incompatibility might not be total.

that the water was standing in its usual place, did various bright lights that had lain scattered on knives and plates flock together through the air and form the water bottle […] The search image annihilates the perceptual image. (Uexküll 1992[1934]: 373)

Uexküll was unable to perceive an object before him because an element (a search image or expectation) within his semiosis altered even his sensory perception. This example highlights that even something as supposedly basic as the experience of sensation is semiosically mediated. The impact is compounded when we consider the influence of semiosic filtering ("terministic" screens) on experience as a whole, wherein the influence of our choices is continuous, and the stakes are higher.

We can consider terministic screens as a form of modeling. Modeling is tied in particular to the notion of Umwelt as "world of experience" proper to finite agents (Deely 2002 36–37). To know what an agent's Umwelt is like will require a "demonstration of how the organism (via its *Innenwelt*) maps the world, and what, for that organism, the **meanings** of the **objects** are within it. Therefore, semiosic systems are simultaneously ***modelling*** systems" (Kull 2010: 43).[39] If an Umwelt is "a public realm within each species yet between all individuals of that species" (Deely 2009: 235), the Innenwelt (or inner world of the agent) is the personal, "subjective universe of psychological states" (Deely 2009: 250). Kull quotes Sebeok in saying that "'*semiosis* [is the] capacity of a species to produce and comprehend the specific types of models it requires for processing and codifying perceptual input in its own way'" (Kull 2010: 47). Anderson and Merrell (1991: 4) follow this principle far enough to identify signs themselves as models.[40] In this light, we can say quite plausibly that any particular instance of deploying a terministic/semiotic screen through the selection of a terminology (a resolution of a semiotic incompatibility) is an example of modeling, as is the overall process whereby the accrual of such selections (and the motives they catalyze) result in a developmental trajectory for the agent.

After all, since I necessarily make a selection from among various incompatible options whenever I choose one particular terminology to describe the cosmos, to this degree I model only some aspects but not others. We don't just mean the fact that one can't say or represent *everything* about a given object, especially in a single instance – though that would already be modeling. Instead, we mean that terminologies contain within themselves some dimension of incompatibility with one another.

2.1.3. Terministic screens and circumference

This incompatibility could manifest as either a degree of mutual exclusivity *or* as simply involving what Burke calls different *circumferences* inherent in different

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[39] Kull notes that the Tartu Moscow School was already emphasizing that semiosic systems are modeling systems in the 1960s.
[40] Kull 2010: 43.

terms, such that the different terminologies include and omit different aspects of the object modeled. Consider the two terms 'nature' and 'creation' as applied to the cosmos. These two terms are not mutually exclusive in a sense; we could use both terms to refer to the cosmos without necessarily entailing any contradictory premises. However, each term has a different circumference of what it includes and excludes. 'Circumference' draws attention to the fact that each term contains "within itself" a different particular modeling capacity – and that is distinct from another (incompatible) term.

Circumference is related to Burke's use of 'scope' and 'reduction'. These are all "scenic" words, which involve ways of placement[41] – that is, establishing hierarchies of the type involved in "seeing x *in terms of* y". This hierarchical principle is at play generally in scenic placements, which thematically unites these concepts. Emphasis on one term rather than others is a kind of reduction. Burke says, "Any word or concept considered from the point of view of any other word or concept is a reduction in this sense. One reduces this to that by discussing this *in terms of* that" (Burke 1945b: 96). In the case of idealism, Burke says that an idealist reduces the world to ideas "when talking of it *in terms of* mind as its underlying substance" (Burke 1945b: 96). Nor is there only one kind of reduction. One can "reduce" a "lower" term to a "higher" one. He mentions Bonaventura's reduction of art to theology (Burke 1945b: 97). Bonaventura holds theology in higher esteem than art and proposes seeing art in terms of theology.

But Burke identifies another kind of reduction that seems to concern him more than the others: a lowering, lessening, or narrowing. The "most drastic manifestation of reduction" in this sense "has been the 'debunking' movement, which could be said in general to treat 'higher' concepts in terms of 'lower' ones" (Burke 1945b: 97). It is in this category where he locates all "physicalist, behaviorist, positivist, operationalist ideals of language", all of which treat "a 'wider' circumference in terms of a 'narrower' circumference" (Burke 1945b: 97). This includes the treatment of consciousness in terms of matter, ontologically reducing mind to "nothing but" matter, as well as any of what Burke calls the scientific metonymies that reduce the intangible to the tangible. Such moves, of course, are not explicitly scientific but are metaphysically scien*tistic*, involving a philosophical preference. Indeed, this is the metaphysical stance of Modernity more generally. Atomistic perspectives and their corresponding terminologies are also of this sort, reducing a complex whole to constituent parts. Nothing in the givens of experience force this perspectival priority. Indeed, Burke says, the very atomistic project to search out the "building blocks" of the universe already "stresses material cause to the exclusion of final cause" – a choice which, not being *forced* by experience, is motivated (Burke 1945b: 98). As an example, he says it would be like trying to reduce a game of football distribution and movement of masses on the field. Such a description couldn't fail to exclude key aspects of the game. Accepting such a characterization would already be a metaphysical move.

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[41] The discussion of circumference in the Grammar is placed in the section Ways of Placement and the subsection Scope and Reduction.

Circumference is tied to Burke's general emphasis upon grounding one semiotic element (or more) in another. That is, one element (term, sign, unified complex) becomes the Scene (context, grounding) for a plurality of others. A term's circumference establishes a scene for whatever semiosis follows subsequently upon it. Burke affirms that "one may place the object of one's definition in contexts of varying scope" (Burke 1945b: 77). 'Scope' refers to something's reach, so to speak – the extent of its influence and enclosing boundaries. A sign's scope concerns the degree of its relevance and enclosure – how widely it applies. Scope is a scenic word, and dramatistically the scene defines the kind of action possible within its reach; this principle applies both to works of fiction and to general events in the cosmos. In this way, we can understand a sign's scope as establishing the constraints or boundaries for the kind of sign action that can follow from it – the scaffolded (hierarchical) structure that can be built upon it. The term 'scope' seems to emphasize its reach and, in that sense, is a positive or neutral term. 'Reduction' emphasizes a closing down, for reduction is always reduction *to* something; it is thus a "negative" term which need not entail a moral lowering here, as only a technical sense is required. Both dimensions (scope and reduction) are relevant when discussing an established boundary, since both are necessary for modeling. Because all meanings (signs) have particular and varying scopes, incompatibilities inevitably arise within any frame; at the very least, we must make some reductions in order to achieve semiotic consistency. Without any reduction, we cannot signify; we would either assert a tautology and signify, or we would embrace contradiction and "fail" to signify.[42]

2.1.3.1. An example of terms' different modeling capacities: 'nature' and 'creation'

Terms' qualitatively distinct modeling capacities should be clear enough with a concrete example: the terminological pairing of creation/nature. The term 'creation' contains embedded within itself the dynamic of creator/created. If something is a *creation*, that means it *was created*, and if it was created, then there is a *creator*. This semiotic inflection is inherent to the term itself in its proper semantic and pragmatic context. When we refer to the cosmos[43] as "the creation", we have conceptually established it *in terms of* a creator/created dynamic. Whether intentional or not, we introduce at the outset the proposition (or the conclusion) that the cosmos was made by *some* agent. The term's circumference does not include any particulars about the nature of that creator, but *that* an agent was involved in the origin of the cosmos (as an act) *is* contained within the semiotic circumference of

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[42] Nevertheless, many actual reductions are characterizations that rest on metaphysical commitments that could very well be described as morally "negative" – that is, destructive.

[43] The term 'cosmos' has an analyzable circumference, of course; one could argue that its semantic base meaning 'order' deflects the meaning 'disorder' or 'chaos'. Nevertheless, referring to a cosmic order says little about the nature of that order and, thus, in a sense says less than 'universe' or 'multiverse' since both involve numerical claims: 'uni' or 'multi'.

the term 'creation'. A minimal implication is permitting the meaning possibility 'creator' within the relevant frame.

The term 'nature', on the other hand, has a different circumference and could be conceived as a tautological term. This word in its origin seems to involve what the term implies in English: the inherent qualities and character of something; being; the fundamental course of things; and so forth. 'Nature' simply says that "this is the way it is". The tautology involved in this term, especially as a name for the cosmos, can be seen in this sentence: "It is the nature of nature to be nature". What is distinct in the circumference of the term *nature* is particularly in its *not* being defined in relation to anything else. It is defined, rather, solely in terms of itself, which is a quite modern type of definition. This conception of the cosmos is tied to a scientist way of approaching the cosmos in the first place: that is, naming. It conceives of the cosmos an isolated object independent of any particular relation: most properly of a relation to any creator or even cause. It does not indicate whether the cosmos came into being or is eternal.

Given this "neutrality" of the term 'nature', we might make the mistake of considering it suasively neutral; however, the circumference of the term is drawn in such a way that makes a particular meaning possible. That is, while the term 'creation' requires us to conceive of the cosmos in relation to some sort of creator, the term 'nature' allows for the possibility to conceive of the cosmos independently of any creator – we can instead conceive of it as merely self-existent and self-relative. So even though the term 'nature' is partly compatible with a conception of the cosmos as creation, it also opens the door to the possibility of conceiving of it as *not* being creation. This permits new categories of thought and meaning. In that sense, if we then arrive at a conception of the cosmos that excludes a creator, we are spinning out a conclusion made possible by that choice of terminology. In fact, if the term 'nature' is deployed in an historical context that defines the cosmos as 'creation', the supposedly neutral term 'nature' becomes a more proactive inclination toward a certain contrary conclusion to define the cosmos *apart* from a creator. That is, if one lives in a semiosphere that "universally" considers the cosmos to have been created, then choosing to replace the term 'creation' with 'nature' introduces the possibility of a semiotic shift whereby the cosmos is reconceived as being not creation. The terminological change opens the "door" to an incompatible meaning, revealing a "motivation" inherent in the term that is often visible only in certain pragmatic contexts.

Of course, we may not in actuality move from the deployment of the term 'nature' to a conception of the cosmos as being uncreated. In this sense, we can say that while such a conclusion is made possible by the term's circumference, that conclusion is not unavoidably "baked" into the term. It's an implication by possibility or by negation. However, the term 'nature' does contain within it the suasive tone of conceiving of the cosmos as an independent, isolated object – and certain conclusions can *only* come about by following out that semiotic trajectory in the first place. Conceiving of the cosmos as creation does not "allow" the semiotic trajectory of an uncaused or self-caused cosmos. That is, to conceive of the cosmos as uncreated, one must necessarily first conceive of the possibility of

defining it independently of any creator. We could thus say that the term 'nature' is implicitly atheistic in a way that the term 'creator' is not; when sufficiently defined in the proper semiotic context, this distinction is a formal necessity, not an evaluation about empirical particulars.

In either case, we see that the different circumferences of the terms delimit different possibilities of meaning, of conceptualization, and of modeling the world. These meanings are implicit in the terms themselves; when we choose to conceive of the world in such terms, they shape our subsequent semiosis. At any given point, we already have many such terminological models in place, which shape our experience and what we observe of the cosmos. This is what Burke means when he says that many of our observations are only implications of the terminological models we've adopted, often implicitly; it's what he means when he says that "much that we take as observations about 'reality' may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms" (Burke 1966b: 46). Thus, we get Burke's sense of the ways in which terms "screen out" aspects of our perception and experience, while highlighting others. Terministic screens direct the attention in a specific way – not only *to* but also *away from*. Minimally speaking, the kind of deflection he intends "concerns simply the fact that any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others" (Burke 1966b: 45).[44] The manner of directing the attention may be as simple as the way a textbook directs the reader's attention toward some subject matter instead of others; however, the directing may be more subtle, such as saw in the nature/creation ambivalence.

2.1.3.2. The selection of a circumference

Circumference and terministic screens are intimately connected concepts: circumferences of varying scope are implicit in terms themselves. The specificity of any particular terministic screen is related to the particular scope of its circumference. The term with its circumference becomes a context which situates an agent's (or agents') subsequent semiosis: "Motivationally […] the quality of the context in which a subject is placed will affect the quality of the subject placed in that context" (Burke 1945b:77–78). The selection of signs (by which we characterize reality *in terms of*...) is a process whereby we contextualize our subsequent semiosis through particular motives that are themselves incompatible with other motives we deflect. We are thus also choosing the ways in which we contextualize *ourselves*, for we not only shape our semiosis but are also shaped *by* it. Any desire to avoid the responsibility in general of having to make this kind of circumferential choice is unavoidable – at least according to Burke. After all,

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[44] In light of relevance theory's emphasis on the role of ostensive communication having to first draw the attention of the addressee through the cognitive orientation toward relevance, we might say that individual terms are inclined toward a certain kind of relevance.

since one must implicitly or explicitly select a circumference […] we are properly admonished to be on the look-out for these terministic relationships between the circumference and the 'circumfered,' even on occasions that may on the surface seem to be of a purely empirical nature. (Burke 1945b: 78)

The selection of a circumference is unavoidable, and it need not be explicit. The implicit selection is rooted in the circumference inherent to the term (to its logos), leading it to function as a terministic screen when chosen from among a variety of other incompatible possibilities. This is a logical necessity rooted in incompatibility, which means that it happens even when we're not fully aware of it. We can implicitly adopt the terminological choices made by others – teachers, entertainers, advertisers, etc.

The principle of different circumferences proper to various terms is independent of particular pragmatic aspects; we could say that a term's circumference is tied to its semantic dimensions as established by the relevant scene. This is tied to the generally "syntactic" dimension: what Wittgenstein identifies as the structural properties[45] that make themselves intuitively manifest to us or what Peirce would relate most closely to the iconic dimension. But when Burke is discussing circumference, he *does* want to emphasize the importance of the pragmatic dimension – especially regarding choice and its effects upon meaning. Indeed, "the choice of circumference for the scene in terms of which a given act is to be located will have a corresponding effect upon the interpretation of the act itself" (Burke 1945b: 77). A sign's scope serves as a scene constraining the possible subsequent action. The main emphasis here is the statement *choice* of circumference; one's choice of a term (semiotic unit) is a choice regarding its circumference. An important part of the reason that terms are terministic *screens* is due to their varying circumferences. For most signs, incompatibility (understood as circumferences that do not entirely overlap) likely won't mean total mutual exclusivity in every context; rather, incompatibility regarding terms is grounded in differing circumferences that are qualitatively distinct and irreducible. Not every context will require most terms be in explicit opposition, especially in cases where both are subordinated to a third, more "ultimate" term.

The nature/creation pairing is indeed a good example, for the two are not mutually exclusive in every context, but their different circumferences are incompatible in a way that puts them in opposition in certain contexts. Each has certain "intrinsic" semiotic possibilities, such that we could see the terms as "doors" to incompatible results in meaning. Each term thus has a different telos. Even when we identify certain contexts in which the two can be consistently used together, one of them will likely serve as the scene for the other. If 'creation' is taken as the primary term, then 'nature' is invoked only as a synonym. 'Creation' establishes the scene for 'nature'. Taking 'nature' as primary over 'creation', however, was precisely the approach of early modernity; the cosmos as creation becomes the

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[45]   Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.12.

conditional description and can be revised without altering the primary terminological commitment. Burke himself explores this theme, saying that

> if we locate the human agent and his act in terms of a scene whose orbit is broad enough to include the concept of a supernatural Creator, we get a different kind of definition than if our location were confined to a narrower circumference that eliminated reference to the 'supernatural' as a motivating element in the scene, and did not permit the scenic scope to extend beyond the outer limits of 'nature.' (Burke 1945b: 77)

A chosen circumference shapes or "colors" the relevant subject according to what Burke calls the principle of dramatic (actional) consistency[46] – this is what he means by different kinds of definitions. By 'definition' he means 'systematic placement'. When we seek to define something, we seek to place it systematically in a relational hierarchy.

After all, to describe what something is, one must position it in terms of something else. We must use signs, and in even a basic sense, a sign signifies what it is not; otherwise it's just itself. Bertelsen puts it like this: "we express the ineffable in terms of something which it is not" (Bertelsen 1993: 237). The ineffable (indescribable, indefinable, inexpressible) could indicate the world or experience as such, which cannot be expressed in any particular instance of signification, nor can it be encompassed by any particular instance of perception. Otherwise we would have no need for modeling.

But of course we do need modeling, and a model always maps its target in some respects rather than others. Bertelsen puts Burke's conclusion thus: "At the same time, the language we employ alters and limits the possible interpretations of events available to us – we understand events in a way that obscures their essence" (Bertelsen 1993: 237). Yes, our semiotic deployments are motivated and model the world in some respects rather than others; however, this statement about essence is extraneous because it involves an evaluative characterization and arises from (or entails) a particular worldview or philosophical stance that is not necessary – not a forced conclusion.

Again, whether signs primarily reveal essence or obscure it is a choice we must make. Bertelsen has given us an example of terministic screens containing implicit conclusions that incline us toward certain commitments. If we were to simply take his description at face value, we might be inclined to repeat it as our own viewpoint, which we are often more likely to believe precisely because we think its our own. We would then find ourselves professing a metaphysical characterization of signs and reality that is not a given but can have big consequences for meaning nonetheless.

After all, we can ask, "Why conclude that signs separate us from essence?" We could just as easily choose to emphasize that signs put us in *contact with*

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[46] As a more complete view, we could perhaps refer to semiotic consistency, though consistency is already a semiotic concept.

essence. Is the problem that our understanding is partial because we're finite? Then the problem is not signs but our own finitude; we need signs because we're not God. We are finite. Our knowledge is partial. The awareness which signs provide is partial. None of this *entails* a conclusion about our connection to or separation from essence – or reality, or truth. This is an example of the kind of "controversial semiotic situation" identified by Kalevi Kull, of Burke's "strategic spots at which ambiguities necessarily arise", or of "dialectical contradictions", as Bertelsen prefers.

The controversy allows us to say that signs partially reveal, which is apparently a given. The question is whether signs *partially* reveal or partially *reveal*. We can emphasize either the fact that it's partial or that it reveals. Experience doesn't force this conclusion on us; it comes in and through semiosis, and the choice must lie with the agent. The social sphere may be an influence, but the agent can accept or reject the conclusion of the social sphere. In this case, as in so many others, "we find that the term or terms we *do* choose to characterize the act permeate our experiencing of the act. The way we choose to understand that act predisposes us to orient ourselves to act in the manner we understand" (Bertelsen 1993: 238). This applies not only to an act with a definable agent performing it but to experience more generally. Experience is shaped through semiosis, which is both active and motivated. Since semiosis "temporally embodies the essential motives of the symbol user" (Bertelsen 1993: 238), motive is at the core of how we work out our semiosis. Our catalyzed motives have a shaping impact upon the agent and the world around it.

2.1.4. Evidence as a terministic screen

We can consider evidence as a semiotic product – as a form of definition or systematic placement. Conceptually, evidence is often treated as something that exists "out there" independent of human cognition and semiosis, but properly speaking, we never encounter evidence as cosmic given. At most we encounter the given aspects of the cosmos, but it is only through semiosis that we transform the "data" into *evidence*. 'Data' is not really the correct term, though; data is already a semiotic construct, for it's only data to us insofar as it's cognized, as mentioned earlier. At the very least, data is an object (in Deely's sense), having become so through experience. Data is still a particular type of evidence, which means that it's a sign. We actually might say that data is even more a product of purposeful semiosic activity than some forms of evidence. Data is often understood as "raw observations" that have yet to be systematically interpreted or modeled, but we might actually understand data as an especially mediated product of semiosis, created by further abstracting our interpretive observations into data. This is especially the case when we consider our instruments and theories as themselves being structures of signs – and, thus, terministic screens.

But regardless of whether "data" reduces to evidence, here we want to highlight specifically that evidence of whatever type (inasmuch as it *is* evidence) is a

semiosic product; evidence is thus more bread than wheat, more wine than grapes. Systematic placement, which requires us to see *x* in terms of *y*, is involved in the creation of evidence. Evidence is always evidence *of something*. This makes it a relational, semiotic concept that defines or places one object in terms of another. Two people may look at the world and see the "same" tree yet see that tree as evidence of incompatible termini. One sees the tree as ultimately evidence of God as creator, and one sees the tree as ultimately evidence of undirected processes of motion. Yet neither has encountered that evidence unavoidably in the cosmos but has instead arrived at that conclusion through an intersection of observation *and* volition – through a semiosic extrapolation from what is universally *given* within human experience. This makes the evidence in both cases a semiosic creation. The tree itself does not force a conclusion regarding what it is evidence *of*; it does not itself force the choice of one relational terminus rather than another.

Strangely, Burke's schema implies that the ground establishing the evidential character of the object often precedes the construction of the evidence. After all, the definition is already a mediation. The object is being seen in terms of something else that functions, he says, "as a motivational element" in the situation (Burke 1945b: 77). That motivational element is rooted in the deeper motives[47] of the agent establishing the evidential relation. These motives are "systematic", for different acts of placement within an agent's semiosis are not wholly disconnected from one another; since motives are catalyzed and subsequently influence the development of the agent's Innenwelt, a habit of action is increasingly built up. Ways of placement become fixed through catalysis, and each way has its own effects upon meaning that remain present in semiosic artifacts. These acts and artifacts of semiosis are thus suasively inclined and, therefore, remain *implicitly rhetorical*.[48] Burke charges that we should keep an active mental vigilance regarding discourses that claim to be purely empirical – precisely because no matter how empirical terms may seem, "it actually is a very distinct choice of circumference for the placement of human motives" (Burke 1945b: 78). Motives are *being* expressed, even when clothed in terms that mask the motive. In semiosis, we *must* choose terms – so we must choose circumferences, one way or another. Claiming that a particular characterization of an object is only an issue of "just the plains facts" is a persuasive tactic that hides choice and its motivational nature.

Of course, systematic placement could be defined more locally than a person's overall motives, and this is part of the "nesting quality" we find in Burke's central semiotic ideas. Circumference can apply to a single term or to a highly complex structure – even to an entire terminology corresponding to a philosophical worldview or metaphysics. At the most general level are God-terms or ultimate terms, which organize whole structures of signs in a top-down manner rather than the bottom-up manner of terministic screens; however, even God-terms (which we will discuss shortly) can be understood in relation to a single semiosic artifact, to

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[47] Aims, goals, desires, values, commitments, and so forth – all can serve as motivation.

[48] This phrase comes from Stan Lindsay's 1998 work, *Implicit Rhetoric*, which deals with the theme of entelechy in Burke.

an agent's motives overall, or to an entire semiosphere and its hierarchical scaffolding. These concepts can be narrowed or expanded to different degrees of complexity when concerning what we might call unified semiotic complexes. Likewise, systematic placement can concern a horizon of focus other than a person's overall worldview.

However, it is likely in the context of an agent's (or community's) maximal motives that the 'systematic' part of systematic placement achieves its greatest visibility. After all, the "systematic motivation" that a person has chosen[49] as their general worldview and personal orientation is a powerful determinant for how they will make semiotic choices when they have the freedom to do so. After all, when it comes to evidence, we find a certain "incompleteness" regarding the given aspects of experience; we encounter places of indeterminacy where the questions of meaning can be resolved in incompatible ways. There is a chasm or epistemic gap over which we must jump, as it were. Semiosis itself requires this openness, as Kalevi Kull makes clear.

So what factor determines how one person will navigate that indeterminacy? The answer we offer here is *motive*. Given the semiotic perspective that human agents are actually signs themselves, motive also becomes the key to answering the question, "What is *this* person a sign of?" The answer comes from identifying that person's overarching motive – the motive operant for them at the highest level of systematic placement. Burke's name for this ultimate motive is God-term, which works by the same teleological semiotic principle as the terministic screen and its related concepts. We must now turn to this most defining type of motive.

2.2. God-terms as ultimate semiotic screens

Regarding the term 'God-term', it's important to emphasize that the concept is semiotic, structural, and technical instead of theological. It may be a "theologically derived" term, and it is well suited for identifying implicitly theological commitments (as we will demonstrate later), but properly speaking it is a semiotic term. In the Grammar's introduction, Burke says that the concept pertains to "the grammatical principles of motivation" which can "lay claim to a universal validity, or complete certainty" – but does not entail "the choice of any one philosophic idiom embodying these principles" (Burke 1945b: xvii). That is, these are formal, a priori principles whose proper realm is validity; 'grammar' does not mean the rules of a particular language nor even necessarily the rules of language itself. The term is rather akin to 'logic' as that which is unavoidable and necessary about the way we must think about the world; remember Burke's statement that this work concerns necessary forms of thought, similar to Wittgenstein's focus in the *Tractatus*.

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[49] Or "settled into through habit".

The God-term[50] is one of the logical forms, we could say, that will be found in any realm of human action. The ultimate background of an agent's acts is precisely a God-term, and a complete discussion of that agent's motives "must contain a reference to *some kind of* background" which defines it in this way (Burke 1945b: xvii). That part is invariant. However, the particulars of that background do vary: indeed, "one thinker uses 'God' as his term for the ultimate ground or scene of human action, another uses 'nature,' a third uses 'environment,' or 'history,' or 'means of production,' etc." (Burke 1945b: xvi–xvii). A God-term serves the semiotic function of being an ultimate ground for a broader complex of signs – governing over the entire meaning structure, as it were. The "theological" tone need not be explicit; Burke refers to someone going "to a movie temple for her meditations and devotions" in order to receive her quasi-Eucharistic "medicine" whereby her life's sense of inferiority can be transformed into something more tolerable and endearing through (Burke 2007: 17). In this case, the function of the "temple" remains intact, only the God-term on which it is founded is not explicitly God.[51]

2.2.1. God-terms as contextually exclusive

No motive has a more powerful influence on the (self-)development of the human agent and its semiotic character than that agent's God-term. We treat God-terms as unitary for an agent, with only one God-term being possible at any given time. In a way it makes sense to talk about someone being committed to multiple God-terms (a sort of terministic analogue of polytheism), but inasmuch as the various God-terms will be incompatible with one another regarding their circumferences, these multiple God-terms will conflict with one another according to the context. As an obvious example, contrast 'family' and 'money' as possible God-terms.[52] Burke points out that 'money' makes a fine God-term for many in a capitalist philosophy of commitment,[53] putting that value in the position that would "traditionally" be occupied by God as the ultimate ground for human action. A person might ambiguously hold both of these values high, such that both organize various hierarchies in her life.

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[50] Burke varied in capitalizing 'God-term'. We cannot follow that precedent for a clear rule, but since the concept turns upon a principle of a semiotic function whose governance over the relevant complex is unitary (derived from the monotheistic semiosphere), I consider that it makes most sense to usually capitalize the term to emphasize what is most proper to the concept and to the principle of incompatibility. Further, we are under no obligation to prioritize the lower case over the capital in order to gratify Modern biases; that's just another metaphysical preference, too.

[51] Burke's example here is somewhat superficial, and we will explore the semiotic function of "non-theological" God-terms later in more detail.

[52] Burke himself explores these two God-terms at some length in the Grammar. See, for instance, the subsection "Money as a substitute for God" (Burke 1945b: 108).

[53] I have adopted the term 'philosophy of commitment' from Jon Wheatley's *Prolegomena to Philosophy* (1970: 45–52).

However, it is easy to identify a context in which these God-terms would conflict. What if she were offered a high-paying job in a distant city, but her family can't move with her and doesn't want her to go? In this case, she knows that moving will harm her family relationships because of the distance, because of the very long hours, and because the nature of her choice to take the job would signify to her family that she would risk relationships for money. She doesn't like the idea of moving away and hurting her family, but the prospect of being wealthy is compelling. In the end, despite her sadness, she decides to take the job.

This is a situation where she cannot simultaneously choose both paths; she must choose one or the other, and a motive will inform the choice. She faces a semiotic controversy or crisis, and one motive will win out at the expense of another. She either reveals an existing hierarchy or establishes a new one by her choice. The money motive may have already been a priority in her value system, having played out in other acts. In that case, her action further catalyzes the money motive, strengthening its entelechial principle within her – that is, strengthening that motive's influence to work out its "internal terministic consistencies" (Burke 2007: 66). An actional trajectory according to that motive is strengthened.

But perhaps this situation of incompatibility revealed to her a conflict of which she was previously unaware. In that case, she has set a new meaning route for herself, an act which will result in the creation of a contextual (scenic) situation in her umwelt that is consistent with the money motive. This new motive-shaped scene within her innenwelt will incline her to act further according to that motive. The result either way is that continuing to act according to that motive will be easier, and acting according to another will be more difficult. She has established a "hierarchy of value-laden terms", which lead "to god-terms" (Booth 2001: 196). Given that we assumed at the outset the possibility that both the money motive and the family motive were her two God-terms (with no other motive being a candidate), then either the money motive was already her God-term, or it is in the process of so becoming. Faced with an incompatible context, she was *forced* to choose, but the specific choice was *not* forced.

2.2.2. God-terms as maximal catalysis

The entelechial principle at work here may involve the kind of total structural solidification that Kalevi Kull has in mind, where the product of catalysis becomes completely fixed, creating an automatic meaning filter where no new semiosis is taking place. The fixation of a God-term is maximal catalysis. Terministic screens, when maintained and enacted long enough, can become God-terms through habit formation. Burke refers to this as the creation of ruts, a process which begins with choice. He says, "Certain of one's choices become creative in themselves; they drive one into ruts, and these ruts in turn reënforce one's piety" (Burke 1984: 78). Michael Feehan elaborates upon it this way: "Piety and propriety are orientations we can live in", but "pieties can become ruts that trap us" and "prevent us from turning onto new roads" (Feehan 2001: 208). Here, of course, Burke does not mean

piety in a typically "religious" sense but in a "devotional" sense where one is committed to one's God-term and necessarily lives according to it. The entelechial principle and the principle of dramatic consistency intersect, with the God-term becoming the overall scene for the agent.

It may seem possible to talk about an agent having multiple God-terms that "rule over" different areas of their life. It is indeed no doubt psychologically possible to separate one's life into different areas,[54] wherein one operates according to different goals or sets of values.[55] And of course it's certainly the case that even those who seek to live in total consistency often have difficulty doing so, as addicts perhaps know better than anyone else. Nevertheless, in a relevant contextual sphere, the entelechial and terministic principles (involving the incompatibility of differing circumferences inherent in terms) will lead to a single God-term emerging in that context. Incompatibility requires it: "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24, ESV). The process of prioritizing a motive leads eventually to its taking the place of one's ultimate motivation – that motive which wins out above all others in conflicting contexts, thus becoming a structural analogue for God. When two motives both seem to be God-terms, with the agent vacillating between them, either the agent is in the process of working out a new "piety", or a hidden third motive is actually directing their action – perhaps a desire for popularity or even a mere survival motive expressed through a fear of commitment. In the end, one motive will ultimately fix the habits of the agent due to the catalyzing of that particular motive through repeated action. This is why a God-term is the ultimate *summarizing* term; it characterizes motives in general and is the most influential meaning that an agent has catalyzed so far through semiosis.

2.2.3. God-term as title of titles

The principle of the summarizing term, from terministic screens to God-terms, is referred to by Burke as *entitlement*,[56] which Richard Fiordo includes in his list of the four key terms of *Kenneth Burke's semiotic* (1978: 59–62). Entitlement is a way of summarizing some structural complex with a term that is less complex and which identifies what we might call its thesis or logos. Fiordo says that "a title is created to summarize the nonverbal situation" (Fiordo 1978: 61). Titles increase in generality, similar to how a book has titles moving from parts to chapters to groups of chapters, and so forth. Eventually "we would have in effect a set of terms ever-widening in scope, until we got to the all-inclusive title that was technically the 'god-term'" for the whole in its unified order (Burke 1966b: 370). A God-term, then, is a title of titles – the maximal definer or fixer of meaning –

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54 Perhaps even corresponding to different cultural spheres.
55 Otherwise, how to explain accusations of hypocrisy?
56 Entitlement here doesn't at all mean "feeling entitled to something" or having a right to something, as in being entitled to an inheritance.

which amounts to a characterization of reality, for the order of ever-widening titles marks "off a succession of essences" – at least insofar "as the work is properly formed, and insofar as your titles are accurate" (Burke 1966b: 370). This proviso means that incompatible metaphysical characterizations of "essences" are possible; the question of a title's relationship to what it models is a separate issue and can be resolved in various ways.[57]

2.2.4. The generation of metaphysics by way of God-terms

God-terms organize meaning at the highest level. Burke especially emphasizes the formation "of metaphysics which brings its doctrines to a head in some overall title, a word for being in general, or action in general, or motion in general, or development in general, or experience in general" Burke 1945b: xxii). This overall title becomes the scene for all terms in a philosophical doctrine. They are included within that title's scope and are "distributed about this titular term in positions leading up to it and away from it" (Burke 1945b: xxii). This titular term governs over all of the structure of which it is the head.

A God-term will categorically remain even in a philosophy that denies God-terms. Burke says that there is "an implicit kind of metaphysics, that often goes by the name No Metaphysics, and aims at reduction not to an overall title but to some presumably underlying atomic constituent" (Burke 1945b: xxii). Such a constituent is a semiotic construct (as opposed to an experiential given), and framing all else in terms of that atomic constituent is a meaning choice; a metaphysical characterization with meaningful consequences has been made through motivated semiosis. Reduction does not allow us to escape the necessity of semiotic responsibility, for reduction as an entelechial operation is also a type of summarizing choice.

2.2.4.1. The motivated nature of parsimony as reduction

This type of reduction – a subtraction that results in Modernity's "No Metaphysics" – is not only able to reduce *x to y* but can also *remove x in the name of y*, a result that Burke says can be used to make major, high stakes transformations in meaning with presumably small, low stakes reductions. Burke starts with the rule of parsimony, Occam's Razor, "which plays a central role in the narrowing of circumference" (Burke 1945b: 98). When two circumferences are matched, the one with the bigger set of terms or wider scope will be held to have included more than is necessary. If we knock a glass off a table and say that it fell because of God's will, "we can quickly become parsimonious enough" to say that it fell because we bumped it; in doing so, we would greatly reduce "the scope of our motivational terminology" (Burke 1945b: 98). Making that move seems reasonable because,

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[57]   This doesn't commit us to naive relativism, but it probably does commit us to recognizing the agent's semiotic responsibility for making choices.

he says, God is an invariant term, applying across a range of different possibilities and all experience. We might add that this reduction seems justified given what was most relevant in the case of the broken glass, for we no doubt want to know what happened in the most local, immediate sense. He says it's much like someone asking for directions, and we tell them that their destination is across the street instead of saying it's "in the solar system" (Burke 1945b: 99). That seems like too much irrelevant information; it's not narrow enough.

Restricting the range of explanation, then, seems intuitively valuable here. To not make this reduction would feel absurd. Burke says that even a scientist who believes in God and begins his day with prayer for his experiments to succeed still goes to work and, at least in some fashion, conducts his experiments as if God had nothing to do with it.[58] This again seems reasonable, and the semiotic stakes seem low. Nevertheless, this choice "automatically reduces the circumference of one's terms" (Burke 1945b: 99). The elimination of Mind in this special sense from consideration can become an elimination of mind in an overall sense. The initial pursuit of this type of parsimony "can lead to terms that keep getting narrower and narrower, until every term for a state of consciousness has been replaced by a term for the *conditions contextual* to such a state" (Burke 1945b: 99, emphasis mine). That is, what initially seemed to be a simple common sense matter has revealed itself to lead to a transformation from an emphasis on agent (or which included Agent in the maximal sense) to a complete emphasis on scene that excludes the term agent altogether:

> Thereupon, lo! we shall find that we have subtly crossed from one realm into another, in having reduced our universal man to terms of the endlessly shifting historical situations that determine his behavior (Burke 1945b: 99)

Note that this sort of terministic emphasis concerns not the givens of experience but *characterizations* of those givens. Formally speaking, the exclusion of God from consideration to preserve only scenic terms may be more parsimonious (in the sense of "including fewer elements") than would be preserving both scenic and agentive terms, but in that sense a mechanistic metaphysics is more parsimonious than models or approaches (like biosemiotics) that include the agent in their considerations to preserve action. In other words, a terminology, model, or metaphysics may be more "parsimonious" in this simplistic sense, but that doesn't make it accurate – certainly not *necessary* – and its influences on meaning may be significant enough to justify reconsideration.

Parsimony in a more robust sense would recognize that a scope with a narrower circumference is only an improvement if the reduction doesn't eliminate

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58   I'd be more cautious in making this assumption without qualification. For one thing, living in full consistency with one's God-term means framing everything in relation to it. Further, a scientist could conceive of God as blessing his work in various ways: praying for God to help him avoid mistakes or for God to guide his intuitions since scientific breakthroughs often come down to intuition. Or maybe he's mystical about quantum physics and cosmic plasticity.

qualitatively important components or terms. That is, it would include *ceteris paribus* qualifications, where it reserves the reduction for cases of "all things being equal". But since the exposition of circumference makes it clear that (except in cases of perfect synonyms) no two differing terms or terminologies (signs or complex semiotic structures) will have circumferences where "all things are equal", *ceteris paribus* must always be defined *in relation to* something else – in terms of something else. Being a semiotic construct, this too is relational. Under the surface of its rhetorical tone, "all things being equal" turns out to be defined by a certain aim and according to a certain ground; therefore, parsimony actually means "all things being equal relative to certain interests, desires, goals, purposes, emphases, or God-terms taken as the scene". Parsimony thus only applies within the frame of relational viewpoints defined according to the specifics of an agent's or community's motives, for when defined in terms of semiosis as a whole, *nothing is parsimonious* when it comes to characterizing reality because of the incompatibility of the different meanings from which an agent must choose. These different meanings are not determined by the givens of experience, which are suffused with the indeterminacy that permits choice in the first place.

Put a different way, when the "law" of parsimony is defined within the scope of semiosis as a whole, parsimony simultaneously takes on a much wider *and* much narrower circumference. Its circumference becomes wider because the incompatible meaningful elements multiply. Its circumference becomes narrower because the basis for determining parsimony goes from being very general and vague, applying to a multitude of situations, to being much more determined and specific. We get a description of meaning that includes incompatibility and indeterminacy; the role of motive in determining how these will be resolved; the qualitatively distinct teleological trajectories of those meanings and their impact upon the agent's Innenwelt and the communal semiosphere; and thus the high stakes of meaning choices – including the metaphysical consequences of reducing or eliminating certain terms.

As Burke said, the elimination of the term 'God' (not just the word but the entire meaning structure) may not seem to have a big semiosic impact within certain "parsimonious" contexts, but that elimination has increasingly significant meaning effects the wider we draw the exclusion's circumference. In Burke's example, the exclusion is initially enacted in a very narrow, "mundane", low stakes context where the differences in meaning-value vary little one way or another. But its exclusion in that narrow context becomes the justification (or rationalization) for its exclusion in increasingly broader contexts where the stakes of meaning also increase; the meaning trajectory is set and deepened over time through catalysis, and the semiotic impact changes as the scope of the reduction grows. Nevertheless, because the basis of the initial decision came from a narrow, low stakes context (and because the expansion of the scope comes in small increments), the reduction/elimination itself takes on a "meaning tone" of insignificance, even though its later impact is great. Within that semiotic trajectory, though, the significance is invisible because the reduction has been encoded with a "meaning tone"

of insignificance. Thus, a metaphysics can arise "for free" from seemingly low stakes meaning choices.

In the materialist form of the reductive No Metaphysics metaphysics, "parsimony" is defined in relation to its apparent[59] God-term 'matter', which is a form of *scene*; a more detailed expression would be 'matter, which is the ontological foundation and essence of all being'. Given its ultimate primacy, 'matter' characterizes everything absolutely: the physical[60] objects around us are matter, the invisible air is matter, mind and thought are matter, all things which we have and haven't seen *are* matter in their *being*. This is an ontological position. Indeed, anything that ever was, is, or will be is matter because Matter is the God-term that defines everything else. So while this God-term defines all meaning in a "top-down" manner, this relationally grounds all meaning (all other terms) in the term 'matter', making it the defining scene or foundation for everything else.

This is why it's a *God*-term; structurally and formally it plays the same role relative to its universe of meaning as an ultimate God governs all structures under His authority. In this case, the enacting of matter as the God-term has the semiosic result of eventually conforming all meaning to that organizing principle. The subsequent evidence which materialists find "reflecting" that metaphysical characterization are but implications of that "*particular terminology in terms of which the observations [were] made*", a result not of disinterestedly inspecting bare reality and then describing its essence but rather of "the spinning out of possibilities implicit in [that] particular choice of terms" (Burke 1966b: 46). We find the reality as our God-term has made it – or remade it.

2.2.5. Attitude and its relation to God-terms

Many of our observations, therefore, don't begin with the world and then result in conclusions that the given world forces upon us. Instead, it is much as Baudrillard described when he referred to "the generation by models of a real" (Baudrillard 2004: 1). The most extreme form of this situation is found in modeling that proceeds on the basis of previous models alone rather than a non-modeled reality that serves to ground the model (Baudrillard 2004: 3).[61] The latter extreme form that is characteristic of modernity (where even science increasingly proceeds on the basis of models alone rather than empirical experience) is obviously Baudrillard's main concern, However, Baudrillard is also identifying an aspect of human

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[59] We could make a case that materialism, like all denominations of Modernism, has a more subtle God-term: Human Reason.

[60] In my usage, 'physical' and 'material' are not conceptually identical. In brief, while *physical* characterizes a given aspect of our experience, *material* (or *matter*) is a specific characterization of the physical that has arisen through semiosic modeling. The very concept of matter has a philosophical profile that I consider to be rooted in a modern terminology to which the present work is not committed.

[61] And this description is perhaps increasingly accurate in the Modern semiosphere.

experience itself: there is an active component to our modeling of reality that does not reduce to scenic factors but lies rather with the agent.

The notion that scenic factors are insufficient for resolving semiotic controversies can be found in ancient texts. For example, in the Gospel of Luke Jesus denied outright that the deciding factor in belief was sufficient evidence. He told a parable about a cruel rich man who died and, being in torment in Hades, asked Abraham to send a particular man back from the dead to warn the rich man's brothers to change their ways. The rich man claimed that "if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent"; Abraham, however, responds that if they aren't convinced by the evidence they already have, "neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:19–31, ESV). That is, even an event as remarkable as a resurrection lacks the ability to force a conclusion upon someone. Evidence[62] is not an object that corresponds univocally to a single possible meaning, such that presenting it to an agent is sufficient for securing a certain conclusion. The deciding factor ultimately rests not with some inherent causal potency of evidence but with something "internal" to the agent. We call this deciding factor *motive* in a general sense that includes aims/goals, inclinations, desires, will, terministic commitments, God-terms, and a disposition to act in a certain way – whatever can be located within the category of *purpose* as distinct from the categories act, scene, agent, and agency.

2.2.5.1. Attitude, autopoiesis, and the Agent-Purpose ratio

Burke calls the disposition to act in a certain way 'attitude', and attitude has a special relation to God-terms. Attitude can be located in both purpose and agent. Early on, Burke located attitude as being grounded within agent. He said that attitude is often "the preparation for an act", making it a kind of symbolic or "incipient act"; since "in its character as a state of mind" it "may or may not lead to an act, it is quite clearly to be classed under the head of agent" (Burke 1945b: 20). That is, he considered attitude as a quality of the agent, though in later years, he thought it might be its own sixth "pentadic" term, turning the pentad into a hexad (Overington 1977: 141). We consider both positions to be partially correct, thus explaining his ambivalence. Attitude is connected to the agent, but it does not categorically reduce to agent.

Inasmuch as attitude is a quality that has been built up in the agent through motivated semiosis, attitude is (or is the result of) a relational interchange between purpose and agent. Choice within semiosis shapes and directs what we could call the agent's character, thus establishing attitudes. The meaning trajectories of the agent's acts shape the development of that agent, for an agent isn't static but is continually self-developing. This self-development – understood fundamentally as "*self-creation, or autopoiesis*" – is an active process whereby the agent "*is constituted as a recursive hierarchy*" of scaffolded structures that have been built up through choice (Neuman 2011: 203). This development may even involve a

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[62]   In this sense, at least.

hardening of habits toward a total semiotic singularization of the agent: that is, catalysis.[63] As such, 'attitude' would be a term for a state that has arisen through a complex semiosic process maintained by an agent over time. It would thus fall along what Burke calls the "agent-purpose ratio" as a principle of determination (Burke 1945b: 15). We are therefore talking about a motivational complex which, when catalyzed through action, has a shaping impact upon the agent (or the agent's character).

Through this act, the underlying motives are catalyzed and have a shaping or reinforcing effect upon the agent's character – especially in situations of high "semiotic controversy" that are especially dense with meaning implications. The choice will set some new trajectory (or deepen the "rut" of a preexisting one) that can have a significant, long-term (or permanent) impact upon the agent and their personal world of experience (that is, *what it's like to be in the world* for them). Attitude results from a motive fixed through catalysis as a disposition of the agent to act in a certain way – which includes even "internal" action as a disposition toward certain kinds of "interpretations". It reflects a commitment to a certain motive.

Carried far enough, an attitude can become a (relatively) permanent aspect of the agent's character. We might consider whether an attitude could itself become a God-term in its own right, even though that attitude is essentially affective. If hate, for example, becomes an agent's controlling principle of action in general, we could consider hate as their God-term, at least provisionally. More properly, an attitude serving as a controlling motive is an affective state corresponding to some motive in the more proper sense, for again attitudes do not reduce entirely to purpose; nevertheless, it may indeed be possible for an attitude to so dominate a person's character and experience that other motives become a pretext for maintaining that attitude. In such cases, the attitude has become a motive in its own right. For this reason, it is proper to partially include attitude as belonging to the province of purpose; of course, inasmuch as purpose enacted over time shapes the agent, it is also proper to partially include attitude within the province of agent. This is why we actually locate attitude dynamically within the agent-purpose ratio. It is the name for a process *and* its result, which cannot be finally separated from one another.

In this way, an agent's character and personal world of experience are developed over time, shaping not only the "climate" of their innenwelt but also the manner of their influence upon the world around them. In that sense, the most important factor in establishing the meaning of the act (and the agent-as-act) is not scene but purpose. Scene is that which happens *to you*, that which is *given* in whatever sense (whether physical, biological, cultural, etc.); scene is by definition *not* something you did. It cannot be your act. To claim that "my context made me do *x*; I had no choice" is a deflection to hide the motive under which the act was done – perhaps even from the agent themselves. If there was no choice, then there

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[63] A state we might understand here as "meaning death" or even as the "spiritual death" of an agent, depending upon the extent.

was no act. Thus, this deflection is an attempt to escape responsibility for a motive by moving agency to scene; agency is made an aspect of scene and reduced to (or located within) the scope of scene's circumference. The only way this would be possible, of course, is through physical events that move the agent by "brute force".[64]

What someone would implicitly mean by saying "my context made me do *x*" is that given factors *x* and *y*, they *had* to undertake that particular act – with *x* being a scenic factor and *y* being a motivational factor or condition: *y* is a motivational condition about how they will choose to act when they encounter condition *x*. But this is another kind of substitution or reduction. Only instead of the reduction they professed to make (that of agency to scene), they're actually reducing purpose to scene – because they are so committed to motive *y* that it is functionally treated as a scenic factor.

In this way, we can say that motive contextualizes the agent, especially if it is a fully catalyzed motive. That motive becomes so defining for the agent's acts that the motive begins to contextualize acts in a sustained way; consequently, that motive becomes a fixed condition for the agent's acts themselves, making it actually an aspect of the agent overall. The final result is the formation of a motive as an agent's God-term, which becomes maximally defining for the agent and their character. A permanent motive no longer characterizes some of that agent's acts but not others; instead, the motive becomes "contextual" to the agent themselves. Multiple permanent motives are possible, but the one that holds the utmost semiosic authority is the God-term; The attitude that is a disposition toward instantiating that God-term would be the agent's most defining and influential attitude. All permanent motives factor into defining the nature of a human agent as a complex sign transformed in part by various dispositions that correlate to those motives. These dispositions can be understood as commitments to those motives – or as the outward, affective results of such commitments. Various commitments can be made, but of course the greatest defining role belongs to the God-term – whose universal structural position gives it the most influence over the teleological development of the agent themselves as a sign overall.

2.3. The human agent as a sign defined by a God-term

The idea that human agents are themselves complex signs can be traced back in semiotics to C.S. Peirce himself. This is fairly well known. Max Fisch and Christian Kloesel summarize his idea by saying that "the entire thought-life of any one person is a sign" (Fisch, Kloesel 1982: 69). John Deely[65] called this "a

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[64] "Brute force" here would also include some form of mind control where the agent is reduced to an automaton. The method is not important – only the circumventing of the agent's will.

[65] This quote from Deely is not published but comes instead from a recommendation letter written on the author's behalf.

major thesis" of Peirce. Peirce explores this theme in *Some consequences of four incapacities* (1868). He begins his line of thought by rejecting modern, Cartesian thought and its beginning point of complete doubt, taking his stance instead upon the claim that we "have no power of thinking without signs" (CP 5.265). Peirce grounds this claim in the inferential nature of human thought, which we explored with Relevance Theory, and he says that "the content of consciousness, the entire phenomenal manifestation of mind, is a sign resulting from inference" (CP 5.313). Our thoughts, conclusions, and other products of mental activity are necessarily semiotic products.[66] Peirce then proposes this question: "What distinguishes a man from a word?" (CP 5.313). His answer is that doubtless there is a distinction, for the human factors "are all exceedingly complicated in comparison"; however, "these differences are only relative" (CP 5.313). Given that human thought is (largely) a product of inference, and given that both the mind and the word share fundamental semiotic qualities, "we must conclude that the mind is a sign developing according to the laws of inference" (CP 5.313). After all, the same meaning-making activity underlies both. In fact, as C. Allen Carter has framed Burke's own views, human experience is so immersed in semiotic dynamics that "a self expressing itself in a message or a receiver rhetorically manipulated by a message are as much verbal structures as the words that pass between them" (Carter 1992: 10). This accords well with Peirce's statement that "the word or sign which man uses is the man himself" (CP 5.314).

2.3.1. Consistency in the human sign

This is a seemingly straightforward conclusion. If all thought involves (or is in) signs, then all thought is a sign. Fisch and Kloesel state it thus: "if any signs are connected, no matter how, the resulting system constitutes one sign" (Fisch, Kloesel 1982: 69) If a whole is comprised of a single element, then it is categorically unified with that element. We might draw an analogy and say that since a cloud is made up entirely of water, it's justifiable to say that a cloud *is* water. In terms of set theory, if we have a set (set *A*) comprised only of the number 1, we can also say that set *A* and the number 1 are identical. In the context of materialist metaphysics, if the ontological "bottom" of matter is material, then the most complex material object reduces to matter as well; the entire complex entity is made up of "just matter", which makes the complex whole also "just matter". According to the same principle, if the fundamental constituent of complex human thought (mind) is the sign, then that complex thought overall is also a sign.

Exploring a potential objection, Peirce says that humans make the word, and the word means nothing we did not make it mean; however, since the human "can only think by means of words or other external symbols", the word could reply, "You mean nothing which we have not taught you, and then only so far as you

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[66] After all, a mental image of a bag of gold and a bag of gold are not the same; otherwise we would all be rich (or no one would be).

address some word as the interpretant of your thought" (CP 5.313). That is, how would we possibly begin to extricate the human and the word? Where would we draw that line even if it were theoretically possible? And if we could do it and did, what would remain of the human being? Since they are not just inextricable but mutually defining, they are two "aspects" of an indivisible unity. We find a conceptual parallel with the (historically orthodox) Christian doctrine according to which the Word (Logos) of God and the Person of God are identical, with Christ Himself being the Logos: "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1: 1–5, NKJV).[67] Here the identification of the Person and that Person's Word is complete; separation is not possible. God and His Word are coextensive in being. Peirce argues that the same principle applies to the human being: the logos *is* the human; the human *is* his logos (word).

However, while Christian theology clearly influenced Peirce's thought to some degree, it's not at all clear that his concept of the inextricability of the human being and their signification is specifically derived from the Christian paradigm. This is not to say that Peirce's views weren't often metaphysically motivated. Arthur Burks, in addressing Peirce's concept of man as a sign, connects Peirce's concept to his metaphysical commitments regarding evolutionary cosmology and objective idealism – according to which the entire non-living cosmos is treated in terms of mind. Burks points to Peirce's own statements (in 6.102) that he conceives of matter as a more specialized and partly deadened form of mind (Burks 1980: 280). As Burks further notes, this in turn relates to Peirce's own concession that his thought may have been inadvertently colored by the Romantics and the transcendentalism in vogue at the time – and their correlative infatuation with Eastern mysticism. Burks' claim is explicitly that Peirce at least inherited a rhetorical tendency from such figures as Emerson, a tendency which Burks believes is responsible for making some of Peirce's ideas more difficult to grasp than others. Specifically, Burks attributes many of Peirce's key conceptual choices to the rhetorical devices of "the stretched analogy, the romanticized description, and the reality label" – the employment of which is motivated by Peirce's romanticism and metaphysical commitments (Burks 1980: 281). And according to Burks, this implicates the concept of 'man as a sign' because Peirce derived it through an overly stretched analogy.

This would be a troubling critique if our use of the 'man as sign' concept rested on this analogical foundation; it would mean that its value as a semiotic category would be relevant only in the context of some particular metaphysical viewpoint. Fortunately, when Peirce claims that a semiotic principle underlies the inability to completely divide the person and their "word" without making fundamental changes to both, he's actually identifying a general semiotic principle related to incompatibility, scaffolding, and the semiotic consistency involved therein. Indeed, Peirce says as much himself. He first tells us that "there is no element whatever

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[67] In this work, we minimally define historically orthodox Christian doctrine by alignment with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

of man's consciousness which has not something corresponding to it in the word" and that "the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought" entails "that man is a sign" (CP 5.314). He then clarifies that a key quality of a sign is consistency, "which belongs to every sign, so far as it is a sign" (CP 5.313). Here is where we see incompatibility surfacing again, for it would be impossible to talk about consistency without incompatibility. If a sign is inconsistent, then it can change. If it can change, then it can become like another sign with which it was previously incompatible – and then other signs can change to share in this likeness, too. Once all distinctions have completely disappeared, incompatibility has vanished within the relevant context and with it all possibility of meaning. Consistency must therefore be as much a condition of semiosis as incompatibility, for neither makes sense without the other. Incompatibility is unintelligible without consistency, for we could not answer, "Incompatible on what basis?" Therefore, Peirce says that "the identity of a man consists in the consistency of what he does and thinks, and *consistency* is the intellectual character of a thing; that is, is its expressing something" (CP 5.315). We could say that consistency is a thing's logos, for what we indicate by 'consistency' is that thing's identity which can serve as the basis for its being incompatible with something else. Consistency relates to its determinate character to the extent that it has one.

Peirce's statement that human identity consists in the consistency of thought and action is the anchor point for the terministic consistency that plays out in semiosis. Through the scaffolding process, the human agent establishes a consistency in thought and action that becomes more definite over time as habits are built. And the nature of action (including thought) necessarily involves motive; even the most basic biosemiosis requires motive as goal-orientation. Inasmuch as semiosis *is* action, it requires a teleological component: purpose in its minimal sense. Therefore, the consistency that is built up over time in the human agent is also a *consistency of motives*, which ultimately will involve some motive above which there is no other: that is, a God-term. This consistency of motive, thought, and action *is* that person's identity (their "intellectual character") – the basis of their "expressing something" (CP 5.315), according to which that person is defined as a sign. The agent's semiotic character becomes increasingly solidified as *habit* – as motives and sign trajectories are maintained, reinforced by the world of experience to which they have given birth.

Ultimately, the consistency of character becomes complete at death, after which there is no longer any chance to change one's semiosis or to redefine oneself by a different God-term. The semiosic solidification according to certain motives is apparently total. The semiosic artifacts the agent has produced according to that motivational principle will serve as interpretants of that agent – as will the effects those artifacts will continue to have upon the world and those who inhabit it in the future. The motivated nature of semiosis requires that the human agent emerge as a sign, not just of their choices in a simple sense but of their chosen motives, for it is motive that most properly defines the nature of the act. This sense of 'the human being is a sign' does not depend upon a specific metaphysical system nor derive from any system's mysticizing rhetoric; it is a general concept that applies

across a variety of incompatible metaphysics, and it is specifically in this sense that we employ the concept here. Additional implications may come variously within different metaphysical paradigms, but this moves the question into the realm of motive.

2.3.2. The necessity of signifying some God-term

We cannot escape the necessity of being a sign, to signify with our lives some God-term rather than another. An attempt to avoid signifying in this maximal sense necessarily fails because even *that* is an aim and, thus, a motive according to which the agent will signify – even if only in the sense of lost meaning or a purposeless existence in "a world with no fixed points" (Delsol 2003: xxx).[68] As Chantal Delsol says in her "Existence as sign" chapter of *Icarus Fallen*, the human agent's necessity to signify overall is so categorical that it still functions in negation, even if "an existence signifies nothing" and is therefore considered "no longer the sign of anything" (Delsol 2003: 4). Such a negative existential state will still signify its experiential quality and whatever motives led to that semiotic result. A sign drained of signification (of significance) doesn't become that which never was a sign but that which *no longer* is a sign. It draws the attention as if to signify, but once the attention is given, it points to nothing beyond itself. It signifies its emptiness, for to "have meaning, to signify, is to stand for something other than oneself, to establish a link with a value, an idea, an ideal beyond one-self" (Delsol 2003: 4). There is perhaps no more fundamental semiotic principle than a sign's needing to signify something other than itself in order to be a sign in the first place.

Those whose lives are pointed at a terminus other than themselves can signify in a way the self-referential cannot. Particular kinds of meaning are conferred, for example, on the lives of "those who spend their time and energy in search of a cure for a disease, or in the struggle against injustice […] The link one establishes with this value or idea confers" a meaning value that transcends the self-reference of the individual (Delsol 2003: 4). The signifying relation between the agent and its referent is a kind of channel through which the referent confers its qualities upon the agent through association – or identification, in Burke's parlance, whereby "A is *identified* with B" and becomes consubstantial with it (Burke 1952d[1950]: 20–21). One's life is "pointed" toward it and absorbs its qualities of meaning. By way of analogy, a flower turns toward the sun and absorbs from it certain qualities that semiotically shape it: the sun as "God-term" for the flower. For us, our "existence takes on meaning [only] insofar as it enters into a relationship with exterior referents that go beyond it and outlive it" (Delsol 2003: 4). The agent is never a fully closed system, for the agent is *semiosic*.

Paradoxically, Delsol says, our signifying value comes in proportion to our ability to recognize and admit that self-signification is not the highest possible

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68   Delsol, Chantal 2003. *Icarus Fallen*. Chapter: "Existence as sign".

value. We receive the vitality of meaning to the extent that we recognize our insufficiency to serve as our own God-term. If we are indeed signs to which the requisite semiotic principles apply, then we are infused with meaning "by recognizing what is worth more than" ourselves, by our "ability to organize [ourselves] around something else" (Delsol 2003: 4). As we orient our lives around a God-term, we are transformed into a sign of its existence. A particular result in meaning is created for our world of experience, as the signifying quality of "being evidence of *x*" suffuses our experience. Inasmuch as we are reflexively part of our own experience, and given the way that trajectories in meaning have consequences for subsequent semiosis, the effect upon our experience is recurrent. If one spends one's life pursuing peace or justice, they are "effectively pointing, even if it is with a trembling finger, to the existence of peace or justice as such" (Delsol 2003: 5). We become a form of evidence to others of that which we signify. The particular type of sign we become will result from how we choose to navigate indeterminacy.

Even the conclusion "there is no other meaning other than or higher than myself" is an answer to the question about meaning, and inasmuch as the given world obviously does not force such a conclusion on us, its selection must be motivated. The question then arises, "Why did this agent choose this option instead of another?" Whether or not anyone else can answer this question, it will be precisely that motive which shapes the agent according to principles of semiotic consistency. Even if we strive to keep from being a sign, striving is an action, which requires a motive of some sort. Avoiding this responsibility is impossible for us, regardless of how we feel about it or of what we decide its necessity means. We must navigate an epistemological gap that serves simultaneously as a context for making action possible and as a litmus test for revealing the nature of our personal and communal motives.

2.3.3. Our conflict with orthodox Modernism

We've so far given an account of meaning-making that puts motive as the crux point for how we resolve semiotic controversies. This would mean that we cannot look to the Scene to automatically provide us with answers to such questions. But is that truly the case? Because Modernism, which is still the world's dominant paradigm, says otherwise. Even when it finds itself confronted by indeterminacy, it persists in its belief that we can look to the Scene to answer our most high stakes questions about meaning, reality, and ontology. These two accounts are incompatible, so which is correct? We must now turn our attention to this foremost opponent of our semiotic of motives, which says that it is *motive* which determines how human agents will navigate semiotic controversies in the presence of indeterminacy – that is, freedom to *choose*.

III. THE GOD-TERM OF MODERNISM

In order to understand the Modern account of meaning, we need to understand its God-term. Given that, in Lotman's words, "meaning arises" at the intersection of "at least two chain structures" (Lotman 1977: 35), we should expect to better understand the Modern God-term when we see it in relation to a different God-term. After all, semiotic incompatibilities are most clearly visible when understood in the context of relevant alternatives. When we also consider the scene's defining role for the act, an historical component comes into play in order to understand terministic departures. The result is that understanding the Modern God-term means seeing it in relation to the dominant God-term of the preceding paradigm: Medieval Christianity. Some historical groundwork will be needed.

The discontinuity between early modernity and its preceding age might be difficult to see today, given certain similarities between them, but without qualifications, this perspective would be a mistake. Much of the apparent discontinuity between the early moderns and the "postmoderns" today is largely a terminological difference that disguises a shared God-term. And the apparent confluence between the early moderns and the Christian premoderns is largely a shared terminology that disguises different God-terms.

Put another way, the early moderns maintained many representamens from Christian premodernity, but the objects signified were altered. From the start, this impacted the related interpretants, with the effects increasing throughout history; the new God-term had a transformative effect upon terminologies (that is, "internally consistent" sign-systems) and the ways of thinking related to them. Over time, modernism's "new" God-term had an influence of making terminologies consistent with itself – until they became overtly *inconsistent* with the God-term of the preceding age. Thus, many of their similarities are only superficial correspondences of terms, which appear because the semiotic effects of modernism's God-term hadn't had sufficient time to take place in culture. The early modern lexicon still shared many entries, as it were, but the definitions had already begun to change – necessarily.

We will briefly define our use of 'Modernism', roughly demarcating its onset in relation to the the Christian Middle Ages.[69] Then, in contrast to this oppositional definition, we will explore continuities between the two periods. We will briefly look at medieval technological and social developments, identifying that the scientific and technological focuses that supposedly characterize modernity were in fact a medieval development and thus cannot be *the* defining feature of the modern age. Then we will apply this same principle to Christianity's inception, framed in relation to the ancient pagan scene from which it emerged. With those contexts defining the semiotic trajectory, we will then turn our attention more directly to the Modern God-term, exploring some of its semiotic results through the Burkean approach we laid out in the previous part of the work.

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[69] Or, as Deely prefers, the "Latin Age".

3.1. Definition of Modernism and its boundaries

The Modern Age continues unabated into the present, despite what the name 'postmodernism' suggests. With John Deely we include postmodernism[70] within the modern age itself. That 20th century trend in thought "actually shore[s] up the edifice of 'modern' ways of thinking" (Cobley 2009: 5) because postmodernism simply carries "to the extreme a *modern* proposition to an *ultramodern* position" (Cobley 2009: 7). The foundation of thought is the same for both. Postmodernism preserved what was essential to modernism; it didn't propose a return to a pre-modern worldview but rather to abandon the trappings that modernism had inconsistently retained from the Christian age. That is, postmodernism sought to follow the modern God-term more consistently, so whether it succeeded or failed to overturn orthodox Modernism, we are still left with Modernism today.

The line we provisionally set here for the definite emergence of the modern age is the Enlightenment, which might serve as Modernism's representative anecdote.[71] Some ambiguity exists, of course. The "modern" mentality was already emerging with the Renaissance. And indeed, our fuller treatment would begin with the creation of a new "secular culture [...] vigorously paralleling the ecclesiastical culture of the Church" (White, Jr. 1972: 28) – which began in the early eighth century with Charles Martel and was perfected by William the Conqueror a few hundred years later (White, Jr. 1972: 37). However, we choose the Enlightenment as a clear point of widespread change, its name expressing a modern mentality: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light".[72]

Even today, we tend to think in terms of "before and after" the Enlightenment. The very notion of being modern implies a discontinuity with the past. "*We* don't think/do/believe *that*; we're *modern*." The conception of the medieval period as the "Dark Ages" is still prevalent and popular today, despite contemporary medieval "historians [having] abandoned that phrase" (Manchester 1992: 3). As Deely makes clear, the term 'dark ages' was in use before the early modernism as designating pre-Christian Classical paganism (Deely 2001: 135, n123), having only been "reversed in the early Renaissance" (Deely 2001: 135, n123). However, for most of us today, there was only ever Dark Ages.

The Modern re-encoding was strategic and motivated. Pagan Antiquity had been considered dark in contrast to the "spread of the 'light' of the gospel" of Christ (Deely 2001: 213, n1). Due to an emerging infatuation with that pagan era, however, "Renaissance authors then rhetorically reversed" the meaning of 'dark

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[70] Our use of the terms 'postmodern' and 'postmodernism' always refer to the 20th century movement associated with authors like Foucault and Lyotard. We will not take up Deely's attempt to reclaim the term 'postmodern' from its usual meaning and apply it to something else (semiotics, in his case).

[71] 'Representative anecdote' is a Burkean term from the Grammar for "a form in conformity with which" a terminology is constructed (Burke 1945: 59). Bryan Crable says that at the broadest level, it is "understood as a way to unify otherwise-disconnected bits of discourse" (Crable 2000: 319).

[72] Isaiah 9:2, ESV.

age' to refer to the medieval period, instead characterizing pagan Antiquity as the "age of light" (Deely 2001: 213, n1). This rhetorical tactic was extremely effective, and the message is clear: the spread of Christ's influence brought darkness upon the world of light.

The opposition "we moderns versus the Dark Ages" survives today. In his popular monograph on the medieval period, *A World Lit Only by Fire*, William Manchester chooses to use the term 'Dark Ages' despite disfavor among historians precisely because it reflects his value judgment that the "brutality, ignorance, and delusions in the Middle Ages" are the key to understanding the entire age itself (Manchester 1992: xvii). This choice of emphasis defines the work at the outset and leads him to say that the Middle Ages as a whole are undeniably ugly and characterized by "an almost impenetrable mindlessness" (Manchester 1992: 3). To the question of whether the medieval world counts as a civilization, he gives the answer 'no' (Manchester 1992: 15). He even blames that epoch for the creation of hereditary monarchy (Manchester 1992: 18), even though earlier examples are easy to give.[73]

This view is a good beginning point for defining the modern period: the act of its socio-semiotic departure is partly defined by how it *perceived* what it was departing from. However, to understand the act more fully, we need to define the medieval period as well. The dominant narrative became that the modern age is defined by its science and technological focus. Manchester himself claims that the medieval period doesn't count as a proper civilization because it had not "reached a relatively high level of cultural and technological development" (Manchester 1992: 15). However, the science, technology, and secularism of modernity emerged as multi-century developments of the Middle Ages themselves.

3.2. Technological and social developments in the Middle Ages

Errors about the significance and dating of medieval technology have often come from an over-reliance on texts. Until recently, a society's written records reflected a small social subset. According to medieval historian Lynn White, Jr., for most of the Middle Ages reporting came "largely from clerical sources which naturally reflect ecclesiastical attitudes" and focuses, and the peasant was "the last to find his voice" (White, Jr. 1972: v). It would therefore be misleading to derive our picture of medieval peasant life entirely from textual sources, but this has been precisely the trend. Indeed, "the vast literature" on the Middle Ages and feudalism "has been produced chiefly by legal and constitutional historians, and therefore is almost entirely a matter of textual exegesis" (White, Jr. 1972: 2–3). Such a reliance has produced a number of illusions. What's needed is for exegesis to be supplemented "with the archaeological material which" so greatly modifies "our

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[73]   Chaldean kings and Egyptian pharaohs having not been elected officials, after all.

view of the early Middle Ages" (White, Jr. 1972: 2). Such material has made it possible to date key medieval technologies much earlier than previously claimed. Manchester himself dated the stirrup some 200 years too late.[74]

3.2.1. The stirrup and feudalism

In *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, White, Jr. credits the development of the stirrup with having the most profound influence toward the emergence of feudalism. It provided new support and stability to the rider, making possible a much more effective form of combat. Now "the rider could lay his lance at rest, held between the upper arm and the body [...] delivering the blow not with his muscles but with the combined weight of himself and his charging stallion" (White, Jr. 1972: 2). This tactic, called mounted shock combat, provided greatly increased levels of violence. All at once "a revolutionary new way of doing battle" was born, for the "stirrup thus replaced human energy with animal power", immensely increasing damage potential. This revolution happened immediately and was an initial step in what became the medieval project of harnessing non-human forces for human ends.

Mounted shock combat (and the stirrup) had a transformative effect upon the social order. The role of the cavalry greatly increased but was very expensive. One man's equipment was roughly equal in cost to "the plough-teams of at least ten peasant families" (White, Jr. 1972: 29). As a result, military service became "a matter of class. Those economically unable to fight on horseback" became a distinct agricultural, peasant class (White, Jr. 1972: 30). Further, since the primary form of wealth was land, feudal leaders began "seizing Church lands and distributing them to vassals" (White, Jr. 1972: 29). This created a new secular culture, where local feudal leaders often took precedence.[75] Feudalism was born, creating one of the conditions of Modernity: secularism.

3.2.2. The new agricultural class and power technologies

The separation of peasants into a specialized agricultural class led to important technological changes. Some of these were the heavy plough, the manorial system, the discovery of horse power through the collar harness and the nailed horseshoe, and the three-field system of crop rotation with the improved nutrition it provided. These changes were no less socially significant than the stirrup; since most people were farming peasants, any changes "affecting agriculture would necessarily modify the whole of society" (White, Jr. 1972: 39). This is precisely what happened. The Industrial Revolution was made possible by a preceding agricultural revolution, but "northern Europe from the sixth to the ninth century witnessed an earlier agricultural revolution which was equally decisive in its historical effects" (White,

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[74] Manchester 1992: 6.
[75] White, Jr. 1972: 28.

Jr. 1972: 40). These developments saved peasant labor, increased efficiency, and expanded production, giving rise to "population growth, specialization of function, urbanization, and the growth of leisure" (White, Jr. 1972: 44). This would lay the groundwork for the increased aggregation of peasants into denser communities – contributing to increased cultural activity.

The plow and manorial system changed people's mindset about nature and resources. The basis of land distribution and production "ceased to be the needs of the family and became the ability of a power-engine to till the earth" (White, Jr. 1972: 56). The perspective shifted from subsistence to surplus. The basis of production became the capability of technology to produce at a certain level; production was dependent upon power. A shift in focus occurred that correlated with a wider interest in the development of power technologies.

The horse power technologies of the collar harness and the nailed horseshoe increased not only farm production but also human mobility, allowing for the greater congregation of populations. Beginning in the eleventh century, peasants began commuting, "moving to neighbouring cities while still going out each day to their fields" (White, Jr. 1972: 67). No longer so bound to location, their work lives began to resemble modern mobility. They started gathering "into larger and larger villages" (White, Jr. 1972: 67). This urbanization led to an explosion of economic, creative, and innovative activity in the later Middle Ages. It raised the peasantry's standard of living and buying power, giving rise to a new "class of skilled artisans and merchants" who quickly gained "control of their communities and created a novel and characteristic way of life, democratic capitalism" (White, Jr. 1972: 78). In addition to landed aristocrats and peasants, a third class emerged, opening the door to a wider range of production and a new social model.

The horse as an engine was not the only power technology of concern: water, wind, steam, gravity, and magnetism were all explored. The harnessing of water power flourished. Mills were put to a wide variety of applications, ranging from reducing paint pigments to operating forge hammers. During this medieval industrial revolution, we even find the shift from reciprocating to continuous rotary motion – "the technical advance which characterizes specifically the modern age" (Mumford 1934: 80). These mechanical developments occurred in just a few hundred years.

The innovations are too numerous to recount. The Middle Ages developed into "a conscious and widespread programme designed to harness and direct" observable energies (White, Jr. 1972: 79). It was in this period that the set of attitudes and activities underlying science and technology were established. What the modern era has claimed as its distinctive trait depends "not only upon a medieval mutation in men's attitudes towards the exploitation of nature but also, to a great extent, upon specific medieval achievements" (White, Jr. 1972: 79). Indeed, Enlightenment proposals to harness natural energies and to "'thus make ourselves masters and possessors of nature'" were simply restating "a programme which had already dominated the ambitions of many generations of engineers and which had long since produced notable results" (White, Jr. 1972: 79). Modernity was a continuation in that regard.

3.2.3. Programmatic inquiry into natural forces
as Medieval characteristic

The accelerating increase in technological development and the inquiry into natural forces more properly characterizes the last half of the Middle Ages than the first modern centuries. The early modern revolution was but "the flowering of innumerable high medieval developments" (Hart 2009: 34). Indeed, "the four centuries following Leonardo […] were less technologically engaged in discovering basic principles than in elaborating and refining those established during the four centuries *before* Leonardo" (White, Jr. 1972: 129, my emphasis). In this way, the early moderns were inheritors of a developmental trajectory and mindset that characterized the Middle Ages; that means this technological shift cannot be what characterizes the modern period specifically, since the two ages shared this quality. The modern "ideological" shifts could not have made science and technology possible, for they were a later development – perhaps even an attitude of response to those very changes. What makes the two ages distinct is that the modern shift explicitly involved the choice of a new God-term – and a related worldview, ethos, and semiosphere.

Understanding the incompatibility of these two God-terms is key to understanding the incompatibility between the semiospheres. And in order to understand the ways in which these two God-terms were (are) incompatible, we need to understand what is most proper to both. As we've said, since the selection of the Modern God-term was a choice, it was also a deflection of another. That rejection defines the act as much as the selection, for scope and reduction are two aspects of the same act. The rejection in this case, of course, is the governing motive of Christianity – that which held sway for many previous centuries. Thus, to understand the act of choosing the Modern God-term, we must understand that preceding God-term and meaning structure. Extending our principle of analysis requires that we look at the departure of Christianity from its preceding context and what a Christian worldview meant before Modernism made alternations to that terminology.

3.3. The Christian God-term against
the backdrop of ancient paganism

Becoming a Christian in the early years involved a significant cultural break. For many today, baptism may seem simply part of the life they've always known. For most of the early Christians, however, "baptism was of an altogether more radical nature" that required one "to renounce a very great deal of what one had known and been to that point" – "to depart from one world, with an irrevocable finality, and to enter another" (Hart 2009: 111). At least in the first years following the apostolic period, the process leading to baptism involved commitment, instruction, and preparation.

The ritual of baptism itself was designed to create a cognitive and semiotic break with one's past pagan affiliation. Before the catechumen would descend into the water, they "would turn to face the west […], submit to a rather forcibly phrased exorcism, and then clearly renounce – indeed, revile and, quite literally, spit at – the devil and the devil's ministers" (Hart 2009: 113). The catechumen would then turn to face the east "to confess total faith in, and promise complete allegiance to, Christ" (Hart 2009: 113). In the scene of pagan worship, this act was dense with significance and "irreverent boldness: pagan temples were as a rule designed with the entrances to the east and their altars at their western ends", with Christian churches being reversed (Hart 2009: 113). For Christians, the west (where the sun sets) symbolized spiritual darkness, with the east symbolizing spiritual light and life. Thus, the act of renunciation was explicitly against the pagan altars themselves as spiritual darkness. It was ritualized blasphemy against the rejected deities, temples, and social structure of paganism.

This blasphemy was considered serious. One repudiated the gods "to whose service one had hitherto been indentured" and attributed their works to the devil and demons (Hart 2009: 113). Many people today no longer believe in such entities, but the early Christians (like ancient pagans) *did* believe; in their rejection of pagan gods as being false, they "did not necessarily understand this to mean simply that these gods were unreal" but rather that they "were deceivers" (Hart 2009: 113). It was a question not of existence but of nature.

The consignment was blasphemous precisely because the surrounding culture saw these gods as objects of adoration: "*Great* is Artemis of the Ephesians!"[76] To therefore call them "malign elemental spirits" only "masquerading as divinities" and "exploiting the human yearning for God" in order "to bind humanity in slavery to darkness, ignorance, and death" was obviously a great insult (Hart 2009: 113). For the ancient pagan, the Christians' "holy impiety" and "sacred irreverence" (Hart 2009: 125) was just impiety and irreverence, with nothing holy or sacred about it.

Indeed, blasphemy was considered dangerous by many because the ancient pagan order was not just political or religious but cosmic. It extended from the heights of divinity to the lowest rungs of human society, with "the celestial and political orders [belonging] to a single continuum" (Hart 2009: 115). The dominion that the gods held over humanity was absolute and its essentially hierarchy unalterable; human beings could never hope to rise above these superhuman "archons" or "powers of the air" (Hart 2009: 114). But neither could they hope to rise to the level of the emperor. The monarch was not only the first of humanity but also the last of the gods – he who bridges heaven and earth, as it were. Since the cosmic continuum was unified and defined in relation to gods, rebellion against any part was rebellion against the whole; "one's allegiance to one's gods was also one's

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[76] Acts 19:28. This was the chant taken up by the rioters in Ephesus, incited by a silversmith named Demetrius who made "silver shrines of Artemis" for worshipers visiting the temple (apparently a tourist trade). Demetrius stirred up the crowd against the Apostle Paul for teaching that "gods made with hands are no gods at all".

loyalty to one's nation, people, masters, and monarchs" (Hart 2009: 114). To rebel against the emperor *was* to rebel against the gods and vice-versa. Indeed, this was

> the sacred premise of the whole of Indo-European paganism: that the universe is an elaborate and complex regime, a hierarchy of power and eminence, atop which stood the Great God, and below whom, in a descending scale, stood a variety of subordinate orders, each holding a place dictated by divine necessity and fulfilling a cosmic function. (Hart 2009: 114–115)

Structurally speaking, the hierarchy was rigid. For the average person, "social fluidity was small, and social aspirations were correspondingly meager" (Hart 2009: 132). No wonder Christianity found the most traction with "the lowborn and uneducated, slaves, women and children", and so forth (Hart 2009: 115). These had much to gain from the doctrinal ethos that all are "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" and that now there is "neither Jew nor Greek", "slave nor free", "male nor female" – because all are "one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26–28, NKJV).[77] This teaching proclaims freedom in the areas of national/cultural/ethnic boundaries (Jew/Greek), socio-economic boundaries (slave/free), and divisions based on sex (male/female).

This was not to be a mere mystical principle. The New Testament makes clear that real social consequences must follow. The Epistle of James says that Christians are to show no partiality between a well dressed rich man and "a poor man in dirty clothes", lest the Christians "become judges with evil motives" (James 2:2–4, NASB). This principle must be put into practice because "faith without works is *dead*" (James 2:17, NKJV) This new cosmic order was to be thoroughly disruptive not just in doctrine but action.

This disruption was indeed felt on these levels. In the second century, Celsus railed against Christianity not just because of "the ridiculous rabble and pliable simpletons that Christianity attracted" but because of "the novel spirit of rebellion that permeated its teachings" (Hart 2009: 115). The threat was deeper than mere patrician distaste. He spoke of Christianity "as a form of sedition or rebellion" (Hart 2009: 116). It introduced chaos into the "divine constitution of the universe" and refused to sacred obligations (Hart 2009: 116). But worst of all was that Christians actually "imagined themselves somehow to have been raised above the deathless emissaries of God" and "to have been granted a kind of immediate intimacy with God himself" (Hart 2009: 116). Here the sedition is maximal and cuts all the spiritual, moral, and social ties by which the cosmic order was held together. Whether this cosmic sedition was the best or the worst thing depended upon one's perspective.

For many pagans, it entailed a threat to the universe in some capacity. Its socio-religious system was an economy whereby the rigid but precarious balance of the world was maintained "through elaborate religious and cultural transactions with death"; the gods required sacrifices, and "in return they preserved us

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[77]   The doctrine is repeated elsewhere in the New Testament: Colossians 3:11, for example.

from the very forces they personified and granted us some measure of their power" (Hart 2009: 132). These systems to preserve order were taken seriously. "Atheism" was regarded with such severity that it could "even be a capital offense"; in fact, Plato (in the tenth book of his *Laws*) presented a case "for imprisoning and, if necessary, executing those who deny the gods" (Hart 2009: 119). Regardless of the underlying motives, these values were stringently held.

The stress of needing to maintain cosmic order by human effort made fertile ground for Christianity's explosion. Part of its offering "was a liberation from spiritual anxiety" and "from the fear that the cosmic powers on high might prevent the spirit from reaching its heavenly home" after death (Hart 2009: 145). We find evidence that in late Greco-Roman paganism this order of principalities weighed heavily on people, especially on the lowborn. We see the "prevailing mood of cosmic disquiet" (Hart 2009: 134) reflected in many trends – such as the proliferation of mystery cults and sorcery arts promising to satisfy the "yearning for deliverance from the bondage of the material world and for an intimate encounter with the divine" (Hart 2009: 141). Given the often dark mythology, the brutal pantheon, the frequently violent sacral order, and the nearly total acceptance of fate,[78] it's easy to see why many were ready to reject that cosmic order.

Beyond liberation, Christianity offered divinity surpassing anything "possessed" by the emperor. In the pagan order, one's connection to the Highest God was highly mediated, fixed, and distant. Christianity, however, presented a conception of God as One who descends to the lowest human level in order to raise us up to the highest point with Himself. The Christian becomes "the temple of the Holy Spirit" of God,[79] with Christ giving them not only the right to sit with Him on His throne[80] but to possess "the morning star".[81] 'The morning star' has imperial overtones, invoking the king of Babylon who claimed, "'I will ascend into heaven" above "the stars of God" and "be like the Most High".[82] Christ, who claims to be the true Morning Star,[83] now offers the fulfillment of that imperial ambition to ascend and partake of the Most High's divinity. The ire that came from multiple Roman emperors is therefore understandable.

The union of God and humanity resulted in a different anthropology and value of the individual human as such. All were created in God's image, yes, but because Christ has given His life for all, all are of immeasurable worth. God has given His Only Begotten Son to redeem humanity from bondage, so human value then rises to take on this ultimate worth. One cannot see any person as an exploitable object and remain consistent with the Christian semiotic framework. It entails a different way of treating people than the dominant standards of that day.

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[78] Hart 2009: 131–132.
[79] 1 Corinthians 6:19, NKJV.
[80] Revelation 3:21, NKJV.
[81] Revelation 2:28, NKJV.
[82] Isaiah 14:13–14, NKJV).
[83] Revelation 22:16.

Within the ancient pagan world of meaning, however, such a value was permissible at the systemic level: some human beings were in fact more valuable than others. A slave was of course worth less than the emperor. It was acceptable in the cultural coding for more valuable people to use those of lower value for justified ends. The maximal form of this was human sacrifice, which the Roman empire actually "actively discouraged" where it could; the empire officially made such sacrifices a crime as "early as 97 B.C." (Hart 2009: 120). However, the practice continued anyway. At least "as late as the time of emperor Hadrian (A.D. 76–138)", it was still necessary to pass laws against human sacrifice – especially "to suppress certain local festal customs" (Hart 2009: 120–121).[84] Despite such laws, though, the *attitude* of human sacrifice as the consumption of human lives remained in official Roman culture. The execution of criminals was often dedicated to whatever god was related to the broken law – Hart (2009: 121) gives the example of Julius Caesar defining the execution of two mutinous soldiers as a sacrifice to Mars in 46 B.C. And of course many people were "consumed" for other reasons – such as for entertainment in the arena, whether in gladiatorial battles or execution spectacles.

An arresting example is recounted by Tacitus in A.D. 61. Pedanius Secundus was killed by one of his own slaves, bringing into effect a custom that *all* household slaves should be executed for the crime of one. In this case, that meant about 400 people. To the society's credit, there was a public outcry against so massive an execution, but the Senate ruled that "the ancient ways must be honored, if only for the example the slaughter would set" (Hart 2009: 122). Concepts of universal rights, human value, or justice do not factor here into the systematic organization of meaning. The value of some humans in this context is low enough to justify "consumption" of their lives for a higher principle. Even today in a secular modern semiotic framework, a government would have to disguise such a motive, even though it would willingly order a bomb strike on 400. Despite being several hundred years into a post-Christian trend, the common mentality still reflects the semiotic departure we see at the nascence of Christianity.

3.3.1. An explicit articulation of the Christian doctrine

To understand the Christian God-term well enough that shorthand titles (such as 'God', 'Christ', 'the Christian God and worldview', etc.) will suffice without distortion, we need a more nuanced grasp of the doctrinal perspective behind 'the gospel of Christ' as a generator of meaning; after all, many incompatible sign structures can be summarized under the term 'God'. The doctrinal core of the Christian perspective has been expressed in creedal formulations from early on. Some even predate the New Testament texts, such as the one related by Paul the Apostle in First Corinthians, which we will slightly abridge: "For I handed down

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[84] Christianity would itself later discover this lingering incompatibility in culture as the sovereignty of its God-term spread.

to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

Several such creeds can be found in the New Testament, but the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (formulated during the First and Second Ecumenical Councils) is a more extensive encoding of the Christian perspective. However, given the vicissitudes of post-Christian cultures, and given that the Creed's concepts would need to be explicated regardless, we will forgo such formulae and instead present the core perspective in a more straightforward fashion. Having laid this perspective out, we can content ourselves with a shorthand title of the Christian (premodern) God-term as we approach the modern period.

The doctrinal perspective is this: There is only one God, who alone made all that exists in our cosmos or any other; there is no preexistent material that is ontologically co-equal with Him. Furthermore, God has made all human beings with a nature like His, having (among other qualities) a capacity of knowing truth; however, all humans have betrayed the truth in pursuit of some other desire – choosing to embrace an animal likeness rather than a divine likeness. The choice to deviate from the truth in pursuit of some object of desire is the meaning of the concept of *sin*. Destructive consequences follow naturally from sin into a person's experiential world, resulting in an unstoppable cycle of further sin and damaging effects. This gives rise to spiritual death as the teleological result of the departure from truth, for separation from truth is separation from God (who is not only truth but life). Mortality is thus an iconic gateway for understanding our spiritual condition. The problem is terminal and beyond human remedy, for human solutions only anesthetize symptoms.

Our suffering is compounded by our inability to achieve our full divine potential, leaving an underlying sense of insufficiency that the objects of our desire cannot dispel. We find no satisfaction in the world for this aching hunger and often seek to avoid its implications, anesthetizing ourselves with various distractions – often those that caused the initial suffering. We dig the canal of habit deeper until it defines our experience and constricts our perspective. In seeking freedom from truth, we find our experience defined by a permeating absence of freedom. It is a prison we bring upon ourselves; the judgment is *just* precisely because it is causal, and it is *God's* judgment because He built the system of our reality to work in a certain way, built upon the unwavering foundation of truth.

However, God's response to our sin and ensuing brokenness was not condemnation but love, grief, and a desire to fix what is broken. He interacted with humanity throughout history in a particular way to build a semiotic foundation so that when the context was right (when the scene was fit for the act), God came to earth in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ – in order to reveal the true character of God, to alter the human semiosphere in a particular way, and to unify Himself with us in order to fix the brokenness from within. Yet the dividing line would again be truth, such that no one would recognize Christ unless they explicitly wanted truth at any cost. Those who did not would perceive Him wrongly; they

would "have ears but not hear. Have eyes but not see".[85] Thus, His presence would be either medicine or poison, salvation or curse.

In His presence the sick were healed, the deformed were made whole, and the dead awoke. But His presence also brought offense, especially to those who either held power or sought to gain it. It was the religious elite of His own people that strove for His execution; so zealous was their antagonism that they hounded Roman officials, stirred up mobs, hired false witnesses, and ultimately professed that they had "no king but Caesar"[86] – effectively denying God, negating the entire Hebrew theocracy, and destroying the basis of their own religious authority. However, it was not only the elite who opposed Christ, for commoners also conspired to bring about His execution. By their response to Christ, people uncovered the hidden truth about their own characters, regardless of their station.

In order to fully reveal the truth and to demonstrate God's love, Christ did not try to escape the trap laid for Him, nor did He make any defense to the Roman authorities once He was arrested. By letting people play out their motives, He revealed that the religious authorities of His people were not righteous, despite their rigorous affect, and that the empire of Rome was not just, despite its glorious façade of justice. These two modes represented the best efforts of humanity to fix itself and create its perfect world – the most rigorous religious attempt and the most rigorous political-technological attempt, respectively. When faced with the truth shown in Christ, the religious leaders responded with wrath, and despite believing that Christ was innocent, Pontius Pilate said rhetorically, "What is truth?"[87] and executed Him anyway.

Though innocent of sin or crime, Jesus was executed as a criminal among criminals, thus revealing that the law was broken. It no longer told the truth but produced contradictions and became invalid. Christ then rose from the dead, reversing the consequence for the judgment of sin. It is therefore in two senses that He broke the "law of sin and death"[88] and set human beings free from it, opening up a door to a different experiential reality. When people affirm Christ and align themselves with the meaning He presents, the choice to diverge from truth is revised, and God will then progressively revise the breakdowns in truth within us until we are fixed entirely and no lie dwells therein, thus creating unity between us and Himself. This is the choice with which we are presented in Christ: truth (and life) or something else (and death)? In the end, this will be the standard according to which our lives are measured, and God has determined that every truth will be revealed at the time He has set.

The view we have just articulated is the foundational Christian account of reality – a view that is shared by Eastern Orthodoxy, Western Catholicism, and Protestantism (excepting more recent Humanist variants of the latter). This account obviously makes definite claims about reality, truth, the world, God, and

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[85] Psalm 115:5–6, Isaiah 6: 9–10, Jeremiah 5:21, Matthew 13:14–15, Mark 8:18, etc.
[86] John 19:15
[87] John 18:38
[88] Romans 8:2

human nature. It entails a particular framework of meaning and anthropology, one that is quite direct and exclusive in many respects. That is, it stands in a specific relation of incompatibility with other accounts of reality and human nature, and in the case of Modernism, that incompatibility occurs at the most fundamental levels, semiotically speaking. The modern shift was a shift in central devotion, and its beginnings can be traced to predate even the Renaissance.

3.3.2. The medieval nascence of Modernity

Over the centuries, as Christianity moved forward through time and outward into new social contexts, the initial scene of Christianity's birth receded into obscurity. An apparent side effect of the thorough dismantling of the pagan semiosphere[89] was that later centuries lost the memory of that Antique world, its sign web, and its significance for the scene of the essential Christian act. This seems to have especially been the case in Europe.[90] While we do question the ideological characterization of the entire Middle Ages (or even Christendom) as "*the* dark age", and while much of the early modern picture about that period was false,[91] a kind of cultural disruption indeed took place, in which the memory of Pagan Antiquity faded in the western/northern European world. And this helped open the door for the early modern departure from its own past.

3.3.2.1. Feudalism and the beginnings of secularism

Part of the problem was the alterations that had begun already in the medieval period. We briefly mentioned the birth of a secular culture in feudalism and drew a line from Charles Martel to William the Conqueror.[92] Feudalism began not only by magnifying the spirit and machine of war but also by creating a system of interposing local authorities. This seemed beneficial at first since feudalism "arose as a defensive reaction to the Viking invasions of the ninth century" and to "the breakdown in central authority which they caused" (Moss 2007: 11). What it actually did, as Moss attributes to Ivan Solonevich,[93] was to democratize power – that is, to make physical power the basis of authority. Soon this began to eat "into the king's power"; feudal lords were now peasants' most immediate and true

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[89] Though not the entirety of its ethos or the human drives which gave birth to it, of course.

[90] It was less so in the Byzantine East, where the educational contact with the past didn't wane to the degree it did in the West.

[91] Beyond issues we've discussed, in *Four Age*s John Deely gives a thorough argument against the sentiment that the philosophical activity during the Middle Ages was insignificant (Deely 2001: 159–484). The scope of that discussion is far beyond our capacity here, but it is valuable reading.

[92] Or "William the Bastard" as some texts call him.

[93] Moss (2007: 13) has in mind Solonevich's 1998 *Narodnaia Monarkhia*. Moss appears to employ his own translation from Russian and only gives a page range for his quotes (270–272) rather than exact pages for each.

masters, making them only the king's subjects in name, and a "king's vassals tended to leave his service for that of the most powerful local feudal lord" (Moss 2007: 12). The ethos of this rule, of course, was also local in the sense of revolving around that local feudal lord's own interests, whatever those may be.

The political structure was not the only one affected. The "Church, too, was bound up in the feudal nexus, with churchmen having lay lords higher than themselves and vassals lower than themselves" (Moss 2007: 13). As Moss notes, this leads to what Aristeides Papadakis calls "the unrestrained secularization of the western clergy" (Papadakis 1994: 18). The ecclesiastical structure became part of the secular system and was increasingly conformed to its principles of operation. By the 10th century, "most churchmen – both high and low – had lost nearly all their independence" as "their functions everywhere became identified with those belonging to lay vassals" (Papadakis 1994: 18). Promotions to positions of ecclesiastical authority became the province of feudal rulers rather than the Church, whose role was increasingly nominal.

The function of lay investiture was precisely the conveyance of priestly authority from a feudal lord. Even though this was not technically an ecclesiastical process, "in practice the power inherent in lay investiture determined who should be ordained" (Moss 2007: 14). The feudal privatizing of power went so far as to allow the landlord to effectively own a church and its functioning: "the local parish church or the monastery, was considered the exclusive 'property'" of the landlord who built it; true, "the church could never" technically be secularized, but the priest serving there "was in practice appointed" by the feudal landlord (Papadakis 1994: 22). Of course, the basis for such investiture generally had little to do with how fit a person was for leadership from a Christian perspective – say, as laid out in 1 Timothy 3. Actually, the person was "usually an ill-trained serf from the lord's own estate" (Papadakis 1994: 22). The ecclesiastical order, therefore, began to take on feudalism's values and motives as its true authority source, even structurally speaking since under certain conditions a person could "pass the parish on to his son or heir" (Papadakis 1994: 22). The local priest was thereby made part of the feudal authority.

We see the same pattern in the upper echelons of ecclesiastical leadership. As one author writes, "The Church was in bondage to secular rulers", even when it came to popes (Kuiper 1963: 134). Generally parallel with the rise of feudalism, popes began to claim for themselves an imperial role of the "'imperator-plus-pontifex maximus'" – that is, the "role of the pagan Roman emperors" (Moss 2007: 8). Beginning in the ninth century, this involved an historical departure from the previous Christian centuries in which no single ecclesiastical authority reigned supreme. Instead, the authority had previously been divided between five patriarchates: Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. While the Patriarch of Rome was treated with a special honor, "there was no single head" to "the Body of Christ" in the human sphere because Christ is supposed to be the head (Moss 2007: 8). No centralized political power existed in the West, "for everyone accepted that in the political sphere the Eastern Emperor was the sole basileus of the whole of Christendom" with the western kings being like his sons

(Moss 2007: 8). The idea here aims for a balance of power. No Church ruler gets sole political power, yet political power is still efficiently organized under one figure; however, this figure is accountable to Christian Orthodoxy, which is not ruled over by a single human figure but stewarded by five equal seats of authority, all of which would differ somewhat in their local "human" motives. Thus, in both the political and ecclesiastical spheres, no single figure holds sovereignty over all, for Christ Himself is the true monarch and head of the body.

This balance changed beginning with "Pope Nicholas I, whose first task was to establish his supremacy over the Church in the West", and he proceeded to claim authority not only over other patriarchates but also over the emperor; Nicholas I thus laid the foundations "for the growth of papal power in the political as well as the ecclesiastical sphere" (Moss 2007: 9). This trajectory would continue until the Western Church would split from the Eastern, turning the Patriarchate of Rome into the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, the highest leader in the Western Church came to take on a role foreign to Christian organization, properly speaking, stepping outside of its structures for authority accountability. Though the role remained entirely ecclesiastical in appearance, it also mirrored the trend toward secularization happening elsewhere through feudalism. Moss refers to this kind of religious imperialism as retaking the pagan Roman model because the Pope becomes a ruler who is not accountable to any other human; indeed, the Pope can speak "ex cathedra" and have his word treated as the Word of God itself: infallible. This laid the groundwork for the modern European monarchs that would take the unification of total political and religious authority and flip the emphasis to escape the reach of the Church (indeed, even that of the Pope). All that was needed was to take the secular order that eventually suffused the semiosphere of the West and to make explicit what had long been implicit.

3.3.2.2. William the Conqueror's new order

We can see William the Conqueror as exactly this type of "modern" king, one whose rule was marked by claiming authority over all. After becoming king, the Pope wrote a letter to William demanding his fealty, and William responded, "'I have not consented to pay fealty, nor will I now'", and and he even "pointedly called Archbishop Lanfranc 'my vassal'" – that is, not 'the Pope' (Moss 2007: 91). His ruling structure combined "secular and ecclesiastical hierarchies under the king", giving credence to Moss's claim (2007: 91) that William the Conqueror marks "the day of doom of the Orthodox Christian autocracy in the West" (Moss 2007: 92). Indeed, the dates of the Norman Conquest and the date traditionally given for the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches are essentially the same: 1066 and 1054.

Through the Norman Conquest, William took the feudal model and applied its principles of power to create a "fully developed feudal organization" (White, Jr. 1972: 37). This so transformed the cultural (and visual) landscape into one of domination that William inspired "burning resentment" among those he now ruled; he

actually spent "years of ruthless oppression" putting down "the active revolts" in order to bring all of England under his power (Howarth 1978: 198). The rebellions only arose after people "discovered what he intended to do" through his extension of feudalism (Howarth 1978: 198). In fact, his rule was eventually associated with Doomsday.[94]

Before the Conquest, the number of slaves in England had been falling. This was "partly because the church on the whole encouraged owners of slaves to free them" and partly because the usual sources for slaves were waning (Howarth 1978: 17). Nevertheless, slaves did exist, and one main source for them was "punishment by the courts of law" for certain serious crimes (Howarth 1978: 17). This practice was not necessarily due to cruelty but rather to the fact that there "were very few prisons in England then, and probably none where men served long sentences" (Howarth 1978: 17).

However, this changed after William's conquest. His treatment of the people and his transformation of their world was brutal, and people hated him for it. Perhaps more than anything else "they hated the castles the Normans built all over England" (Howarth 1978: 199). Because there were no external threats, and because William had enough power to prevent little local wars, the "purpose of the castles was to protect the new landlords against their tenants" – that is, to establish domination over them (Howarth 1978: 199). These castles became signs of oppression because through them was created "what England had never had before" – namely, "a huge number of prisons" (Howarth 1978: 199). This was not merely a feudal model but the ultimate conclusion of a feudal model: that if someone rules by power alone, then one is entirely subject to their power, regardless of their motives or the way in which they will to exercise that power. One would be subject to their will, even it meant being "reduced to penury, thrown at [the ruler's] whim into dungeons, chained and manacled, blinded and castrated" – as it did under William (Howarth 1978: 199). Those "grim stone keeps were a threat to every man and woman in every part of England, and stood as symbols of bondage" (Howarth 1978: 199). The landscape and the semiosphere were changed, transformed according to implications inherent in feudalism's structure of motives.

Already by this point, what 'Christianity' had meant at its inception had changed – the man who had taken control of the Church in the West, William the Conqueror, being seen by many as the bringer of doom and perhaps even the Antichrist.[95] In some sense, the fundamental line demarcating the Modern turn had already taken place with the birth of the secularist authority departure from Christendom. In another sense, this shift laid the groundwork for the Modern departure to properly take place, for the oppression symbolized by William's order to cover the land with castles following his coronation would be the very thing that the early moderns sought to throw off in their revolution. Dressed in

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[94] The name comes from the Doomsday (or "Domesday") Book, a census so thorough it would remain unmatched in England for some 800 years.
[95] In Moss's (2007: 56) words, "The Antichrist had come to England".

the clothing of Christendom, that post-Christian order of domination would seem to call for a departure from Christianity itself, which now appeared to the early moderns as a symbol for sheer despotic power. Modernity cast its eyes in hope toward reason as a counterbalance to power, and given the recent progress regarding instrumental knowledge and technology, this hope seemed well founded to many. Unfortunately, Modernity played right into the very trajectory its sought to fight, and in this way it actually flung wide the door to the total sovereignty of power.

3.4. The Modern God-term against the backdrop of Christianity

The picture given so far is contrary to the dominant conception. We often perceive most of the early moderns as Christians. Some of them were, and many thought they were despite being at odds with Nicene orthodoxy. Many believed that they could salvage the faith by making alterations to it, but the Christianity they were rejecting had already undergone alterations at a deep semiotic level. By the early modern period, a shift had been underway for quite some time. Its God-term had not been altered explicitly, but changes had taken place which did implicitly alter its guiding principle. Structural changes had resulted in an overall meaning change – even while many of the more obvious aspects of the faith had been left mostly intact.[96] The Christian concept of the Antichrist-as-imitator of Christ/the Church finds its sense here, where a new order wearing the semiotic "clothing" of the old order succeeds much more than if it embraced outright opposition.

Since the structural changes were more difficult to see than the signs arranged as a structure, the early moderns zeroed in on key Christian doctrines and sought to revise them. In that sense, the "Antichrist-as-imitator" motive was successful in drawing criticism toward the wrong semiotic locale. Ironically, in trying to break with the immediately preceding epoch, the early moderns actually enthroned its implicit principle as an explicit God-term. Attempting to escape a paradigm, they took its principle and manifested it fully. In that sense, the Modern departure is a continuation of what they were trying to escape: the arbitrary rule of power. They envisioned the apotheosis of Human Reason as a liberation from power, but it instead eliminated from their semiosphere the possibility of anything but power. Let us now turn our attention to this properly Modern turn.

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[96] The 'filioque' controversy (whereby a small change in the wording of one phrase in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed contributed to the Great Schism) serves as a good figure for this semiotic transformation: a seemingly small alteration in the structural relation among signs in a semiotic complex results in big implications that follow and change the meaning of the whole. This is the reason behind the Church's historical seriousness in defining correct doctrine and identifying semiotic breakdowns (that is, *heresies*).

3.4.1. The sovereignty of human reason

A common theme in Modernity is the belief that one's stance is a matter of pure rationality. Even among Modern, we can find those who believe that their particular branch of the worldview is the only "rational" position. For instance, in a book championing a Modernist Randian anti-theism,[97] George Smith makes the claim that both theism and agnosticism are irrational; the only *rational* conclusion is atheism (Smith 1979: 48). Here, 'reason' itself supposedly entails a specific metaphysical/theological conclusion; the mere existence of reason automatically does the work of supporting certain views. Smith says that certain ideas *must* be supported or rejected by "any person with even a shred of respect for reason" (Smith 1979: 51). That he doesn't explain or support the origin of this *must* makes sense given the claim that reason self-evidently entails our agreement. Despite the fact that Smith is employing more rhetorical technique than argument, we consider this ultimate elevation of human reason to be *the* fundamentally Modern commitment.

It's precisely this sort of *human reason itself makes an automatic determination of truth* idea that was championed by Enlightenment era thinkers. Thomas Jefferson, who was a key patron of the "new modern light" in the burgeoning American nation, wrote that "the opinions of men and belief of men depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their minds" (Jefferson 1984: 346).[98] Strangely, Jefferson immediately follows this statement with one that seems to contradict it: "Almighty God hath created the mind free, and manifested his supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraint" (Jefferson 1984: 346). Our conclusions are determined automatically by the evidence we encounter in the world, but also the mind is free of restraints. If any contradiction exists here, Jefferson appears either unaware or unbothered by it. He confidently claims

> that truth is great and will prevail if left to herself; that she is the proper and sufficient antagonist to error, and has nothing to fear from the conflict unless by human interposition disarmed of her natural weapons, free argument and debate; errors ceasing to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them. (Jefferson 1984: 347)

In other words, if you remove any human institutions or authorities that interfere with the free operation of human reason, truth and right knowledge will be perfected as the natural result of that reason. Truth is only able to guarantee the correct knowledge, of course, because of the ultimate infallibility of human reason to naturally discern truth when distorting social influences are removed. True, he says, reason "may sometimes err. But it's [*sic*] errors are honest, solitary and short-lived"; therefore, this shouldn't deter us from our confidence in "the sufficiency

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[97] Smith, George H. 1979. *Atheism: The Case Against God*. Buffalo: Prometheus Books.
[98] This quotation comes from *A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom*, written 18 June 1779. The text (Jefferson 1984) is a large compendium containing many such small texts.

of human reason for the care of human affairs" (Jefferson 1984: 491).[99] Reason will always correct itself by its "perfect" nature, naturally resulting in right knowledge of the truth; if we ever arrive at any false conclusions, the problem lies not with human reason's ability to unambiguously determine truth but with social structures. This means that indeterminacy is not a property of the cosmos nor of human reason but of particular institutional authorities and can thus be eliminated.

Ultimate faith in human reason was certainly not a peculiarity of idealistic American revolutionaries. They simply "embraced the body of Enlightenment principles" that had already taken hold in Europe and "wrote them into law, crystallized them into institutions, and put them to work" (Commager 2000[1977]: xi). The Enlightenment conviction that it was *the age of reason* was a defining tenet, as was the commitment to the God-term 'Human Reason'. It was the age of reason in the sense that the Christian era had been the age of Christ, precisely because early modernity had "made reason into its highest authority, its final court of appeal, in all intellectual questions. Its central and characteristic principle is what we might call the sovereignty of reason" (Beiser 2005: 22–23). Christ (or, more vaguely, God) had previously been the ultimate authority in all such matters (at least officially), but for the early Enlightenment *philosophes*, that authority was 'Human Reason'. As their most fundamental principle, this meant that there was "no source of intellectual authority higher than reason" (Beiser 2005: 23). Regardless of other various stances they held, this elevation of reason was common overall.

Of course, this position resulted in a major semiotic shift because it applied to all the foundations supporting Christian doctrine and thought. After all, if human reason itself is the highest authority in the determination of truth, then neither "scripture, nor divine inspiration, nor ecclesiastical and civil tradition have the authority of reason. While reason judges the legitimacy of all these sources of authority, none of them stands in judgment of it" (Beiser 2005: 23). Such alternate authority sources were subordinated to reason, which alone would judge whether they contained any truth or value. In his *Critique of Pure Reason,* Kant defines the Enlightenment by saying, "Our age is, to a preeminent degree, the age of criticism *and to criticism everything must submit*" (Beiser 2005: 22, emphasis mine).[100] Any form of religious or civic authority (all gods and kings) must bow to the judgments of human reason, and if they fail the test, they are rejected. According to Commager (2000[1977]: 43–44), Voltaire held that "'this principle [of reason] is so constant, that it subsists despite all the passions which struggle against it'".[101] It is immovable and unchanging, like God. This foundation stone grounds

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[99] The original text is Jefferson's *Response to the Citizens of Albemarle*, originally written 12 February 1790.

[100] We will retain Beiser's English quotation of Kant as his source text is the preface from the first edition in German, taken from the 1902 *Gesammelte Schriften*. The text as documented by Beiser is found under (Kant 1902) in the references.

[101] Commager identifies this quote as coming from Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* as translated by Charles Vereker. He does not give any page numbers or any further information in the correlating footnote, however, and I was unable to verify any version of *Essai sur les moeurs* translated by Vereker. Perhaps the quote is a personal translation that appears in one of Vereker's own works, but Commager does not tell us here.

the various modern viewpoints, which are simply different ways of building upon the same foundation.[102]

The doctrine 'Human reason is the highest authority' came to define the various figures who associated themselves with early modernity, and the practical implications were not lost on them. The "philosophes, the encyclopédists, the naturalists, the explorers, the historians, the statesmen" all "acknowledged the sovereignty of Reason as their guide, and were confident" that they could therefore "penetrate to the truth about the Universe and about man, and thus solve all of those problems that pressed upon them so insistently" (Commager 2000[1977]: 43). They "recognized no bounds", "no barriers", "no limits […] to their authority" (Commager 2000[1977]: 3). They "were a fellowship engaged, so they believed, in a common enterprise and bound together by a common faith" (Commager 2000[1977]: 43). Their belief inspired a certainty that human beings could uncover all secrets and thus could make a perfect world for themselves – fixing problems and impediments found both in nature and in the human being.

3.4.1.1. An "almost uncritical faith in Progress"

This belief in the sovereignty of human reason entailed a number of other perspectives that are generally characteristic of the modern age. For one thing, "it was to science which they all pledged their allegiance and gave their devotion" (Commager 2000[1977]: 3) – because they believed that human inquiry fostered by the denizens of reason would obviously discover all truth, answer all questions, and fix all problems. Since science is an organized form of human reason that supposedly filters out all other influences, science could therefore answer all questions. The cumulative effect would clearly be a constant improvement; herein lies the "almost uncritical faith in progress" widely held by the early moderns (Commager 2000[1977]: 40). The belief in Progress was key and pertained to all areas: agriculture, industry, suffering, government, law, science, philosophy, the arts, and morals; all areas of human life would need "'no other guide than the torch of reason'" (Commager 2000[1977]: 44). Innumerable expressions of this high faith exist. Jeremy Bentham wrote that the "'age we live in is a busy age, in which knowledge is rapidly advancing towards perfection'"; Bentham didn't have only technology in mind, for "'[c]orrespondent to discovery and improvement in the natural world, is reformation in the moral'" (Commager 2000[1977]: 45). This perfection involved hopes quite religious in tenor. They saw themselves as "were a fellowship engaged, so they believed, in a common enterprise and bound together by a common faith" (Commager 2000[1977]: 43). They believed that through reason we can perfect not only our external comfort but also our moral situation.

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[102] Indeed, much of the supposedly conflicting modern philosophies come down only to an optimistic or pessimistic emphasis of the same God-term.

In this way, the moral improvement of humanity becomes in essence an extension of technology, placed within the purview of the inventive exercise of reason to bring about desired effects at will. We need not seek answers from any transcendent source nor rely on any extrahuman factor. The hope here is not merely for individual but communal perfection: the creation of Paradise on earth. At the unrestricted exercise of human reason, "'Resplendent and all-pervading TRUTH will terminate the whole in universal harmony'" (Commager 2000[1977]: 229). This harmony, of course, is to arrive within the present cosmic and social realm. Christianity had said that the perfection of human existence was possible but (1) would come only in concert with God's action and (2) would be in the context of a new heaven and earth. Modernism said that (1) it would be achieved by human agents themselves alone and (2) would take place in the world just as it is now. Thus we find the belief and dream behind the doctrine of Progress as a transformation of Christian theology: we believe that we ourselves can make the world perfect given the chance.

3.4.1.2. Transformation of Christian theology

The key to this chance, of course, is Human Reason. We emphasize *human* here even though the early moderns often invoked Reason as a general category that transcended humanity. One sees an implication toward a wider principle. In 1750, Jonathan Mayhew wrote that "even God himself 'is limited by law, by the eternal laws of truth, wisdom and equity, and the everlasting tables of Right Reason'" (Commager 2000[1977]: 216). Mayhew makes this statement as a supposedly Christian perspective, but an alteration has been made. In Christianity reason, truth, and so forth are not independent from the nature of God Himself; Jesus claimed that He and truth were identical (John 14). This is not intended as arbitrariness, as if God could alter the truth and then that would become "true" simply because He as an authority said it; the Christian understanding is that truth (etc.) and God's nature are intertwined.

Now, however, law and truth are principles that exist independently of God, giving rise to the possible implication that they are themselves authorities which God Himself must obey. In some sense, Christian theological terms have been maintained, but the framework has been altered so that a new emphasis is possible: human reason as independent of and superior to God. This occurs because (1) if Reason is a general principle which God's authority must obey, and (2) if Reason as a principle or reality is precisely what human reason has access to (or is identical with, at least under certain conditions), then (3) human reason can transcend God and His authority – at least in the sense of operating independently of the exercise of God's authority. Reason becomes an independent principle that just happens to elevate the authority of human reason.

3.4.1.3. Alteration of the Christian Logos

Yet despite ways in which this conception of Reason diverged from Christian theology, Modern thought maintained much of that theological origin. Moderns affirmed a "principle that Laws of Nature presided over and regulated 'the great machine and structure of the universe'" – and, consequently, that we can understand and apply natural laws because the cosmos is itself *reasonable* (Commager 2000[1977]: 39). This principle supported the modern preoccupation with the Medieval search for "general principles and authoritative laws" (Commager 2000[1977]: 53). Obviously, for this search to be possible, then the cosmos and all it contains must be understandable. There must be an ontological correlation of intelligibility between the universe and the human mind, which the early moderns often treated as a kind of universal rationality.

Here was a principle they had inherited most directly from the Christian worldview. Christian theology held that the cosmos was formed according to a rational blueprint – that is, according to a Logos. This was, of course, a conception that Christians partly shared with pagan Greek philosophy, but the Gospel of John clarifies that this Logos is not an impersonal principle; it's to be fully identified with the personal God – specifically, with Jesus Christ Himself. In English Bibles, 'Logos' is usually translated as 'Word', but it carries a deeper nexus of conceptual ties, partly drawn from Greek philosophical thought. The Logos is the logic underlying the universe, a rational pattern that runs throughout its entirety. John expresses it this way:

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made [came into being] through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.. (John 1:1–5, 9, RSV)

The Logos is a rational pattern underlying the cosmos precisely because it was the blueprint according to which it was made in the first place. It is an underlying Logic in the fullest sense – both for its initial formation and a rule for its development. Furthermore, this Logos is identified with God Himself: God is so completely identified with truth that He IS His Word. Thus, the Word and the Father of that Word are ontologically unified.

This makes the cosmos not only inherently significant but inherently intelligible to human beings. Paul writes that humans are accountable for their response to God because "since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:18–20, RSV). The cosmos bears a semiotic relation to God and the nature of His creative act, and this concept precedes Paul. The Psalmist David writes that the visible "heavens declare the glory of God", and this significance is semiotically universal, for there "is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1–3, NKJV). The intelligibility of the cosmos correlates to a general human semiosic faculty. Therefore, not only is there an underlying order to the cosmos but that order is intelligible to human beings as such.

The early moderns maintained these two aspects of the Logos but made a key alteration of treating the Logos as impersonal. The Law of Reason is an impersonal category that limits God; it's treated abstractly as other than God, though the nuances of what this means are often undefined. Where does this Reason come from if it's something impersonal that limits God? Where can we find, identify, or locate this Reason? Since our only visible witness of it is of human reason, this mystical generality reveals nothing "concrete" but human reason beneath its theological dressing. The "divinized" treatment of reason always included humanity, it never meant *specifically* 'God's reason', and when early modern said that reason was sufficient for determining truth and guiding human affairs, they of course meant an ideal form of *human* reason.[103] If God's reason were guiding human reason, we would still be talking about the Holy Spirit's leading, but such revelation was subjected to reason, which excludes extra-human reason. Thus, even when 'reason' was vaguely mystified, it functionally reduced to *human* reason. The theological term only served to elevate 'human reason' to a theo-semiotic status: thus Human Reason was the God-term.

3.4.1.4. Alteration of the term 'God'

Indeed, the term 'God' as it came to be used in modernity was ultimately a mere nominalization – a redundant sign that would eventually begin to disintegrate due to its semiotic irrelevance and to its inconsistency with modernity's God-term. After all, when you remove all revelation, church doctrine, historical tradition, and the Bible as possible authority sources, what options are left? A result of making human reason the God-term is that "Man" becomes the true authority, not God. God's authority can't conflict with humanity's because then human reason can't be sovereign. Either human reason is sovereign, or God is; when a conflict of incompatibility arises, one will necessarily win out, and *that* one is the true sovereign term. And if no cases of incompatibility arise between the terms 'Human Reason' and 'God/God's Reason', in what sense would we even be talking about separate terms? Considered as two sets, their identical qualities and entailments make them identical sets that we've simply given two names. If we abide by the convention of Occam's Razor, one will be eliminated, which is precisely what eventually happened in modernity.

Ultimately, the only way for God's authority to be identified in a way not identical to the individual's reason/judgment is through sources the Enlightenment rejected. For a person completely committed to the God-term 'Human Reason', even a shocking visionary experience or an event of supernatural special revelation would have no capacity to compete with human reason – as a matter of category, because 'Divine revelation' for them was not a possible category. An experience of encountering a judgment from God that differs from one's own would have to be excluded by definition and reinterpreted, even if it meant questioning one's own sanity; in such a case, the undermining of one's sanity wouldn't

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[103] Whether they always knew it or not.

necessarily call for reformulation of holding human reason as sovereign, for the doctrine rests on humanity categorically and denies revelation categorically to such a degree that it trumps personal experience. Therefore, for a person *completely* committed to that God-term and all it entails, no experience of any kind is sufficient to dislodge it or provide a recognizable counterexample. An experience of this kind would not be reproducible at will, and if it *was* reproducible, it would become naturalized. This means that 'God' would become reduced to Nature – that is, to Scene.

Furthermore, without an authority source beyond human reason, a case of special revelation could only be judged as real by that reason, which reduces the revelation to reason's circumference. Therefore, human reason remains sovereign even if we try to include other authority sources. Since human reason has been made the God-term, it resists any possible coequal or superior term for as long as it is maintained. This is a semiotic entailment; the ultimate term either is ultimate or it isn't. Thus, 'Human Reason' becomes the universal scene for all semiosis and subsequent scaffold-building.

As such, to maintain the term 'God' requires either that one exclude God from any actual contact with the cosmos (Deism) or that one naturalize the concept of God, making it functionally identical with nature (various versions of pantheism). This is precisely what we see in those early moderns who adopted the modern God-term while trying to still maintain the term 'God'. They had understandable reasons for wanting to include God as a structural element – especially for upholding cherished moral values. We see an example of this in "Kant's idea of moral faith, according to which belief in a supernatural God is justified on moral grounds" – which at one point Hegel thought was an important enough reason to support belief in such a God, though he would later embrace a pantheistic position instead (Beiser 2005: 46). Thus, a belief in a supernatural God was not initially seen as logically incompatible with modern commitments and even as desirable or necessary for deriving/supporting certain moral positions.

Nevertheless, the justifications for such positions had to be entirely available to and dependent upon human reason. Many of the early moderns continued to desire religion and never questioned its value; they simply required it to stand on the authority of reason. They desired to maintain religion as a component of their meaning system, but it was still secondary to human reason. They saw their need for an option other than Christianity – one resting solely on the authority of reason – which led them to the construction of "a natural religion and morality" (Beiser 2005: 25). Their belief in this "natural religion" was a *consequence* of their faith in reason. Since "natural reason alone – independent of revelation – had the power to demonstrate all our fundamental moral and religious beliefs", human reason must be able to generate those beliefs (Beiser 2005: 25–26). Such a religion and morality would need to hold for everyone equally; given the freedom to follow their own rationality, all would come to the same conclusions, resulting in a universal religion and moral standard. Utopia would inevitably follow. These beliefs may seem incredible now in light of every failed modern utopia, but optimism was high at the outset.

3.4.2. First cracks in the new Modern faith:
politics and philosophy

A number of developments, however, began to shake people's faith in these doctrines. Attempts to employ them in practical political settings in Europe did not produce the expected results. The failure of the French Revolution was a crisis for the faith in reason; this revolution had "seemed to be the apotheosis of the Enlightenment. All of society and the state were to be reconstructed according to rational principles", sweeping away all laws that "failed to pass the test of reason" (Beiser 2005: 31). The Enlightenment *philosophes* expected a naturally arriving utopia, for "the great promise of Enlightenment [was] that if we only follow reason in social and political life there will be heaven on earth" (Beiser 2005: 31). In the wake of the French Revolution, though, "[r]ather than heaven, there was hell" (Beiser 2005: 31). What was initially a hopeful test case became a rather shocking counterexample. The more people increased their efforts to apply the principles of reason to the governing structure of France, the more it devolved into violence and chaos.

The early moderns responded in a variety of ways; one result was the so-called theory-practice debate. Some claimed that there is an inherent gap between theoretical principles and the ability to make them work in practical settings. Given the opportunity to apply such principles to the state, "people still do not *act* according to them", choosing instead to follow passion, self-interest, or tradition (Beiser 2005: 31). This debate resulted in two different positions: rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism held that "practice should follow theory because the principles of morality, which are determined by pure reason, are also binding in politics"; empiricism, on the other hand, held that theory should be derived from practice "because the principles of reason are too formal to have any bearing on constitution or policy", so "we need to consult experience" instead (Beiser 2005: 32–33). This parallels a debate about logic itself – do the rules of logic themselves give us useful empirical knowledge about the world (soundness), or are they restricted to the formal realm (validity)?

3.4.2.1. Modern deism's self-negation

Thus, disappointing political realities were not the only challenge to the Enlightenment faith. In the realm of ideas, problems began to arise from the modern "terminology" itself. For one thing, the attempt to maintain God as a useful semiotic unit turned out to be complicated. While the solutions of deism and pantheism seemed promising, both eventually sort of wrote themselves out of existence – precisely because 'God' as a generalized semiotic unit (though pragmatically valuable) revealed an incompatibility with 'Human Reason' as a God-term. In the first place, 'God' is "inherently" a God-term due to its denotative content. 'God' deprived of a God-term function is, in a sense, already at odds with itself; it ceases "to mean what it means" and becomes a nominalization or takes on a nominalistic quality.

Accordingly, 'God' became a redundancy in both deistic and pantheistic contexts. In deism, we still have a supernatural God, but he no longer has contact with the cosmos other than traces he left behind (that is, "natural revelation"). The deists rejected special revelation and actually launched "ceaseless attacks upon the Scriptures and the miracles" central to Christianity (Commager 2000[1977]: 49). They maintained instead a view of "God as a Master Clockmaker" who wound up the cosmos, as it were, and then left it to run according to its natural principles (Commager 2000[1977]: 51). In a way, deism's God is "a kind of cosmic principle" (Commager 2000[1977]: 77). This type of deity is abstract and, categorically, can only be known in the most general way as an inference from observation or reason. Deism rested heavily on grounds (such as the ontological argument for God's existence) that were inclined toward general principles, not the specific (and sometimes shocking) characteristics articulated by Christianity.

Of course, without an authority beyond the individual human judgment, even the deist claim that we can know general characteristics about God becomes subject to indeterminacy. Once (special) revelation is removed, the universal ground for the belief that God can be known from the cosmos disappears; consulting human reason alone certainly doesn't result in universal deist convictions. True, a deist perspective can be maintained today; a somewhat famous case in recent philosophical history is Antony Flew, who traded in atheism for a deist position in 2004[104] (Baggett 2009: 149). Nevertheless, maintaining a deist position while holding to the strong Enlightenment commitments about human reason seems difficult – even impossible if one consistently follows out the belief that the free exercise of reason leads all to the same conclusion. If reason doesn't entail deism, and if special revelation is impossible, what basis is left for deism – especially after its cherished ontological argument was seen to also be subject to indeterminacy? We must either give up the ultimate sovereignty of human reason to universally determine truth, or we must give up deism. Despite deism's early popularity, mainstream Modernity has long since abandoned that viewpoint.

3.4.2.2. The "Pantheist Controversy"

If deism separated God from nature, the philosophical trend of pantheism conflated the two. Modern pantheism had perhaps an even greater influence than deism in reducing God as Agent to cosmos as Scene – and eventually of Agent-in-general to Scene-in-general, which became a defining feature of Modernity. Indeed, it was here that another major challenge to the modern faith in reason was raised, related to the so-called Pantheist Controversy.

The challenge came from F.H. Jacobi in relation to faith in natural religion and morality. In 1786 Jacobi "argued that reason – if it is only thorough, honest and consistent – does not support but undermines morality and religion" (Beiser 2005: 26). His attack made a big impact and sent many scrambling. Jacobi identified

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[104] Flew may have been influenced by a series of philosophical interchanges he had with Gary Habermas, though Habermas is not a deist.

"rationalism with a complete scientific naturalism" and "with the mechanistic paradigm of explanation" – a position that obviously became influential (Beiser 2005: 26). For Jacobi, the basis was Spinoza, who had identified "God with the infinitude of nature" (Beiser 2005: 44), "[banishing] final causes and [holding] that everything in nature happens according to mechanical laws" (Beiser 2005: 26). Spinoza assumed a principle of sufficient reason, and if we follow that principle, then events which occur could not have occurred otherwise. Jacobi says that if this principle always holds, "then there cannot be (1) a first cause of the universe, a God who freely creates it, and (2) freedom, the power of doing otherwise" (Beiser 2005: 26). Both cannot be true, so only one must be. If the first is true, "Spinozism leads to atheism"; if the second is true, "it ends in fatalism" (Beiser 2005: 26). Either is bad for the prospect of natural religion.

The Enlightenment with a meaning crisis. The "dramatic dilemma" was this: "either a rational atheism and fatalism or an irrational leap of faith"; no middle path was possible that could provide a "rational justification of our most important moral and religious beliefs" (Beiser 2005: 27). Either we reject those beliefs, or we simply assert them without "rational justification". The dilemma is clear; the Enlightenment wanted to retain both the ultimate commitment to human reason *and* certain moral convictions maintained from the preceding age. Jacobi, however, said that when Spinoza pushed the Enlightenment "principle to its ultimate conclusion", it revealed the impossibility of justifying moral convictions outside of a fiat of will – or power move (Beiser 2005: 26). Many figures of that generation were troubled, including Hegel, who "was deeply disturbed by Jacobi's challenge to the Enlightenment"; indeed, the "chief purpose of Hegel's philosophy was to find a middle path between the horns of Jacobi's dilemma" (Beiser 2005: 27). The impact of this critique in its having set the course for one of Modernity's most influential philosophers.

The conflict existed at a deep semiotic level, for the moderns had inherited a notion of God that clashed with their core viewpoint. Making God fit with the modern terminology was so difficult that a few people actually embraced explicitly atheistic positions. For instance, in his 1741 *Divinity of Reason*, "Johan Edelmann of Jena had proclaimed the falseness of God and the Scriptures", and the Baron d'Holbach reduced everything to matter and motion, saying that all gods are created through ignorance and fear and are then co-opted by power structures in order to bring about human ends through manipulation (Commager 2000[1977]: 49–50). This uncommon kind of explicit, conscious atheism seems presciently modern now, and it was arrived at by following out widely held beliefs that were implicitly atheistic. Nevertheless, while many people were happy to give up orthodox Christian views, they were much less willing to give up belief in God or faith in every form. And some type of pantheistic revision of God was a popular attempt at a solution to the conflict.

This was precisely Hegel's tactic. Like Jacobi, he himself drew key concepts from Spinoza, whose pantheism "seemed to resolve the conflict between reason and faith" that had taken place "throughout the Enlightenment" (Beiser 2005: 44).

He thus sought to resolve through Spinoza the problem Jacobi had raised through Spinoza. Hegel was inclined toward pantheism not just because it seemed to unify faith and reason but also because for him it restored a divine meaning to the cosmos. Deism was inferior because its separation of God from creation meant that "the natural realm lost its divine significance" (Beiser 2005: 44). Hegel's romantic conception wanted to preserve the notions of God and the highest conceivable good but to interpret those notions "in immanent terms" that identified God with "the universe as a whole" (Beiser 2005: 44). The conception of God is not just entirely immanent but also ultimately identical with the cosmos.

This interpretation of God seemed promising to many people because "If God were the same as 'the one and all' – if the divine were the creative force of nature, the dynamic unity behind all its laws – then there would be no reason to oppose reason and faith" (Beiser 2005: 45). This was cause for optimism, it seemed. Rather than God falling outside of Modernity's *de facto* purview, "the objects of religion and science would be one and the same", meaning that God could now be said to be the proper focus of Modernism (Beiser 2005: 45). Committed moderns of a theological bent had been anxious to establish this result, and because pantheism posed no threat to "Reason", it alone seemed not to be in "danger of such obsolescence" as orthodox Christianity and deism faced in Modernity (Beiser 2005: 45). Even better, Spinozist pantheism appealed to multiple groups, including certain "radical Protestants"[105] drawn to it for both religious and political motives.

The problem, though, is that it doesn't take long to realize that in this schema 'God' and 'Cosmos/Nature/Universe' describe the same set. 'Nature' as a term already includes the cosmos in its entirety, including all its laws and forces. If one's conception of nature includes a notion of self-contained laws, then adding the term 'God' appears superfluous and describes nothing functionally new. Even if the term 'God' recharacterizes the cosmos and results in useful semiotic consequences, one's affirmation of this characterization is still entirely dependent upon one's desire or will to embrace it; it's not an unavoidable entailment from cosmic *givens*. If anything, the Modern bias is actually toward mechanism and a reduction of terms in the name of parsimony. Over time, this reduction is precisely what happened: where 'God' applied to the same set as 'Nature', the term 'God' was seen as terminologically redundant and was eliminated as contributing nothing functional.

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[105] We could argue that Protestant support suffered from too narrow a focus. If indeed these radical Protestants held to a Christian theology that was orthodox in the historical sense of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, then their focus on the freedom it provided them from certain authorities was a myopic focus that traded in key Christian commitments for political exigency. Regardless, the term "radical Protestants" is Beiser's characterization (2005: 45).

3.4.3. The reduction of God to Scene

This redundancy makes sense when we recognize that 'God' as an Agent term was reduced to a Scenic term: 'Nature' (or cosmos, or universe). Even if we hold a form of pantheism that tries to conceive of nature as a conscious agent, we do not experience the cosmos that way. We primarily experience it as the surrounding world, as context, as scene – a setting which sustains agents and permits their action. To speak in a pantheistic way is to speak most directly of the scene as simply imbued with an additional (perhaps mysticized) meaning where we speak of the scene *as if* it were an agent. Yet it remains for us scene and not agent, for we do not attribute intention to the occurrences of physics, especially in Modernity. A rock fell on my head; it didn't attack me, and I wouldn't take it to court.[106]

This reduction of God to scenic terms was an implication inherent in the modern choice of terminology as defined by the preceding cultural context. When we replace 'God' with 'Human Reason' as our ultimate term, we make the semiotic foundation of our meaning system the human being itself. The center moves from 'God' to 'Man'. However, our acts and semiotic departures are extensively defined by our living context, and 'man' (though an agent) was partly a scenic term in the Christian meaning system. The Christian God is not just ultimate Agent but also ultimate Scene. God is the sole cause for both humanity and all the cosmos;[107] everything *but* God has come into being and still depends upon Him entirely for its continued existence in whatever capacity. As such, God is the sole ultimate context for both humans and the cosmos. He is the agent who is the scene for all other agents and scenes. In that sense, we human beings participate in a shared ontology with the cosmos; while we share an aspect of God's nature that the rest of the cosmos does not, we also share an aspect of the cosmos's nature that is distinct from God: we have *come into being*, our existence is dependent upon God and can cease to be. That means that while we humans are agents, we are also part of the cosmic scene in a way that God is not, for God is the Scene of the scene. 'Man' in that sense is a scenic term. However, in the Christian world of meaning, 'Man' does not *reduce* to a scenic term, not only because he *is* an agent but also because he is *grounded* in an ultimate Agent whose nature he partially shares.

Against this background, when God is excluded from the semiotic picture to leave only 'Nature', 'Man' continues to be an agent, but he reduces to Scene in an ultimate sense. At the *foundation* of our being, humanity can find only scene and not agent. In a context where God is removed, all that is left to ultimately define our nature as scene, for we are a part of the cosmos and have no being or existence outside of or beyond it. We cannot survive the deletion of the cosmos because our being is wholly contained within it. In the meaning structure where no God (no Agent) transcends the cosmos as scene, nothing but scene lies at our ontological foundation. Even considered within the frame of an evolutionary

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[106] Even if I did, what court would hear the case?
[107] Whether universe or multiverse.

atheism, humanity is fundamentally identical with our cosmic scene; we are simply a different manifestation of it.

So whether we approach the human being in relation to God or in total exclusion of God, we get the same result: the human being is part of the cosmic scene. What differs in the two overall schemas is whether or not humans fully reduce to scene. In the first framework, we are ultimately signs of both Scene and Agent. In the second framework, we are ultimately only signs of Scene, not of Agent. Thus, the modern shift in God-term involves an increased focus upon scene, for the balance between Agentive and Scenic definitions of the world shifts in favor of scenic terminology: at bottom we are more scene than agent; we can cease to be agent (at death), but we cannot cease to be part of the scene. Thus, the Scene-Agent ratio is asymmetrical in circumferences that exclude God but symmetrical in those that include God – that is, in which 'God' is the God-term.

Note that this pentadic symmetry only obtains in the case where the shorthand 'God' indicates an Agent – a categorically personal, conscious Being who does not reduce to scene. This is in distinction to, say, the Neoplatonist conception of "God" as "something" that cannot be said to posses any qualities or characteristics. *À la* Plotinus, "God" or the One cannot be said to have "something in common between it" and the totality of (finite) beings; indeed, "no common term whatsoever, including 'being,' can embrace both the One and its products" (Perl 2007: 11). For Pseudo-Dionysius,[108] this means we can't even affirm God's existence. To say God exists "still treats God as some distinct conceptual object and so fails truly to intend God at all" – meaning that in this schema "it is no more correct to say 'God is not' than to say 'God is'" (Perl 2007: 15). Such a Neoplatonist "concept" of God is incompatible with the sign value that God is an Agent – and is thus effectively identical with any exclusion of God-as-Agent from the defining circumference, even though Perl denies that affirming atheism could be any more accurate than affirming theism. Pentadically speaking, the key point is the inclusion or exclusion of the term-function 'agent'.

The Scene-Agent ratio in the definition of the human being changes if God is not personal/conscious or does not transcend the cosmos, for He thus ceases to be a maximal agent or maximal scene, respectively. When we make 'Human Reason' the God-term of some frame, the shift away from symmetry in the Scene-Agent ratio means a decrease in Agent/agentive terms within that frame. The new term suffuses the corresponding world of meaning. Modernity takes on an increasing scene-bias as it spins out its terminology and builds a world according to it. What begins as an increased emphasis on the human agent becomes over time both a separation of the agent from the scene and an overall shift in scene as the ground or definition for all meaning (and the human being in particular). The eventual result is today's reductive terminologies: mind is *nothing but* matter, life is *nothing but* chemistry, and so forth.

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[108] Whom Deely says was "most probably a Syrian desert monk of the sixth century" (Deely 2001: 132).

In consistency with the modern departure point, we see a paradoxical shift in focus to prioritize scene *as well as* the human agent. Yet the two strangely end up divided from one another, even as they both increase in prominence. It's curious that the early moderns often complained about the division of humanity from nature when we can justifiably locate the source of that increased division within the modern shift in focus itself – defined here as replacing 'God' with 'Man' as the semiotic center and simultaneously making the scene the primary pentadic term. Paradoxically, as Modernism makes the human agent the focus and ultimate ground of motives, the scene becomes the ultimate pentadic focus and the universal circumference. As Man makes himself the semiotic cornerstone, he disappears before himself; the substance (both that of himself and of his scene) disappears when made the focal point. As Chantal Delsol said,[109] a sign ceases to signify when it only points to itself. This is what Burke called the paradox of substance. This ambiguity repeats throughout the Modern construct and cannot be resolved or reduced away while remaining consistent with Modernism's terminology. Modernity, as it were, deconstructs itself through its confrontation with the paradox of substance. We turn now to this problem.

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[109] As mentioned, see page 4 of Delsol 2003, though the thought is developed throughout the first chapter: 4–14.

IV. THE PARADOX OF SUBSTANCE

We can begin our treatment of this paradox with definition itself.[110] We discussed definition as systematic placement throughout Chapter 2,[111] which treated different instantiations of what Burke calls ways of placement. "Ways of placement" emphasizes that definitions must be chosen, could have been otherwise, and are motivated. But when it comes to the paradox of substance, the emphasis is slightly different. Definition actually involves a negative mode of thought, and our attempts to penetrate essence with our understanding actually defer that essence.

By "negative mode", we simply mean that definition by its nature requires a departure from the defined object. In order to define, to "tell what a thing is, you place it in terms of something else" (Burke 1945b: 24). Otherwise it wouldn't be a definition but a tautology: 'A tree is a tree' – '*A* is *A*'. Strictly speaking, such a statement tells us nothing beyond formal equivalence unless predefined definitions operate implicitly in the background, in which case the same issue applies: the definitions that do more than assert the name 'tree' add meaning content from some origin besides the syntactical unit 'tree'. 'Tree' is made the summarizing title for other elements – that is, elements other than 'tree'. To say 'Tree is tall', 'Tree is a plant', 'Tree is soda pop', etc. all feature some other word besides 'tree' – regardless of whether such definitions are considered true statements. The situation is formal and thus the same if we use symbols rather than words: '*A* is *A*' vs '*A* is *B*', '*A* is +'. or '*a* = *x*'.

The other elements mark the boundaries of the defined term. They establish its "contextual reference" (Burke 1945b: 24). This is contained within not just the concept but the function of definition. Without some additional contextual reference, a term has no value or meaning beyond its formal qualities that distinguish it from other structures. This is what Wittgenstein means when he says that it's "the peculiar mark of logical propositions that one can recognize that they are true from the symbol alone" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.113). Truth here means the sense used in logic, where 'True' means a correctly functioning processing of inputs. As Juri Lotman said, in the formula 'a = b + c', "'a' has definite content" regardless of any "connection with systems outside the equation" (Lotman 1977: 35–36). We can certainly "ascribe an external meaning to 'a'", of course, "but if we do not make this substitution, these signs will still have meaning" (Lotman 1977: 36). But it is meaning only in the formal sense whereby the different structures make themselves manifest to us, so to speak; our grasp of this "meaning" is immediate and intuitive. That is why Wittgenstein refers to it as *a priori*:[112] as an experiential given, it is not susceptible to further analysis. Thus, in order to

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[110] "Paradox of Substance" is the first section title of the Grammar's second chapter ("Antinomies of Definition").
[111] Refer especially to sections 2.1.3; 2.1.3.2; and 2.1.4.
[112] Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.35.

give an analysis of some experienced object, we must define its contextual reference through that which it is not.

However, this results in a strange but inevitable situation where we must define what a thing is by saying what it is not. It's as if in the very act of affirming its being, we deny its being, with the paradoxical implication of saying that the thing's proper ontological nature is that it is *not*. Of course, this is not at all what we usually mean, for our recognition of its being is automatic and immediate; we presuppose the affirmation of its existence in whatever mode by seeking to define it in the first place. Behind the pursuit of definition seems to be the thought process, "It *is*, but *what* is it?" Properly speaking, we recognize the object before us as present and "complete" entity with defined boundaries, but as we seek to know it and plumb its ontological depths, that complete entity recedes from us, and we are never able to encapsulate its nature or being. This is the case with both abstract and concrete objects of experience: we divide the sign but don't find its logos; we divide the rock but don't find the material bottom.

We have this very result in definition. To an "immediate" apprehension of some object we've encountered within experience, we give a name. In order to define that object, however, we intend to do more than simply name it, which means framing it in terms of other objects, giving rise to a more complex semiotic structure. But these other objects must be defined as well and in the same way, so that the hallway of description extends further away from us. We never end up approaching the ontological core we sought to define, and we end up chasing names, as it were. But as signs, they are themselves something other than what they signify, and the "real presence" we perceive recedes from us as we try to grasp it. This is the problem or paradox of substance: not just that definition is itself a deflection of the essence we desire to pin down but that the objects of our experience recede into ontological mist when we make them our analytical focal point. We clearly perceive them, but like a mirage, they disappear as we turn our faculty of understanding upon them in order to know what they are *in themselves*.

Burke says that even our notion of substance contains this problem. He gives documented definitions of 'substance' as "the characteristic and essential components of anything; the main part; essential import" (Burke 1945b: 21–22). 'Substance', he says, is unquestionably "the most prominent philosophic member" of the family of "Stance" terms that "derive from a concept of place, or placement" (Burke 1945b: 21).[113] Thus, substance is a scenic term, which means context for something else. A person's or thing's "sub-stance would be something that stands beneath or supports" it (Burke 1945b: 22). Burke notes that the corresponding Greek word is hypostasis, which also means a standing under; the term is commonly used in reference to the doctrine of the Trinity as "hypostatic union", where 'hypostasis' indicates "a Person of the Trinity" – with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being distinct hypostases of the one God (Burke 1945b: 23). Hypostasis here means that "there is in God genuine diversity as well as specific unity"; there is

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[113] Or it was, he says, until "John Locke greatly impaired its prestige, so that many thinkers today explicitly banish the term from their vocabularies" (Burke 1945b: 21).

"unity in essence", but the "distinction between the three persons [hypostases] is […] an eternal distinction existing within the nature of God himself" (Ware 1986: 37–38). That is, the difference between them is not accidental in the Aristotelian sense.

Deely positions substance as a technical Aristotelian term for addressing different kinds of change. The substance is "the individual being or existent" that can undergo change while remaining that same individual (Deely 2001: 72). If someone gets a haircut or a house gets a new coat of paint, the substances remain the same; only the hair and the paint change. This is "accidental change" because the thing underlying those superficial characteristics remains intact. The distinction persists into modern philosophy; Leibniz referred to substance as that which is "complete" and "indivisible" (Leibniz 1989: 274).[114] Against Spinoza, who had claimed that mind and body are the same, Leibniz said that the human substance "hardly consists of extended mass since any of those things could be taken away, leaving the substance intact" (Leibniz 1989: 274). That is, a person can remain the same person even while their body changes, just as a house can change but remain intact. The substance, therefore, is the unity underlying all the various aspects pertaining to any individual. Indeed, being and substance have been conflated.[115] Substance means an individual's true being.

The problem, Burke says, is precisely that substance is a scenic term. The word "'substance,' used to designate what a thing is, derives from a word designating something that a thing is not" (Burke 1945b: 23). While purporting "to designate something *within* the thing, *intrinsic* to it, the word etymologically refers to something *outside* the thing, *extrinsic* to it" (Burke 1945b: 23). A scenic term is treated as an agent term. An attribute of a thing's supporting context is moved to the circumference of the thing itself – and is now treated as an inherent quality of that thing itself. It's as if the Scene-Agent ratio has been inverted, with the agent becoming the scene of the scene. The agent becomes a scene term, too, and now we have only scene within scene. The agent term disappears in the sense that agent becomes scene and scene is made conditional to the agent – but scene never actually becomes agent because it lacks the proper agency. Further, the context necessary for the agent [substance, existent] has been dislocated and made a part of the agent's circumference, but this means that the agent no longer has a scene. Thus, the Scene-Agent ratio becomes ambiguous, and the inability to define the relation means an inability to define the related elements.

As we try to define the object's consistent being in itself, that ontological presence dissipates under our gaze and recedes to the periphery. Burke says that this reveals "an *inevitable* paradox of definition, an antinomy that must endow the concept of substance with unresolvable ambiguity" (Burke 1945b: 24). Its

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[114] The original text by Leibniz is found in Foucher de Careil's *Réfutation inédite de Spinoza par Leibniz*; this work was published in 1854, but the editors of (Leibniz 1989) give an estimated date for Leibniz's initial writing as 1707. Note that the *Réfutation inédite* may also in some bibliographies be found under Leibniz with Foucher de Careil as the editor.

[115] Thus, for Spinoza the pantheist, "there is only one substance" (Leibniz 1989: 274).

unresolvable quality is a conceptual limit, a seemingly formal necessity that we cannot escape simply by inventing better methods for definition. This would mean that we can't categorically eliminate the situation either by using more metaphysically dense language or by converting the signs from words into more abstract forms. Even in such cases, this paradox of substance "will be discovered lurking beneath any vocabulary designed to treat of motivation by the deliberate outlawing of the *word* for substance" (Burke 1945b: 24). As we made clear, '$x = x$' is not a definition but a tautology (and gives us no more than simply asserting x), and '$x = y$' defines x by what x is not: namely, y. Since Modernism's principle of operation is the scientistic or definitional mode of language ('*It is*, or *it is not*'), we should find this paradox causing major problems for its semiotic framework, which indeed we do find.

4.1. The ambivalent conception of being in Modernism

Let's begin with a concrete example of the paradox of substance unintentionally showing up in a modern treatment of another subject. In his argument for a modern atheistic realism, George Smith takes up the issue of negative theology versus positive (affirmative) theology. He treats this bi-directional affirmation/negation mode of thought as if it were a specific characteristic of Christianity or theism rather than an aspect of human semiosis itself: the principle that affirmation and negation are an inherent part of signification itself, for every sign relies on degrees of both similarity and difference (consistency and incompatibility).

Smith almost seems to hit upon this recognition. He says that negative theology cannot stand by itself and "presupposes the validity of affirmative theology" since "the negative predicates are possible only" if we can know "their positive counterparts" (Smith 1979: 53). This is true of theology, but superficially so; a statement of any kind, regardless of the subject matter, simultaneously involves negation and affirmation. We can only say what something is by partly casting it in terms of what it is not, and we can only say something *is not* if we presuppose the possibility that *it is*. Since both aspects are present in all deployments of language, the claim might as well be that 'Use of language about God is use of language' – thus hiding a tautology.

While Smith seems to prioritize affirmative statements over negations, he actually relies on the negative and appears to prioritize it. For instance, he says that "if God is described solely in terms of negation, it is impossible to distinguish him from nonexistence" and that in "order to state what God is not, one must have prior knowledge of what God is" (Smith 1979: 52). This sounds like a subordination of negation; negative theology would only make sense if positive theology first filled out what negative theology lacked.

However, he treats negative qualities as more metaphysically significant. He identifies certain positive traits that Christianity applies to God, such as love, justice, and mercy. However, he says these don't count as legitimate positive statements about God; they are merely "of secondary importance because they refer to God's

personality rather than his metaphysical nature as an existing being" – thus, saying that "God is loving or merciful is not equivalent to claiming that he is infinite or ineffable" (Smith 1979: 55). He does not explain why "personality traits" are of secondary importance behind negative qualities like infinitude; this seems to be another case of what Smith considers a self-evident truth. But there is nothing unavoidable about the conclusion that so-called personality traits are less meta-physically significant than qualities like "infinitude", especially in paradigms that consider qualities like love to be as much a part of God's essence as infinity. Thus, Smith's self-evident truth actually arises as an implication from some previously affirmed stance. And underlying his claim that the negation of particular qualities gets us closer to true metaphysical being is a common modern commitment: that *being as such*, drained of any particular qualities, is the "highest form" of being. This concept of being as such is precisely a place where Modernity finds itself confronted by the paradox of substance.

4.1.1. Being as such – being in itself

Sometimes what is meant by 'being as such' is actually 'being in itself'. John Deely defines this concept in relation to the premodern Latin distinction between different orders of being: namely, "being in itself" (*esse in se*) and "being in another". Being-in-itself is "a subject of existence" in its own right, a *substance*; being-in-another is "a mode of being which depends upon substance in order to be" (Deely 2001: 75). In one sense, this is a logical distinction that can be applied in various frames of consideration, defined relationally; if I say that my coffee cup is a substance defined in relation to myself, all I'm necessarily saying is that the cup doesn't fully reduce to me or my experience of it. In that context, it is *mind-independent* in some aspect of its being relative to my own mind. In the fuller experiential sense, of course, part of the cup is dependent upon my mind (is mind-dependent) and will presumably "cease to be" if I die. Some objects of experience, however, are said to be wholly mind-dependent; a fictional character in a novel, for instance. It has being-in-another (namely, the author or readers). This is the defining schema for Deely's treatment of being in itself, which concerns "those features of the environment" or aspects of the world "which exercise and participate in an existence in their own right apart from our perceptions" (Deely 2001: 348). This does not entail materialism or the modern concept of being as such, however.

In that Latin context, the full sense of the distinction between being in itself and being in another has a deeper reach. Considered as a categorical distinction, being-in-itself and being-in-another mark an ontological divide that isn't specific to a particular frame of analysis. Properly speaking, the category 'being-in-itself' applies only to God in that premodern context; only God is or has being-in-Him-self. Defined against that ultimate background, all other being is 'being-in-Another'. No other existent of any sort apart from God has an inherent being in itself; its being is dependent and conditional – ontologically, it is secondary to

God's Being. In the maximal sense, only God "exists in [His] own right and not in another as in the subject of existence: *Esse in se*" (Deely 2009: 333). From this standpoint, there is no such thing as "being as such", for the (primary) Being proper to God and the (secondary) being proper to all created existents do not participate in a shared set that is ontologically primary or prejacent itself to God's Primary Being-in-Himself.

This is an important philosophical distinction, for the concept sees changes in the early modern period, where we see the articulation of a concept of being that is purest when least definite or defined. That is, being becomes less perfect and less itself when articulated in terms of a specific character. That's not to say all moderns embraced this view. Descartes maintained the distinction above. In discovering that he could not doubt his own reality as a substance, he also distinguished his finite being himself from God's infinite being. He said, "I clearly perceive that there is more reality in the infinite substance than in the finite" (Descartes 2004: 102–103). His imperfection is defined is distinction to God's perfection. This difference in reality is qualitative, not a difference in degree, for he was imperfect in a way God is not. He saw God as "a being more perfect than [himself]" (Descartes 2004: 103). The deficiency in Descartes' being was not only a difference in the negative sense – "in the way one knows "repose and darkness by the negation of motion and light" (Descartes 2004: 102). Rather, it's a difference in a positive quality that Descartes himself lacks but that God possesses – a completeness and perfection as a quality (Descartes 2004: 103). These are imperfections that distinguish two fundamentally separate types of being, and a positive rather than a negative quality defines the highest, most complete form of Being.

As Modernity continued, however, a different definition of being took hold in which "perfect" being was defined in negation. Being as it cut across all categories became the definition of being as such, defined impersonally as Scene rather than Agent. A consequence was that the ultimate form of being was that which had no specific characteristics or distinguishing qualities. The most enthusiastic example is modern pantheism: if God is reduced entirely to scene, transforming divinity from 'transcendent *and* immanent' to only 'immanent', then the plurality of existents in the cosmos are themselves reduced to an absolute unity. The "plural yet one" nature of the Trinity becomes applied instead to the cosmos itself, functionally transforming it in an abstract ground of the cosmos that's identical with the cosmos.

Formally speaking, the cosmos becomes its own ground because "the ultimate", "the absolute", or "God" can only be known through the totality of all concrete particulars in the cosmos. In other words, the absolute is the universal that transcends all particulars. But *nothing* transcends the cosmos, for the absolute is entirely immanent. Necessarily, the absolute can only be known by what it is *not* – whatever you have once you subtract all the particulars from the cosmos is the absolute. That *alone* is absolute being: being-as-such. Therefore, being loses its perfection when it is described, as it takes on particular qualities that reduce its universality. Hegel says exactly this:

> Being is the notion implicit only: its special forms have the predicate "is": when they are distinguished they are each of them an "other," and the shape which dialectic takes in them, i.e., their further specialisation, is a passing over into another. This further determination, or specialisation, is at once a forth-putting and in that way a disengaging of the notion implicit in being […] Thus the explication of the notion in the sphere of being […] abolishes the immediacy of being, or the form of being as such. (Weiss 1974: 113)

Being as such is defined here in its negation of all qualities or characteristics. To make any kind of description or to involve any particular qualities is to *abolish the form of being as such*. We might cast this in positive sounding terms, saying that moving "beyond *being*" into "the richer forms of representing the absolute or God" is to "[bring] out the totality of being" as it "[sinks] deeper into itself" (Weiss 1974: 113). However, we still reduce being in the fullest sense proper to itself to a negation – an absence of any quality. As Frederick Weiss says, it "is in the beginning only an empty word and only being" (Weiss 1974: 113). A reduction has happened whether we make a value judgment to attribute an optimistic or a pessimistic meaning to it.

A denotative change is needed if we are to continue applying the term 'God' to this concept of nothingness or emptiness, as Hegel does. He says that any "metaphysical definition of God" beyond a formulation "in its simplicity" and a "return from differentiation to a simple self-reference" only "implies a something in the mind's eye on which these predicates [of differentiated definition] may fasten"; therefore, "even the Absolute (though it purports to express God in the style and character of thought) in comparison with the predicate […] is as yet only an inchoate pretended thought – the indeterminate subject of predicates yet to come" – "the Absolute, is a mere superfluity" (Weiss 1974: 113–114). Here we find a conception of being that in definition becomes effectively identical with nothingness – the possibility of a category of being that is inherently undefined. Indeed, as Burke himself says, "a point that Hegel made much of" was that "Pure Being would be the same as Not-Being" (Burke 1945b: 35).[116] It is being *as such*, but it's a negation reframed in positive terms – as if it were an affirmation.

This is to be expected given Spinoza's influence on Hegel. For Spinoza, "'the deity is all and thus – nothing'" (Burke 1945b: 26).[117] Since "Spinoza held that no single thing could be considered 'by itself'", meaning that "'all determination is negation'", we end up with a definition of everything simultaneously as the absolute and as the absence of all qualities (Burke 1945b: 25). Burke identifies that this is a variant of negative theology, which means something slightly different than what Smith invoked above. Smith indicated a mode of Christian thought whereby some of God's qualities can only be referred to in a negative way, like infinite, immeasurable, and immortal – even though some qualities can be referred to in a positive way, like love and kindness and compassion. However, the negative

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[116] Carroll (2002: 1093) also mentions this reference to Hegel by Burke in Carroll's lexicon entry for 'paradox of substance'.

[117] Burke is quoting Windelband, though he doesn't give the quote's specifics.

theology that Burke identifies with Spinoza is the type of doctrine we briefly mentioned before as a Neoplatonist concept "of God as the absence of all qualities" (Burke 1945b: 25).

To find figures such as Spinoza and Hegel holding to broadly Neoplatonist ways of thinking is not surprising. Those doctrines proliferated in the West without always being visible, beginning in the sixth century with Pseudo-Dionysius, who gained widespread influence by claiming apostolic authority. People believed the author's subterfuge that his texts were written by the man who accompanied St. Paul to the Apeopagus in the first century (Deely 2001: 132). This falsehood meant that Pseudo-Dionysius's writings met the criteria for canonical scripture: that the author either be an apostle or personally acquainted with them. This "pious ruse was a spectacular success" among both Greek and Latin Christians, for whom the work "was invested with the authority of St. Paul himself" (Deely 2001: 132). As Stiglmayr (1909: 17) says, Christians "believed that St. Paul" himself "spoke through these writings". The doctrines themselves were of a philosophical viewpoint that was incompatible with Christianity, but Pseudo-Dionysius's influence spread far and fast: "By the time the fraud was unmasked […] the influence had become so extensive as to be irreversible" (Deely 2001: 132). It was deeply woven over many centuries into Western thought, and the early moderns carried forward some of its implications, one of which was that being in its ultimate ontological sense is definitionally equivalent with nothingness. It underlies much of Modern thought.

Thus, when George Smith unintentionally implies this negative concept of being, he is playing out implications inherent in his worldview. He tells us that negative qualities are less real and should be subordinated to positive ones, but positive qualities are discounted precisely on the basis that they are not of equal metaphysical value as negative qualities. We see the presence of conflicting realist and idealist positions positions all at once. On the one hand, if some entity (say, God) is identical to descriptions of nonexistence, Smith considers that we should reject that entity. On the other hand, he reveals a Modern concept of *being as such*, where negative statements get more "to the heart" of metaphysical being. This clearly reveals his underlying philosophical viewpoint, whether or not he is aware of it. On the surface, these two positions indicate Modern realist and idealist commitments, respectively, which are vacillations in Modernism's inability to coherently navigate the paradox of substance.

This paradox surfaces particularly in Smith's treatment of nonexistence, for his rationale to exclude God applies also to the concept of nonexistence itself, which by definition can only be known in terms of what it is not. This question thus arises: 'in order to state what nonexistence is not, one must have prior knowledge of what nonexistence is' – or, 'in order to state what existence is, one must have prior knowledge of what existence is not'. Following Smith's line of thought, how can we have an idea of what nonexistence is in the first place? Since 'nonexistence' doesn't mean 'whatever I cannot see' but 'that which has no being whatsoever in any form', we must conceive not only of that which is invisible and but also that which is unknowable to us. And even so, conceiving of some-

thing as being unknowable to us doesn't even manage to satisfy the condition of 'nonexistence', for the category 'exists but cannot be knowable to human beings' is completely possible *and* logically coherent; the category of 'human being' does not *entail* being able to know or understand all things to their fullest degree – except as a position or a profession of belief that we can choose if we're properly motivated.

The mere existence of the human being does not entail epistemological perfection; alternate anthropologies are possible. While it would be impossible to say what we cannot in any respect know, it is a perfectly justifiable inference to conclude that there is a limit to our epistemological faculty or capacity – given our limits in every other area. This inference is not inherently incoherent simply because it's incompatible with optimistic Modernism (or Humanism) and its God-term. Yet the concession of epistemological limitation still does not magically solve the problem of nonexistence as a category nor explain how we can *conceive of a difference* in the first place between what exists and what does not. Either there is a real difference between existence and its absence,[118] or there is no such difference, and 'existence' and 'possibility' are identical categories or sets that only seem distinct because of nominalizing. That would not be a less difficult problem to explain, and it would still leave us with the question of the reliability of the human epistemological faculty – especially when it comes to the cornerstone of Modern knowledge: induction.

4.2. Problems with induction

In the modern semiosphere, science is considered the best agency for ensuring an accurate understanding of the world – science as a reliable mode of reasoning whereby we critically assess reality through processes of accountability. This primarily means inductive reasoning, but the indeterminacy inherent to semiosis isn't removed in this way. Even when controlled and framed within an accountable community, our observations are always "owned" by our cognitive finitude. The problem is partly our biological and temporal limitations, which always keep us from closing the inductive book on observations within the cosmos.

However, even if we could overcome the limitations to total measurement that time, biology, and natural laws present, the deeper problem would remain: the limitation inherent to inductive reasoning itself. Even if we could measure all states of affairs, we could still never be sure that we have done so. When it comes to our experience of the empirical details of the world, we cannot verify our conclusions as we can in formal systems; placing our hope in empirical observations to provide the kind of unmotivated certainty that deductive logic provides is a misplaced hope. While modern assumptions might affect our felt experience, we can't unmake the most fundamental limits of human semiosis. Indeterminacy arising at the intersections of semiosis and the given world is unavoidable.

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[118] The negation either as impossibility or as possibility-that's-not-currently-actual.

4.2.1. The circularity of induction

As we have seen, the choice required to resolve indeterminacy of meaning is unavoidable as a component of human semiosis itself. Any form of corporate inquiry is necessarily a human endeavor and must operate according to the same constraints. As we've seen previously, inference is an act that must involve choice, even in an ideal setting where the inference is not motivated by any untoward, dishonest purposes. Categorically, induction is a form of inference, not the necessitated conclusion proper to deduction. As such, the corporate employment of induction is limited by the same restrictions that apply to that category. So while we often think of science as able to produce certainty in the strong sense, in reality the controlled inquiry that science undertakes is not categorically different from much of our everyday reasoning, which is inferential; Hawking and Mlodinow (2010: 46) are correct in this regard. Just as it is not possible for science to exhaust all instances of possible measurement, so is it impossible for an individual to observe all relevant cases before making a decision or coming to a conclusion (which is itself a form of decision making). Even in a basic survival sense, decisions must be made before we can survey all potentially relevant data encountered in experience. Organisms will starve to death otherwise. And inference from past experience is induction, precisely so.

In an epistemological discussion of the critical flaw of induction, Mitch Stokes talks about Hume's critique of the same.[119] Hume launched a critique against faith in human reason to produce certainty. Stokes says, "Hume recognized that induction depends on our belief that *the future will resemble the past*" (Stokes 2016: 40). What reason do we have for this belief? Namely, that "in the past, the future has always resembled the past"; unfortunately, "the very basis for believing that the future will resemble the past […] is our belief that the future will resemble the past" (Stokes 2016: 40–41). As it is, we have no noncircular reason for trusting induction. But he also points out, in further agreement with Hume, that "we can't help but trust induction" (Stokes 2016: 41). It's unavoidable, a given, and we use it whether we want to or not. We trust induction because we trust induction. Our trust in induction is something like our trust in logic, reason, and truth. We demonstrate an implicit belief in and reliance upon them, even when we doubt them. To give an argument against logic is to presuppose and use logic at the outset, since we're arguing toward a result. To present an argument against truth in general presupposes that one can arrive at a true conclusion. And to argue against reason is to use reason, presupposing its existence at the outset. These are all givens, and affirming them doesn't require a single metaphysical conclusion, nor does affirming them provide one with automatic resolution of all important and relevant indeterminacies.

They are *givens*, but this doesn't tell us anything specific about the particulars of the cosmos or what it means for truth, logic, and reason to be givens. That the

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[119] While we will work from Stokes' already concise summary of Hume, note that Stokes is referring to Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Hume 1978[1739]: 180–183).

world is like *something* doesn't actually tell us what the world is *like*. Our inability to avoid induction (and inference) doesn't guarantee infallible results. For better or worse, induction is given, but its unavoidable presence does not exempt us either from errors or from having to make decisions. Fallibility in a faculty does not erase our having to use that faculty. After all, neither are there any "non-circular arguments for the reliability of the senses or reason (or memory, or any of our other cognitive tools)" (Stokes 2016: 42). We cannot live without the use of sensation, perception, reason, memory, inference, induction, and other cognitive agencies. But it is important to recognize the other side of this situation: that we simply must accept them as givens. Their existence doesn't entail one meaning, and we cannot provide justification for them. Indeed, we rely upon them to be able to undertake acts like "providing justification" in the first place; to argue for *or* against certain agencies requires assuming their existence from the outset. The empirical remains semiotic. We should not conclude that just because we cannot avoid using these faculties that by necessity our conclusions about reality are wholly accurate – whether in actuality or in possibility.

This critique can even be launched from within a fully Modern model. After all, according to a typical evolutionary perspective, we can say that that "our brains evolved solely for the task of survival, not for the construction of complex theories that describe entities and events entirely beyond the realm of observation" (Stokes 2016: 50). Even if we include in that process the building of social realities and the construction of an emotionally satisfying order, we still aren't guaranteed the entailed result that our brains are well enough suited to plumb the cosmos for truth or accurate conclusions about its ontology. We are only "guaranteed" that we would be able to act in a way that permits us to successfully navigate the world. The question is whether functional success and complete accuracy of truth judgments in model building are identical.

We have good reason for thinking that they're not. Stokes mentions Dawkins' use of the "minimal model", which says that even if the minimal model is not *solely* concerned with and suited for survival, it must be *at least* suitable for survival. And survival means functional success; the meaning processes of biosemiosis need to be minimally concerned with this kind of activity. That is, its most proper role is "functional" survival, even if it is a method that can also be applied to other "secondary" activities. We see the basic principle in this distinction in Deely's regular theme that "*linguistic communication* is" but "the *exaptation*" of "*language in the root sense*" – meaning that a more fundamental organismic capacity is directed toward secondary ends (Stjernfelt, Deely 2006: 19). We also see this principle in the Tartu-Moscow distinction between a "*primary modelling system*" and the "*secondary modelling systems*" that arise through that primary system (Eco 1990: x). Despite the different ways the lines of primary and secondary are being drawn in these examples, they all operate on the distinction between a primary capacity and the ends to which it is put. The actuality of a given, primary capacity does not entail the same veracity of its products, especially if the uses to which it is put vary from its initial functional purpose. Indeed, Uexküll himself characterized the basic meaning process as a "functional circle, beginning with perception

and ending with effect" (Uexküll 1982: 34).[120] The meaning activity at the most basic level is concerned with perceiving what is relevant for the agent's survival and acting toward that end. While function and perception are given here, the deeper ontological and semiotic reality of what that agent perceives is not given. The perceptual capacity is geared up most specifically toward survival. If semiotic scaffolding builds progressively on this foundation, then the basis of perception in the minimal model's functional nature serves as a defining and restricting scene. That is, we would have good reason to conclude that our perceptual-semiotic abilities are ultimately only competent to give us functional knowledge that is limited in its ontological and semiotic scope.

Stokes makes this point by discussing the shifts in scientific paradigms throughout history. Often the reliability of science (or its underlying reasoning process) is pronounced on the basis of functional success, which is seen as substantiating the claim that science tells us the truth, full-stop, about the world around us. But Stokes points out that having a high degree of functional, practical success does not keep a scientific theory or paradigm from being supplanted by another. All major paradigms were at one time established in part because of their explanatory and technological success. Yet despite their success, they were eventually overturned. Their previous success was not an indication of their wholesale truth.

This opens the door to questions about the relation between the success and the truth of a scientific theory. In fact, Stokes says that "there are good reasons to doubt the connection between the *truth* of a scientific theory and its ability to *work,* to accurately describe the observable world" (Stokes 2016: 101). Agreeing with Hawking and Mlodinow, he says good reasons exist to be an instrumentalist about scientific theories – to hold that "theories need only be empirically adequate to be counted as successful" (Stokes 2016: 101). One example Stokes gives is Copernicanism and geocentrism. Both theories worked equally well regarding observable data for years; that is, "there was a time when the set of data could be explained by both theories" (Stokes 2016: 102). Some are likely to object that "science eventually proved which theory was true, and therefore science and scientific reasoning are reliable sources for true beliefs". However, this response obscures an important point: that the entailed conclusion is not that we can trust science to tell us the truth *today* but to tell us the truth *one day*.

The view from the present is partial, and science always affirms a particular perspective from the present. But in speaking from the present, working on the basis of models that match observations, science has often shown that behind its success hides a falsity, an error. Categorically, the critically controlled exercise of human reason is always speaking from the present in an incomplete manner, and the presence of indeterminacy is never removed – any more than continually dividing the number one ever results in zero. Practically, this means that eventually

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[120] That is, "an effectual side" that "affects our senses" and "a perceptual side" that "consists of human perceptual cues" (Uexküll 2001: 111). Note that the text appearing in *Semiotica* 134(1/4) is from (Uexküll 1937).

the old model is thrown out. Nevertheless, we are expected to maintain our full confidence in the process and to embrace the new model with the same credulity as the "debunked" one; after all, science is supposedly self-correcting. We are expected to view the situation not as consistently producing errors but as consistently revealing and correcting errors; we are to embrace this particular *perspective*. Supposedly the errors are not common, and we are on reliable epistemological ground, making progress.

Nevertheless, the number of successful but false, discarded theories is noteworthy. Philosopher of science Larry Laudan lists a few: the humoral theory of medicine, the effluvial theory of static electricity, the caloric theory of heat, theories of spontaneous generation, and even Newtonian physics. "These theories", he says, "referred to entities or events that neither existed nor occurred" (Stokes 2016: 102). Yet these models produced functional results. Referring to a remark by J.C. Maxwell, Laudan says,[121] "'the aether was better confirmed than any other theoretical entity in natural philosophy'" (Stokes 2016: 103). If the aether now seems passé, Newtonian physics is still regarded with respect as a powerful, properly modern theory. It had a major impact upon thought and science; as P. Kyle Stanford says in *Exceeding Our Grasp*, the "evident success [of Newtonian physics] in prediction, explanation, and intervention" was long considered to render "it impossible or extremely unlikely that the theory was false" (Stanford 2006: 7).[122] Our retrospective view can obscure the fact that "defenders of past scientific theories occupied at one time just the same position that we do now" (Stanford 2006: 7). Their certainty is ours. It's of the same sort, belongs to the same category, is supported on the same philosophical grounds, and partakes of the same epistemological limits. Despite a model's present success with respect to our goals, there is a limit to its truth-telling capacity; this arises not from a specific model but from modeling itself and from the human faculty of knowledge. Given that (from the perspective of the present) it is possible for a false theory to be more successful than a true one, and given the scientific history of discarding major theories despite their practical success, the equivalence between a model's functional effectiveness (relative to human goals) and that model's overall truth breaks down. Why would we assume that the situation has changed in our own day – that this mutability is somehow different? The method, theory, or paradigm might work within a particular scene, but the underlying *reason* that it works is a different sort of question. Instrumental methods answer instrumental questions, not necessarily metaphysical, ontological, or semiotic questions.

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[121] Laudan 1981.
[122] Also quoted in (Stokes 2016: 103).

4.2.2. Addressing an objection

George Smith would object here. He opposes critiques of Modern epistemology by equating them with solipsism (Smith 1979: 145) and recasts the identification of indeterminacy as "'the infallibilist fallacy'" – that is, a "ploy to vindicate faith through skepticism" (Smith 1979: 141). However, the way he tries to preserve the doctrine of epistemological certainty is a hidden way of agreeing with the position he critiques. As a counter to the argument that science can never produce *certainty* but can only result in contingent knowledge, Smith offers this:

> As scientific knowledge increases, man will continually revise and update many of his scientific principles, but this does not preclude the possibility that many scientific laws can be known with certainty. Certainty does not mean 'static.' It simply means that, *within the context of one's knowledge*, the evidence for a given proposition is overwhelming. (Smith 1979:147)

By a kind of rhetorical alchemy, Smith has taken the position he was arguing against, restated as if it was different. He has redefined certainty to mean "I *feel* certain" or "I am persuaded that it is true". The attempt to express a realist position has resulted in an "idealist" conception instead. His description of certainty alters the usual definition that we can know 100% that our conclusions about reality are accurate.

In this reformulation, however, saying that we are certain means making a claim about our own degree of confidence that a statement is true. This is *not* a hardcore realist claim about the accuracy of human cognition and its verification – a position to which Smith seems committed. Rather, it affirms some degree of an idealist caveat that human conclusions and knowledge about reality are limited, contextualized, constructed, or influenced by the human mind itself. If the kind of "certainty" proper to human understanding is not "static", it can't ever actually be *certain* in the strong sense. This is the true propositional content of Smith's statement, even though he is trying to make a realist claim. Again, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Deely uses this Jekyll and Hyde metaphor to refer both to modern science (with its assumption of realism) and to modern philosophy (with its assumption of idealism). The two conceptions of reality are inextricable but never find cohesion. Even the strictest scientific realist ends up bringing out the idealist when the right triggers present themselves, and this split personality showed up early on in the modern extrapolation of its founding terminology: "Dr Jekyll, the scientist in the modern sense, soon discovered within his own breast Mr Hyde, the philosopher in the modern sense" (Deely 2001: 358). This is because the *modern* scientist, properly speaking, is defined less by a set of practices and functional competencies as by a philosophical viewpoint and worldview. The scaffolded world and meaning structure generated by the modern God-term gives rise to a "conflicting metaphysical personality" of a total, optimistic realism combined with an inability to consistently justify that optimistic realism. Thus, those

who hold to this modern semiotic/terminological commitment end up propa-gating this metaphysical conflict, whether they realize it or not.

Some moderns *do* realize it, of course. One could argue that many intellectual developments in the 20th and 21st centuries have been explicit attempts to resolve this conflict. One example is Stephen Hawking, who (along with Leonard Mlodinow) offers a kind of instrumentalist view in *The Grand Design*. Hawking and Mlodinow present a model-oriented view that would feel somewhat familiar to a semiotician. They say that "a physical theory or world picture is a model […] and a set of rules that connect elements of the model to observations" (Hawking, Mlodinow 2010: 43). This is a familiar concept in semiotics, where a model is an internally structured system that corresponds to the object it models in certain respects. Of course, models aren't just scientific creations, for "we also make them in everyday life"; what Hawking terms "model-dependent realism" actually applies "to the conscious and subconscious mental models we all create in order to interpret and understand the everyday world" (Hawking, Mlodinow 2010: 46). Ultimately, even though realism may be a tempting view, Hawking and Mlodinow claim that "modern physics makes it a difficult one to defend" (Hawking, Mlodinow 2010: 44). Mitch Stokes (2016: 113) summarizes Hawking's view as saying that, in the end, the "view that our scientific theories give us the sober truth about the unobservable world […] is simply one we can no longer rationally accept". And, he says, even though *The Grand Design* uses the term 'realism' for its own model, one would be hard-pressed to consider it a thoroughgoing realism. After all, as that work states, "*There is no picture- or theory-independent concept of reality*" (Hawking, Mlodinow 2010: 43). If they're right, science is unable to produce the kind of certainty envisioned by those who naively hold that the "plain facts" are the official product or domain of science. This doesn't mean that science produces only "pure fictions", but it does mean that science does not – indeed, cannot – simply tell us about the "thing in itself" as the Enlightenment dream hoped and believed.

The modern notions of the "thing-in-itself" (*ding-an-sich*) and "being as such" are biases that permeate the modern semiosphere. The belief that reason is "fully capable of understanding all facts" holds that reason can penetrate to the true substance of the thing in itself (Smith 1979: 107). This is how we dispense with any epistemological agnosticism. After all, in order for human reason alone to be able to understand all facts, it must be able to understand the things in themselves – that is, to plumb the depths of each existent's ontology.

But if the full nature of each existent involves its metaphysical being as such, defined absolutely and independently of "secondary qualities", then we have a contradiction that involves a Kantian bias. Kant distinguished "between know-able phenomena of experience and unknowable things-in-themselves" (Deely 2001: 272). This "phantom 'thing-in-itself' – 'ding-an-sich' […] can be accessed neither within nor through sensory appearances; yet by being posited it is to be known 'indirectly'" (Deely 2001: 8, n7). In addition to Smith's modern vocabulary being unable to avoid the category of "pure being", he also seems to be unable to avoid falling into the Kantian split between the thing in itself and the object as

we experience it. Indeed, his definition of certainty reflects this chasm between the true, inherent nature of a thing and the experience of that thing as an object; despite his optimistic tone, this chasm is visible when he says, "As the amount of evidence increases, so will the degree of certainty. Certainty does not require infallibility or omniscience, and to claim certainty is not to claim the theoretical impossibility of error" (Smith 1979: 147). But assertion does not make it so. Smith has nominalized the problem away by renaming it. *The possibility of error* is *the degree of uncertainty* – the degree that we cannot be certain of the conclusion. An increase in the degree of evidence does not categorically alter the kind of conclusion that evidence is capable of producing. And of course, Smith is talking about induction, for it is in the context of inductive reasoning where an increasing degree of evidence of correlated to a conclusion. This is a critical and categorical limit to induction, and the degree to which science relies on induction is the degree to which science can never resolve indeterminacy nor eliminate uncertainty.

4.2.3. Induction's inability to produce necessity

Part of the reason that induction is limited in its truth-telling ability comes from its inability to produce conclusions through necessity. This is because, strictly speaking, induction isn't logic but a heuristic for guiding inferences. This distinction is often overlooked because the public discourse about logic is muddy and involves misconceptions. Many educated people struggle with logic's key tenet – the distinction between the type of knowledge possible in formal systems (validity) and the type that is possible within the broader frame of experience as a whole (soundness). Certainty (in the usual, *strong* sense of *entailment*) is available to us in the narrow context of validity, but establishing certainty is quite different (and perhaps impossible) in the wider context of soundness. Consequently, when people say things like "We have proved that *x* is true", they usually mean to apply the certainty proper to formal systems (such as mathematics and deductive logic) to some area of everyday experience beyond formal systems. It is a major but common epistemological mistake.

The term 'inductive logic' is itself a contradiction. Wittgenstein dealt with this issue in the *Tractatus*. He said, "The so-called law of induction cannot possibly be a law of logic, since it is obviously a proposition with sense" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.31). 'Sense' refers to values given to the symbols of logic, especially in reference to the actual empirical world. Logic has nothing to say about the empirical world. This is why we distinguish between validity and soundness – because *soundness* tells us where logic is *not*. These terms refer to the boundaries of deduction; a deductive argument "is valid when it is successful", which only "refers to the relation between its propositions" (Copi, Cohen 2005: 15). Successful means procedurally correct – like the right functioning of a machine. Indeed, validity "*can never apply to any single proposition by itself*" (Copi, Cohen 2005: 15). Single propositions can be true or false, but validity refers only to whether multiple propositions have been combined correctly in their correspondence to one another.

When we talk about truth in the context of logic *proper*, we only mean validity; logic can only tell us whether the symbols combine properly, not whether its premises or conclusions correctly refer to the actual empirical world. Logic as a discipline does sometimes refer to truth in a wider sense, where truth is defined as "the attribute of a proposition that asserts what really is the case" (Copi, Cohen 2005: 15). For instance, Copi and Cohen (2005: 15) give the example that if they say that Lake Superior is the largest of the US Great Lakes, they "assert what really is the case, what is true". But technically speaking, they would *not* be talking about logic. Indeed, "truth and falsity are attributes of individual propositions or statements; validity and invalidity are attributes of arguments" (Copi, Cohen 2005: 16). Determining truth and falsity is outside of logic, for validity is a separate quality from truth in that full sense. An argument might be perfectly valid in the sense that its steps proceed correctly; if its statements also happen to accurately reflect actual reality, then we say it's also *sound*.

The problem is that logic only defines soundness in order to help people understand the restrictions of logic. When we're working out validity, we never refer to the "actual" outside world. We are only concerned with what Wittgenstein calls logical forms and necessity. An operation of logic is only valid if its conclusion is a necessary result of the input values and the operations employed to establish relations between those values. On the most proper level, the situation is formally identical to mathematics; the operational correctness of 1+2=3 has nothing to do with the details of the world. We don't need to know "One of what?", "Two of what?", or "Three of what?" The proper domain of mathematics is precisely its formal relations independent of any concrete details of the world. We only need to consider the equation itself to determine if it is correct. This is even clearer when we consider mathematics that employ variables; we only need to refer to the symbols themselves.

This is what Wittgenstein means by a logical form. Our "knowledge" of it is not dependent upon conclusions about empirical givens but is a priori. When "all [of a network's] properties can be given a priori", we can say that they are "purely geometrical" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.35). As we mentioned earlier, the truth of the proposition can be derived from its symbols alone. In that sense, logical propositions are tautologies because they "have certain structural properties", and "when they are connected in a certain way", they yield further tautologies (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.12). Indeed, the propositions of logic "have no 'subject-matter'" in themselves; the domain of logic is that in which "certain combinations of symbols – whose essence involves the possession of a determinate character – are tautologies" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.124). Given the definitions established within the argument's frame, each proposition is a tautology taken at face value for the sake of logical operations; the values are inputs that logic takes as if they were true and deploys them within its operations, generating certain conclusions by necessity. This is entailment.

Thus, the propositions of logic don't tell us empirical specifics about the world; we cannot move from structural properties or logical forms themselves to a description of cosmic actualities. We can consider all logical arguments to contain

an implicit conditional qualifier: *if* it is the case that all the premises/value inputs are true (defined accurately), then the entailed conclusion is true as well. But in order to get such an entailed conclusion, *we* must *put in* values; that is, we must choose premises to assert as tautologies that are themselves neither given by logic nor forced by the empirical world. As Wittgenstein said, "the only necessity that exists is *logical* necessity" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.375). Thus, any selection of propositions (or definitions) to serve as inputs for a logical argument is by definition *not* necessity.

This applies to all conclusions we come to through induction or (non-deductive) inference of any sort. That includes abduction as "a type of inferential process" – or what Peirce called an "'extremely fallible insight'"[123] (Danesi, Bockarova 2014: 53). Since logical necessity applies neither to induction nor to abduction, we could say that deduction is another name for logic itself; there is no such thing as inductive logic or abductive logic unless 'logic' is taken to mean 'reasoning process', in which case there is no form of thought that is not logic. Even some conceptions of deduction as a reasoning process make the error of grounding it in reason; to hold that the "'generalization-by-demonstration' process is the sum and substance of deductive thinking'" is to miss the point that, properly speaking, deduction is not a process of generalization but logical necessity (Danesi, Bockarova 2014: 53). What is proper to logical necessity is not a reasoning process as such but a relation of logical forms that cannot be conceived of as otherwise. We only deductively "generalize from" in the sense of an actual person attempting to work out deductive syllogisms, which is about the person's reasoning process and not about logical necessity. The ground of a deductive argument is not someone's reasoning activity but necessity, which arises immediately in the presence of certain conditions; it is a formal inevitability.

When Deely subordinates both induction and deduction to abduction, he mixes his categories. He says that "the abductive phase of logic" must come first, "whence deductions and inductions result in the first place by being made possible" (Deely 2001: 577). But he's still talking about a reasoning process employed here and there by humans. What he means by "the abductive point of departure" is the agent's "perception" whereby the "understanding investigates the properties of perceived objects" (Deely 2001: 649). This is a different category. It doesn't matter that the "original conceptualization – the way it is envisioned – is an abduction" (Danesi, Bockarova 2014: 53). The issue is a relation of necessity. When it comes to looking at modern epistemology and scientific modeling, the problem is that we cannot move from the initial insights of abduction (or the subsequent inductions) to the entailments proper to deduction – that is, to formal necessity. This is because formal necessity is independent of conclusions about the world; entailment only begins once we've made our choices from indeterminacy.[124]

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[123] Danesi and Bockarova cite Peirce from CP 5.180.

[124] We must distinguish between so-called "deduction" as a particular method of inference (that individuals attempt to employ) and the logical necessity underlying a "deductive relation". Abduction fills in gaps and enriches starting points in ways to underdetermined

Therefore, much that is taken as necessary within science cannot be *certain* at all, even regarding the so-called laws of nature. What Wittgenstein means by 'law' is precisely necessity, not a contingent result from habit. This applies to what science calls laws of nature. Indeed, even the "law of causality is not a law but the form of a law" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.32). It is a general name that has been cast in terms of law, but strictly speaking, this principle and others like it are not logical principles because (1) logical necessity is not sequential and (2) there "is no compulsion making one thing happen because another has happened" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.37). The conclusion that the sun will rise tomorrow because it has previously risen every day of my life is an assumption, not an entailment. We might offer the rebuttal that we need to qualify the statement as 'Unless some alteration happens to change the orbital situation or the principles by which it operates, the sun will rise tomorrow'; however, this amounts to saying, 'Unless something changes, things will stay the same', which is identical to 'If things stay the same, then things will stay the same' – that is, a tautology. Just as there is no non-circular reason for believing that induction is true, there is no non-circular reason for believing in the "law of causality", which is the same assumption stated differently.

This applies to so-called minimum principles like the principle of sufficient reason, continuity and least effort in nature, and so forth. All such claims "are a priori insights about the forms in which the propositions of science can be cast" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.34). Wittgenstein points out that we "do not have an a priori *belief* in the law of conservation, but rather a priori *knowledge* of the possibility of a logical form" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.33). His italicized words may lead to wrong conclusions, but altering the emphasis may help with this. The point isn't primarily the typical elevation of knowledge over belief; rather, Wittgenstein is saying that the thing we actually possess a priori is the knowledge of *the possibility of a logical form*; this knowledge is an unanalyzable "intuition" that is not derived from particular observations of the empirical world but pertains to our intuitive "knowledge" – seemingly a kind of firstness that we cannot avoid. Conclusions that we come to about the empirical world are themselves beliefs that are not entailed by the laws of logic; even though we give them the semiotic form proper to a logical law, they are not such laws, and we cannot properly justify them on a priori grounds.

In such cases where science establishes a "law" on the basis of induction, a conclusion that could be otherwise is cast *in terms of* a logical form, but it isn't a logical form. Logical forms alone pertain to *law* in this strict, non-rhetorical sense; if one wants to study "everything that is subject to law", one must restrict oneself

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conclusions that could be wrong; "deduction", in the most fundamental sense we mean here of logical necessity, concerns entailments that result unavoidably from given starting points. This corresponds to Wittgenstein's statement that "All deductions are made a priori" (Wittgenstein (1977[1921]: 5.133). Whether this tells us only about the boundaries of human thought or about reality beyond ourselves is a subsequent metaphysical characterization of reality as we must experience it – that is, of the given.

to the study of logic, for "outside logic everything is accidental" – meaning not necessary (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.3). What science calls "laws" are really models. It's not that these models tell us nothing about the mind-independent world, but they speak "indirectly, about the objects of the world" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.3431). Wittgenstein uses the geometric form of nets as his controlling metaphor for such modeling.[125] He says that we can build nets in different ways, resulting in different kinds of "meshes" (like a mesh based on a triangle, on a hexagon, etc.); the particular "form is optional" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.341). As we use a certain mesh to model the world, it "imposes a unified form on the descriptions of that world" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.341). This is close to the principle of terministic screens and God-terms, only Wittgenstein uses a geometric ordering principle.

Obviously the mesh will not conform exactly to the form of what it models. We "can always approximate" to varying degrees "by covering the surface [of the modeled object] with a sufficiently fine" mesh of whatever shape (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.341). However, it always still imposes a unified form on the object modeled. In this metaphor, each different net with its particular mesh "corresponds to different systems for describing the world" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.341). This is the case, he says, even for something so supposedly unmotivated as Newtonian Mechanics. As a form of mechanics in general, it "determines one form of description of the world by saying that all propositions used in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a given set of propositions – the axioms of mechanics" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.341). We're told at the outset that if we want to build a structure, we must use certain building blocks. Again, we see the terministic principle: certain conclusions of different modeling systems arise as inherent implications of how they began to model the world.

The issue is not that such modeling tells us nothing about the world. Wittgenstein acknowledges our "epistemic access" to the possibility of logical forms; further, logic has some connection to the world beyond it. That is, the "propositions of logic describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they represent it" – not by telling us directly, of course, but "something about the world must be indicated" by the fact that certain combinations entail tautologies (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.124). Indeed, logical propositions even "presuppose that names have meaning and elementary propositions [have] sense" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.124). Even so, we cannot justify a priori knowledge with appeals to the empirical ("accidental") details of the world, which are not necessary in the same way. The empirical realm does not ground the a priori. But neither can the laws of logic tell us about the empirical objects of the world, at least not in a direct and exhaustive way. What is necessary must always be the case; what is not necessary could be otherwise; what is necessary, then, will always be the case across variations in the non-necessary realm. Thus, in any given case (like our actual world), the laws

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[125] We could no doubt draw a parallel between Wittgenstein's nets and the 'web of signs' of semiotics, even if but geometrically.

of logic do not entail particular states of affairs in the categorically accidental realm. They would be consistent with many possible worlds.

What we end up with is that a particular modeling system does not tell us anything "directly" or exhaustively about what it models, even though it tells us *something* about "the precise *way* in which it is possible to describe" by certain means (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.342). It also tells us about "the fact that it can be described more simply with one system" rather than another (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.342). The world *can* be modeled like *this*, and here are the semiotic results of modeling it that way. This principle applies to mechanics (physics) just as to any other modeling system; because that's the case, all so-called laws "like the principle of sufficient reason, etc. are about the net and not about what the net describes" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.35). This does not entail a solipsistic metaphysics because it's about the nature and constraint of logic itself; we could justifiably call it a kind of logical realism whose implications would vary depending upon its greater semiotic foundation. Indeed, this distinction doesn't require that we believe that truth as correspondence is impossible, for the distinction rests simply upon the recognition of what logic is and is not, of what it can and cannot do.

4.2.4. The rhetoric of "logic"

Practically speaking, this allows us to point out that many deployments of Logic terminologies are rhetorical enactments in service to some particular system of description and its God-term. Such deployments attempt to borrow the "prestige" of logical necessity and use it to endorse a particular selection about how to resolve an instance of indeterminacy; however, such a resolution is not an entailment but simply one option out of a multiplicity of incompatible alternatives for how to model reality. Nevertheless, since that solution has been framed in terms of logic (even under the synonym 'reason') the resolution is portrayed as an entailment, making a choice appear as if it were a law instead. It acquires the "glow" of a glory that belongs to another, and this makes it a powerful and often effective rhetorical technique within modernity.

"Proof" in the popular sense is therefore not just erroneous but also motivated. Someone hopes to apply logical necessity to a realm where indeterminacy prevents the possibility of there being only a single meaning option. In a deductive system where the operations are well-formed, only one meaning is possible: this is the strict meaning of a *proof*. We do not find this straightforward result outside of logical forms, even regarding the empirical "givens" of the cosmos. When people say that we have proven a certain conclusion about the empirical world, this nearly always means "Based on *x* number of observations, we have decided according to motive *y* that there is sufficient evidence to conclude *z*". That is, they take a conclusion from non-deductive reasoning (with its inherent contingency) and express that conclusion as if it were a result from deduction; this is a rhetorical technique, intentionally deployed or not. It lends the persuasive force

of a logical necessity to a motivated choice. As a mode of rhetoric, this can be used to win assent on unjustified grounds, camouflaging gaps of uncertainty with signs of entailment.

This *suasive* use of deductive terms to sell interpretations is a common tactic in terminologies of "Logic" and "Reason". As in much persuasion, the most effective deployment is often getting people to internalize the terminology itself (and, implicitly, its underlying metaphysical or ideological commitment) and to then police their own semiosis according to its rules. Circulating within a person's Innenwelt, this "rhetoric of deduction" often works to cover up a selection from a multiplicity of possible meanings. This tactic is not only involves an error but is also often an instance of "outsourcing" our decision making. After all, if we can discover "proof" for one conclusion over its alternative options, we can achieve a state of felt-certainty and simultaneously avoid a *choice* – or, at least, so we hope. The temptation to perform such a semiosic outsourcing can come either from a reluctance to commit or from a desire to find a pretext for making some choice that we desire but feel ethically or morally conflicted about.

Regarding the motive of desiring certainty, it can feel good and relieving when we can rest in a certainty provided by someone else, especially in areas where we feel unable to resolve an indeterminacy. Here, the quest for "proof" may be a hopeful one; the reassuring belief that one has proof for a certain conclusion seems to absolve us of needing to choose. We feel freed from having to bear the responsibility that comes with that decision and its semiotic fallout. In the case of seeking pretext, we already have a choice in mind, but the meaning of our choosing that desired option is one that we're uncomfortable with; inasmuch as the motive defines the act, we are uncomfortable with undertaking that act.

Thus, the outsourcing of our decision to some external entailment semiotically functions as a modification of our motive for making that choice; the modification allows us to convince ourselves that the nature of the act is different than if we simply chose it based on desire. However, it is indeed a pretext because the "proof justification" is only a semiotic intermediary deployed to allow the same choice without the interference of misgivings. The pretext is not related to the choice (or conclusion) itself but to the misgivings that the person wants to eliminate from view; as such, the pretext is not part of the motive behind the act but is either a form of agency (*how* the act was able to be undertaken) or is part of the act itself – as a now slightly more complex act. Either way, the motive for choosing the pretext is the same motive for choosing the desired act, so the nature of the act hasn't changed except in the agent's perception. Choosing the pretext is a second act whose motive is the original motive; because this act is less obvious, though, the motive is harder to see and easier to ignore. It is thus another form of self-persuasion – or, better, self-deception. A full interpretant of the act includes the choice of the pretext, for the desired conclusion was chosen ahead of the justification for that conclusion.

4.2.5. Implications for Modernism

The roots of induction are not logical but intuitive and inferential; it can in no sense generate necessity nor remove indeterminacy. The view that we can replace motivated choice with unmotivated necessity in truth judgments outside of logical form turns out to be a restatement of the Modern assumption, not a conclusion entailed by "the pure facts". To believe that the human epistemological situation changes because science corrects itself over time is a categorical confusion. If human reason is capable of ensuring truth in the future, then at best our faith is justified for the *future*. However, the greater trouble is that even if our trust in such self-correction was justified, how do we get from there to confidence *today* in inductive inference and in the actual, current scientific models built through it? Given the limits of induction, we have reason for tempered credulity toward a completely realist interpretation of the present models of Modernity. And if we believe (1) that human reason is the product of undirected evolution and (2) that there is no external force or Agent that can provide a reliable ground for epistemological certainty, then we are even more justified in having a tempered credulity toward inductive and inferential models. The question is not how reliable a model *seems* in the Modern semiosphere – but to what degree that felt certainty is simply the Modern God-term reappearing in the guise of conclusions throughout its scaffolding.

Motive can never be removed from semiosis; entailment only happens once we've made a selection. We will look at what this means for Modern realism and idealism. We will consider that in the Modern framework, idealism (and its analogues nominalism, bundle theory, and Anti-Realism) is realism's critique of itself. That is, Modernism at its heart is both idealist and realist, but capable of being neither; using Deely's metaphor, Modernism can't ever be Dr. Jekyll *or* Mr. Hyde. They don't reduce to one another, and they don't resolve. This is perhaps the key breakdown of Modernism's collision with the paradox of substance.

4.3. Modern realism and idealism: A house of mirrors

The conflict between realism and idealism in Modernity arises (1) from human cognition's inability to resolve the paradox of substance and (2) from the Modern framework's inability to respond to that paradox in a way that is consistent with Modern terminologies. The paradox of substance involves more than the multistable optical illusions of Gestalt psychology[126] and indeed appears repeatedly throughout the semiosphere. Attempts to deal with it only result in conflicts that lead continually back into one another like Ouroboros. Realism and idealism are precisely this: within the scene of Modernity, attempting to consistently follow out realism leads to the idealist critique, and attempting to consistently follow out idealism leads to the realist critique. Neither can make progress beyond the

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[126] Though we will briefly discuss multistability below.

intuition that the other has problems. Thus, the paradox of substance "replicates" itself in the domains that attempt to resolve it. We will locate this critical problem as a result of the Modern semiosic framework itself by looking at the paradox in the Modern scene. A more enriched analysis would look also at the paradox in the context of the Christian framework and compare the different possible meaning results. Due to the length constraints of this work, however, we must truncate our analysis and present the more thorough treatment elsewhere.

4.3.1. Definition of realism and idealism

We keep in mind two slightly different definitions of 'realism/idealism': (1) a general Burkean sense of two different perspectival emphases that can be applied within any semiotic framework and (2) the usual stronger sense of "opposing" metaphysical stances associated with each emphasis. The first sense is most semiotically relevant as an analytical tool. The second sense is more directly related to our discussion of Modernism and how it deals with the paradox of substance. We will briefly clarify both types of definition.

4.3.1.1. The Burkean emphasis definition

According to our general Burkean definition, realism and idealism emphasize different aspects of action – that is, each places the prime emphasis on different pentadic terms. As we noted earlier in this work, Burke says that emphasizing each pentadic term generates in principle a different metaphysics or philosophical terminology. Thus, idealism is the terminology you get when you see everything else within a given circumference in terms of the *agent* (Burke 1945b: 128). According to this emphasis, if I'm considering *x*, I'm interested in it as an *object* of (or within) some agent's experience. That object is considered through the filter of that agent; object *x* is seen *in terms of* agent *a*. When the frame of reference is the pentadic terms themselves, scene, act, agency, and purpose are all seen through the lens of agent.

    Realism, on the other hand, is the terminology that results from seeing everything in terms of the *act*. This pentadic emphasis holds even when realism considers non-living existents (non-agents), transforming 'act' into 'event' – a common transformation in Modernity. The realist emphasis considers object *x* not as an object of the observer's experience but as a *subject* in its own right – what *really* exists or is "taking place". It sees the substance in its "purity" (Burke 1945b: 35). It is a result of the human capacity to conceive of an object as being itself an agent (or individual existent) in addition to being an object. As John Deely would say, a realist emphasis is possible in the first place because of the human ability to distinguish between the possible categories of mind-dependence and mind-independence. In this vein, we might say that realism correlates to *act* through the conception of an object as an event that does not reduce to the perceiving agent.

Despite Burke's articulation that such emphases correspond to different meta-physics, we can actually make the more nuanced identification that these emphases can be perspectively applied without resulting in a full-blown metaphysical commitment. That is, pentadic emphases always are applied within some particular circumference. Depending upon how widely the scope of the circumference is drawn, a metaphysics may or may not result. An analytical emphasis may be quite local; for instance, if I am woodworking, I may apply a scenic emphasis in hopes of discovering under what conditions a piece of wood will break – so that I won't get deep in a project, only to have my work break. However, this hardly entails that I will always prioritize a scenic ("materialistic/naturalistic") emphasis; I may only employ a "materialist" perspective in practical settings like woodworking. Indeed, my general metaphysical commitment may be pragmatism, due to an overall preference for agency; in such a case, I would only adopt a "materialist" approach in certain contexts because of its pragmatic results. In order for a scenic emphasis to result in a metaphysical commitment of Materialism (or Naturalism), scene would have to be preferred within a very broad (even universal) circumference.

4.3.1.2. Emphases and multistability

We can alternate such emphases in contexts of varying scope because the pentad is *multistable* – and because multistability is an experiential aspect of human cognition as such. Coming from Gestalt psychology, the term 'multistability' refers to a situation wherein two related entities "are alternately ground and figures to one another" (Gandelman 1982: 53). Famous examples of this phenomenon are the optical illusions of the Necker cube[127] and the vase/two faces. In such "flip-flop figure-ground phenomena", the cube can be seen as if either from above or from below, and one can see the second as either a vase or two faces – though "usually not both" at the same time (Hochberg 1981: 257). The different perspectives arise from different emphases upon the form. Altering our "visual fixation can influence perceptual reversal" (Pomerantz 1981: 150). As we shift our focus, different aspects of a perceptual complex become "alternating backgrounds to each other" (Gandelman 1982: 48). One aspect of the form is seen in terms of the other.

Multistability is not merely a visual phenomenon. We find it in other perceptual modalities, such as those of "touch, kinesthesis, and audition"[128] – basically any mode wherein we internalize "rules of formation and spatial transformation" (Shepard 1981: 318). Spatial transformation means how we establish *container*

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[127] The Necker cube is the simple cube in outline.
[128] Indeed, experiments with sound have found the same result as in optical illusion (Shepard 1981: 319).

and thing contained: that is, in any relation between multiple elements,[129] we can choose to make one element the scene (container) for the other. This is an issue with relation itself, regardless of mode. Since "geometrical representations […] have essentially the same abstract structure", we find the same relational principles "in all modalities" of both "the external world" and cognitive "internal principles" (Shepard 1981: 321). Regardless of the ontological status of this correlation (or *complementarity*), it is a given characteristic of human experience. Wherever we find a relation of multiple elements, multiple emphases are possible.

We describe this relational situation as multistable precisely because even though the structure is "stable", the relation involves enough indeterminacy that there are multiple ways to establish a structural stability (or hierarchy) for the same complex. The basis for how this multistability will be navigated is motive – or intentionality in the broader sense of purpose. Since "an organism's capability of semiosis necessitates an intentional act", we find that this "intention is seen in the way the objects are signs" in agents' experiential worlds (Potter 2016: 123). As such, how an agent resolves a multistable tension reveals that agent's intentions. Indeed, multistability itself can therefore be understood as a sign (1) of the way that relations can be multiply organized, (2) of the necessity of organizing that complexity one way rather than others, and (3) of the necessity of motive (intention) to make this organization. As Claude Gandelman says, the "*metastable* or *multistable Gestalt*" can actually "be used as a model, as a visual sign of the shifting *intentional structure*" (Gandelman 1982: 48). The structure can be shifted, and intention is required to do so. Gandelman suggests that the concept of the multistable Gestalt is itself a model of this experiential reality.

The pentad can be understood as a multistable five-place relation. Each of its terms can be emphasized in a given context, and the nature of each term gives it a certain semiotic "influence" or "coloring" when it is prioritized over the others – regardless of the scope of its priority. Within that context of whatever scope, the selection of the characterizing term suppresses the background, "which now becomes reduced to exactly the same dimensions as the 'figure' it 'contained'" – becoming "symmetrical to it" (Gandelman 1982: 48). Thus, the "idealizing" quality of the term 'agent' which reduces the relational complex consistently with its own thematic or "semantic" principle.

The same goes for the "realism" effects of the term 'act'. These semiotic influences (whereby each pentadic term can be made the overall context for some structural complex) can be understood in a general way; as such, one can have a "realist" or "idealist" emphasis within some limited context without entailing a full-blown metaphysics. One can apply an idealist inflection to see an object in terms of the perceiving agent, and one can apply a realist inflection to see an object abstractively as an existent in its own right. Each can produce valuable semiotic results, and the total exclusion of one or the other can result in a less

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[129] "Multiple elements" is technically redundant since the concept of a relation relies upon the involvement of multiple elements; such is the necessary for identity and difference – consistency and incompatibility.

robust model. This is a semiotic issue that transcends different metaphysical commitments. When the circumference of these reductions is drawn broadly enough, however, then the result will indeed be a metaphysical commitment with significant semiotic results – precisely because the scope of their sovereignty has been drawn very widely.

4.3.1.3. The stronger definition:
Realist/idealist emphases becoming metaphysics

As perspectival filters are applied to a universal frame, 'act' and 'agent' generate what we think of as metaphysical realism and idealism, properly speaking. However, not all realisms and idealisms are identical; depending upon the particular semiosphere in which they are found, incompatible characterizations of reality could go by the same name. Both the realism and the idealism (or idealism's analogue, nominalism) of the Later Medieval period have a different basis and different meaning consequences from the systems going by the same names in the Modern period. Indeed, in a creedally Orthodox Christian context, neither realism nor idealism in their Modern forms work. As such, we will be concerned primarily with the manifestation of these metaphysical perspectives within the Modern semiosphere.

In the Modern scene, an idealist metaphysics will ground reality, experience, the cosmos, and so forth in the human agent; indeed, the early modern departure is marked by making human rationality the universal ground. Common extrapolations are (1) to question whether an object of experience has its own independent being or (2) to state that we cannot know the degree of its mind-independence, which epistemologically amounts to much the same thing. On the other hand, a realist metaphysics will in some way attribute a self-existence to that object of experience – it's a real subject in its own right, and we can know its reality somehow.

As we will see, realist and idealist emphases ultimately amount to the same thing in the Modern paradigm; since reason itself must be our sole authority source, we can't appeal to any external ground without contradicting that commitment. The only external ground to which we can appeal is the (cosmic) *scene* in some respect, but the scene (as the given) can always been perceived and interpreted in multiple, incompatible ways. It is precisely for this reason that the idealist position emerges in the first place. In order to derive a realist conclusion within the modern architecture of meaning, one must make an inference from induction or from an intuition about reason itself; human reason is finite, and Modernism permits no infinite sources of knowledge (such as special revelation). Thus, reason is the very thing that needs explaining, but it cannot fully comprehend itself (cannot *enclose* itself in understanding). A leap across indeterminacy must be made in order to derive a realist conclusion. An idealist can thus charge that the realist has moved into faith; all the realist truly knows is his own decision and perhaps his motives for making it.

However, the idealist conclusion also relies just as much on inference and intuition. Even *if* we have no way of knowing whether we can be certain that our sensations, perceptions, and interpretations are (or even could be) wholly accurate, it does not follow by necessity that they aren't partially or wholly accurate. Even to derive the conclusion that they are inaccurate requires a leap over indeterminacy – a choice of emphasis. In that sense, a realist conclusion *and* an idealist conclusion are categorically the same. Within the modern paradigm, though, this unity favors idealism because idealism describes the situation they both face. Its primacy is due to its entailment by the modern terminology itself; the modern God-term makes human reason ultimate, but making human reason ultimate simultaneously makes the human agent ultimate. Thus, modernism in its departure point is already an embracing of an idealist terminology and universal emphasis: it prioritizes the human *agent*. However, it prioritized the human agent with a realist ethos; outwardly it was realism, but its terministic commitment to agent ensured that its metaphysical core was idealist in a particular sense.

This introduces a strange and unresolvable conflict where the two displace one another continuously. They can neither reduce the other away nor eliminate its critique of themselves; realism itself gives birth to the idealist critique, and the idealist critique reintroduces the realist intuition. Attempting to ground realism reveals no substantial basis undergirding it beyond intuition, and an idealist denial of realism would have to describe some *reality* overall.

4.3.2. An example of a realist surface with an idealist core

Bertrand Russell exudes modernity and a realist ethos. He is identified with "logicism",[130] defined by Quine as the reappearance of medieval realism in the context of "twentieth-century surveys of the philosophy of mathematics" (Quine 2008: 51). However, in *My Philosophical Development*, Russell expresses a strong idealist stance, saying he holds that "we can witness or observe what goes on in our heads, and that we cannot witness or observe anything else at all" (Russell 1959: 26).[131] No direct epistemological access to anything beyond ourselves is possible. Russell says he agrees with Bishop George Berkeley: anything more is inference. Apart from inference, the "whole of what we perceive […] belongs to our private world" (Russell 1959: 27). The empirical becomes a construct of the individual mind: "The starry heaven that we know in visual sensation is *inside us*. The external starry heaven that we believe in is inferred" (Russell 1959: 27, emphasis mine). But inference necessarily involves indeterminacy, a gap only crossed by volition. The conviction about the stars' existence is not entailed; Russell has no way of knowing for sure, but he chooses to believe that they exist. Despite Russell's optimistic emphasis, this is precisely the stance that Deely calls idealism: the mind only knows what it creates.

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[130] Along with Frege, Whitehead, Church, and Carnap.
[131] Deely (2001: 588) references this quote as well.

However, Russell often presents as a realist. For instance, he wrote a book called *Why I Am Not a Christian* (1957), wherein his arguments exude a strong realist tone. He charges that we should "stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world" – claiming that we can "see the world as it is" (Russell 1957: 23). Employing our ability to see bare reality, we can thereby conclude that the "whole conception of God [...] seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings" (Russell 1957: 23). Freed from fear,[132] we will finally be able to "[c]onquer the world by intelligence" (Russell 1957: 23). If any fear remains, "Science can help us to get over" it, teaching us "to look to our own efforts here" for moral and social improvement (Russell 1957: 22). Seeing the world "as it is", we will thus create the best possible world – one that is "better than what these others have made of it" in all previous, ignorant ages (Russell 1957: 23). His epistemological attitude is the realist ethos characteristic of the Enlightenment.

However, Russell's profession of an idealist epistemology would put a significant qualification on his realist statements. In that light, a more fitting title for his book would be *Why I Choose Not to be a Christian*. If he cannot be certain of the stars' existence, neither can he be certain of God's nonexistence, since both would share the category of being inferences. A naive modern realist is likely to intuit that an inference about a visible object (a star) is more reliable than one about an invisible object (God). The problem is that the issue is with the nature of inference itself, not with the inference's subject matter. If there is an unavoidable gap between (1) our inferred conclusions and (2) reality that we can *know*, then the question of the inference's subject matter is superficial. Our inferences would always be underdetermined and involve a motivated decision. Even if we could demonstrate without residual indeterminacy that there is a "percentage difference" in uncertainty between the seen and the unseen, the fact that indeterminacy remains for both puts them in a shared category. But if we can't even ascertain the ontological grasp of sensation, how can we establish a certainty differential between multiple objects of whatever sort? Actually, we *can* establish a percentage: we have 0% ability to demonstrate the actual nature of experiential objects beyond our *ability* to doubt – and this applies to empirical as well as to non-empirical objects.

In such a paradigm, Russell can only be telling us about his inner world and his own motives. When Russell tells us that the conception of God "seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings", he can only be telling us about the way it seems to *him*. When he condemns belief in God because people accept it "on emotional grounds" (Russell 1957: 19), with the presumption that he's operating in a different mode of plain fact and rational argument, he can in reality only be building his stance on a different type of the same ground. Again, the ground is inference, not the inference's rationale. In the modern "reason only" paradigm, the most we can do is either (1) make limited selections of reality and construct a valid (consistent) argument from those choices, or (2) appeal directly

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[132] Russell 1957: 22.

to an intuition. The first can be doubted by questioning the initial selections and constructing a contrary argument, and the second can be countered with a contrary intuition – since intuitions must be asserted.

These two options correlate to "synthetic" and "analytic" statements, respectively. As Beiser notes, this was the problem that the 18th century moderns encountered in the anti-foundationalist critique. If the first principle you choose from natural reason alone is synthetic, it's "deniable and so subject to skeptical doubt"; if it's analytic, it's "trivial and without consequences" (Beiser 2005: 25). Even worse, the analytic foundation actually falls prey to doubt itself because in order to know if the assertion was "materially true", we'd have to consult experience – at which point we encounter the problem of indeterminacy, according to which "we can conceptualize, systematize or interpret the same facts in incompatible ways" (Beiser 2005: 25). To construct a synthetic statement (*A* is *B*), we must first construct an analytic statement (*A* is *A*), which requires us to navigate indeterminacy in the first place. This means that Russell can't eliminate indeterminacy simply because the basis for his inferences are supposedly not emotional; his "ascertainings" of the "world as it is" rely on common-sense intuitions that he chooses to believe, which is precisely what emotions are: a type of common-sense intuition. His realist aspirations lack the capacity to escape the constraints set by his idealist epistemology.

Whatever argument (outside of formal necessity) that Russell tries to advance will fall prey to this consequence. This is the power of Wittgenstein's critique in the *Tractatus*; the Modern paradigm doesn't permit one to say with certainty more about reality than can be derived from formal necessity. Wittgenstein critiqued Russell on this account; he said, "Propositions like Russell's 'axiom of reducibility' are not logical propositions", and "even if they were true, their truth could only be the result of a fortunate accident" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.1232). It's likely for such reasons that Wittgenstein, after defending his *Tractatus*, clapped Russell "on the shoulder consolingly" – as if to say, "Don't worry, I know you'll never understand it" (Heaton, Groves 1999: 71). Russell is committed to an unsteady coexistence of idealism and realism, according to which motivated, inferential choices (about the stars, God, etc.) hide behind a borrowed credulity of a realism modernity can't justify consistently within its own framework.

Russell is not alone, of course. We can understand modern metaphysics in general as an attempt to work out this very conflict. Realism finds itself having to defend against the same spirit of critique in multiple areas and under different names – such as nominalism, bundle theory, and Anti-Realism. None of these critiques provides satisfactory solutions, but they all reveal the unstable core of modern realism and its inability to consistently deal with the problem of substance. Let's look at these tensions now.

4.3.3. Nominalism defined

Nominalism arises in the examination of universals – qualities shared among different objects. The realist says that perceived universals do not reduce to human cognition/semiosis. The nominalist says that all or some of them do – at least in certain respects. The nominalist position holds that all qualities shared by concrete objects (such as color and shape) are not properties of those objects but of our mental activity. When it comes to "the properties things posses, the relations into which they enter, and the kinds to which they belong", there is no actual thing or entity that all those objects "share or have in common" (Loux 2008: 17). They are properties which we reify as a mind-independent category. In predicate (concept) nominalism, "properties, et cetera, are as it were created by the classifying mind: shadows cast on things by our predicates or concepts" (Armstrong 2008: 67). We think something is real just because we gave it a name.

However, a metaphysical realist holds that we have given a name to a mind-independent reality. Realism claims that there actually "are entities that can be simultaneously exemplified by several different objects" – that "the referents of predicate expressions" applying to more than one particular object actually *do* refer to something real (Loux 2008: 17). That is, the word 'dog' refers to a general kind that does not reduce to the human mind. Thus, universals exist for real out there somewhere, outside of "space and time, ontologically independent of us" (Azzouni 2004: 107). Particular concrete objects "agree in attribute in virtue of their jointly exemplifying a single universal" – such that there do exist "non-repeatable entities that stand in a special relation to repeatable entities" (Loux 2008: 19). 'Nonrepeatable' means concrete, numerically distinct particulars; two "identical" bottles of water are still two different objects despite their similarities. 'Repeatable' means universal entities that obtain across a variety of particulars. This distinction reflects an ontological reality that grounds our common sense understanding of language, the similarities among objects, and the correspondence of language and the world.

One of the key disagreements is the realist thinks that if abstract reference didn't connect to a terminus transcending individual objects, then language wouldn't work the way it does; we would have no way to account for attribute agreement. If "we say that an object is triangular, we are not merely saying that it belongs to a set of objects" but also "pointing to the property shared by all the members of the set" and saying that a particular member of that set exhibits that real property (Loux 2008: 25). Indeed, realists say that "an adequate account of attribute agreement *presupposes* a distinction between two types or categories of objects", the two categories being universals and particulars (Loux: 2008: 19, emphasis mine). That is, since we necessarily presuppose this distinction, it therefore exists.

A nominalist, though, would say that our having to presuppose a certain way of thinking doesn't entail a realist metaphysical description. Our being able to talk about things in a certain way does not entail a particular ontological characterization of the modeling. The perceived universal is not necessarily something we're encountering "out there" (like a Platonic form) but may come as a result of

giving multiple objects all the same *name*. This is an old philosophical problem that modernity continues from Antiquity, making it "perhaps the oldest sustained debate in metaphysics" (Loux 2008: 19). Philosophers traditionally referred to as "*metaphysical realists* or simply *realists*" are those who continue to "endorse the Platonic schema", but despite the long popularity of this position, nominalists have argued in modernity "that there are deep conceptual problems with the metaphysical machinery" it implies (Loux 2008: 19). Some nominalists have argued that a "quite different theoretical explanation for attribute agreement" is needed, and some have held that no account is needed at all because it's a primitive, unanalyzable fact resting on intuition (Loux 2008: 19). Those two options obviously have different consequences for meaning, but they both have a critique of realism in common.

4.3.4. Modern realism's inability to defeat the nominalist critique

Accounts of reality that run counter to many of our central intuitions are presented under the name 'nominalism', and one of realism's strongest factors of support is that it matches those intuitions. The problem is that 'realism' in the modern context creates weird results, leaving us in the position of always relying on intuition, even though the terminology of modernity requires every stance be supported by rational justification in order to count as truth. The debate between realism and nominalism highlights the impossibility of establishing truth through "natural reason", demonstrating that neither realism nor nominalism ever escapes intuition.

   Much of realism's account of universals involves taking an intuition, splitting it abstractively into parts, classifying those parts, and then using those classifications to explain the intuition – as if the classification as a universal were an indivisible "atom" that combined with other universals to build up the "complex body" of the intuition.[133] This would mean that the gradient of differing forms arises from (or is caused by) a shifting degree of shared universals: a dog exhibits attributes [*a*, *b*, *c*], and a cat exhibits [*b*, *c*, *d*], such that they agree in [*b*, *c*] but not [*a*, *d*]. In a realist account, "what gives rise to the difference in degree of agreement is the fact that the universals [which] particulars exemplify exhibit varying degrees of generality" – meaning that universals, "then, come in hierarchies of generalities" (Loux 2008: 20–21). This way of thinking is traceable to Ancient Greek thought, in which context this kind of generally Platonic schema makes more sense. In a cosmos suffused with and structured by a pantheon of "Universals" responsible for causing and maintaining the order of the world, a Platonic conception of abstract universals "giving rise to different degrees of agreement" among existent particulars is a more organic concept.

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[133] David Armstrong (2008: 90), for instance, mentions certain theories "that try to construct properties and relations out of other materials" – and which encounter "great difficulties" in such an atomistic attempt.

But in the context of modernity, where not just "gods" but "God" has been left behind as an organizing principle, this conception of universals encounters meaning problems. Universals operate structurally as if they're still a pantheon despite that terministic impossibility. In his summary of contemporary metaphysics, Michael Loux says that realists like to affirm different types of universals – some being not just monadic but "*polyadic* or *many-place* universals" (Loux 2008: 20). Universals are structured in a hierarchy that culminates in universals above which there are no others: "every such hierarchy terminates in fully determinate universals, universals such that they have no less general or more determinate universals under them" (Loux 2008: 21). Loux frames this in a structure where these most determinate universals are at the bottom, but what matters is not how he geometrically prioritizes the hierarchy but that there does exist a fixed hierarchical boundary on one side. Further, these fully determinate universals at the so-called bottom are things like "color, shape, kind, spatial relation", and so forth (Loux 2008: 21); thus, it would make equal sense to envision these universals at the *summit* of the hierarchy, for they are indivisible, self-existent, and non-derivative. That is, if pictured at the top of the hierarchy, there are none higher. Structurally, this parallels the pagan cosmic hierarchy, indicating an implicitly theological remnant in the secular paradigm that retains key aspects of its conceptual ancestor's logos.

4.3.4.1. The infinite regress of Modern realism

Understanding the realist treatment of universals in this implicitly theological light helps us to better account for some of its weird results. For instance, realists claim that these most fundamental, indivisible universals "can themselves agree in exemplifying further universals" (Loux 2008: 21). They can creatively interact to give rise to new complex universals, a complexity that continues to compound. The variety of particulars exemplifies "universals of different types: properties, kinds, and relations. Those universals, in turn, possess further properties, belong to further kinds, and enter into further relations […] and so on, seemingly, without end" (Loux 2008: 21). The increasingly complex hierarchy continues to extend infinitely. What was initially "an apparently innocent extension of common sense" has turned into an ontology "that is a long distance from common sense" (Loux 2008: 21).

Of course, this is a result realists generally don't want. Saving the common sense view of reality is one of the primary goals of realism, if not *the* major goal. This aim leads realists to defend their theory despite the fact that some "might balk at the complexity" of it – precisely because it leads to results they think are good: it's "a fruitful theory", presumably justifying certain claims about the relation of language and thought to the world (Loux 2008: 21). Thus, this theory is embraced despite the unpleasant result of its generating an infinite hierarchy, which is seen as counterproductive. Moderns dispelled with God often because

they wanted to eliminate a foundational infinity that must be simply accepted instead of justified[134] by human reason.

Realists have sought to maintain this schema, though, because it supposedly helps to justify some of our most central intuitions about language and the world. Loux mentions that some of these are precisely for subject-predicate discourse and abstract reference. The specifics of these arguments are too nuanced for us to trace without going off topic, so we will restrict ourselves to a few relevant problems. Loux (who himself supports realism) mentions a difficulty which "appears to plague the realist attempt to explain subject-predicate truth" – namely, that the statement '*a* is *F*' "is true only if the referent of '*a*' exemplifies the universal (*F-ness*) expressed by '*F*'"; however, that means that in order for '*a* is *F*' to be true, we also need the sentence '*a* exemplifies *F-ness*' to be true (Loux 2008: 32). It should be clear where this is going. We still can't establish the truth of the first statement until we can show "the ground of the truth of this new sentence" (Loux 2008: 32). But this new sentence, by introducing a new predicate, introduces a new universal that itself needs explaining, leading us to yet another new statement: '*a* exemplifies the exemplification of *F-ness*' (Loux 2008: 32). This will never end. No ontological bottom can be found in this way. Signs can't ground themselves, and we can never find the location of being because there is no "I Am" inherent within the signs (or within the concrete particular). This is precisely the paradox of substance: Where *is the thing*? It seems to be *some*place, but when we look closely, the ontology drifts away. When we chase after it, it recedes further. Where is the "ghost in the machine"? We cut the body and do not find the soul; we parse the sign and do not find the logos.

4.3.4.2. The nominalist response

The nominalist charges that this kind of problem is an infinite regress – one that is "vicious", meaning fatal to the metaphysics. Realists, on the other hand, say we must avoid this problem but claim there's a way around it. For this regress, their solution is to simply "deny that every distinct form of attribute agreement involves a separate and distinct universal", thus denying "that where the agreement consists in a number of objects exemplifying a universal, there is a further universal supporting the agreement' (Loux 2008: 32). Instead, we just "restrict the applicability of the Platonic schema and the realist's theory of predication" (Loux 2008: 32). This is not a rational explanation, though; it means simply taking the statement '*a* is *F*' at face value and choosing to believe that the presence is already there – that is, relying on "intuition". It means just drawing a line and, through choice (belief), investing the beginning place with the real presence that we need. This simply posits a self-existent whose ground is contained in itself and is present *somehow*, asserting that it's not infinite and moving on as if there was no problem, no crisis in meaning.

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[134] Or perhaps controlled.

Loux doesn't think this is an issue. He says that if "these regresses just delineated are real, it is difficult to see why the realist should be bothered by them" (Loux 2008: 33). He asserts that the realist only originally set out to "provide a complete account of any given case of attribute agreement" and that simply saying 'a is F' has, in fact, "given us a complete explanation"; if this explanation "introduces a new case of attribute agreement" that results in a regress, the realists "are under no obligation" to continue applying "the Platonic schema" and to follow out the implications of their own argument consistently (Loux 2008: 33). Thus, he tells us that even if this regress is real, it's not a big deal because the realist can just choose not to deal with it, simply accepting and assuming an ontological foundation rather than continuing to apply the rule of his own model when it hits a wall.

This just becomes the realist assumption about reality applied at a new level to stop the metaphysical bleeding. We begin with a realist assumption about the world and reality, which is a "natural" part of common sense experience, but a challenge comes about how to ground that assumption in rational justification; one attempt that the realist makes is to give this explanation of subject-predicate truth, a solution that we were told was powerful enough to justify a concept of hierarchical universals that recedes into infinite regress (or extension) at the most general level.

The solution actually given, however, leads to the same kind of regress in perhaps an even more critical area; the logos is now draining away from the predicate itself, such that there is no locatable *I Am* in the sense of the absolutely ontological ground proper to the predicate itself as it rests on or requires subjective being as a potential act. The solution to this new critical problem is to simply reassert the realist assumption *with which we began*; the realist attempt at rational justification provided no insight into that intuition but only spilled out its presence, the solution for which was to reassert the original intuition. This is a confrontation with paradox. It seems that we either accept the presence underlying ontology "on faith" and *find* it, or we seek to enclose it with discursive reason and *lose* it.

Yet Loux downplays this confrontation with indeterminacy by framing the choice in negative rather than positive terms. He says that the realist *would* have had to explain this ontological regress/retreat only if "the aim had been to eliminate or analyze away the subject-predicate form of discourse"; then, indeed, the regress "would be genuinely problematic" (Loux 2008: 33). But that's not the realist's aim at all, he says. If that burden falls upon anyone, it falls upon the nominalist. After all, "the realist is hardly committed to supposing that it is possible to eliminate that form of discourse" (Loux 2008: 33). It is easy to miss what Loux has done here because of his sober rhetorical technique. But notice the reversals that have taken place. He has made the realist's commitment to his own assumptions their ultimate justification; 'the realist is not committed to supposing it's possible to eliminate discourse that assumes realist ontology' is a subtle but complex way of saying, 'the realist is not committed to conclusions that undermine his own assumptions'. This is said in a backhanded way where his commitment is not mentioned directly but stands at two degrees of removal.

That is, first, he's saying that he's not committed to conclusions that, if true, would undermine his own assumptions in their support for a contrary position. The realist belief about language and reality here entails that we can't eliminate subject-predicate discourse because it *does* correspond to a mind-independent reality beyond human will. Therefore, Loux affirms his commitment by denying entailment from a contrary commitment. Second, he seems to frame the exception case where the aim would be "to eliminate or analyze away the subject-predicate form of discourse" in a way that actually supports the realist assumption. He says that if that *had* been the aim, the regress would have been a problem, but this means that he is actually saying that the infinite regress is a *support* for the realist account of ontology, reality, and attribute agreement. This is a subtle reversal whose actual claim would be more controversial if it was overt. He has indirectly turned an objection to realism into an apparent support for it.

In truth, though, the critique of realism's case for universals or for subject-predicate discourse is *not* that it's possible for human beings to eliminate that form of discourse. Our inability to escape it doesn't entail that the realist account is accurate; that's a different issue. But Loux makes it sound like that equivalence holds, and then he negates it, giving an impression of a support for realism. Skimming over that offhanded remark, though, he says that even if such a regress did exist and even if it was a problem for the realist, it doesn't matter anyway because that regress "is one that infects every attempt, realist *or* nominalist, at delineating the ontological grounds of subject-predicate truth" (Loux 2008: 33). By way of example, he mentions a particular nominalist theory of the same subject:

> For each subject-predicate sentence of the form '*a* is *F*,' it will identify some condition, *C*, and will tell us that the original sentence is true only if *C* is fulfilled; but then there will be a new subject-predicate sentence ('*a* is such that *C* is fulfilled'), and our original sentence can be true only if the second sentence is true. Accordingly, that theory will be every bit as regressive as the realist's. (Loux 2008: 33)

That is, if neither can get away from it, then it doesn't matter, and realism doesn't have to account for that problem in its own formulations and theories. No crisis is at hand; if realism can't defeat the nominalist critique, that's okay because nominalism can't defeat the realist critique. But nominalism arises as a result of problems appearing in realism, not the other way around. Realism (not nominalism) corresponds to our common sense view, but when we try to rationally justify that view in the Modern context, ontological problems arise; nominalism is a critique of realism, and it need not successfully propose an alternative model to successfully identify issues in Modern realism.

4.3.5. Substratum theory and bundle theory

Indeed, this ontological retreat facing realism appears on other fronts. Consider bundle theory's critique of another manifestation of realism: substratum theory. The debate here is a slightly different emphasis of the same problem. Namely, this question eventually arises: *Regardless of whether or not the concrete particular is comprised of universals, and regardless of whether or not the perception of universals is mind-dependent, where is the actual unity of the particular itself?* In attempting to analyze the ontology of particulars, we have been assuming "that they are wholes made up of metaphysically more fundamental constituents" (Loux 2008: 84). But what is this unity, this substantial whole? The question is usually answered in one of two supposedly opposing ways: substratum theory and bundle theory.

The two views correlate to the realist and nominalist viewpoints above. Substratum theory is basically realism, and it holds that "a concrete particular is a whole made up of the various properties we associate with the particular together with an underlying subject or substratum that has an identity independent of the properties" for which it serves as the foundation; this substratum would be the "bare particular" itself, which "is the literal exemplifier of those properties" (Loux 2008: 84). For all intents and purposes, 'substratum' is another word for 'substance'. This identification is not new, for Leibniz himself mentioned the "notion of substance" that "says simply that it is a *substratum*" (Leibniz 1989: 286). Indeed, Leibniz agrees with Locke in critiquing those who think they have given an explanation of substance when in truth "they speak of this I-know-not-what we call *subject* or *substratum*" (Leibniz 1989: 286). Thus, subject, substance, and substratum become effectively names for the same thing.

Bundle theory (BT) leans into the observation that 'substratum' is a name for something as equally undefined as 'substance'. BT has an obvious connection to the nominalist critique, holding that "there are no underlying substrata" (Loux 2008: 84). There is no subject-reality which possesses the traits we perceive in objects, no *I Am* serving as the foundation for those aggregates of universals. Instead, "ordinary particulars are constituted exclusively by the properties associated with them; they are just 'bundles' or 'clusters' of those properties" (Loux 2008: 84).

That is, in the constitution of any concrete object, there are two different types of entities: "the various attributes associated with the concrete object, and something that functions as the literal bearer or possessor of those attributes" (Loux 2008: 87). Bundle theorists would say that for a red cylindrical plastic cup, once you remove the redness, the cylindrical-ness, the plastic-ness, the cup-ness (etc.), there is no thing or subjectivity that remains. There is nothing which once possessed those qualities but now does not. For them, the notion of a substratum as the bare particular (the particular bare of any defining qualities) is incoherent. While it makes a kind of intuitive sense to say that objects do not reduce to mere accidental qualities, and while indeed we may *not* be able to think about objects entirely free of the notion of an underlying subjectivity, it makes no sense to posit

an entity that has *zero* defining qualities. This can't even consistently follow its own principle; it's contradictory to say that there is a thing whose defining property is having no defining properties. How can such a claim even be valid?

A substratum theorist would point out, though, that a bundle theorist can't be consistent either. Not only is the notion of a substratum as a ground of attributes inherent to our thinking, but it's also inherent to and necessary for subject-predicate discourse. We cannot escape thinking of objects as having some kind of ontological *substance* that we might say distinguishes existence from non-existence. And our fundamental intuition is that an alteration of a concrete object's secondary (accidental) qualities does not transform it into a different object. Even this position's supporters would no doubt complain if you made a small tear on the cover of their favorite book and then stole it because "that's not their book anymore". We have an unavoidable intuition that an underlying subjectivity exists for concrete objects, and if we tolerate the theft, it's because we're enacting a principle, not because we actually think our book popped out of existence.[135]

4.3.5.1. Substratum theory's collision with the substance paradox

Nevertheless, we cannot *place* this ontological core anywhere specific in the concrete domain – even metaphysically speaking. It's the same problem for all being: where is the thing? Neither option makes sense once you follow it out fully. We end up with *nothing* in both cases. The sub-stance as a scenic word is conceived of as an agent term: the substratum is the *literal* bearer or possessor of its attributes, and these are all action terms. Since action can only be undertaken by an agent, the substratum functions as an agent term, not a scenic term. Thus, we see that some of the strange aspects of the concept derive from again treating a scene as an agent; it cannot possibly remain consistent if its implications are allowed to play out fully.

Substratum theory runs afoul of Locke's critiques of the Modern conception of substance in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, as Burke points out.[136] Regarding what Locke called our obscure idea of substance, "'if anyone will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what support of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us'" (Locke 1825[1690]: 192–193). The simple ideas here correlate to the "attributes" that concern bundle theorists and substratum theorists. Locke says, "'If any one should be asked, what is the subject wherein color or weight inheres" or "what is it that solidity and extension inhere in", his answer will eventually entail "something, he knew not what" (Locke 1825[1690]: 193). Locke says that the situation for a modern is not categorically different from an Indian claiming that the world rested on the back of a great elephant (a joke that Leibniz also makes); the subsequent question of what grounds the elephant leads to the answer, "I don't know".

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[135] Of course, we're excluding instances of "psychosis" or other exceptional mental states.
[136] (Burke 1945b: 22).

Modern thinking leads to the same place, even in substratum theory. After all, once we push its analysis all the way, what more could we say than "I don't know what it's like"? If something has no describable properties at all, we cannot say what it's like.

Thus, in our attempts to describe substance, Locke says, all we do is invoke the name 'substance' as a general title. And this is precisely "nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing" (Locke 1825[1690]: 193). As a title meaning a 'standing under, or upholding', it becomes undefined and undefinable, amounting to "something upholds it". But since we have no idea *what* is upholding it, the agent term becomes a scenic term as "*x* upholds *y*" is translated into "*y* is upheld". This puts the object in the subject position, and that object is reconceived as providing its own ontological ground through this simple assertion – or the tautology of *naming*. Not only is the agent term implicitly eliminated, resulting in a less complete description, but in removing the agent and making the action passive, it has moved into a magical mode of thought, as Lotman said.

In the Modern context, this rationale follows all the way down from the God-term, moving the foundation from that which is *other* than itself to *itself*. Human reason becomes not only the ground of authority but also the ground of its own being through semiotic transformations to metaphysics: the human agent is made the scene of the scene. The semiotic reversal allows for what Burke calls "an alchemic moment, wherein momentous miracles of transformation [in meaning] can take place"; in the case of substance, this means that "the intrinsic and the extrinsic can change places" (Burke 1945b:24). The scene becomes totalizing, the entirety of the maximal circumference, making the notion of the "scenic thing in itself" the upper ontological boundary (or the ontological foundation). But since we must define a thing in terms of what it is not, all cosmic reality becomes un-definable. In this very act of affirming its being, we deny its being, and the implication is to paradoxically say that some thing's nature in its most proper ontology is that it is *not*.[137] Scene and agent terms have been collapsed. There is no scene beyond the scene, and the analysis of the scene itself leads us to results characteristic of ontological dependence, but we have no semiotic categories in which to ground that dependent ontology. The scene is all there is.

The paradox of substance prevents substratum theory from being able to ever close the boundaries on what a substratum is. Even if we bury the paradox under abstract philosophical language, this unavoidable antinomy "will be discovered lurking [even] beneath any vocabulary designed to treat of motivation by the deliberate outlawing of the *word* for substance" (Burke 1945b: 24). Of course, bundle theory (as a manifestation of the idealist ethos) does not present any more

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137   In other words, even if we try to assert some part of the scene as ontologically primary, we immediately negate that primacy by either talking about it in terms of what it is not or by saying that it has no describable character or properties, making it indistinguishable from nothingness – save for the fact that we have given it a name. But humans have long given names to things that don't exist, so this brings no satisfaction.

complete of an account than substratum theory. But like nominalism, it points out that this paradox of substance is not one that Modernity can escape, even if the wider implications are often missed. At its heart, the ethos of Modernity has always been realist, but it simultaneously generates idealism (and its congeners) because of this ontological paradox; the edifice of realism is being constructed, but it's built on idealist foundations. The realism draws the eye, but beneath the surface it hides a chasm that doesn't support it; the substratum to support the visible attributes is missing.

4.3.6. Realism and Anti-realism

Realism can't escape this ontological regress even if we define realism in the broadest possible terms – terms that functionally include idealism – and this is precisely what some realists have tried to do. Loux's method for solving regress earlier was to stop following it out and just assert that the presence is there; this is also his method for saving realism as a whole. He begins by first redefining realism in a way that actually includes idealism (nominalism, bundle theory, etc.) and then ends his book by saying that a realist can just choose to hold realist beliefs when he has failed to resolve its problems or to dispel "anti-realist" critiques.

What he does is make a belief in a mind-independent world in any sense the *sole* criterion for being a realist. In some ways this makes sense; the insistence on a mind-independent reality has been a major emphasis in John Deely's fight against idealism. Unfortunately, Deely would probably not be so happy with Loux's redefinition, which moves the boundary in such a way that puts realism on the same footing as any other belief we might desire, regardless of grounding. According to Loux's new definition, both "the Platonist" *and* "the extreme nominalist" can affirm "the idea of a mind-independent world that functions as a parameter for the truth of what we believe and say" (Loux 2008: 262). In light of Bertrand Russell's earlier statements, he would also fall into the category of a realist, then, because he certainly seems to *believe* in a mind-independent world. Given this definition, it's possible that an extreme nominalist could think of themselves as a realist. Loux is now giving a new, much more inclusive definition of 'Realism', which he now capitalizes to signify a greater category that allows many modern stances to count as Realism in opposition to Anti-Realism. The problem, though, is that his definition gives us nowhere to go with either. It denies us a meaningful distinction between the two, and further locks us into an idealist or "Anti-Realist" world such as Loux apparently wants to avoid.

First he equates "the traditional [realist] view" with the general idea of a belief in some type of mind-independent world. He says that this view holds that "there is a mind-independent world about which we form beliefs and make statements" which are true if "they correspond to the world they are about", and that correspondence "is a property that *can transcend our ability to determine* whether or not it obtains" (Loux 2008: 259, emphasis mine). Thus, someone can be a hard line idealist *and* simultaneously a "Realist" because our ability to know whether

anything we say or think actually corresponds to a mind-independent reality is now irrelevant. All we must do is accede to the proposition that a mind-independent world exists in some sense and has *some* constraining effect upon us. We can be a complete realist *and* a total epistemological skeptic.

It makes sense for Loux to capitalize 'realism' here because he's described a type of realism that is more like a mystical orientation or faith commitment – which is permissible, but it's a very different definition. Loux actually ends his book with this final sentence:

> even if the anti-Realist can succeed in eluding the attacks of the Realist, that fact should not trouble the Realists among us. We can, in good conscience, go on believing in a mind-independent reality and go on as well believing that metaphysics gives us access to the nature of being *qua* being. (Loux 2008: 293)

That is, even if the realist can't overcome the objections of the anti-Realist, he can keep believing what he wants anyway. He can make a *choice* to continue believing in a mind-independent reality – because the epistemological situation of the realist and of the idealist are identical and do not count as a meaningful distinction. While in a sense we, too, want to emphasize choice in the face of indeterminacy, Loux's definition seems like a very nominalistic definition of realism, which is an odd way to save realism. Indeed, it would *have* to be if it's going to be inclusive of extreme nominalists.

If someone of a realist inclination can simply choose to be a realist regardless of how successful the arguments of anti-realism are, then why can't an anti-realist choose to be a realist, too? Indeed, this would involve at most a simple change of belief or emphasis – an act of faith chosen because it's possible to choose it. After all, Loux gives us a definition of anti-realism that indeed makes it possible for it to be completely consistent with realism. He says that the view that's opposed to Realism and is called Anti-realism today "is the view that what we call 'the world,' what we called 'reality,' is constituted *in part* by our conceptual activities or the conceptual tools we employ in our inquiry" (Loux 2008: 259, emphasis mine). This is such a low stakes definition of anti-realism that almost no one would deny its viewpoint. That's not anti-realism unless by 'realism' you mean that the universe *forces* all the right conclusions on us about everything in a complete and perfect sense, but since Loux emphasizes choice, he obviously affirms some presence of indeterminacy.

Given these definitions, the much easier task is to identify the few people who *don't* think that our mental activity has any kind of shaping effect upon our experience and perception of reality. That's what we would have to think in order to not count as Loux's Realist. And his characterization of the anti-realist viewpoint is simply a "picture of a world tinged with mentality" (Loux 2008: 293). He tries to get more for free by implying that the anti-realist position is the total denial of any influence of the mind-independent world upon understanding – that claims evidence is entirely a construct of the mind without any influencing factors. He positions the realist as then charging that according to the anti-realist, "we

find ourselves talking instead about our epistemic situation" when we try to make a claim about mind-independent factors (Loux 2008: 292).

But there are two problems. First, he already defined anti-realism as tinged with mentality, but 'tinged' hardly means 'entirely colored by'. This is such a low stakes claim that anyone who doesn't believe in external determinism could be an anti-realist. It's therefore as vague as his definition of realism, which can apply to anyone who isn't a complete solipsist. These two extremes constitute absolute meaning/truth determinism and absolute solipsism, but how many people actually hold these views? This definitional schema makes the majority of people simultaneously realists *and* anti-realists, with the only remainder being a handful of psychopaths, presumably. In what sense is this a good definition?[138] It only sounds like each category has been defined by the exaggerations of its opponents – as if realism and anti-realism/idealism are both nothing but straw men.

4.3.6.1. Realism and Anti-realism/idealism as the same in Modernism

The distinction is utterly meaningless in this paradigm because of the second problem: in Modernity, these two positions are the same and lead into one another. That's why they both entail a description that essentially includes everyone. Almost everyone rejects truth determinism and believes instead in the possibility of error; almost everyone rejects solipsism and believes instead that the mind lacks complete freedom over its own experience. The most hardcore idealist acts as if realism is true; the most hardcore realist can't resolve the paradox of substance and provide an unavoidable justification for our realist intuitions. Neither can account for its own contradictions, and when they try to articulate a complete and consistent perspective, they create a straw man out of *themselves*; their only value, the only place where they don't undermine themselves, is in their critique of each other. But their critique of each other is identical to the critique that's born from trying to carry out the implications of each to its logical conclusion. In Modernity, the transparent, systematic application of realism *is* the critique of realism, and is therefore identical with idealism; and the transparent, systematic application of idealism *is* the critique of idealism, being thus identical with realism.

Loux should be aware of this problem because he almost manages to articulate it. He says that the anti-realist description, which frames things "in terms of what would count as evidence warranting the statement's assertion", is actually "the same statement" that the realist makes, only understood "in a quite different way" (Loux 2008: 292). Presumably Loux can't see (or doesn't present) the implication here: that the Realist and Anti-Realist positions are not wholly distinct but are simply different emphases. When he says that they "read [the] statements in different ways", he gives the impression that anti-realism is a mischaracterization of a realist truth rather than the other side of the same perspective (Loux 2008:292). In truth, the realist may actually be talking mainly about the formal consistency

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[138] We can refer no doubt to what Deely calls anemic, "sterile", or "empirical" realism. See Deely 2001: 570, 576, 576n70, 573, 573n60, 586, and 587n97.

of our statements and the relations we have established between the states of affairs in experience, while the anti-realist may be mainly talking about our actual epistemic access to the truth of those statements.

But if the question of epistemic access or reliability is separate from the property of truth as being able to transcend our ability to discern it, what does the mere possibility of statements that *could be* true have to do with our confidence about our *actual* statements and conclusions at any given point? Because this seems like the most that a realist position could hope to gain if it wants to include stances that are uncertain about our actual access to verifiable knowledge regarding ontology, purpose, and meaning: to say that it is *possible* for truth to exist in such a way that "mind-independent states of affairs" and "signs that make truth claims about such states" could theoretically align in a consistent "correspondence of truth".

The problem is that we don't need an elaborate metaphysical theory to get this kind of possibility; we get it for free by identifying the formal invalidity of universal statements against truth (what we called naive relativism earlier). This invalidity tells us that the truth is necessarily possible and must exist in some capacity, but it does *not* tell us what that capacity is or what statements are true. As we've said, we cannot move directly from empirical givens or logical forms to conclusions about the nature and meaning of the world; we always encounter both incompatibility and indeterminacy within experience, resulting in semiotic "crises", and we cannot resolve these crises by looking to either the scene-as-experienced or to logic for an automatic resolution. We must act, which means we must choose to catalyze some motive – even if that means embracing some system of interpretation that will let us pretend that our desired choice is entailed.

When the so-called Modern Realist position tries to save itself by redefining the distinction between 'realism' and 'not realism' to rest upon the belief in *some kind* of mind-independent reality and the *possibility* of truth correspondence, that doesn't keep any of its characterizations of reality from being nominalizations – that is, making something seem real by creating a name.[139] All this tells us is that there is a world that we experience, that it has some kind of impact or shaping influence upon us, that it *seems* consistent, and that our sign attributions often seem consistent, too. However, these do not entail that our conclusions are correct or that giving something a name reveals its mind-independent ontology.

Indeed, all that the consistency we experience between the world and our sign systems tells us is that the correlations we establish between them through habitual modeling remain established until we change them; our statements, beliefs, and models may be *consistently wrong* beyond functional success. No matter how

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[139] Maybe the maximal kind of nominalism is the Neoplatonist contradiction, asserted by Pseudo-Dionysius in his *Mystical Theology*, that "we cannot say what God is not any more than we can say what he is, because God neither is nor is not anything at all" (Perl 2007: 14). That is, even to deny God's existence is to conceptualize God in some capacity, which is to conceive of God as "finite and created" (Perl 2007: 15). Thus, 'God' is not a name for anything, and even the name "must be transcended" (Perl 2007: 14).

finely we draw our modeling nets, there is an inescapable gap between the model and what it models; we *do* learn of the truth that the world can be modeled *this way*, and that *does* tell us something. But didn't we already intuitively believe or know that? The specifics about what the model tells us accurately and what it doesn't are not revealed by the fact of the model's possibility. The semiotic question – what does it mean that the world can be modeled this way but doesn't have to be? – remains unresolved by the new model because it pertains to a distinct and separate category that no new type of net can resolve for us.

Realism, then, has to do more than simply assert itself in order to move beyond intuition, but it can't do that – at least not in a Modern framework. To go further, we would need to permit knowledge sources that Modernity rejected, such as special revelation or some form of understanding beyond the "discursive", such as noetic or "spiritual" reason.[140] Burke (1952d[1950]: 331) mentions noetic reason in the Rhetoric, whereby one would "have a strong conviction that his experience was 'noetic,' telling him of a 'truth' beyond the realm" of discursive reason. This refers not to mere intuition but a form of understanding whereby a spiritual reality is grasped at once; we might connect this concept to what Peirce meant by abduction, but the noetic properly refers to a spiritual capacity than transcends a naturalistic reduction. Nevertheless, in the modern context such a "noetic" faculty could be no more than intuition, understood in its normally imperfect sense.

Indeed, this is precisely where Loux ends his discussion of Realism and anti-Realism: by appealing to intuition. But is that truly a successful counter to the critiques emerging due to the paradox of substance? Not only has realism failed to dispel them, but Loux has actually embraced the only possible resolution for Modernism: to simply let go and appeal ultimately to intuition, embracing as given what the doctrine of Modernism said can be and must be explained. Realism ends by implicitly giving us the same answer as Modern idealism: our apprehension of the world rests on judgments or intuitions that we cannot rationally justify in the way Modernism expects and claims. Just as John Deely said, these two views are two different emphases of a shared perspective.

Unfortunately for the Modern framework, both emphases lead in circles around one another as they try to resolve an ontological paradox that extends into every realm of experience where we try to plumb the ontological depths of reality through our reason alone. This situation is itself incompatible with the semiotic framework of Modernism and its God-term: Human reason is not sufficient for fully bringing out ontology or truth in a way where we can confirm it according to Modernism's criteria. Indeed, the crisis of meaning is worse than we have had space to explore, but we will explore one last example arising in a place supposedly outside the boundaries of metaphysics: physics.

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[140] This concept of a noetic faculty of understanding distinct from discursive reason is common in Eastern Orthodox Christianity but less so now in the West.

4.4. Materialism as a denomination of Modern Realism

Even such a supposedly straightforward and commonsense province as matter leads to the paradox of substance – indeed, to perhaps one of the strangest results of all: the continuous retreat of a *material* foundation for substances. This particularly confronts incarnations of Modernism that embrace a materialist metaphysics. We will briefly look at some instances of this paradox that have appeared in the domain of physics. Note that we are not attempting physics work, but inasmuch as human semiosis about physics is semiosis, it falls within the circumference of semiotic analysis to some degree – especially since the discipline of physics is often (or always) undertaken with certain metaphysical commitments in place. Indeed, we can identify materialism (or physicalism) as Modern Realism in relation to the *physical* emphasis.

4.4.1. Origins in Greek atomism

In assessing the paradox of substance in relation to matter, we can begin as early as ancient Greek atomism, which Modernity later imported. We can trace the "idea that the world consists of standard little parts" back to Democritus (Herbert 1987: 8) and Leucippus (Davies, Brown 1988: 2).[141] Democritus wrote, "'By convention sour, by convention sweet, by convention colored; in reality, nothing but Atoms and the Void'" (Herbert 1987: 9). Attributes like sourness, sweetness, and color are all simply accidents of objects, but in their true essence, they are atoms. Thus, the "end of matter is matter", for the ontological bottom of matter is material (Berlinski 2009: 53). All else is Void.

The ancient notion of the atom stood in opposition to "the belief that the world consisted of transformations of a single continuous substance" (Herbert 1987: 9). Democritus's "'uncuttable' ultimate units of matter or being" were constantly falling down into the void and recombining to give rise to the various appearances that constituted our experience, "which is nothing but the various combinations and change of combinations of atoms" (Deely 2001: 31). We see an opposition but also a unity underlying the concepts of 'discrete unities' and 'continuous substance'; if atoms are ontologically primary and not comprised of parts, then even if there are different types of atoms, they are of a single ontology. They are all atoms – there is a universal type of thing that they all are. But this results in a substantial unity, and a single substance is continuous in at least an ontological sense.[142] The atomistic model thus becomes identical with the continuous model at a formal level; a single underlying substance transforms in different ways to

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[141] Deely (2001: 30) gives the dates for Democritus as circa 460–385/362 BC. Deely also notes that our knowledge of Leucippus's atomism comes down to us through Democritus, so the two are usually lumped together.

[142] After all, because of how Spinoza drew the definition of substance, he held that everything in the cosmos is one substance, despite apparent differences.

give rise to the appearance of all the different objects. In both cases, the unity and the division collapse into one another: the very paradox of substance. This paradox would later reappear even in quantum physics – is matter discrete or continuous?[143]

Indeed, physicists themselves have made the connection between atomism and materialism. In setting up an historical frame for superstring theory, Julian Brown and P.C.W. Davies emphasize Greek atomism as the first Theory of Everything – and thus the ancestor of superstring theory itself (Davis, Brown 1988: 2). Ancient thought held that there "were a number of different types of atoms, but all were supposed to be *elementary* in the sense of being impenetrable and indestructible" – implying "that atoms had no internal parts" and could not be made up of anything smaller (Davies, Brown 1988: 2). Atoms, which were considered too small to see, could attach to one another in different formations, and "any change in the physical world could be attributed to the rearrangement of these atoms" (Davies, Brown 1988: 2). It was a remarkable intuition (or inference), especially since no observation of microscopic entities would occur for more than 2,000 years.[144]

Eventually, empirical evidence did affirm the atom's existence – in a sense. We witnessed exceedingly small objects and gave them the name 'atoms', but they turned out to be different from Democritus's "uncuttable" idea. After all, we split the so-called atom in 1932 (Deely 2001: 32). Obviously, the atom was not the atom, but the fact that modern physicists used the name 'atom' reveals something about their aim. The search was indeed for something fundamental and indivisible (as we see explicitly in the search for "elementary particles"), with the endeavor carrying forward an ancient metaphysical concept and assumption. Even when the name 'atom' was left behind, the pursuit of the concept itself remained a prime goal for modern physics: to discover how reality reduces to a final material constituent.

4.4.2. Materialism/reductionism as a motive for Modern physics

Indeed, Davis and Brown actually claim that the satisfaction of this aim is one of Modern physics' main goals. It's actually one of the most compelling motives for pursuing superstring theory in the first place: "if superstring theory does eventually provide a quantitative explanation for all the particles and forces of nature, it will represent one of the greatest scientific triumphs in the history of mankind" (Davies, Brown 1988: 69). This is such a compelling goal that "some workers abandoned longstanding research projects overnight to take up string theory"

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[143] Interestingly, this paradoxical opposition appears even in quantum physics: is matter discrete or continuous? Some physicists interpret the particle-wave duality in quantum physics in a way that suggests it, too, is tied to a question of emphasis.

[144] Even when British chemist John Dalton discovered chemical evidence pointing to "an invisible atomic reality" in 1808, some prestigious scientists (such as Humphry Davy) still doubted the atom "on the grounds that it went beyond the facts" (Herbert 1987: 9).

(Davies, Brown 1988: 69). The reason this motive is so compelling is that "it would be *the culmination of reductionist science* (Davies, Brown 1988: 69, emphasis mine). 'Reductionism' here is another name for materialism. That is, according to the philosophy of reductionism, "the 'arrows of explanation' always point downwards to the deepest layer of reality until, ultimately, everything can be explained in terms of the fundamental constituents of matter" (Davies, Brown 1988: 1). And as they say, this metaphysical commitment is closely tied to Modern science, such that the prospect of confirming it is a highly compelling motive for many who seek to provide "proof" of materialism's chosen perspective.

This motive is so strong that it overcomes superstring theory's great weakness: a disconnection from empirical observation, which has long been a prized tenet for the Modern paradigm. It's fairly well known that the scales with which superstring theory is concerned are far beyond our capacities (financially and technologically) to test, but the degree to which this is the case may be less common knowledge. In an interview, Nobel physicist Abdus Salam said that in order to directly test superstring theory and provide it with an empirical grounding, we would need particle accelerators that "would have to be at least 10 light years in length" (Davies, Brown 1988: 171). Obviously, we have made little progress toward that goal 30 years later, yet superstring theory has remained popular.

Even if a discovery of such objects were to occur, however, it would not entail the affirmation of materialist/reductionist metaphysics. The problem of establishing an ontological ground for matter lies elsewhere; even if it were empirically possible to establish an absolute boundary for the hierarchy of material entities, we still would have the problem of justifying why one end of the hierarchy (the "small" one) deserves the priority of emphasis that supposedly confers upon it ontological primacy. The correlation of "bottom of the hierarchy" with "foundation of a structure" is consistent with human metaphorical thinking, but the analogy doesn't entail the materialist commitment. Appealing to materialism's starting assumption that small things cause big things doesn't itself resolve the categorical problem; all we've done is state our assumption and then used it to generate a hierarchy in an indeterminate, multistable field. One element has been chosen to ground another, but the perspective can be flipped to privilege another boundary of the hierarchy. Neither result comes from *logical* necessity.

The questions of scale or of a complete taxonomy of physical existents are categorically beside the point when it comes to determining whether matter is the ontological foundation of the cosmos and everything in it. Even if we could establish that there's nothing smaller than x and nothing bigger than y, we would only have reached the end of our ability to defer the relevant question to the black box of unknown scale where anything seems possible. The type of description proper to sorting objects into hierarchies is the wrong kind of description for answering ontological and semiotic questions. Even if we could "complete the collection" and then sort all the objects in such a way that the whole collection is coherent, it wouldn't erase the problem that descriptions of the so-called laws of nature only tell us about the way things (seem to) function. The question of whether function exhausts ontology and meaning is not automatically solved by an appeal to

empirical givens. These are questions that must be answered in a different way. The objection that those questions are meaningless because they don't reduce to function is only a restatement of the metaphysical commitment, not an empirical description.

The assumption that the material bottom would be an ontological foundation is metaphysical and proceeds from the commitment that matter is the ground of its own being – Scene as ultimate. The belief that the smallest material entity *x* will be the fundamental constituent of the cosmos and being is a meaning implication from the materialist assertion. And the belief in the existence of a smallest material entity that is primary and not divisible is *itself* but an implication of that metaphysical commitment. Not only does it precede anything empirical or given, but it's also not a logical necessity – that is, the "only necessity that exists" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.37).

It is here in logic where we find the only laws in the strong sense, but the rhetoric of Modernism obscures the distinction between logical necessity and conclusions about reality made in the name of Logic. This is what Wittgenstein means when he says that the "whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena", where the models organized under the title 'laws of nature' are seen as resting on a logical foundation (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.371). But because they actually rest on induction, which "consists in accepting as true the *simplest* law that can be reconciled with our experiences", they rest on a foundation that "has no logical justification but only a psychological one" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 6.3631). Our beliefs based on inductive reasoning are inferential, not the entailment proper to *law*. We often use the term 'law' to mean 'rule established by convention', but that is a distinctly different category from logical necessity – a distinction that rests on the difference between necessity and contingency. Law in the strong sense that Wittgenstein intended is different from "law" as the product of habit or convention in whatever sense. Logical law transcends the accidents of varying possible worlds.

Through this lack of clarity about the nature of logic, an "alchemical" transformation is made whereby *contingent* models we create are framed in terms of *law* proper, which imparts to those models a "semiotic glow" of necessity and Logic, even though they arise from selection, not entailment. Because these models are constructed and disseminated by an authority structure that legitimizes itself in terms of Reason and Logic, they acquire the rhetorical tone of being logical through the implication that they rest on the foundations of logic and can be trusted in the same way. Due to this ambiguity in common understanding, 'logic' as a term is used as a nexus whereby contingency and choice can be transmuted into necessity and law to great rhetorical effect – in order to bolster the materialist motive.

Ambiguities arising from the paradox of substance can be made to appear resolved using the same technique. The paradox of substance confronts atomism, with the conception of discrete units merging ambiguously with the conception of a continuous substance. To posit only these two relational elements with an

additional third leaves them in an indeterminately ambiguous relation. Either can be made the ground for the other according to emphasis, but doing so immediately implies the other and destabilizes the hierarchical primacy. To maintain the discrete perspective is therefore a result of a commitment – as in the case of materialism. Trying to find "the ontological bottom" of the physical world in the physical realm itself leads to this same paradoxical ambiguity wherever one looks. The dialectic of an atomistic and a continuous model reveals a paradox between the finite and the infinite; an "atom" as a discrete unity is a finite substance, and an unending continuity is an infinity. We saw this same distinction above regarding metaphysics: a concrete particular is a finite substance, and a universal as being *not* finite and *not* particular is an infinity.

4.4.3. The problem of infinity arising in physics

This paradox has appeared in contemporary physics. One such context was super-gravity theory. A great part of its appeal was that it seemed to ease the "considerable problems of infinities that had plagued all attempts to construct a quantum theory of gravitation" (Davies, Brown 1988: 67). Physicists kept encountering the obstacle of infinities, which created "problems of mathematical consistency" in the "descriptions of the forces" (Davies, Brown 1988: 63). These infinities undermined confidence that a theory of everything was at hand. Doubt arose partly in relation to "the structure of the electron" (Davies, Brown 1988: 63). The electron would have fit the proper concept of the atom more closely since it apparently didn't have any parts,[145] but without parts, the electron was like a geometric point.

The problem is that it had to remain physical, which a point is not; the electron must have mass, and thus a radius, even "if the radius of the electron is assumed to be very small" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). That is, it can't have a radius of zero, but assuming a radius of zero solved critical problems in the stability of the electron. Specifically, certain "cohesive forces [were] required to exactly counterbalance the disruptive tendency of the electric charge [of the electron] at all times"; attempts to model that balance in a way that was "consistent with the special theory of relativity proved hopeless" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). Physicists decided the only way around this impossible contradiction was to simply sidestep it "by assuming that the electron is, in fact, point-like; that is, it has zero radius and hence no internal parts to which a mechanical theory is applicable" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). It was now possible to speak about the electron as elementary.

Unfortunately, this just created a different problem regarding the electron's electrostatic energy. If its radius "is allowed to become zero, the energy is infinite", but because mass and energy are related in relativity, this "implies that the electron ought to have an infinite mass on account of its infinite electrostatic self-energy" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). And this was a problem because, for materialist-committed physics, "the presence of an infinite […] term in the equations is a severe

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[145] Herbert 1987: 58.

embarassment [*sic*]" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). The infinite that the paradigm intentionally excluded had reappeared anyway. In order to escape this confrontation, physicists applied "the renormalization trick", whereby it was decided that an infinite term was only a problem if it referred "to a measurable quantity"; since physics[146] doesn't consider energy measurable except in relative terms, one can feel "free to rescale the zero of energy by an infinite amount so that the observed mass of the electron is finite" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). The infinity is rebalanced by a converse infinity in order to translate the electron back into finitude. Of course, this tactic actually reintroduces a second infinity, which is why it's not a genuine elimination but a "trick".

The initial infinity reappeared as physicists began to work on quantum electrodynamics in the 1930s. Only this time "the difficulty with infinities turns out to be more severe than in the classical theory" (Davies, Brown 1988: 64). Physicists tried the renormalization trick again, but it didn't work the same way. For one thing, "other infinite quantities (such as electric charge) appear in the theory, too, and these have to be taken care of" as well (Davies, Brown 1988: 65). Further, the model actually resulted in "an unending series of infinite terms" which "seems to require an unending series of separate renormalization operations" (Davies, Brown 1988: 66). From the physics standpoint, this makes the theory useless.

The result here is formally identical with that of Modern realist metaphysics: an infinity of infinities is produced.[147] The attempt to remove the infinite and fix the substance only results in the proliferation of the infinite. This problem was such an impediment to physics that "it took nearly two decades before QED [quantum electrodynamics] could be declared renormalizable" (Davies, Brown 1988: 66). This notable obstacle to escaping the infinite reveals how the paradox of substance has confronted human semiosis in physics, too, even given the freedom that comes from physics being increasingly decoupled from empirical constraints and moved to the realm of mathematics.

4.4.4. The problem with material reduction as a search for substance

A materially reductionist description may aim to *end* at a final, indivisible material entity as the ultimate constituent of reality,[148] but it *begins* with a reduction of all infinities – or at least aims to. In that sense, material reductionism never begins until it finishes, except in intent; infinities continue to surface because even materialist thought cannot escape the paradox of substance. It makes a universal (an infinity) out of matter, which is finite and supposedly discrete. It's supposed to be divisible but also ultimately indivisible. In that sense the paradigm is

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[146] That is, non-gravitational physics.

[147] If God as a single infinite element was undesirable for a modern physics model, how much worse was a plethora of infinities?

[148] Michael Dummett gives this definition for reductionist/reductivist thought: "certain entities are not among the ultimate constituents of reality if they can be 'reduced' to entities of other types" (Dummett 2008: 549).

functionally still atomism. Modern realism and idealism/anti-realism could both be considered descendants of atomism, whose search for an ontological bottom to matter in matter is akin to the expectation of finding the ontological ground of the sign in the sign. The assumption of this ontological bottom as being present in matter itself is at the heart of materialist metaphysics *and* of the modern inquiry into the fundamental nature of matter. Indeed, materialists "have always hoped that by going downward, they would at last reach the ultimate level of analysis and so the place where Nature reveals her ontological essentials by means of a finite number of elementary particles" (Berlinski 2009: 53). Burke identifies this reductive bias in many forms, including the Modern phenomenon of "debunkers" whose persuasive method is to say that '*x* is nothing but *y*', where *y* involves a term of narrower circumference: mind is nothing but brain, love is nothing but chemicals, "material statements are reducible to ones about sense-data", "statements about character are really about behaviour", and so forth (Dummett 2008: 559). Despite the so-called logicality of materialist principles, however, the reduction is a result of selection from indeterminacy. We believe without having seen.

The position that a finite number of particle types exists is of course an assumption: neither *deduced* from "pure" observation nor logically necessary but an implication of a materialist assumption. That is, if everything can be reduced to matter, then matter is the foundation of everything, which means that matter is the foundation for itself. Matter becomes self-existent, self-foundational, and since everything can be reduced to matter, we *must* find matter "at the bottom" of physicality. Substance and matter must be equivalent, and we can't find something "point-like" at its extreme boundary because points are not material. That's why conceiving of electrons as having zero radius is a problem; they would have no extension and thus not be material.

But we come to the paradox of substance when we try to carry out the concept of matter to its fullest extent. If the fundamental nature of the world around us is "physical" or "material",[149] then we end up with two equally weird and impossible results. In all of our direct experience, physical objects (matter) can be divided. We have no empirical reason to believe that any of the extremely small entities of contemporary physics cannot be divided; the lack of current technological means certainly does not entail indivisibility. Such a conclusion is neither entailed nor especially implicated by past experience; while we have multiple examples of objects that we thought were indivisible but then found otherwise, so far we have no knowledge of a material object that we cannot divide. But the real trouble lies not in the empirical realm but in the very concept of divisibility itself, for either we can divide matter to a degree where we reach some fundamental physical object that *cannot* be further divided, or we can divide matter *infinitely* without bottom. But both are strange and seem equally untenable.

Let's say that we can divide matter until we reach a final indivisible physical element. Note that we're *not* saying that *we* can't divide it further due to a limitation in agency (which could be overcome with technology), but rather that this

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[149] We will distinguish between the concepts 'physical' and 'material' shortly below.

material element itself is truly indivisible.[150] In this case, we have an object actually taking up space, which implies that it's still composed of parts, for one part of it is in *this* part of space, and another part of it is in *that* part of space. Consequently, we should be able to divide those parts from each other if we discovered the sufficient agency to do so. *However*, regardless of how far we divide this matter, it will always be occupying more than one part of space – this is inherent to the very concept of matter in a materialist sense. Only a point would not occupy two parts of space, but a point is not a physical but a geometrical entity. Any physical representation of this mathematical entity would not be an actual point, for it will be divisible into parts. One might offer the rebuttal that we could postulate as an object of physics a smallest possible discrete unit of space such that no smaller unit of space exists, which would then make it possible for there to be a discrete material entity that is not divisible because no smaller unit of space exists for those smaller parts to inhabit. Indeed, this has been a proposal in physics.

But how can that be so? Such a state of space sounds like a *concept* – that is, where the foundations of space are conceptual rather than material. The result seems like pixels on a screen, where the boundary defining a pixel and separating it from another is simply a matter of decision, of *convention*, for the pixels can be made smaller if the convention is reworked. It's a matter of contingency, not necessity. Just as Burke said, definition involves marking a thing's boundaries. The implication seems to be that we can divide physical elements forever. But that's equally weird. If the universe can be divided into smaller parts forever, then its foundation or bottom isn't physical – for it doesn't *have* a physical bottom. But how could it not have a physical bottom? How could it be possible for us to divide material objects forever? The concept of matter involves numerical implication, for a material object is supposedly comprised of a concrete and limited number of constituent parts. But when the notion of constituent parts is applied back onto the notion of matter, we end up with an enigmatic result that points to an unresolvable distinction between wholes and parts.

This distinction makes sense when we apply it to the intentional realm of *concepts*, but when it's applied to the concept of matter, we end up stuck between two impossible choices. We simply have to accept the existence of "matter" in a sense, but we are not able to comprehend it – comprehend in the sense of fully enclose it with our understanding. A remainder always exists. Perhaps we should keep in mind that even if Quine is right that the "myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most" (Quine 1998: 298), the notion of the physical as opposed to the objective (in Deely's sense) is itself at least partly a creation of the human mind – thus, the "myth" of physical objects, as Quine says. That is, we have derived it conceptually from cognitive abstraction, and while the concept of matter (as self-existent and independent of any mind) might not be entirely a creation of human conceptualizing, it also *might* be. At the very least, matter is something we've never been able to encounter directly within experience because

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[150] Let's assume also that it was actually possible to achieve certainty of this indivisibility.

physicality has always also been "objectivity" for us – everything physical that we have encountered has been an object of our experience. The concept of matter as a category of existent that could possibly exist independently of any mind (including God's) is a product of a particular inferential process carried out from certain selected assumptions and might be a fiction. At the very least, it arises only through the materialist departure point working out its own internal consistency – that is, working out an implication inherent in the terms chosen to frame reality.[151]

Indeed, its terms imply that 'reality' is defined by 'material', and what we experience as the physical world is material at bottom; thus, there is an ontological disconnect between the physical and any other categories (such as 'the spiritual'), with reality itself defined in terms of the material. Even for those who believe in spirits but have internalized this pattern of thought, matter is thus seen as ontologically different from spirit, which subsequently means that there are substantive qualities pertaining to the physical world that so-called spiritual agents (God, angels, etc.) are *missing*. The bias is to give ontological, substantive primacy to the "physical", by which we mean *material* as a materialist characterization of the physical.

Materialism thus becomes an analogue to the privation theory of evil, in which evil is not a particular, separate substance distinct from goodness but a negation of goodness or related qualities. Accordingly, as Mary Midgley says, "Evil, in fact, is essentially the absence of good, and cannot be understood on its own" (Midgley 2001: 14). That is, good and evil would not be equally existent substances balancing or opposing each other. Rather, evil is simply the subtraction of something good.

The privation theory would parallel Kabbalistic understandings of the Qlippoth as negations of Divine qualities, as opposed to contemporary Left Hand Path treatments of the Qlippoth as substances in their own right. Similarly, materialism places the substantive emphasis on matter to the effect that even for those who seek to maintain a belief in "spiritual" beings, the acceptance of matter as a concept frames God and other spirits in terms of a quality they *lack*. Materialism is a privation theory of spirit that derives from a certain emphasis, from a certain type of semiotic filtering.

This is especially clear if we explore an alternate emphasis that rejects materialism and affirms God's existence and creation of the physical world. Two major results would follow: (1) 'matter' doesn't exist at all, inasmuch as matter is the concept of the physical as wholly self-existent and dependent upon nothing more metaphysically fundamental than itself; since the concept 'matter' possesses (and depends upon) this implicitly theological quality of self-existence, the concept of matter disintegrates when we divest it of its theological quality which is then categorically returned to God; and (2) the physical world is no longer

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[151] Modern terminology has so suffused the semiosphere that this materialist bias is largely obscure; it often intentionally obscures itself in the name of "just the plain facts". This suits its persuasive ends quite well, constituting a powerful method in the legitimation of the ideology's power in and over the semiosphere.

withdrawn from the scene of the "spiritual" world (no longer extracted from that set) but is rather located within the "spiritual" as properly belonging to that scene; after all, if the physical is not only originatively and substantively derived from the spiritual realm (specifically, from God as Spirit) but is also ontologically grounded in and dependent upon it as its scene, then the physical takes on the qualities of its spiritual scene and foundation. The physical would be an artifact of the spiritual, and the spiritual would be not an absence of the qualitatively physical; the physical would possess certain substantive qualities pertaining to God (and perhaps other "spiritual" beings) but lack others. In that way, what we perceive as the physical is spiritual – even if perhaps at a "lower" dimension of complexity relative to certain spiritual dimensions or existents.

4.4.5. Materialism's inability to escape the paradox

In the case of materialism, we do not discover (through reduction of the physical) that the spiritual is ontologically primary, simply because the materialist frame does not permit the necessary terms. Regardless of the results that arise from physical reduction, materialism cannot find any results (signs) that contradict its core commitment – specifically because matter alone is defined as ontologically primary at the outset, entailing that reductions can only lead toward the onto-logical foundation *if* they lead toward a material substance. Confirmation is found for starting assumptions because it removed the terms of its disconfirmation from the field of possible sign discovery. Even conflicting discoveries (which undermine its concept of matter) often do not threaten the commitment because the commit-ment is not based on particular empirical qualities.

The central commitment is that the foundation of the physical lies in the scene itself rather than in *any* agent which gave rise to it. This can be stated more spe-cifically in pentadic terms: the foundation of the scene is scene – the foundation of every act, agent, agency, and purpose is *scene*. Scene is ontologically primary, and everything else reduces to it. This commitment entails that whatever we discover, no matter what it looks like or seems to be, it *must be scene* (and *only* scene) at its foundation, in its innermost nature. Many Modern conclusions are statements of faith disguised in the terminologies of Reason and Logic, which belong to a system of faith built on the contradiction of denying its own existence. This is a religious-semiotic system for structuring experience and interpreting the cosmos, formulated in self-cloaking terms and targeted toward those who find the idea of such systems distasteful. For such, the implicit theology of Reason, Logic, and Humanism is appealing – and its deployments are rhetorically effective despite the impossibility of its achieving internal consistency, since it proposes to do what it denies is real.

The materialist metaphysical system is as phantasmic as the very concept of matter upon which it is built. Matter leads to its own negation: either we divide forever and never find a final material form (which means that matter cannot be the ontological bottom), or we arrive at a final material form that cannot be divided

(which means that it's not matter; it's more like math, or concept, or both). Trying to concretely picture either situation exceeds the grasp of human understanding and leads to unresolvability. Which is worse? That the cosmos gets smaller forever, or that there is a physical boundary? If the cosmos is boundless, that's strange; how can there be an inside if there is no outside? If the cosmos has a limit, that's also strange; if there is an inside, how can there be no outside? To say there is no problem here because it's an illusion created by human perception is not a solution to the paradox; it only sidesteps the problem and passes it back to intuition. That's not the kind of rational solution that Modernism promised – or indeed has required. We get nothing by saying that this is simply a problem of geometry and that human cognition has a geometric/mathematical bias – for the problem inherently involves inside and outside, the space within the form and the space containing it.

This is not just a geometrical enigma but the very mystery Burke identifies by the phrase "container and the thing contained", wherein his concern is dramatistic, pentadic, actional. Any act implies an agent to act; materialism reduces agent to scene and transforms 'act' to 'event', 'motion', or 'state of affairs'. But this affects not a whit the problem of container and thing contained, for even if we conceptually permit the possibility of action that can be ultimately reduced past agent to scene, we still have the problem of a scene as the context for the event. The notion of an event requires that which is outside of the event – the scene in which it takes place. We end up needing a succession of wider and wider contexts not just to give the event meaning but to permit its intelligibility in the first place, so even here the paradox reasserts itself, and Modernism has no wider non-human ground to which it can appeal besides Scene as Ultimate.

4.5. Restating the paradox of substance

The paradox of substance identifies a limit of human reason, which is why it reappears in all domains of human inquiry regardless of metaphysical stance or variations in the semiosphere deriving from different God-terms. As such, the paradox forms part of human experience as a given; as a limit to human comprehension, the paradox's appearance within our semiosphere will be unavoidable. What *is* variant is the manner in which it appears for different meaning paradigms and their correlative worlds of experience. We have previously intimated that the paradox has different consequences and significance in the Christian meaning framework than in the Modern framework. We will briefly describe this alterity as a counterpoint that dialectically clarifies the paradox of substance. First, however, let us restate the paradox's basics.

The paradox is that an aspect of finite experience (an existent or object) must simultaneously be what it is *and* what it is not from the standpoint of analytical human reason. When we make the object our focus, it disappears or recedes from view; its substance only seems well defined and tautological in our peripheral view. What this *means* – its *significance* – is a great question that we must answer

individually since that conclusion is not given by experience as such (that is, no particular conclusion is compelled by experience). The paradox itself, however, *is* given. Why can a thing only be defined by what it is not? The substance of a thing necessarily is what it is, but to go beyond a mere tautology requires us to shift our focus to what that thing is not. Wittgenstein hit upon a key insight regarding the paradox of substance. He said, "Contradiction, one might say, vanishes outside all propositions: tautology vanishes inside them. Contradiction is the outer limit of propositions: tautology is the unsubstantial point at their centre" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 5.143). The object is that which it is; the outer limit of the object is that which it is not. There is no way for us to conceive of reality any other way. It is in this sense that Wittgenstein says it's impossible for us to think illogically because, strictly speaking, the illogical is unthinkable; we can only think about possible situations, and actually "we could not *say* what an 'illogical' world would look like" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 3.02–3.03). A purple spotted unicorn wearing red shoes may not be an actual existent, but the thought is not illogical; its syntax and semantics are perfectly intelligible to the mind.

The problem is that this intelligibility is not analyzable to us. Intelligible thoughts are indeed intelligible, but we could not say what a completely unintelligible thought would look like because that would require us to understand what is not understandable to us. These are hard boundaries for our cognition. We depend upon tautology and contradiction for intelligibility of thought, perception, and experience in the first place, but we cannot explain them because they are fundamental to that very thought, perception, and experience. We don't encounter them "out there" in experience and then come to believe in them; we depend upon them in order to come to any conclusions in the first place. But strangely, "They do not represent any possible situations" – for tautologies "admit *all* possible situations" and contradictions admit "*none*" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 4.462). In order to conceive of anything, we must take it as a given that the thing is what it is: a tautology underlies the foundation of its substance. But the tautology at the object's center is unsubstantial and indeterminate. It is simply a given we must assume, and when we try to analyze its substance, that point disappears (or recedes from view back to the periphery of our vision). The substance reconstitutes itself out of our focus.

The tautology is simultaneously present with contradiction in defining the object of experience. We know that, necessarily, a thing's "being what it is" is inextricably tied to what it is not. The concepts are inseparable, and a sustained attempt to determinately fix the boundary between that in which the object's ontology does and does not consist results in the boundary moving along with the analytical focus – not unlike an attempt to look directly at the floaters in one's vision results in their moving again to the periphery. It is in this way that the paradox of substance manifests as a dialectical whole. It is impossible to conceive of the category "what it is" without the category "what it is not"; they are interdependent concepts that we cannot finally separate, and they move together wherever we fix the attention of our analytical focus. There is a reason that Burke considers "Being and Not-Being" to be the "most thoroughgoing dialectical

opposition" (Burke 1945b: 34). The question of being is ground zero for the paradox of substance, and dialectical opposition is at its heart.

We find the same type of unanalyzable dialectic in the pair "being and doing", which are also interdependent concepts. Neither is intelligible without the other. We could begin by taking being as primary over doing, but we quickly realize that "being" involves a verb: the to-be verb. If we are tempted to then consider doing as primary to being, however, we immediately get the result that doing something (that is, the verb) implies the existence of a subject doing the doing. Tautologically, we know that "doing = doing" and "being = being" in order for the concepts to be intelligible in the first place; however, analysis reveals that "being = doing" and "doing = being". They are a dialectical pairing not because they are opposites but because they flow into one another. Any attempt to analyze each term leads one's view away from that term to the other. Paradoxically, what it *is* is defined by what it is *not*. Being is only being if not-being; doing is only doing if not-doing. Here again is the paradox of substance, and we have traced out its appearance in previous sections. As a dialectic, it will only appear as resolved if it leads the mind to a "perfection" beyond itself that includes the pair in a greater whole, semiotically transforming the opposition into some unity. Otherwise it will remain an unresolvable paradox. Either way, however, it will remain unanalyzable in some basic sense.

4.5.1. The paradox of substance within the Christian frame

We have already suggested that Modernism may be incapable of resolving this paradox. For the strongest versions of Modernism that affirm human reason's ability to understand all reality and to provide justifications for all given aspects of experience, the paradox of substance is a particular impediment; by resisting complete enclosure (full *com*prehension) by human reason, the paradox forms a counterexample to the sovereignty of human reason in the strongest sense. For the more modest Modern stance, according to which 'the ultimate sovereignty of human reason' means not that reason can comprehend all but that no authority is higher than (imperfect) reason, the paradox of substance will still continue to surface as a disruption that resists coherent integration according to the organizing principles of that meaning paradigm. In other words, even the more modest branches of the Modern meaning system may be incapable of coherently integrating the paradox of substance – with the result that the paradox must be perpetually "renormalized" in order to retain the meaning system's coherence.

The situation is not identical for every other meaning system, for the paradox of substance is not equally contrary to the organizing principle of all such semiotic frameworks. In the context of Christian theism, the paradox of substance affirms the paradigm's organizing principle and serves to reinforce it internally. When one looks at the finite existents experientially encountered in the cosmos, thereby discovering that things can only be defined by what they are not, this is consistent with Christian expectation; in this framework, all elements of the cosmos are of

secondary being because they are all created by and dependent upon God, who is of primary being. God is eternally existent and has not come into being, while all cosmic entities (1) *have* come into being, (2) have come into being through the will (purpose), agency (power), and action (act) of God (agent), and (3) depend upon God (as scene) for their continued existence. These entities *are* (they exist), but only dependently and contingently; God *is* ("I Am"), independently and without contingency. Thus, the fundamental truth of all cosmic existents is that they are, but also they are not – for God's being is absolute in a way theirs is not.

This simultaneously resolves problems in the tension between realism and idealism regarding the cosmos. The unresolvable conflict is translated into a dialectic, for realism and idealism are simultaneously true depending upon where the emphasis is placed. Considering that God *is* and that He has, in fact, chosen to bring the cosmos into existence, realism is an accurate description; the cosmos and its entities do exist independently of the human mind and are not a construct of human cognition. On the other hand, when one emphasizes that the cosmos has been made and depends upon an Agent and His mind, idealism is true. Consequently, according to the perspective that both realism and idealism are simultaneously true ways of describing a single reality (two ways of emphasizing a dialectic whose ground transcends the cosmos), evidential traces that point now to realism and now to idealism no longer work in opposition but signify in tandem toward that one reality; the opposition becomes dialectic. In so doing, the paradox of the cosmos becomes intelligibility according to the organizing principle of the Christian semiotic framework. When the paradox of substance appears, it functions as a signpost pointing to God as the maximal fulfillment of the statement that things can only be defined by what they are not – for their ontology is rooted not in themselves but in Another. This is a categorical matter that Christian thought considers intentional, since the biblical viewpoint is that the cosmos has been created as a sign to lead the human mind toward God.

What Christian theism effectively does is quarantine the paradox of substance in God, who becomes the locus of mystery. In this semiotic framework, God is defined in dialectical terms: one/multiple; immanent/transcendent; personal/infinite; loving/just; Father/Son. These dialectics reveal God's nature and character, rendering God intelligible, while simultaneously preventing full and final enclosure (total comprehension) – that is, perpetually preserving some of God's nature as unanalyzable. God is revealed because He chooses to reveal Himself, but human reason cannot plumb His depths of its own accord. In typically Christian symbolic terms, God is light, but not all light is of visible spectrum to us; even though He is light, aspects of His being appear to us as darkness. There is a void at the heart of the flame.[152]

Thus, the unanalyzable aspect of experience remains, but it is sequestered in God rather than suffused throughout all of reality and experience. Experientially, the result is that finite existents no longer infinitely recede, in part because the Christian is not seeking the ground of the objects' being in the objects themselves.

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[152] Credit to artist Elijah Tamu for this phrase.

They are taken as given – a gift from God that we receive, just as we receive our own existence as a gift. Neither the objects of experience nor our own existence requires our reason to provide justification for them; the attempt to provide justification for finite existents is implicitly to place human reason in the position of their ontological ground. Within the Christian viewpoint and meaning paradigm, it is to be expected that searching for the ontological ground of the finite object within the object itself can only result in failure to locate that ground because it is located elsewhere. This applies to all finite aspects of our experience, all of which recede when we try to analytically pin down their substantial ground and unity. They recede as if they were not concrete objects, as if they were objects of volitional mind, precisely because that is what they are. A Logos holds them together.

From this viewpoint, it is further to be expected that when God is removed from the semiotic frame, the paradox of substance is released from quarantine and suffuses all of existence and human experience – with the result that all of reality becomes unanalyzable beyond the functional (or instrumental) domain. That is, all of reality becomes indeterminate in regard to ontology. Descriptions of ontology become mere descriptions of what the object appears to be doing; its being is defined wholly by its doing because there is no greater act which contextualizes it and provides it significance beyond itself. This is why many descriptions that appear to be ontological are actually instrumental. Finite objects become self-existent tautologies in place of God: the great "I Am" remains present but is diffused throughout reality to apply equally to all entities. Meaning inflation occurs since each entity bears its "I Am" equally from itself rather than from God directly as maximal scene – with the ironic result that the "I Am" of each object and of the cosmos as a whole becomes self-referential and, thus, no longer signifies (that is, loses a form of significance).

Thus, the theological mode and the paradox of substance (with its unanalyzable quality) have not been removed from experience but have been simply diffused throughout it. They have gone from applying to one instance to instead applying to many. But since the paradox now applies as a tautology directly to all finite existents (rather than mediatively through their Divine ground), contradiction suffuses the experienced cosmos as well. The problems that arise within the Modern paradigm regarding ontology and meaning are precisely what the Christian theistic perspective expects.

None of this formally entails that Christian theism is correct; it does not compel affirmation through necessity. That is not our argument. The point is to demonstrate how the paradox of substance can appear quite different within different meaning paradigms. Indeed, this paradox can either reinforce or destabilize such paradigms to different degrees, depending especially upon the foundational principles (or God-terms) of such frameworks and how consistent they can be developed relative to the givens of human experience – the paradox of substance in this case, as we have argued. We need not conclude that the Christian paradigm is correct in order to use that paradigm as a counterexample to highlight problems at the heart of the Modern paradigm and its terminologies.

V. TOWARDS A SYNTHESIS

The paradox of substance is inescapable within human semiosis, even in a paradigm inhospitable to such a paradox. Indeed, if orthodox Modernism was true, we should expect to be able to overcome it and resolve its indeterminacy. That has not happened, however. Modern scholars (and, indeed, cultures) continue to battle it out over oppositions such as realism and idealism but can't move forward in a dialectical synthesis because the substance paradox destabilizes both sides; each gives birth to its own critique, each thesis birthing its own antithesis, but the Modern paradigm of meaning doesn't permit the semiotic categories to transcend the dichotomy. It lacks the conceptual or categorical "vocabulary" to move forward; its paradigm destabilizes the pentadic relation to such a degree that it can only reproduce its problems in new areas, even once discourses are reformulated in hopes of escaping that barrier and crossing the threshold. But these dichotomies of Modernism can't be transcended because each side is the same as its supposed opposite – precisely because the conflation of scene with agent has rendered descriptions that should be different into sameness. 'Looking to the scene for truth' (realism) and 'looking to the human agent for truth' (idealism) become pentadically identical, for the human agent and the scene are substantially unified. Thus, Modernism's collision with the substance paradox means that no resolution can be found while also remaining consistent with the Modern terminology and semiosphere itself.

In the end, the only question is not whether the paradox of substance can be escaped (since it cannot) but rather how a given meaning system (as built upon particular, motivated resolutions to indeterminacies) is able to navigate that paradox – and what meaning results arise from it. In a sense, this is a pragmatic question. The paradox of substance is a given since we cannot avoid it and must decide what it means and what to do about it; on the surface, ignoring it seems possible, but it will resurface in a new context and present us with the same fundamental semiotic crisis in another form, regardless of whether we recognize the nature of the reappearing question. "What is it?" formally requires an answer that is either a tautology ("It is it") or semiotic ("*x* is *y*"); it can only be defined in terms of itself or in terms of another.

To define an object in terms of itself is simply to *assert* it, which only gives its name twice. This is identical with a copula ('I am', 'It is'), and this itself is a quasi-theological assertion that implicitly attributes self-existence to the object in question. This places it on the same categorical plane as God, whose absolute essence is articulated in Exodus 3 when God answers Moses that His name is "'I AM WHO I AM'" and that Moses should tell enslaved Israel that "'"I AM has sent me to you"'".[153] The name used here is a copula and is related to God's proper name, YHWH.[154] The Divine existence is expressed in its absolute form through self-existence. That God identifies Himself with truth in the Old and New

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[153] Exodus 3:14, NASB.
[154] 'YHWH' is itself derived from the verb 'hayah' – 'to be'.

Testaments makes sense given that (as Wittgenstein says) logical propositions are tautologies that entail further tautologies.

The irony here is that the Modern paradigm, which seeks to know what the cosmos and its contents truly *are* through the exercise of reason, proceeds by definition rather than tautology. After all, if tautology were sufficient, then reason has no further work to do; it *is*, and that is all. But definition requires one to move the focus away from the object to something else. In the paradigm of Modernity, though, the something else is substantially identical with the original object because both are *scene*. Thus the paradox of substance will continue to run the gaze in circles, for in order to know what *x* is, you need to know what *y* is. But in order to know what *y* is, you need to know what *z* is. And this regress recedes into infinity (1) because of a formal necessity about definition and (2) because Modernism as a paradigm has excluded any semiotic categories that are not substantially unified and identical with the scene.[155] The scene's circumference has been expanded so greatly that nothing could serve as a definition for the scene.

The Scene, therefore, becomes its own tautology: It *is*. As Carl Sagan famously said, the cosmos is all there ever is, ever was, or ever will be. If the Scene could speak, it would say, "I AM WHO I AM". Paradoxically, this means that every Modern definition, regardless of how scientific it seems, is no definition at all but only a tautology. The opposition only seems to circle around itself, for there is no distinction anymore; it's much like Max Black's famous example of a universe comprised only to two identical spheres[156] – so identical in qualities that they collapse into one another as we realize that numerical identity is a quality, too. There is only one sphere. The Modern paradigm does not have the resources to resolve the paradox of substance in any other way but can only dress up the same answer in different rhetorical clothing. The implicit theology remains the same, and only the vestments change.

5.1. Translating Modernism's implicit theology

We have been discussing the implicit theology permeating human semiosis throughout this entire work, for the theosemiotic viewpoint is precisely that the motives we catalyze through choice govern over our subsequent semiosis and shape it. This is a perspectival result of our intersecting Burke and semiotics. However, the notion of implicit theology works at an additional level when it comes to analyzing Modernism, which proliferates terminologies that hide their theosemiotic character. In proper Burkean spirit, we seek to be on the lookout for such deflections whereby motives are concealed by excluding terms – recognizing that "in banishing the *term*, far from banishing its *functions* one merely conceals them"

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[155]   In Jean-Luc Marion's words, "Modernity is characterized in the first place by the annulling of God as a question". This English wording comes from Perl 2007, which attributes this quote to pages 20–21 of (Marion 1982).

[156]   He introduces this example on page 156 of *The identity of indiscernibles* (Black 1952).

(Burke 1945b: 21). In this way, the work of persuasion is moved from a conscious to an unconscious level; the audience is persuaded not by open assent but by embracing semiotic characterizations that implicitly contain conclusions that the audience may not at first intend to embrace.

Stan Lindsay calls this Burkean concept implicit rhetoric. He emphasizes its entelechial character, saying that "Burke's major impact" can "be summed up in one word" – namely, 'entelechy' (Lindsay 1998: ix). As we have pointed out, Burke's use of entelechy comes from Aristotle. Originally the concept described "the implicit, predictable motions and changes of nature", but Burke transforms it "to describe how humans persuade themselves and each other implicitly" (Lindsay 1998: ix). However, inasmuch as the ultimate result is the creation of God-terms that conform semiosis to their motives, and inasmuch as semiosis becomes suffused with at least a quasi-theological quality, implicit rhetoric should be further transformed into implicit theology. This is especially the case in Modernity where the previously explicit theological quality of human semiosis and sign systems has been translated into terms that give the appearance of being non-theological.

Addressing the Modern account of meaning requires us to take a closer look at how that system banishes theological terms but continues to rely upon the theological functions of those terms. We have previously laid much of the groundwork already – or even identified outright instances of implicit theology. Now, however, we will briefly explore one example of Modern implicit theology: the invention of the Multiverse as an attempt to escape the paradox of substance appearing in questions about the origin of the cosmos.

5.1.1. The Multiverse and implicit theology

The Multiverse attempts to resolve indeterminacies that arise from the universe apparently having an historical origin point. The apparent evidence for the Big Bang immediately found opponents in Modernity (Fred Hoyle being a famous example) and pleased many theists. As Ashley and Deely note, Pope Pius XII himself "was cheered by the Big Bang Theory" and, addressing the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1951, said that "it would seem that present-day science, with one sweep back across the centuries, has succeeded in bearing witness to the august instant of the primordial *Fiat Lux* [Let there be Light]" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 114–115). It's understandable why some would find this association unpleasant; a definite historical origin point seems to imply an ultimate Agent behind that origin – at least *in potentia*. Stephen Hawking made this connection, saying, "'So long as the universe had a beginning,'" it was possible to "'suppose it had a creator'" (Berlinski 2009: 70). The conundrum behind the cosmos having an uncaused finite origin is a motive behind the concept of the Multiverse: a model imagined to resolve multiple problems for the Modern perspective. It reinjects the infinite back into the scene – both in terms of extent and history.

5.1.2. The Modern motive for embracing the Multiverse

This resolution is of course the motive for embracing the theory, which itself is beyond observation. For one thing, if the multiverse is infinite, we can have no empirical basis for affirming it because "an *actual infinite* in this sense is unobservable" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 36). After all, "our actual [empirical] knowledge of remote parts of the universe depends upon those remote parts having effects upon the parts that we can actually observe directly" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 36). The "outer reaches" of infinity could never reach us. That unavailability is even more of a problem in the case of the multiverse; the Princeton cosmologists Paul Steinhardt and Heil Turok explicitly state that their concept of Multiverse is that of "'a much grander universe whose true magnitude is hidden in dimensions *we cannot perceive*'" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 114, n2, emphasis mine). By definition, we cannot have an empirical basis for what we cannot even perceive.

As Ashley and Deely point out, multiverse theories could only ever hope to be conjectural models. Multiverse thinking joins many trends in science today in moving away from an "exclusive interest in uniform natural laws" and embracing instead "an historical emphasis" on "a chronology of unique", unrepeatable events (Ashley, Deely 2012: 113). However, since "history has to do with an increasingly remote past that scientists cannot experimentally control", the resulting historical methods "require interpretation" and involve "irreducible elements of *uncertainty*, the more so the further back our guesses reach" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 113, emphasis mine). Thus, if "lack [of] empirical verification" is what makes a scientific theory tenuous, then the Multiverse and other models like it are "tenuous hypotheses" (Ashley, Deely 2012: 114). Another description is to say that such models move increasingly into the realm of the imagination. If the mere suggestion of a connection between 'science' and 'imaginary' is offensive, this reveals the contours of Modernity's semiotic commitments.

We get a glimpse of the motive in Michael Lemonick's 2004 *Discover* article,[157] in which he discusses Steinhardt and Turok's multiverse model. Lemonick says that their model "could wipe away these mysteries" since "the universe as we know it is [but] a small cross section of a much grander [though unperceivable] universe" (Lemonick 2004: 36). What "we think of as the Big Bang" was really just our world and "another three-dimensional world" colliding; this event was "just the latest in a cycle of cosmic collisions stretching infinitely into the past and into the future. Each collision creates the universe anew" (Lemonick 2004: 36). As an automatic result, we can reclaim an infinite, uncreated, eternal, self-existent universe.

Even the perplexities of time can be dispelled – or "renormalized" since our cosmos' multi-billion year history becomes just a blip in an infinity. As if by magic, we no longer have to deal with any problems related to temporality, since they seem to disappear. All expanses of time become completely meaningless when defined against a background of zero, which is what happens for us cognitively.

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[157] Lemonick's text is referenced in (Ashley, Deely 2012: 114), note 2.

The only numerical infinity we can understand is zero. The 13.7 billion year history is dispelled, along with any related paradoxes, for defining it in relation to infinity reduces to the infinity; its finitude is swallowed up in negation. After all, no matter how big 13.7 billion might seem, if you divide it by zero, it's zero, so there's no factor left to explain.

Lemonick says just this, though perhaps inadvertently: that Steinhardt and Turok's multiverse model could wipe away mysteries, not resolve them. The same renormalization technique that we saw earlier is also at work here. The universe as scene is supposed to concern the finite, yet the conception of it as *ultimate* gives it a quality of infinity; the discovery that the universe had a beginning and is therefore finite undermines this infinite quality and raises the question of infinity elsewhere. Negating the infinite quality of the scene causes the infinite to surface in undesirable places. Thus, inflating the scope of the scene allows the reinjection of infinity to the substance of the scene where it belongs.

The trouble is that the scope inflation tactic doesn't solve the relevant issues. The appearance of its success is an illusion created by our limited comprehension regarding incredible magnitude. When we create a model of such a mathematical and spatial scale, the actual dimensions so exceed our grasp that often anything appears possible. The problem is recontextualized within a grander, more awe-inspiring scene; since we cannot grasp that scale, the problem seems to disappear into the wonder of the scale. We have imaginatively entered into the realm of the miraculous or the imaginary. Because we cannot fathom the nature of that scene, we cannot fathom the acts possible within that scene; because that scene seems "magical", magical rules apply to the possibilities within it.

The key question underlying the paradox of substance (the 'began to be' versus 'always existed' paradox in this case) hasn't actually disappeared, though, but has simply been moved to a less visible place. When it comes to the multiverse, we still have the question of *why* it exists rather than doesn't. The scale of that context (and the rules that apply once that context is already a given and *exists*) doesn't negate the question – because the question is categorically different. Indeed, the question is independent of and prior to the rules of any particular cosmos (universal *or* multiversal) itself. After all, the multiverse is itself a *cosmos*, a unified ordering that contains great possibilities of multiplicity. Categorically, nothing has changed that was *relevant* to the questions of coming into being versus self-existence. The problem isn't just that the paradox of substance is still wholly unresolved; it's that it hasn't even be addressed. A question about one thing received an answer about something else; however, the answer astounds the imagination and alters the focal point. The belief that the problem has been resolved is also bolstered by expectations that all answers can be found in the scene because The Scene Is Ultimate. That is, this type of answer is metaphysically and semiotically consistent with Modern commitments and expectations. We find what we have decided to find, and the conclusion is no more revealing than any tautology.

The paradox therefore remains. The fact that the current empirical evidence only points to our known universe originating with the Big Bang has not impeded

models that would semiotically reground cosmic emergence in some sort of greater Scene. The (literal) Multiverse is the attempt to provide an unchanging scene for the apparently uncaused but finite emergence of our universe. Suddenly, the mystery and the problem appear resolved because the emergence of our universe is an "act" (an agentless, actless act) that occurs in a greater unchanging scene: the popping into being of universes is something that the multiverse "just does". Our universe may not be eternal, but the multiverse is.

We have simply reassigned the terms in order to negate the problem, moving but not resolving the boundaries. Any explanation of the multiverse's existence itself is then dealt with by restating that it just exists, with 'Multiverse' being a new name for that tautology – for that self-existent copula. This is the implicitly theological attribution reapplied. The Big Bang destabilized this association, for an ultimate God cannot be finite, but the Multiverse reestablishes the mystery and restores the implicitly theological meaning that sustains the Modern semiotic structure.

Indeed, this is precisely the "renormalized state" Modernity sought to establish. The resolution of the paradox of substance is not actually the primary aim with models like this; the primary aim, whether explicit or not, is to maintain the tenuous balance of its semiotic architecture's consistency as built upon its God-term and correlative pentadic schema. Returning the infinite to the Scene is the fundamental motive here, for the Human Agent cannot be sovereign unless the scene is sovereign; if any Agent ontologically transcends the scene, then the Human Agent cannot be sovereign. Thus the motive is to re-balance and re-secure the semiotic system, serving its God-term ('Human Reason') and its pentadic ultimate (Scene), which is the needed circumference for making the Human sovereign.

The God-term and its principle implications are the primary devotion (the utmost motive), and the faithful Modernist is likely to defend and secure them even when doing so contradicts more explicit but secondary commitments (such as the doctrines of Rationality and Empiricism). Using the critical lens we've laid out makes sense of support for scientific models that have no more claim to empirical evidence than do explicitly theological models. While Rationality and Empiricism are professed values in Modernity, they are secondary to the God-term as the ultimate motive; thus, they can be sacrificed in the pursuit of defending that God-term, which also means defending its implicated circumference. Let's look at a specific example.

5.1.3. Steven Pinker's embracing of the Multiverse doctrine

Take Steven Pinker's recent work of Modernist apologetics, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (2018). Using the term 'apologetics' is not a mere rhetorical flourish but a reflection of Pinker's confessed goal of "[e]xplaining the meaning of life" and "channeling a body of beliefs and values […] of the Enlightenment" (Pinker 2018: 4). He specifically means 'the ideals of reason, science, humanism, and progress", which he says

"need a wholehearted defense" (Pinker 2018: 4). He is defending the faith against people's cynicism that "the Enlightenment-inspired institutions" are not "securing this progress" as was promised (Pinker 2018: 5). Instead, he wants to show how the world is unequivocally getting better under Modernity, thus justifying our continued faith (and hopefully winning converts, too).

Pinker discusses the multiverse toward the end of this book. He embraces this theory for its benefit of dispelling the problems of "fine tuning", which means the apparently high improbability of all the convergent factors required to support life in this universe. Pinker refers to Martin Rees' *Just Six Numbers*, which says that if the numerical values of a handful of physical "constants were off by a minuscule iota, then matter would fly apart or collapse upon itself, and stars, galaxies, and planets, to say nothing of terrestrial life and *Homo sapiens*, could never have formed" (Pinker 2018: 423). If the strength of the physical forces, the dimensions of space-time, or the amount of matter were different, life wouldn't be possible.

We don't actually have models that explain why this is the case. Indeed, the "best-established theories of physics today don't explain why these constants should be so meticulously tuned" (Pinker 2018: 423). Fortunately, says Pinker, there's no need to introduce faith into the picture. We certainly don't need to question Modernity, for "[p]hysicists have not been left dumbstruck by the apparent fine-tuning of the fundamental constants, but are actively pursuing several explanations" (Pinker 2018: 423). Oddly, this confident statement says less than its tone suggests – or, with Wittgenstein, we could say it says quite a bit *more* since a contradiction says too much.[158] 'Physicists haven't been left dumbstruck' suggests they know. 'Actively pursuing several explanations' means they don't know. If you're pursuing an explanation, you don't know the answer. If you're pursuing multiple explanations, you're even less certain. Perhaps Pinker means simply that they don't *feel* dumbstruck because they're confident they or their paradigm can eventually resolve the problem. This would be a less significant claim.

Still, Pinker thinks that the fine-tuning argument paraded by some theists is an issue worth dealing with, and that's why he finds the multiverse theory appealing. He says that since "our universe is just one region in a vast, possibly infinite landscape of universes – a multiverse – each with different values of the fundamental constants", then we just happen to "find ourselves in a universe compatible with life not because it was tuned to allow us to exist but because the very fact that we exist implies that it is *that* kind of universe" instead of one of those other inhospitable ones (Pinker 2018: 424). Thus, fine-tuning turns out to be just

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[158] Specifically, he says that while a "tautology leaves open to reality the whole – the infinite whole – of logical space", a "contradiction fills the whole of logical space leaving no point of it for reality" (Wittgenstein 1977[1921]: 4.463). A tautology says so little that it applies to everything; a contradiction says so much that it applies to nothing. Thus, a contradiction says too much.

"a fallacy of post hoc reasoning" instead of a problem requiring explanation (Pinker 2018: 424).

He recognizes that this sounds like post hoc reasoning. Indeed, he says, it *would* "itself be a post hoc excuse for an explanation if it were not consistent with other theories in physics" (Pinker 2018: 424). That sounds solid, but what are these other theories? Namely, "that the vacuum of space can spawn big bangs which grow into new universes, and that the baby universes can be born with different fundamental constants" (Pinker 2018: 424). That is, he means string theory, which he doesn't mention by name or include in his extensive index. Nor does he mention the lack of empirical grounding for this kind of physics. He only vaguely refers to "theories in physics" as a rhetorical technique to win credulity when he might not otherwise get it.

Pinker's rhetorical presentation is of a Rational sort, and it relies heavily on statistics to "prove" that the world is getting better because of Modernism; the implication is that we should look to Reason and Observation as bases for our beliefs. The truth, though, is that Pinker is advocating concepts whose basis is "model first" mathematics, aiming not to explain any empirical phenomena but to find ways to make other scientific models fit together. Indeed, observation can actually be seen as an impediment to the math. According to his professed ethos of empirical rationality, this should hardly serve as a sufficient ground to offset post hoc reasoning.

Indeed, if his theistic opponents were to use this line of thinking, he would denounce them as irrational. Instead, he has worked a rhetorical reversal in order to bolster the rational appearance of Modern ideology. By this sleight of hand, he has portrayed an entirely imaginative, unempirical model supported through post hoc reasoning as rational – while an actual empirical aspect of our experience (the physical situation sometimes called "fine-tuning") is characterized as an instance of the post hoc fallacy. The case where we begin with observation and generate math to describe it is supplanted by math that starts with math and proceeds according to itself without external reference, which is then filtered through established structures of interpretation.

Pinker says that if this violates our common sense, we shouldn't be bothered. After all, history shows that "common sense" and "cognitive queasiness [are] a poor guide to reality" (Pinker 2018: 424). Once we get used to it, the idea of infinite universes "is not so exotic after all" (Pinker 2018: 425). It's not such a crazy notion that "somewhere there are universes with exact doppelgangers of you except that they married someone else, were killed by a car last night, are named Evelyn, have one hair out of place, put the book down a moment ago and are not reading this sentence, and so on" (Pinker 2018: 424). In an impressive reversal, Pinker says that in a way "the multiverse is the simpler theory of reality, since if our universe is the only one in existence, we would need to complicate the elegant laws of physics with an arbitrary stipulation of our universe's parochial initial conditions and its parochial physical constants" (Pinker 2018: 425). The wholly imaginary theory is preferable because that way we don't have to let the perplexing realities of our actual observable universe get in the way of our

"elegant laws". We might also refer to this as *fantasy*. The model has departed so much from the reality that initially inspired it that the reality itself has begun to interfere with the model, and we think perhaps we would do better without the reality. Some might question whether this is a more rational (or more parsimonious) result than God.

Oddly, the justification for this incredible picture of Multiversal reality seems to be the Modern doctrine itself: we Moderns are smarter and less ignorant than people in the past. Today we are comfortable with truths that "insulted our ancestors' common sense" (Pinker 2018: 424) and which they "had to swallow" with difficulty, if at all (Pinker 2018: 425). Truth, apparently, is often apparently irrational. Given all the things that seemed crazy to our ancestors, we should expect truth to seem crazy to us at first; if "reason contradicts intuition [or common sense] once again, so much the worse for intuition" (Pinker 2018: 425). Pinker's schema associates *true* with *counterintuitive*; the implication is that something's seeming irrational or fantastical becomes a credit to its veracity. Given that the Enlightenment's unrestrained exercise of reason was accompanied by many fantasies (Atlantis, El Dorado, mythical creatures observed during overseas voyages), the title *Enlightenment Now* is appropriate.

5.1.4. The hidden theological commitment

How is it that Pinker can unironically advocate for a belief in this Multiverse as a way to dispel the so-called "God of the gaps" when he's arguing for a multiverse of the gaps? His only protection (by his own admission) from accusations of post hoc reasoning is that the Multiverse is consistent with string theory, but so is God. His postulation is only not theological in a tautological sense: it doesn't involve the word 'God'. However, it violates the same principles according to which God was supposedly ruled out: we can't verify Him empirically. He is therefore superfluous, at least in terms of Modern scientific description. But if appealing to our universe and restricting our consideration to what we can observe has turned out to not be enough, then why are we committed to maintaining the semiotic system that told us we should abide by this restriction? It's not doing its job. Why not reject it and its semiotic foundations outright as insufficient instead of trying to reformulate them?

Because of course it's not a disinterested meaning system. It's a pseudo-religious semiotic system with an implicit theology – and all the commitment which that entails. It positions itself explicitly against theism precisely because it's an alternate theology, because it marks out for itself its most categorically appropriate opponent, semiotically speaking. It's not an assortment of disinterested conclusions tentatively held by pure rationalists willing at any given moment to relinquish old beliefs and commitments. It's an implicit theology that will fight to preserve itself as a semiosphere, even if that means greatly multiplying infinities within its model in order to reinject itself with universalism. When the infinities it tries to exclude reappear, it performs the "trick of renormalization" to

remove the appearance of the infinity in the unwanted place and to smuggle it under other terms back into the Scenic realm where it's supposed to remain. In the name of eliminating one Absolute Infinite Term, it has invented a whole host of them in the guise of non-agents. Instead of one universal God as ultimate Agent, we have infinite universals – infinities that continue to proliferate as we seek to reinstate the appearance of real Substance, which retreats as soon as we try to pin it down. Indeed, we even have an infinity of universes themselves now; in making the Scene ultimate, we've turned it into an infinity. What more logical implication could there be?

Indeed, the Scene takes on the ultimate qualities that were supposedly so offensive about God and that served as our reason for banishing Him. In doing so, we "popped the bubble", as it were, and those qualities have drained out from their unity in the Logos (Logos as *Other* than the cosmic scene *and* the human agent[159]) and spread to all the cosmos itself. We have not escaped theology; we have driven it into the very ground, which we now serve as our god and God-term.

The Multiverse is invisible. The Multiverse is eternal. The Multiverse is uncreated. The Multiverse is omnipotent, able to create any possible world. The Multiverse was in the beginning, and without it nothing was made that was made. In it we live and move and have our being. There is no power above it, no space outside it, no one like it, no gods beside it. We cannot see it, we cannot taste or touch or verify it empirically or prove its existence. We can only access it by faith, which is the evidence of things hoped for and the substance of things not seen. Yet we recognize its reality by its beauty and its effects upon meaning, for those who have the eyes to see and the ears to hear know that the Multiverse *is*; the one who believes in the Multiverse will not let his eyes get in the way of his belief, for "we walk by faith and not by sight".

5.2. Conclusion

The distinction between a *theological* view and a *theosemiotic* view is key to understanding what is meant by a 'semiotic of motives'. I, the author, hold a theological view, adhere to the Christian God-term, and spin out a world of meaning in consistency with Christianity. But while my particular Christian orientation is also consistent with a theosemiotic view, these two don't reduce to one another. Burke's perspective was also theosemiotic, and he considered himself agnostic. The fact that my perspective can be accurately characterized as both is "accidental" in the Aristotelian sense, and one doesn't require the other. That my theological commitment as a Christian makes me pleased to find core problems with the Modern paradigm is an issue of my *attitude*, but it doesn't create those problems in meaning.

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[159]   Other – and thus able to give meaning to both, for a sign must be in a relation to what it is not, or it can't be a sign.

Further, a person without a Christian commitment can reject the Modern semiotic paradigm on theosemiotic grounds – whereby we recognize that Modernism's problems with meaning and consistency are not accidental to its manifestations but arise from its ultimate generating principle. If a theosemiotic viewpoint entails a rejection of the Modern theory of meaning, it does not entail an embracing of the Christian alternative, even if it opens the door to that perspective in a particular way – that is, to the degree that Modernism is a culturally catalyzed incompatibility with Christianity. The semiotic of motives shows that this incompatibility is the result of choice, not necessity, and is thus *motivated*.

In light of this, Modernity's exclusion of theological terms is also not a formal necessity but rather an implication of its most fundamental semiotic values and motives. Therefore, when it transforms its theosemiotic functions into terms that obscure their "theological" character, this is a rhetorical tactic the purpose of which is to insulate the worldview-value-system from critique by making its self-contradiction invisible.

Though this theosemiotic view does not entail Christianity, it also does not entail the "naive relativist" view often associated with postmodernism, for *nothing* can entail that because it is invalid: that is, the universal claim that truth or reality does not exist is still a universal claim about what always holds. As a contradiction, it says too much because it says everything all at once, including within its circumference every incompatibility simultaneously – as Wittgenstein said.[160] The naive relativist position requires either a universal qualifier or the negation of an existential qualifier; the first would be some form of 'It is always the case that there is nothing that is always the case', and the second would be 'There does not exist at least one truth that always holds'. Thus, there exists at least one universal truth, but that is all that logic can tell us. What that truth might be, or whether there are more, is only decidable in the realm where we must choose. The Modern answer that we can simply look to the scene for answers does not work; if we reject naive relativism, we also reject naive realism.

So what other option do we have? This is where a teleological method for navigating incompatibility comes in. This method stands as a kind of third alternative to naive realism and naive relativism, for it recognizes that we must assume that there is *some* truth, whether or not we have epistemic access to its specifics; after all, we assume the existence of truth even in forming a proposition categorically denying truth, just as we assume the existence of logic even in forming an argument against the existence of logic. In denying scientistic realism and the Modern account of meaning, we are not embracing a "believe whatever you want" ethos, precisely because we recognize the formal necessity of truth. The question to resolve, then, is how to determine the specifics of that truth. We recommend what we refer to as the teleological method for judging the truth value of various incompatibilities.

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[160] See footnote 157.

5.2.1. The teleological method

What we mean is to use the entelechial principle for tracing forward the trajectories of various semiotic options in order to determine where they lead in meaning. Their teleological "end points" are then used as a determination of their semiotic character. Those end points are then compared in relation to the agent's deepest and most highly valued motive to see which trajectory is most consistent with that motive; that is, the end points of the multiple trajectories are compared to see which one leads toward the motive the agent most desires to be their God-term. Whichever option is most consistent with that motive is the one which is chosen – to the exclusion of incompatible options that lead away from that motive and toward others.

For instance, earlier in the work we explored an example where someone faces a choice of whether to accept a high-paying job that will require very long work weeks and relocation far from her family; the meaning crisis for this person was framed as a conflict between two competing motives: 'Money' and 'Relationships'. We imagine now that this person consciously wants to make relationships (with family and close friends) the superseding motive, but she struggles to determine the right choice because she can see multiple perspectives where either choice could conceivably best serve the 'Relationships' motive. On one hand, she can envision how making more money could actually help her family out, but on the other hand, she sees how taking the job must involve distance in those important relationships – both in terms of spatial distance and of literal time available to interact with friends and family.

This comparison may be most successful when additional comparisons can be made: for instance, through other people she has known. This compounds the "texts" involved in the assessment, increasing the meaning density. If she has a friend who made a career choice similar to the one she is considering, what does that friend's life look like? What are their relationships like? Further, if she has another friend who turned down financially lucrative opportunities in pursuit of family, what kind of life does *that* person have? However, since people in any given life situation may be living out their motives imperfectly (or dishonestly), this assessment must be done in a nuanced and conscientious way. It will not be maximally helpful to look at someone who turned down a job to have a family but who spends most of their time ignoring their family and friends; such would not be a good indicator of the semiotic value of developing the relationship motive, largely because that person is not catalyzing that motive.

Thus, the assessment must be a conscientious one that specifically follows out sign (meaning) trajectories, particularly where that sign-as-motive is clear. When the "end" point is obtained, it is considered not only in an abstract semiotic sense but actually in relation to *experience*. To what kind of experiential reality does following out that motive lead? What general world of experience does it create or help bring about for the agent, and is that the kind of world in which the agent wants to live? We can also consider how it shapes the world for other agents. This

will ultimately contribute to the kind of sign each human agent will finally be as a result of their choices in semiosis.

This teleological approach will obviously be most impactful in situations of high stakes incompatibilities – that is, situations of particularly high semiotic density. This means semiotic crises or crossroads that lead to major experiential differences. Some examples are obvious cases of hurtful consequences, such as a choice whereby someone could lose custody of their children, and if such consequences don't intuitively turn someone away from that choice, the teleological method may add nothing more compelling. However, some high stakes incompatibilities are "more semiotic" in nature, such as wrestling with questions about whether love reduces to mere chemical stimulus; in this case, it will be more helpful to ask where the different answers lead – to ask what semiotic entailments arise from embracing the various meaning pathways.

As such, we wouldn't want to just ask what the immediate next step is but what the whole host of entailments are. And we don't want to consider only the propositional entailments but also the attitudinal entailments and the results for felt experience. Indeed, meaning is not just a question of definitions and information but also the production of interpretants – including *emotional* interpretants. And interpretants shape subsequent semiosis as holistically felt experience. Meanings have impacts upon us also in terms of how they *affect* us: a term which literally means how they make us feel. Our feelings shape our perception of meaning, not just in an "emotional" sense (as opposed to a "mental" sense) but in the sense that different meanings alter the way it feels to be in the world. If I truly believe in a reality where no one loves me because I am a worthless person, what it is like to be in the world is different than if I am convinced that I am a person of value and that people are telling the truth when they say they love me. These two meaning options are incompatible in the sense of being mutually-exclusive; I cannot believe both at the same time. If I become convinced of the contrary position, in a sense I would enter into a different world of experience, inasmuch as what it feels like to be in the world will be very different. This will alter not only my perceptions but also the panoply of available signs that I can encounter within experience.

All meanings are not equal; this principle underlies the very concept and possibility of meaning (and signs) in the first place. But while much of human experience is invariant, many of the most significant contours of meaning must be navigated through choice. We cannot outsource our semiotic responsibility for choice to the scene or to empirical inquiry. The point is not to denigrate science or even to primarily make a statement about science itself; rather our aim is (1) to point out an epistemic situation obtaining for humanity in general that cannot be removed by any methodology or technological augmentation, and (2) to argue that this epistemic situation is also rooted in the cosmos as it is given, according to the way we all *must* experience it. The indeterminacy seen in optical illusions, negotiable by shifts in perspective, is at least a useful metaphor for the way that the "given cosmos" supports multiple perspectives about meaning and ontology. Different emphases or semiotic characterizations are possible for the same

experiential object. Regardless of which emphasis is truer or more important, the cosmos in some capacity does permit various emphases. This indeterminacy is both the freedom that makes choice possible and the background on which we all must reveal our motives.

We emphasize the *givenness* of the cosmos primarily in the categorical sense that human beings must encounter the cosmos. For instance, both a theist and an atheist see the "same tree" in some sense, even though their full experience of that tree within semiosis can be quite different. After all, both are perfectly able to navigate the tree, to eat of its fruit, to describe and measure it in a consistent way that doesn't vary between their perspectives. While their overall meaningful experience of the tree is different (perhaps drastically so in some ways), a kind of "skeleton" underlying experience remains the same for both – but the kinds of structures that can be built upon that skeleton can vary significantly. Despite whatever structures the skeleton stipulates, it also permits a variety of structural possibilities. These different possibilities correlate to different experiential worlds, and the ultimate determiner for whether we build one way or another (and enter into one experienced reality or another) is motive. For selection is an act, and motive determines the nature of the act.

Further, by advocating for a teleological method, we mean to recommend (along with Burke) an intentional approach to meaning construction, recognizing the suasive character of signs, especially those dense with incompatibilities. That is, as Burke says in the Rhetoric, we should be aware "that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us", and "this attitude of assent may then be transferred to the matter which happens to be associated with the form" (Burke 1952d[1950]: 58). If we are not approaching the deployment of signs in culture as the negotiation of incompatibility, we can find ourselves assenting to high stakes conclusions that are merely implicit and not overt; such tactics are often employed by persuaders who are happy to gain our assent without our intention. But because of the suasive character of signs, we can still find ourselves in a correlative world of experience – perhaps one we never intended to enter. Because we didn't realize it was happening, we will likely lack knowledge about how to exit that experiential world and then enter another. Hopefully, this teleological approach connected with a motive-focused semiotic viewpoint could at least serve as a beginning place for opening doors to worlds that seem separated by an uncrossable chasm. The application of this viewpoint to the Modern paradigm that we undertook above was one demonstration of how tracing out entelechial semiotic pathways can be used to build a bridge across such chasms, thus permitting the translation of the agent from one world of experience to another. In a sense, we could say that the work is apologetical in the sense of removing impediments to perspectival change.

5.2.2. Trees in the Garden of Eden: A representative anecdote

As a final articulation of the perspective underlying this semiotic of motives, we will briefly offer (in appropriate Burkean form) a representative anecdote as a figure demonstrating the spirit (thesis *and* ethos) of the work. A representative anecdote "sums up the essence of a text" (Madsen 1993: 208) – indeed reveals "the motivational framework which underlies a text" (Madsen 1993: 209). Burke considers the representative anecdote to be involved in the generation of the text itself. In the Grammar he refers to it as "a form in conformity with which the vocabulary is constructed" (Burke 1945b: 59). Indeed that's the case here, for what we present as a representative anecdote was influential in the development of our key concepts. Namely, this anecdote is the narrative in Genesis 3 about Adam, Eve, and the trees of the Garden of Eden.

5.2.2.1. Clarifying the narrative

This story is popularly misunderstood, so we must lay out the narrative as it actually appears in the text. This first means clarifying that the famous "Tree of Knowledge" does not exist in Genesis. Semiotically, this is key. The "Tree of Knowledge" persists in popular memory, but in this text its name is The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. First mentioned in Genesis chapter 2:9, it is one of three trees (or types of tree) that appear in this narrative. The others are (1) the Tree of Life and (2) every other tree, all of which God calls "desirable *and* pleasing to the sight and good (suitable, pleasant) for food" (Genesis 2:9, AMP)[161]. That this class includes every tree besides the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is reflected in God's command to the man ("Adam") in verse 16 that he "may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden" (Genesis 2:16, AMP). The one exception is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Technically the Tree of Life would fall into this category of "good trees", and since they are all good for eating and consistent with life, they could all be seen as related to the Tree of Life.

Yet since they are referred to distinctly from the Tree of Life, we can understand this group to thematically form a third type of tree: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good. We have a context in which every tree but one has been called good and has been affirmed for eating and experiencing directly – that is, for gaining knowledge. The default, universal condition, then, is the knowledge of the good because everything that the man and woman are given access to is good. Therefore, every tree *but* the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil *is* the Tree of the Knowledge of Good. From here it becomes clear that the only thing novel

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[161] A note about the Amplified version of the Bible: the AMP contains terminological elaborations to address the difficulties of translation, where a word in the source language may have conceptual dimensions that are difficult to convey with a single word in the target language. The AMP is an attempt to give a more accurate conceptual rendering of the biblical Hebrew and Greek texts. I will at times use this version when I think it offers something useful.

about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is "[...] and Evil". Its only innovation is the additional knowledge of evil (or calamity, affliction, distress). We can see therefore that this tree is not the Tree of Knowledge – *not* simply because of its name but because knowledge itself was already present in all the trees. As a category, knowledge was not universally absent, for knowledge of good was ubiquitous – the universal condition with one exception. The additional knowledge that the excluded tree offered was, by contrast, a minority case.

The background for Genesis 3 is that God had taken the "man and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it" (Genesis 2:15, AMP). The man is placed in a world with a responsibility for shaping that world through his engagement with it: it's a garden to be *cultivated*. Against this backdrop, the Lord gives this command: "'You may freely (unconditionally) eat [the fruit] from every tree of the garden; but [only] from the tree of the knowledge (recognition) of good and evil you shall not eat, otherwise on the day that you eat from it, you shall most certainly die'" (Genesis 2:16-17, AMP). This is not only a command but also a revelation that the choice to violate the prohibition will lead to a certain result: death. Eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is connected to the teleological end point of death; it establishes a trajectory toward that result.

Death would involve a departure in quality of experience for the man and woman. Specifically, the Tree of Life stands in the midst of the garden,[162] which means the garden is a scene characterized by the presence of the Tree of Life, defining the scene's circumference. The reason given for the prohibition is that eating from the Tree of […] Evil will open up death as a different world of experience; death would be a different kind of experience than what currently obtains. That is, life and the knowledge of good characterize their current world of experience in consistency with the Garden of Eden as scene. However, death and the knowledge of evil or calamity stand as an alternative, incompatible world that is accessible through the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

So it is that *this* tree is really the tree of another way: a door to Universe B, which is predicated on something other than what God has identified as "good" and in which He has placed the man and woman. Everything that exists in the Garden abides by the principle of actional consistency: since the scene that God has made is good, everything which lives in it must also be good. This is why God created a fitting companion for the man: "'It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone'" (Genesis 2:18, AMP). Goodness is the guiding principle for creative development in this world. Thus, Universe B would involve a different guiding principle for development within it: destruction and not-goodness.

That only one tree will lead to that alternate experiential world emphasizes the element of choice involved. The "narrow door" of the singular choice emphasizes the overt quality of the choice *as* a choice. One does not stumble upon it but chooses it based explicitly upon its meaning. Many motivations might lead to that choice, but they will all share a semiotic quality that unifies them in a shared

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[162] Genesis 2:9

motive, despite their differences. Only a certain range of motives will correspond to that act; they will share a different circumference than motives that correspond to the incompatible choice. Having made these clarifications, let us proceed to the actual narrative of Genesis 3, which we will recount and then explicate.

5.2.2.2. Recounting the Genesis 3 narrative

The chapter begins by saying that the serpent was more crafty (beguiling) "than any beast of the field". The serpent approaches the woman and asks, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman responds, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You may not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent responds, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil". The woman, not only seeing that the tree is beautiful to look at but also believing the serpent's claim that it is "good for food" and "desirable to make one wise", takes the fruit and eats it. She also gives some to her husband, and he eats it, too.

A difference in experience takes place immediately, for their eyes "were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings". They then hear "the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day", and they hide themselves "among the trees of the garden". God calls out, "Where are you?" The man responds, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid myself." God asks, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree?" The man replies that the woman, "whom You gave to be with me", took the fruit and gave it to him, so he ate it. God turns to the woman and says, "What have you done?" And she replies, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate it."

So God turns to the serpent, and begins His pronouncements with this original crime, cursing the serpent.[163] God then reveals to the man and woman what their new world of experience will be like: they will face new forms of bodily suffering, there will be asymmetry and imbalance in their relationship, the ground will produce thorns and resist their attempts to bring forth food from it, their daily existence will be defined by exhausting toil, and this will continue until they eventually die and return to dust – for they were formed from dust, and now they will return to it. Then God "made garments of skin" for them and drove them out of the Garden of Eden, whose entrance point was blocked by cherubim with a "flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life".

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[163]   The curse against the serpent is far too dense with theological significance to treat here, especially since our main focus is the man and woman, not the serpent.

5.2.2.3. Explication of the text

The text intends the tone of the serpent's discourse to be deception, not liberation. His initial question to the woman (who is referred to as Eve[164] at the end of the chapter) is, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" Eve's response should have been simply "No" because the serpent misquotes God. What God actually said to Adam[165] was, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely" – with one exception, of course, because that tree would kill the man. Thus, God frames His statement in terms of freedom, but the serpent reframes the situation in terms of prohibition or restriction. That is, God makes the nearly ubiquitous freedom to be the context or scene in which the agent is situated, but the serpent reframes that situation in the context of the one restriction; instead of freedom being the most defining feature for reality and experience, the negation of freedom is made the most defining feature.

Therefore, the serpent's statement is not just a misquotation but a choice to reframe all reality and perspective in terms of a loss of freedom. So Eve's translation from freedom to the loss of freedom as an experiential world doesn't begin with the action of eating the fruit but with her acceptance of the serpent's terms for characterizing reality. This alters the way she sees reality, which means that for her the scene has changed: one in which the act of eating the fruit is possible and consistent. What the actual act of eating the fruit does is catalyze not just the underlying motive but the transformation of the scene as one that is consistent with the motive and the act. The resulting transformation in experience comes before she and the man are expelled by God from the Garden of Eden; they perceived reality differently while still in that garden, which shows that the change is much more nuanced and holistic than spatial location. The change begins with the acceptance of the serpent's altered terms for characterizing reality (the scene).

This means that the change isn't a magical result of eating the fruit nor that the change in reality is an external condition that God imposes upon them arbitrarily. Rather, it's a result that arises at the semiotic level. It begins with an alteration in meaning, which is accomplished by changing the signs themselves – for the serpent revises God's statement "You may freely eat from any tree of the garden" into "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden". If these two statements seem equivalent, the basis must come from outside the statements themselves, for they are incompatible at a formal level. One characterizes reality as freedom with one restriction from freedom, and the other characterizes all reality as restriction from freedom. Thus, simply by embracing the serpent's characterization of God's statement, Eve implicitly embraces a conclusion about reality in the process.[166]

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[164] 'Eve' means 'living' or 'life', for this woman is "the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20). This ancestral attribution is meant to refer to a spiritual lineage, not just a biological one. It means that we have all committed Eve's spiritual act. We are all Eve.

[165] In chapter 2:16–17.

[166] The two statements are not logically identical, but by accepting the substitution of one for the other, Eve reveals that she perceives them as logically equivalent. Such misapprehension can often happen in communication; indeed, certain attempts at covert persuasion (or deception) rely on such errors.

Strangely enough, Eve's very next statement carries forward this trajectory of misquoting God. She says, "God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" But what God actually said was only that they shouldn't eat its fruit; He said nothing about touching. This alteration also changes the meaning tone of what God said: effectively, that the tree's fruit is poisonous for them. The reason for her misquotation is not stated, though we have some basis to surmise it. For one thing, God's initial statement was spoken to Adam, not to her, so her knowledge of God's words in that regard would be secondhand rather than direct. Lest Eve be too narrowly judged, we can ask the question, "Where was Adam during all this?" The text only says that she gave some also to Adam. Perhaps he was absent during the serpent's discourse, though verse six says that "she also gave some to her husband with her" (Genesis 3:6, NASB), the preposition 'with' appearing in the Hebrew text itself; since someone's being present when you give them an object is a given, the preposition may indicate his presence throughout the episode. Regardless, since Eve seems to not even be familiar enough with God's words to quote them correctly, the implication falls upon Adam: as the original witness, why hadn't he made sure she understood things better? This was their one restriction, and its stakes were as high as possible (death); it seems less likely that she would have forgotten than that she never understood correctly. And given that Adam was willing to follow her lead into what he knew was wrong, without even protesting, we have precedent for saying that he is neglecting his responsibilities to care for this person and to make sure she follows God's words. Even if God was lying, Adam cannot know for sure, which means he is risking the life of the woman he is supposed to love.

However, lest we neglect Eve's responsibility, the text gives us a basis for identifying the problem in her: namely, her motive. It says next that she decided to eat the fruit for three reasons: it was good for food, it was a delight to look at, and it was desirable for making one wise. However, the serpent only communicated two of those reasons; he said that it was possible for her to eat it (was "good for food") and that it would make her wise like God. The serpent did *not* say anything about its appearance, which means that she supplied this reason on her own; it therefore gives us insight into her motive. She has already seen the tree and found it beautiful; indeed, since that quality appears on her list of reasons to eat of it, we know that she desires to eat of it because of that reason. Thus, what the serpent does in presenting his deception is to give her a basis (or a pretext) to do what she desires to do. This means that she believes the serpent's words in part because she wants to; she is attracted to his reframing of reality precisely because it makes possible a path of action that is inconsistent with her present framing of reality. Thus, she herself is motivated to embrace the lie.

Regardless of whatever degree of deception is truly taking place – that is, regardless of whatever degree to which Eve is telling the truth when she tells God that she ate the fruit because the serpent deceived her – she is culpable for the act because her motive inclines her toward the act itself. We know this because regardless of how we understand the figure of the serpent in the text, it is a stranger in the garden whose word is contrary to that of God. The primary question is not

about how effective the serpent's persuasive methods are but rather why Eve chose to immediately believe the serpent instead of waiting and asking God about the serpent's claims. Why was she more willing to believe the serpent as a stranger than God with whom she had a relationship and who had only given her reason to believe that His intention toward her was good? Providing a world filled with many different ways of experiencing good should at least provide an initial counter-example to the claim that God did not have good for her in mind. So why was she so inclined toward believing the serpent's claim? The serpent wasn't *forcing* her to eat it, so why didn't she wait and try to confirm his words first?

We find clarity by identifying the source as her motive: she desired to eat of the tree, which she found visually attractive. She had her own desire to eat its fruit anyway – a motive which the serpent did not provide. Thus, her motives for eating the fruit don't reduce to the deception because her compound motive includes a motive that the serpent didn't supply. As we discussed earlier, a motive for embracing a pretext to act in a certain way is the true motive which the pretext is designed to hide; since pretext p serves as the motive for act a, and since motive m is the motive for embracing the pretext, then m is also the real motive for act a – a fact which p is designed to obscure, perhaps even for the agent themselves so that they can act on motive m. This means that Eve's motive of being visually attracted to the tree is not only her primary motive for wanting to eat its fruit (a reasonable consequence of lust) but also her motive for embracing the serpent's picture of reality – which would permit her to gratify her desire. Thus, the prime deception in this story is not the serpent's deception (though his actions clearly *did* lead her into lies) but Eve's self-deception first and then her attempt to deceive God by deflecting the blame to the serpent as her pretext.

Deflection and blame are new experiential characteristics in the story, for Adam, too, deflects the truth and blames Eve. Indeed, he is the first one to do this by blaming her for giving him the fruit. But again, this deflection hides his true motive in eating it because he knew that God said not to eat the fruit and that doing so would harm him. There is no evidence in the text that Adam didn't know what he was eating; indeed, it makes little sense to imagine he didn't recognize the fruit, for if there was only one poisonous fruit tree, he would know what it looked like. In places where a highly poisonous plant or animal is prevalent, people learn quickly to identify it. Further, we have evidence that Adam did know what he was eating, for upon eating it he had the same experiential effect that she did: he saw the world and himself differently, and he knew that he was naked – that is, he felt *shame*, which was a feeling consistent with the new world. Since this was a semiotic result of the particular act, it reveals the presence of the motive that properly correlates to the act. And they both now inhabit this same new world, in which they both feel shame and deflect the blame to someone else. Indeed, Adam's blame extends even to God, for he begins his statement of blaming the woman by saying, "The woman *whom You gave to be with me*". Implicatively, it is her fault, and it is God's fault for putting her with Adam. In other words, if the blame falls on anyone, it's Eve or God, but certainly not Adam.

We see several important meaning changes and experiential effects here. The initial falsehood has already begun to thread throughout their reality. They see a truth (their nakedness) now tinted with a negative perspective, which produces in them shame. As a response, they hide themselves in three senses: of themselves from themselves, of themselves from each other, and of themselves from God. They sew fig leaves together to cover their nakedness to protect their *personal* sense of shame and also to hide themselves from *each other*. Where there was only openness and transparency before, now things must be hidden, and there are walls between the man and woman, which disrupts their intimacy. Further, when God approaches them, they actually hide themselves from Him in the trees.

This threefold breakdown is seen also in their response to God's simple identification of the truth when He asks, "Did you eat from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" That is, they respond by trying to obscure the truth and keep it from illuminating them and the nature of their act – specifically, from revealing their motives in undertaking that act. They both blame someone else instead of owning up to the truth that they did something wrong because they wanted to. God said something bad would happen, they chose to do it anyway, and something bad happened; that bad effect is revealed primarily in effects within their characters. Already their relationship with themselves is breaking down because they won't even face the truth; indeed, they lied to themselves in order to commit the act in the first place. But their relationship with each other has broken down, too, because now they are blaming each other. God said in His curse to the serpent that there will be enmity between it and the woman, but there is also enmity between the woman and the man now, where before there was none. Additionally, their relationship with God has broken down, for they hid themselves from Him – not just by retreating to the trees but by hiding the truth of their inner selves from Him in their deflection of the truth. Where before there was transparency within themselves, with each other, and with God, now there are walls of separation. The relationships have broken down.

Further, their relationship to the world around them, to the scene, has also changed. God tells them that the very earth will respond to them differently. Instead of cooperating with them and obeying their hands as cultivators, it will resist them; it will produce thorns and briars in defense of itself against them. They will have to beat it in submission to live by its fruit, and life will be a struggle to merely obtain the necessities of life. If this is understood simply in a magical way that misses the semiotic picture, it would be a mistake – because what's happened is that their relationship with the scene as agents has changed. No longer do they relate to it as the agents they were, and because they have changed as agents, the scene has changed in response to them. They themselves have begun to blend into the scene. They wove leaves together for themselves and wrapped them around their bodies. When God approached, they receded into the background and hid themselves among the trees. They have been remade in the image of the thing they desired above all else, above even God, and unified themselves with it. They have become "one flesh" with the tree.

This entails damage to themselves and to their human *being* as agents, for they dissolve into the background, becoming part of the scene as trees. They turned themselves into part of the scene by desiring the scene more than God and then choosing to unify themselves with it instead of Him. Thus there is a transformation in their nature as agents from having altered their identification. Burke associates identification as a way of establishing consubstantiality and ambiguities of substance. When someone identifies themselves with another, they become "'substantially one'" with that person, despite remaining "an individual locus of motives"; therefore, they are "both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another" (Burke 1945b: 21). Identity is usually conceived of as an inherent quality of the individual, and that is one aspect, but "two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common", which does not deny but requires their distinctness (Burke 1945b: 21). But there are multiple ways we can identify because there are multiple ways we can signify, and different signs mean different things – even incompatible things. If a substance is an act "and a way of life is an acting-together", then by identifying with something or someone through shared motives and values, we become consubstantial with it or them (Burke 1945b: 21). This is precisely what we see happening with Adam and Eve. They have disrupted their identification with God to instead identify themselves on a fundamental level with the tree.

This has profound consequences for meaning. They become signs of the tree instead of God, clothing themselves in the appearance of their new God-term and drawing close to the tree as God approaches, from whose presence they now withdraw. The ambiguities of substance for Adam and Eve as human beings are that in their being they are comprised of both the biological scene and of the life of God as Agent, for He "formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils" God's very own breath (Genesis 2:7). This means that two emphases are possible: emphasize the Divine breath, or emphasize the dust. Standing in their initial relationship with God means an emphasis on their consubstantiality with God, and their experiential world reflects this identification – there is no lie within themselves, and there is no brokenness in their relationships with others. They can walk with God in an experiential reality that is universally suffused with the qualities of life and of goodness.

However, choosing to reject God's word and testimony about reality means that they break their identification with God; they no longer identify themselves with Him, His words, His motives, and His perspective. Why exactly they did this is not important because all the possible reasons partake of a single ultimate motive whereby their primary allegiance to God in their relationship with Him is broken; regarding the question of their altered identification, all we tautologically need to know is that this identification was altered in preference for another identification. This is why the Old Testament largely frames people's rejection of God as adultery: an ultimate identification with one person is broken in order to form that connection with someone else instead. In that sense, it doesn't matter *why* someone left in regard to the fact that they *left*.

As a result of Adam and Eve's altered identification, an emphasis on the Divine Agent aspect of their being is exchanged for an emphasis on the scenic aspect of their being. This amounts to a destruction of what the human agent originally meant, which occurs not on a magical level but on a semiotic level. They no longer signify the same way, so they no longer *mean* the same way, and the consequences for them as agents and for their experience follow immediately; they automatically feel more unlike agents and more similar to the scene – specifically, to trees. Thus, God's pronouncement about their returning to dust is not so much His imposed curse on them but His revelation about the nature of their choice and what it means for them. Even the earth will no longer obey them as children of God but will treat them like it treats itself – with a response of defense at the other's expense in pursuit of survival.

Adam and Eve are drawn into the scene and become part of it, even to the degree that the scene will begin to resist them, for through their new identification, they themselves have become members of the scene who must obey its own rules and ethos. Automatically, they conform to the scene's pentadic emphases and principles of operation. That they will now return to dust is not only dramatically appropriate but semiotically consistent, necessary, and entailed. It's an operating principle of their new world of experience – a world that they entered through their choice, not something that happened to them.

In terms of what it's like to be in the world, "everything" is different now, even though not everything is different. That is, in a sense they're still standing in the same place, they're still seeing the same topography, they're still breathing with the same nostrils, they're still looking at the same person they've always known. But also they're not. It's not the same place, and that isn't the same person; they don't feel the same, and none of their relationships are the same. The world they were in felt one way, felt good, but this feels different. It's as if they stepped through a portal and emerged into another universe in the multiverse where everything was the same, even though everything semiotically was different. The trees were the trees, but they didn't mean the same thing; the humans were humans, but they were different signs. Reality was different, and what it meant and felt like to be in the world was incompatible with what it had been before. The two realities were as separate as any two universes in the multiverse. And there was a sentry guarding entry back into the old reality from every direction, such that no matter how hard they looked, they would never be able to find it – almost like a door that disappears once you close it from outside.

5.2.3. Final summary

In just this way, many of us are inhabiting worlds of experience that are very different. We walk the same streets, but we're experiencing incompatible realities. The foundation of this is semiotic, and signs (especially God-terms) are the doors to these different worlds of experience. But we live in an age, Modernity, which has locked us into worlds many no longer want to inhabit through its absolute

reduction of all meaning and reality to the scene – the effect of which is to make us think that "reality is just reality" in such a way that we can determine it by looking to the Scene to guide us and to answer all of our important questions. It casts this as Realism which, in Modernity's parameters, is actually indistinguishable from a thoroughgoing nihilism – because when the foundations of that Realist ontology are examined closely, they retreat like a mirage when approached. Modernity (as today's dominant order and semiosphere) spends extraordinary effort in all fields to maintain this world of meaning by "renormalizing" the negation at the center of the sign, where there is now only an absence (I am not) instead of a presence (I am). The subtraction of that Infinity has still left an infinity, but it is an infinity of absence, of zero, and every foundation built upon it recedes into negation when we direct sustained attention toward it.

An anxious unease has increasingly suffused the Modern world, which has expended an inordinate amount of time, energy, and resources to inflate the entertainment apparatus. The escalating thrill of virtuality temporarily helps us to forget that there is no real presence behind that apparent presence; however, when we emerge from its provided diversion, we rediscover the emptiness behind the virtuality. To the degree that it lacks a real referent, it provokes a sense of meaningless and dissatisfaction. The old illusion must be replaced with new forms that are more immersive, more difficult to see through, and longer lasting – that is, more effective and more stimulating. As the virtuality grows, however, the gap increases between the virtual and a referent understood as real. Baudrillard says that the virtual "can intensify in such a mind-boggling way and, moving ever further from the so-called 'real' world, itself lose hold of any reality principle" (Baudrillard 2002: 60). In *Simulacra and Simulation* (Baudrillard 2004), he describes the situation by using the model of a map that survives the terrain it mapped; increasingly the virtual becomes defined entirely by its self-reference as it spreads beyond its previously contained limits.

The "perfection" of this process is the creation of a virtuality that we never have to leave. The movie theater provides a distraction from the feeling of unreality that suffuses everyday life – so understandably characteristic of the 20th century with its depressions, world wars, and existential crises. However, the movie theater provides only occasional and brief diversion, rendering it a quite imperfect reprieve. A natural solution is to move the television into the home, where it becomes the centerpiece as both furniture and time are reorganized around it. Of course, the television is restricted to the home, and people must leave sometimes for work, school, and other reasons; thus, TV is also unable to fulfill the perfection of virtuality. Portable screens of various forms were the reasonable extension, and such screens have greatly infused our lives. We carry them with us and even wear them on our bodies, and their diversions are able to fill every available space. It suffuses more and more of our experience.

One word Baudrillard has used for this ubiquitous spread of virtuality is *prophylaxis*: the interposition of a protective layer between ourselves and the world outside, creating an "absolutely spotless space" screened of external contaminants (Baudrillard 2002: 3). He doesn't just have digital screens in mind here but a kind

of prophylaxis that is being extended to cover all aspects of our experience. The flavor of food is hyperreal and increasingly intensified, with fast food becoming a technology of entertainment; virtual food proliferates, too, as people simulate eating by chewing on mints and gum that taste like food but aren't (cupcake gum, fruit flavored mints). Similarly, joggers run toward no goal, simulating an urgency that is not present; through the technology of treadmills, joggers can telescope the virtuality and simulate running itself. The artificial lights in buildings simulate a daylight never encountered in nature, and the vibrant neon colors on surfaces, textiles, and packaging make the outdoors often seem drab by comparison. We swallow pills that simulate different feelings and conditions. What we take as the mundane, everyday real is actually at this point a profusely extended prophylaxis separating us from the real – to the degree that it is no longer certain whether we would recognize the real if we saw it, for we have come to perceive the virtual *as* the real.

Indeed, Baudrillard says, bombastic artifices (such as Disneyland) are not virtualities in contrast to the everyday real; rather, Disneyland "is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real" – that is, it serves a function "of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle" (Baudrillard 2004: 12–13). Of course, many powerful economic and technocratic entities have a vested interest in maintaining our belief that our virtual everyday life is real, since it depends upon technological insertions that we purchase and consume. Further, the dissatisfaction created by the absence of real presence in meaning that fueled our pursuit of the virtual also fuels our continuing and even deepening engagement with it. This is why corporations and other persuaders have moved en masse to pseudo-spiritual and values-based marketing. It reinforces their hold on us in two ways; by temporarily fulfilling the human craving for deeper meaning, they win an emotional attachment from their consumers, and by occupying our attention on that level, they keep us from disengaging and looking elsewhere for meaning and satisfaction.

Thus, various powerful factions have a vested interest in our continued abiding in the Modern paradigm of meaning and the experiential world it generates. Its substance is virtuality hard coded as Realism, with Reason serving not only as a kind of mascot but actually as a heroic ideal in which everyone can participate: thus the social status of intelligence or rationality that is made available to those who simply embrace certain ideas, whether or not they understand them. This contradictory compromise regarding the ideal of Reason (whereby Reason was circumvented to promote the doctrine of Reason) was made fairly early in Modernity as the early Moderns discovered that the free exercise of human reason led neither to a unified agreement about truth nor to a paradisiacal peace on earth. However, since the Moderns were personally invested in the doctrine and unwilling to reject it, they began to revise their approach, translating the doctrine of Reason into not only a meaning system but also a rhetorical tool of power. This is terministically consistent with Modernity's nascence, after all, for a hungry search for increased power over natural (cosmic) forces was a prime motive in the second part of the Middle Ages. What began as an egalitarian ideal in the early

Modern period soon became a feudalistic style oligarchy. Contradictorily, of course, Modernity had been built upon the principle of egalitarianism and the abolishment of subordinating power, just as it had been built on a theosemiotic foundation that tried to ambiguously make both the human agent and the cosmic scene ultimate, resulting in fundamental contradictions. The result is a semiotic paradigm that must hide the facts that (1) it is an oligarchy and (2) it is a theology that prioritizes the Scene so that it can prioritize the human Agent.

For this reason, the work of Modernism is to translate everything – all meanings, all existents, all agents within the cosmos – into the Scene. This process is difficult with humans, who cannot live in existential consistency and resolution as part of the scene, since that would necessarily entail the dissolution of the agent. It is therefore a kind of pentadic (or semiotic) death. The transformation of reality into conformity with the Scene as an ultimate, infinite principle also means conforming human beings to "just scene", and many end up resisting some aspects while simultaneously attempting to support the "Realist Scenification" of all things. The more existential discomfort we experience as a result, the more increasingly bombastic distraction becomes necessary: anesthetizing prophylactics of whatever sort.

Thus, the entelechial perfection toward which Modernity is moving is the complete translation of the real into the virtual (or illusory). This is necessary within the system for it to achieve internal consistency according to its semiotic foundation – that is, its particular God-term. The manner in which it was built made the Human Agent's Reason ultimate, which required simultaneously rejecting God The Agent as the God-term in preference for terministically turning God into the Scene (whether in the guise of Deism, Pantheism, or something else): the logical equivalence 'God=Scene' gives rise to its reversal, 'Scene=God'. Since a logical equivalence is also an identification in Burke's sense, the two become semiotically consubstantial, which means that the term 'God' becomes nominalized as being simply another name for 'Scene' – which logically justifies the transformation, 'Only the Scene exists'. This atheistic implication, even when disguised with theological terms, was a necessary component of the Modern paradigm because it cleared the way for the unopposed exercise of sovereign human reason. The problem, however, was (1) the early Moderns misunderstood human reason's limitations relative to semiotic reality, and (2) they overly romanticized the distinction between reason and desire. Indeed, it was not so-called pure reason but desire-fueled reason that motivated the creation of the Modern terminology and the development toward its entelechial completion – the translation of reality into nothing but "the orbital recurrence of models" (Baudrillard 2004: 3).

In some sense, this is the Modern dream. One of the most compelling fantasies of *Star Trek* is perfected simulation: the replicator, which makes both the holodeck and the food replicator possible. In a sense, the replicator is Modernity's ideal for salvation; in one sweep it would solve what we think of as our two greatest needs: resource scarcity and boredom. In dispelling our boredom, the holodeck would fulfill our spiritual, emotional, or semiotic needs, and the food replicator would enable us to stay permanently in the holodeck by taking care of

our bodily needs. However, inasmuch as virtuality cannot solve but only defer or displace semiotic malnourishment, even perfected virtuality would be unable to reinject the presence missing from the sign – even the human as sign. Indeed, if significance comes from a relation to another beyond the self, perfected virtuality would become a kind of consummate prison as well, preventing the human agent from becoming a sign in the fullest sense, even as it allows the simulation of that reality. The trajectory of Modernity thus far is consistent with this result. In truth, if we adjust for details regarding specific technologies, the description is one that maps plausibly and without difficulty onto our current situation, which shows no clear indications of altering course. The present condition of our semiosphere is consistent with Modernity's semiotic foundations, and the inference of a continued development along this same trajectory is also consistent with those foundations.

If this experiential reality as an entelechial result does not appeal to us, it can serve as a sign of the value of Modernism and of its foundations. This teleological method would consider the experiential reality to which some semiotic pathway leads as the basis for choosing or rejecting it. Embracing this praxis would mean recognizing that Modernism's version of Realism actually disguises an Anti-realism, and its "just the plain facts" discourse is often a rhetorical tactic in service of Modernism's implicit theology and power structure; its conclusions are already established at the outset, and the argumentation it presents in support is often only a persuasive strategy to obtain unconscious compliance. Thus, rejecting this strategy and its method of framing discourse in its own favor to terministically implicate its own conclusions, it is possible to stand back and ask whether the world into which this persuader is trying to draw me is truly the kind of reality I want to inhabit.

Consequently, we can see that this method is both a defense against the under-handed, coercive persuasion so common today, as well as a proactive approach for weighing various semiotic possibilities – especially when the choice could have high stakes consequences. For this approach to serve as a heuristic in the pursuit of truth requires that an agent honestly look at their deepest motives rather than their superficial attractions. It means considering a wider motivational frame than immediate, short-term desires. If one thereby discovers a desire for an alternate world of experience, they would identify what that means and what core motive is involved, and then make a purposeful dedication to direct their lives toward that world and its God-term, which will subsequently direct their semiosis as they follow it toward that better world – where once again they *mean* in the fuller and truly satisfying sense.

APPENDIX

A survey of references to Kenneth Burke in three semiotics journals
(*Sign Systems Studies*, *The American Journal of Semiotics*, and *Semiotica*)

1. Introduction and methodology

What follows is a survey of references to and uses of Kenneth Burke in three of the most established journals of semiotics. The methodology was fairly simple: I acquired PDFs of every volume and issue of the three journals (up until a certain point in 2020) and ran a keyword search for four key terms. The four search terms were 'Burke', 'terministic', 'dramatistic', and 'pentad'. The rationale for choosing these specific four was to cover extra bases that might be missed by only searching for the term 'Burke' – primarily taking into account the possibility that an author might reference or employ a key Burkean concept without directly attributing its origin to Burke. I wanted to catch some of those instances if they did, in fact, exist. Indeed, some hits did indicate just this situation.

This is why I chose the three terms other than 'Burke', for 'terministic', 'dramatistic', and 'pentad' all associated with Burkean concepts. 'Terministic' was selected to catch references to *terministic screen*, and 'dramatistic' was selected to catch references to *dramatistic pentad* or to *dramatism* – all three of which seem to be terms which Burke himself coined. The rationale was that the appearance of, say, the term 'dramatistic' might be a case where an author was using an idea derived from Burke, even though the search term 'Burke' yielded no results. Though few, there did indeed seem to be such cases, justifying this methodological choice.

If I were beginning this project now, I would consider altering the search term 'dramatistic' to 'dramatis' in order to potentially catch the use of the term 'dramatism' as well, which could conceivably yield results. However, I found so few occurrences of these other three terms without also finding the presence of 'Burke' that finding many additional results missed in this current survey is unlikely. It is possible, though, for Burke's system of "dramatism" was popular for a number of years during the 20th century. However, no methodology is perfect, and the scope of key Burkean terms to include in the search could be continually expanded until the project becomes increasingly unwieldy – all with correlatively diminishing returns. The fact remains that the search term 'Burke' did most of the heavy lifting here.

For gathering the needed texts, I searched academic databases – primarily through the University of Tartu (in Tartu, Estonia) and Southern Methodist University, (in Dallas, Texas, USA). Materials were downloaded as PDFs both in person at each university as well as through a proxy VPN which allowed me to access Tartu's databases from the United States, where the last leg of the work was done. All PDFs were acquired from official online sources: the University of Tartu for *Sign Systems Studies*, the Philosophy Documentation Center (pdcnet.org) for *TAJS*, and De Gruyter for *Semiotica*. The one exception was that initially the

first 18 volumes of *TAJS* that I downloaded and searched were the ProQuest PDF versions, which I acquired through SMU; when I was later able to access the official *TAJS* PDFs, I downloaded those files as well and confirmed the hits and page numbers of quotations.

In most cases, journal issues were split up into individual files per article, so I had to download each one individually. To make the keyword searches more manageable, efficient, and accurate, I used a program to merge all articles according to their volumes and issues, creating longer PDFs that I could search all at once. I then opened each PDF and used the find function (CTRL+F on PC) to input the search terms. I was of course careful to verify each entered keyword, but combining the many articles into larger collections minimized the number of times each keyword needed to be entered – and therefore minimized the likelihood of error.

For each relevant hit, I documented the journal volume and issue in which the hit appeared, included the full reference information for the article, noted which keywords were hit, and then gave contextual information about that hit and the kind of usage it made of Burke. I also noted whether Burke was included in that author's reference list at the end of the article – since some authors either mentioned Burke but didn't include him in their reference *or* included him in their references but didn't mention him in the text. Further, for maximum accuracy and to increase the breadth of data that others can later access, I made a note of which edition each author was using for a particular work, which was mainly an issue in the case of several Burke books that have had multiple editions. (For greater clarity about the various editions, the extensive bibliographies of the Kenneth Burke Journal are helpful and contain works both by Burke and about Burke.)[167]

Keyword hits that clearly do not refer to Burke have been excluded. For instance, authors' uses of 'deterministic' often triggered the 'terministic' search term, and there is no relevant connection between the two. I have also excluded references to any other Burke besides Kenneth Burke (such as Edmund Burke). And the term 'pentad' occasionally arose simply as a term for a general five-point relation, with no connection to Kenneth Burke or his dramatistic pentad specifically. Such hits clearly do not count as references to or uses of Burke and have been left out.

The search was conducted up through the following issues: for *SSS*, up through 48(1); for *TAJS*,[168] up through 36(1/2); and for *Semiotica*, up through 2020(233). The majority of hits were found in *Semiotica* and the second most in *TAJS*, with only one hit in *SSS*. A caveat must be inserted here regarding SSS, for my search could only begin with *Sign Systems Studies* 26, since up until that point the journal was largely in Russian. There were exceptions; Estonian and English summaries and tables of contents can be found, as well as some articles – such as Piatigorsky's 1973 *An introduction to Abhidhammic psychology (Some psychosemantic conside-*

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[167] For the bibliography of works by Burke, see: http://kbjournal.org/content/works-kenneth-burke.

[168] Note that for its first four volumes, *TAJS* used the name *American Journal of Semiotics* – without the definite article.

rations), which appears in English in *Sign Systems Studies* 6. Nevertheless, since so much of these first volumes is in Russian, and since I am not competent to work with Russian, I have left them entirely alone so as not to give the false impression that they have been sufficiently searched. If this survey is to be complete in that sense, someone with Russian competency must complete it. It could be that references to Kenneth Burke can be found in these first 25 volumes, especially since they were published at a time when Burke was fairly popular, even outside English-primary spheres; this survey documents, for instance, more than one *Semiotica* article in French that references Burke. The search within early *SSS* is therefore worth the effort.

As a final note, I have arranged the survey listing by fewest hits to most numerous: thus, *SSS*, *TAJS*, and *Semiotica*. This order was chosen for simplicity in organization and what I think will be most convenient for finding entries. All are arranged in sequential order, with the *SSS* entry being 1, the first *TAJS* entry being 2, and so forth. Each journal is given its own subsection, however, and every entry begins by listing the journal and volume/issue number of the hit for quick and easy reference. No summarizing analysis will be given as the purpose of this survey is to document for research purposes, not to form a conclusion toward an argument.

2. Sign Systems Studies

1. *SSS* 29(1)
Oelschlaeger, Max 2001. Ecosemiotics and the sustainability transition. *Sign Systems Studies* 29(1): 219–236.
Hit: Burke
Oelschlaeger refers to Burke's "sage reflections" regarding "myths as architectonic forms, as rhetorical structures that undergird the basic woof and warp of society" (Oelschlaeger 2001: 231). He then quotes from Burke's Rhetoric, which also appears in the references, wherein Burke refers to "language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (Burke 1950: 43). These are the article's only uses of Burke.

3. The American Journal of Semiotics

2. *TAJS* 1(1/2)
Steiner, George 1981. Narcissus and Echo. *American Journal of Semiotics* 1(1/2): 1–14.
Hit: Burke
Steiner briefly mentions "the semiotic rhetoric of Kenneth Burke" (Steiner 1981: 2). This opening note contains no reference list.

3. *TAJS* 3(1)
MacCannell, Dean; MacCannell, Juliet Flower 1984. Editorial. *American Journal of Semiotics* 3(1): i–iii.
Hit: Burke
In reference to Gerard J. van den Brock's study of fly fishing, according to which "if the fly is a sign, then the fish is an interpreter", the authors are "reminded of Kenneth Burke's passage on 'all living things are critics'" (MacCannell, MacCannell 1984: ii). This editorial contains no reference list.

4. *TAJS* 3(1)
Wilden, Anthony 1984. Montage analytic and dialectic. *American Journal of Semiotics* 3(1): 25–47.
Hit: Burke
This article begins with a quote from Burke wherein he emphasizes that "the study of man as the specifically word-using animal requires special attention to this distinctive marvel, the negative" (Wilden 1984: 25). Wilden then begins by discussing types of negation, a major subject of interest to Burke, but Wilden seems not to engage directly with Burke further and does not include Burke in his reference list.

5. *TAJS* 4(1/2)
Jules-Rosetta, Bennetta 1986. "You must be joking": A sociosemiotic analysis of 'Ethiopian' jokes. *American Journal of Semiotics* 4(1/2): 17–42.
Hit: Burke
Jules-Rosetta refers to Burke's *A Grammar of Motives* (pages 503–517 in the 1969 edition), specifically saying that "joke techniques may be examined with reference to the figurative language and tropes employed in jokes" (Jules-Rosetta 1986: 38, n3). The *Grammar* appears in the reference list.

6. *TAJS* 4(3/4)
Steinberg, Sara 1986. The master tropes of dreaming: Rhetoric as a family affair. *American Journal of Semiotics* 4(3/4): 29–51.
Hit: Burke
Steinberg says that regarding the great dispute over tropes, "metonymy and synecdoche in particular", she has settled the conflict "along the lines taken explicitly by Vico, Kenneth Burke and Hayden White" (Steinberg 1986: 34). She refers to Burke's *Grammar* (pages 505–509 in the 1969 edition) and identifies that Burke considers metonymy a type of reduction, which she briefly discusses. The *Grammar* is also included in her references.

7. *TAJS* 5(1)
Fry, Virginia H. 1987. A juxtaposition of two abductions for studying communication and culture. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 5(1): 81–93.
Hits: Burke, dramatism

The two abductions for studying communication and culture that Fry juxtaposes are the "Dramatism of Kenneth Burke and the Semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce and Umberto Eco" (Fry 1987: 82). Burke's work is therefore a major focus of this article. Fry's "position is that both Dramatism and Semiotics conceptualize a theory of social action which derives from their respective views of language" (Fry 1987: 82). Her presentation of Burke "is a synthesis of his work" and aims to give an overall view of his theoretical perspective, though she arguably over-privileges dramatism; nevertheless, she uses several of key Burke texts that are highly relevant to semiotics while acknowledging that her selections are not "inclusive of all the relevant passages which could have been referenced" (Fry 1987: 91, n2). Specifically, she includes *A Grammar of Motives* (1945), *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), and *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) – as well as Burke 1952a, Burke 1952b, Burke 1968, and Burke 1978.

8. *TAJS* 6(2/3)
Fry, Donald L.; Fry, Virginia H. 1989. Continuing the conversation regarding myth and culture: An alternative reading of Barthes. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 6(2/3): 183–197.
Hit: Burke
Fry and Fry focus mainly on Barthes, as the title makes clear, but they draw a bit from *Permanence and Change* (Burke 1984 [1935]) in their analysis. They main incorporate Burke's "three orders of rationalization" (magic, science, and religion), which serves as one of the article's two key notions along with Eco's "semiotic notion of the role of codes and rules in the production of signs" (Fry, Fry 1989: 183). Fry and Fry "tentatively" consider Burke's three orders of rationalization as "functioning semiotic systems" (Fry, Fry 1989: 194). This use of Burke partly constitutes their "alternative reading of Barthes's notion of myth as speech" (Fry, Fry 1989: 196). *Permanence and Change* appears in the reference list.

9. *TAJS* 7(3)
MacCannell, Dean; MacCannell, Juliet Flower 1990. Introduction. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 7(3): 3–4.
Hit: Dramatistic ('dramatistical')
In this short introduction, the authors refer to Fernando de Toro's article, *Toward the specification of theatre discourse*, which appears in the same issue (pages 73–90). According to the introduction, De Toro's article "should be of great interest […] to those semioticians who focus on the dramatistical side of everyday life" (MacCannell, MacCannell 1990: 4). However, Burke is not mentioned in this introduction, nor are any of our key terms found in De Toro 1990.

10. *TAJS* 7(4)
Hit: Burke
Harris, Alan C.; Owens, Nancy J. 1990. Doth apparel the symbol make? A semiotic investigation of symbolic references to dress in selected plays of William Shake-speare. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 7(4): 109–130.

Hit: Burke, [dramatism also used]

Harris and Owens do not discuss Burke so much as simply refer to the way that Virginia Fry (1987) "contends that the dramatism of Burke and the semiotics of Peirce and Eco are distinct abductions for studying communication and culture", which Owens and Fry say is similar to how they contend "that foregrounding and communicative intent are equally valid abductions" for studying the domains of culture and communication in Shakespeare (Harris, Owens 1990: 113). This indirect reference seems to be the only overlap with Burke. Burke does not appear in the reference list.

11. *TAJS* 11(1/2)

Elwood, William N. 1994. Russian Formalism and cultural narratives: An argument to trash the structuralist perspective. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 11(1/2): 173–180.
Hit: Burke

Elwood draws once from *Language as Symbolic Action* to flesh out the concept of myth (Elwood 1994: 175). This work also appears in the references.

12. *TAJS* 11(3/4)

Puckett, Thomas F.N. 1994. C.S. Peirce and the analytic destruction of argument: Dynamis, self, other, desire. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 11(3/4): 39–59.
Hit: Burke

Puckett references the Rhetoric once to simply say that Burke "discusses the importance of the act" (Puckett 1994: 55). His basis is Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, which appears in the references.

13. *TAJS* 17(1)

Kramer, Eric; Ikeda, Richiko 2001. Defining crime: Signs of postmodern murder and the "Freeze" case of Yoshihiro Hattori. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 17(1): 19–84.
Hits: Burke, dramatistic

Burke's *Language as Symbolic Action* is included in a list of works that discusses the magical mode of language and thought (Kramer, Ikeda 2001: 38). This work is parenthetically mentioned again "for an often forgotten distinction" regarding motive or "humanistic 'cause'" (Kramer, Ikeda 2001: 46). The article also uses the term "political dramatistics such as pageantry and demagoguery" (Kramer, Ikeda 2001: 57). *Language as Symbolic Action* does appear in the references.

14. *TAJS* 17(2)

Taylor, James R. 2001. Toward a theory of imbrication and organizational communication. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 17(2): 269–298.
Hit: Burke

Taylor brings up Burke while discussing the concepts of agent and "the agency-instrumentality link" as an "all-pervasive characteristic of every system of activity, linking human and non-human" (Taylor 2001: 280). He says, "All action is, in

the end, grounded in physicality" and then indicates that what he means by physicality is motion "in Kenneth Burke's way of speaking" (Taylor 2001: 279–280). Burke does not appear in the reference list.

15. *TAJS* 17(4)
Wanderer, Jules J. 2001. Hobo signs: Embodied metaphors and metonymies. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 17(4): 131–146.
Hit: Burke
Wanderer uses Burke to apply the concepts of metonymy and metaphor as devices for seeing one thing in terms of another (Wanderer 2001: 138). He cites the *Grammar* multiple times to develop his conceptual framework and also includes that work in his reference list.

16. *TAJS* 19(1/4)
Anton, Corey 2003. Playing with Bateson: Denotation, logical types, and analog and digital communication. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 19(1/4): 127–152.
Hit: Burke
Anton touches upon issues of the paradox of substance in relation to words as signs and the "'un-speakable objective level'"; he brings in *Burke's Language as Symbolic Action*, in which Burke notes that the socio-political order depends upon the verbal in a special way – and often has "no clear 'natural counterpart'" (Anton 2003: 143). Anton further quotes *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Burke 1970[1961]) to indicate that despite this gap, "'we gravitate spontaneously toward naive verbal realism'" (Anton 2003: 147). Both *The Rhetoric of Religion* and *Language as Symbolic Action* are included in the references; however, for Anton documents Burke 1970[1961] incorrectly, pairing the original publication date with the publisher and city of the second edition.

17. *TAJS* 21(1/4)
Greenberg, Karen J. 2005. Eero Tarasti's existential semiotics. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 21(1/4): 92–100.
Hit: Burke
This review article simply mentions "Burke on sign/signification tensions, i.e., on 'rations'" in a list of other sources "where thinking is similar to Tarasti's" (Greenberg 2005: 98). A direct quotation is not made, but Burke's *Grammar* appears in the references list.

18. *TAJS* 21(1/4)
Anton, Corey 2005. The metalinguistics of subjectivity: A review of Benjamin Lee's *Talking Heads*. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 21(1/4): 113–119.
Hit: Burke
Anton characterizes Lee's book as being "concerned with subjectivity and how language-structure interrelates with concrete situations of speaking" (Anton 2005: 114). Toward the end of this review essay, he says that despite the book's strengths, it would benefit from giving more consideration "to Kenneth Burke's

'paradox of substance'" and to the *Grammar*, "where Burke uses the dynamic interplay between logical and temporal priorities to address both substance and motive within the 'dialectic of constitutions'" (Anton 2005: 118). Both the *Grammar* and *Language as Symbolic Action* appear in the reference list.

19. *TAJS* 22(1/4)
Sutton, J.S. 2006. Intersections: Woman, rhetoric, and domination. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 22(1/4): 131–148.
Hit: Burke
Sutton mentions an text by Burke (1973) in the context of Sutton's discussing rhetoric as a form of domination, with the main theoretical lens being that of Merleau-Ponty and Bakhtin. Burke is identified as one of Richard Lanigan's influences in his 1984 *Semiotic Phenomenology of Rhetoric*. Burke isn't discussed directly except to generally associate Burke with the claim that "rhetoric is incarnated by situations" (Sutton 2006: 132). Burke 1973 is also included in the references.

20. *TAJS* 28(1/4)
Arnett, Ronald C. 2012. The fulcrum point of dialogue: Monologue, worldview, and acknowledgement. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 28(1/2): 105–127.
Hit: Burke
Burke is briefly mentioned in the section "Existential Servanthood and Responsibility", which cites Burke's *Permanence and Change* and his notion of taking responsibility for one's semiosis (Arnett 2012: 120). Arnett is discussing the subject from a "postmodern" angle, however, rather than from an explicitly Burkean viewpoint. *Permanence and Change* appears in the reference list.

21. *TAJS* 28(1/4)
Griffin, Jonathan 2012. Foundations of rhetoric within the semiosis of life. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 28(1/4): 175–204.
Hit: Burke
This article draws explicitly on Burke, citing only from *A Rhetoric of Motives* but working from a perspective that runs more broadly throughout Burke's writing. The main thread of thought here is that past human semiosis can be known if the relevant interpretants can be accounted for – and to suggest not that we have a specific responsibility for how we should conduct our semiosis but rather that we recognize that supposedly hidden semiosis can be discovered and make choices accordingly. The *Rhetoric* appears in the references.

22. *TAJS* 33(1/4)
Kramer, Eric M. 2017. Cassirer as revolutionary: Semiotics as embodied worldview: Appreciating the other in ourselves. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 33(3/4): 233–332.
Hit: Burke

This article actually only references Kenneth Burke (1950) once (which also appears in the references), but it cites another Burke frequently in its exploration of "the meaning of interactive comportment as identified by Richard Lanigan", the improvement of social life, the role of communicology, and "Cassirer's work on symbology generally" (Kramer 2017: 233). The article refers once to Burke's distinction between "magic, mythic, and modern perspectival architectonics" (Kramer 2017: 233). *A Rhetoric of Motives* appears in the reference list.

23. *TAJS* 34(1/4)
Pelkey, Jamin; Pereira, Michael 2018. Introduction: Applied brand semiotics. *The American Journal of Semiotics* (34(3/4): 263–271.
Hit: Burke
This introduction to the "thematic double-issue" featuring articles only from authors who have applied semiotic principles in industry contexts mentions that one of the authors, Cara, "applies a blend of semiotic insights from Kenneth Burke's (1941) theory of narrative rhetoric and Marcel Danesi's theory of multi-modal metaphor known as 'metaforms'" (Pelkey, Pereira 2018: 266). The source that Cara references (Burke 1941) appears here as well and is also found in the reference list.

24. *TAJS* 34(3/4)
Cara, Mariane 2018. The semiotic layers of *Instagram*: Visual tropes and brand meaning. *The American Journal of Semiotics* 34(3/4): 331–352.
Hit: Burke
Cara's use of Burke here is to draw on what Burke called the three master tropes that are "essential to the narrative process" – metaphor, metonym/synecdoche, and irony (Cara 2018: 336). Cara takes this schema and transforms it to the visual realm in order to analyze social media networks. Though Burke forms part of the theoretical lens here, direct engagement with Burke seems to happen only once. The work that Cara includes in her references is Burke 1941.

4. Semiotica

25. *Semiotica* 8(3)
Hendricks, William O. 1973. Verbal art and the structuralist synthesis. *Semiotica* 8(3): 239–262.
Hit: Burke
Hendricks says that "anyone interested in any type of verbal art can profitably read Kenneth Burke"; he gives particular emphasis to those interested in "the structural analysis of narrative", who should find certain Burke texts relevant, especially *The Philosophy of Literary Form* and *Language as Symbolic Action* (Hendricks 1973: 241). Hendricks also identifies two other authors who have dealt with Burke in this manner, James L. Peacock and Dell Hymes; in particular, Hendricks mentions Hymes's 1962 review of Burke's *The Rhetoric of Religion*,

in which Hymes points "out that similarities exist between some of Burke's work and Levi-Strauss' approach to myth analysis" (Hendricks 1973: 241, n4).

Hendricks includes both *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Burke 1957[1941]) and *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1968c[1966]) in his reference list.

26. *Semiotica* 13(2)
Rossi-Landi, Ferruccio 1975. Signs about a master of signs. *Semiotica* 13(2): 155–197.
Hit: Burke
This is a review article of Charles Morris's 1971 *Writings on the General Theory of Signs*. The mention of Burke is a reference to Morris's review of Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives*, which appears only in a bibliography of Morris's writings. Rossi-Landi does not directly refer to Burke nor include Burke in the article's reference list.

27. *Semiotica* 13(3)
Hendricks, William O. 1975. The work and play structures of narrative. *Semiotica* 13(3): 281–328.
Hit: Burke
Hendricks makes multiple references to Burke's *The Rhetoric of Religion*, especially in relation to the analysis of texts and principles of dramatic consistency – in which the "act is 'de-termined' – settled beforehand. The end of the narrative determines what precedes, not vice versa" (Hendricks 1975: 287).

The Rhetoric of Religion (1961) is included in the reference list.

28. *Semiotica* 16(2)
MacCannell, Dean 1976. The past and future of 'symbolic interactionism'. *Semiotica* 16(2): 99–114
Hit: Burke
In the course of discussing George Mead, MacCannell mentions that readers interested in "a critical comment on the circularity of Mead's system" should refer to Burke's *Philosophy of Literary Form* (MacCannell 1976: 110). MacCannell says that Burke "laid the groundwork for a semiotic of motives which might be developed within the symbolist interactionist perspective" (MacCannell 1976: 110). However, while MacCannell praises Burke's departure point, he also critiques Burke's "follow-through" in some of his analytical extensions (MacCannell 1976: 110).

MacCannell includes *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1957[1941]) and *Permanence and Change* (1965[1935]) in his references.

29. *Semiotica* 18(1)
Valesia, Paolo 1976. The virtues of traducement: sketch of a theory of translation. *Semiotica* 18(1): 1–96.
Hit: Burke

In pursuing "the verbal strategy of the text, its rhetorical structure as a complex of devices for symbolic action", Valesia uses "the pioneering terminology of Kenneth Burke"; Valesia thinks this terminology "still has to be systematized" but nevertheless "points in the right direction)" (Valesia 1976: 8-9). Despite this endorsement, however, the reference list does not include any particular works by Burke.

30. *Semiotica* 19(1/2)
Kevelson, Roberta 1977. Language-games as systematic metaphors. *Semiotica* 19(1/2): 29–58.
Hit: Burke
Kevelson makes multiple mentions of Burke: for instance, in relation to "the language-game of historical discourse as rhetoric" (Kevelson 1977: 36) and to what she calls Burke's proposal for "a meta-language to refer to our metaselves" (Kevelson 1977: 46). She also mentions Burke's description of "how language has 'invented the past' in *Attitudes Toward History*" (Kevelson 1977: 48).

Burke's *Attitudes Toward History* (Burke 1959[1937]) and *Permanence and Change* (1954[1935]) are both included in the reference list.

31. *Semiotica* 19(3/4)
Kevelson, Roberta 1977. Reversals and recognitions: Peirce and Mukarovsky on the art of conversation. *Semiotica* 19(3/4): 281–320.
Hit: Burke
Kevelson lists *Permanence and Change* in her references, but a keyword search reveals no actual mention of Burke in the main text.

32. *Semiotica* 20(1/2)
Kelemen, János 1977. Linguistic form and meaning. *Semiotica* 20(1/2): 123–138.
Hit: Burke
Kelemen discusses Burke's "recognition that in speaking we 'do' something" – that is, Burke's tenet that language is symbolic *action*. (Kelemen 1977: 133). Burke, however, is not included in the reference list.

33. *Semiotica* 23(1/2):
Fiordo, Richard 1978. Kenneth Burke's semiotic. *Semiotica* 23(1/2): 53–75.
Hits: Burke, terministic, dramatistic, pentad
This is one of the most thorough treatments of Burke's work I've seen from a semiotic source. Fiordo says that "Burke's semiotic is systematically explainable in terms of the following items: (1) his definition of man, (2) his notion of entitlement, (3) his concept of terministic screens, and (4) his philosophy of dramatism" (Fiordo 1978: 53). Fiordo lays out this account and then calls for further research.

Fiordo includes 21 Burke works in his reference list. The articles are Burke 1933; 1943a and 1943b (listed as one); 1945a; 1951; 1955a; 1955b; 1956; 1958; 1960; 1963; 1966a; and 1968b. The books are

The Philosophy of Literary Form, 1957[1941]; *Attitudes Toward History*, 1959 [1937]; *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology*, 1961; *Permanence and Change*, 1965[1935]; *Language as Symbolic Action*, 1966b; *Counter-Statement*, 1968a[1931]; *A Grammar of Motives*, 1969a; and *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 1969b.

[Note: Fiordo's reference list makes a mistake for Burke 1955a. He lists the article's title as "Linguistic approaches to the problems of education" instead of "Linguistic approach to problems of education".]

34. *Semiotica* 24(1/2):
Kevelson, Roberta 1978. 'Figures' and semiotic relations: A rhetoric of syntax in Balzac's *Sarrasine*. *Semiotica* 24(1/2): 114–147.
Hit: Burke
Mentions *Permanence and Change* (Burke 1954[1935]) on page 126, but the reference list contains two errors. It gives the date as Burke 1959 (a date on which no edition appears), and the title is misspelled as '*Permance and Change*'.

35. *Semiotica* 24(3/4):
Fiordo, Richard 1978. League's projection. *Semiotica* 24(3/4): 371–379.
Hit: Burke
A superficial hit that occurs only in an author's note referencing Fiordo's previous article *Kenneth Burke's semiotic*. Burke is not mentioned in the reference list.

36. *Semiotica* 27(1/3)
Boon, James A. 1979. Saussure/Peirce *á propos* language, society and culture. *Semiotica* 27(1/3): 83–101.
Hit: Burke
Boon discusses Burke in relation to the semiological tradition, considering (for instance) Burke's "polar terms" as a dialectical counterpart to "Lévi-Strauss' formulation *a priori*/*a posteriori*" (Boon 1979: 91). Boon characterizes Burke's approach as being specifically semiotic in contrast to authors whose studies are "sub-semiotic" (Boon 1979: 97). In his reference list, Boon lists *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Burke 1970[1961]).[169]

37. *Semiotica* 27(4):
Authors, 329–354; Articles, 355–367; Key Concepts, 372–382.
Hit: Burke
Fiordo's article *Kenneth Burke's semiotic* is included in the summary lists of previous authors (335), articles (359), and key concepts (380).

38. *Semiotica* 30(1/2):
Babcock, Barbara A. 1980. Reflexivity: Definitions and discriminations. Semiotica 30(1/2): 1–14.

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[169] Berkeley: University of California.

Hit: Burke

Babcock references Burke's statement in *Language as Symbolic Action* (1968c[1966]: 24) that the "'second-level aspect of symbolicity'" is what is "'characteristically human'" – that is, the "'reflexive capacity to develop highly complex symbol systems *about* symbol systems'" (Babcock 1980: 4). Burke 1968[1966] is included in the reference list.

39. *Semiotica* 30(3/4):
Sarbin, Theodore R. 1980. Hypnosis: Metaphorical encounters of the fourth kind. *Semiotica* 30(3/4): 195–209.
Hit: Dramatistic
Sarbin uses 'dramatistic' to describe Shakespeare's worldview that "life is theater" (Sarbin 1980: 197). There seems to be some connection to Burke besides the simple use of the term, for Sarbin references "dramatistic language" (Sarbin 1980: 202). Sarbin actually uses 'dramatistic' frequently as one of his key terms, and he says that "effects must be examined in terms of the intentions of the subject" (Sarbin 1980: 200) – which actually suggests a connection with (and perhaps an origin in) Burkean concerns about motive. Sarbin also contrasts his article's approach to "the scientific metaphor" (Sarbin 1980: 195). All this suggests a Burkean origin for the concepts, even though Sarbin does not include Burke in his references nor mention his name in the text.

40. *Semiotica* 32(1/2)
Kevelson, Roberta 1980. Semiotics and the art of conversation. *Semiotica* 32(1/2): 53–80.
Hits: Burke, dramatistic
Kevelson references to "the Burkeean 'perspective on incongruity'" (Kevelson 1980: 74). She also uses the term 'dramatistic' in relation to "Peirce's Dynamic and Final Interpretant Signs and the Stoics' semiotic – and dramatistic – subject/predicate sign functions" (Kevelson 1980: 57). In the reference list, Kevelson includes *Permanence and Change* (Burke 1954[1935]).

41. *Semiotica* 36(3/4)
Bram, Marvin 1981. Elements of symbolic history, Part I. *Semiotica* 36(3/4): 211–271.
Hit: Burke
Briefly mentions Burke's use of the term 'consubstantial' in relation to the universe, hierarchy, and substance as "plurisubstantial". Burke's *Grammar of Motives* (1969a[1945]) is included in the reference list.

42. *Semiotica* 37(s1) – *Semiotica* supplement. (1981)
Valesio, Paolo 1981.The analysis of texts and the critique of ideology: An introduction. *Semiotica* 37(s1): 59–90.
Hit: Burke

Makes one reference to Burke's particular use of 'container' but does not engage Burke extensively nor include Burke in the reference list.

43. *Semiotica* 46(2/4).
Boon, James A. 1983. Functionalists write, too: Frazer/Malinowski and the semiotics of the monograph. *Semiotica* 46(2/4): 131–149.
Hit: Burke
Boon begins one of this paper's sections with a quote from Burke's *The Rhetoric of Religion* that while "'isms' look positive, they are all negatively infused" – that is, the entelechial principle inherent in terms (Boon 1983: 132). Burke seems to play no further explicit role here. *The Rhetoric of Religion* appears in the references as Burke 1970[1961].

44. *Semiotica* 47(1/4).
Turner, Kay F. 1983. The cultural semiotics of religious Icons: La Virgen de San Juan de los Lagos. *Semiotica* 47(1/4): 317–361.
Hit: Burke
Turner refers to Burke's definition of signs of signs as the second level "aspect of symbolicity that is characteristically human" – the reflexive capacity – in connection with Christian icons as "second order signs" (Turner 1983: 318). She includes *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1968c[1966]) in the reference list.

45. *Semiotica* 54(1/2).
Liszka, James Jakób 1985. Mythic violence: Hierarchy and transvaluation. *Semiotica* 54(1/2): 223–249.
Hit: Burke
Liszka includes Kenneth Burke's *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) in his references, but he doesn't seem to refer to Burke anywhere in the actual text. The search function was reinforced with a manual scan, which yielded no results, but it is easy to see why Burke may have been associated: Liszka is writing about ideology and hierarchy.

46. *Semiotica* 57(1/2).
Strozier, Robert 1985. Saussure and the intellectual traditions of the twentieth century. *Semiotica* 57(1/2): 33–49.
Hit: Burke
References Kenneth Burke's identification of poetry as symbolic action and attributes an influence of I.A. Richards on Burke (Strozier 1985: 36). Strozier characterizes Burke as one of "the more important theorists of the expressive era" and as distinct from "modern structuralist" theory (Strozier 1985: 42–43). In his references, Strozier includes Burke's 1957[1941] *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Though he features Burke slightly more than average, the inclusion of Burke is fairly cursory.

47. *Semiotica* 57(3/4).
Kevelson, Roberta 1985. Riddles, legal decisions, and Peirce's existential graphs. *Semiotica* 57(3/4): 197–223.
Hit: Burke
In one place, Kevelson mentions Burke's "perspective by incongruity" (Kevelson 1985: 213). She includes *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966) in her references.

48. *Semiotica* 58(1/2).
Webley, Irene A. 1986. Professional wrestling: The world of Roland Barthes revisited. *Semiotica* 58(1/2): 59–81.
Hit: Burke
Webley includes Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) in her references, but I find no instances of her actually referring to Burke in the text (I also did a manual scan). It's easy to see where the association would come in; she is discussing the "rhetoric of wrestling", paradox, and ambiguity, and she uses terms like "first order system of signs" (Webley 1986: 74). However, any connection to Burke is left unmade.

49. *Semiotica* 58(1/2).
Grossberg, Daniel 1986. A centrifugal structure in Biblical poetry. *Semiotica* 58(1/2): 139–150.
Hit: Burke
Refers to Burke's *Counter-Statement* and its emphasis that considerations of literary effectiveness should include not just intended but also unintended effects (Grossberg 1986: 147). *Counter-Statement* (1968a[1931]) is included in the reference list.

50. *Semiotica* 59(1/2).
Publications received. 201–208.
Hit: Burke
Listed (p 207) is William Rueckert's 1963 work *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

51. *Semiotica* 59(3/4).
Partner, Nancy F. 1986. Daughters of earth/sons of heaven: Signs and things in history. *Semiotica* 59(3/4): 245–260.
Hit: Burke
Partner brings up Burke's discussion of metaphor (and metonymy) as a trope of contiguity connected to substance – that is, consubstantiality and coexistence (Partner 1986: 252–253). Her references are a little unclear. In the text she refers to "Burke 1975" but only includes *A Grammar of Motives* as 1945 (and its reissue in 1969). The date '1975' is likely a typo, especially since that date seems not to correlate to any edition of the *Grammar*. (based on the Kenneth Burke Society's bibliography as well as on my own brief search).

52. *Semiotica* 60(1/2).
Fiordo, Richard 1986. *Tales from the Smokehouse*: A rhetorical inquiry into erotic didactics. *Semiotica* 60(1/2): 1–27.
Hits: Burke, terministic
Fiordo, who has written at length about Burke elsewhere in *Semiotica*, includes Burke as forming part of the paper's rhetorical perspective. As such, Fiordo also directly references 'terministic screens'. Here Fiordo cites *Language as Symbolic Action* (1968c[1966]) and includes it in his reference list.

53. *Semiotica* 61(1/2).
Jules-Rosette, Bennetta 1986. The narrative structure of prophecy among the Maranke Apostles: An alternative system of religious expression. *Semiotica* 61(1/2): 12–31.
Hit: Burke
Jules-Rosette (1986: 23) invokes Burke in relation to metaphor, specifically regarding the theme whereby we treat one thing in terms of something else. This is the only direct reference, connected specifically to *A Grammar of Motives* (1962[1945]), which appears in the reference list.

54. *Semiotica* 61(3/4).
MacCannell, Dean 1986. Guest editorial: Semiotics and sociology. *Semiotica* 61(3/4): 193–200
Hit: Burke
MacCannell refers to "the relationship between the Goffman-Burke-Mead idea of *social actor* and Greimas' semiotic formulation of the *actant*", but it isn't clear whether this means Kenneth Burke (MacCannel 1986: 199). The author seems not to have clarified this, but it is likely given that in Babcock and MacAloon's commemorative essay on Victor W. Turner in *Semiotica* 65(1/2), "K. Burke and E. Goffman" are associated together as sharing "the 'dramatistic' or 'cultural performance' approach" (Babcock, MacAloon 1987: 6). This editorial does not include a reference list.

55. *Semiotica* 63(1/2).
Botero, Luis Perez 1987. Semantics in Petrus Hispanus' *Tractatus*. *Semiotica* 63(1/2): 83–87.
Hit: terministic
Botero says that his "point is to look for the new analysis of the meaning of logical terms, the so-called 'terministic logic', and to show a typical aspect of the origin of modern semantic analysis" (Botero 1987: 83). He seems to be referring to Burke's concept, but he doesn't mention Burke by name nor include him in the references.

56. *Semiotica* 65(1/2).
Babcock, Barbara A.; MacAloon, John J. 1987. Commemorative essay: Victor W. Turner (1920–1983). *Semiotica* 65(1/2): 1–27.

Hits: Burke, dramatistic

As mentioned above for MacCannell 1986, "K. Burke and E. Goffman" are associated together as sharing "the 'dramatistic' or 'cultural performance' approach" (Babcock, MacAloon 1987: 6). These authors mention Burke's concept of second order/level symbolicity and the reflexive human ability to develop complex symbol systems about symbol systems (Babcock, MacAloon 1987: 15). They are drawing from *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1968c[1966]), which appears in the reference list.

57. *Semiotica* 67(1/2).
Baetens, Jan 1987. La bataille de l'image. *Semiotica* 67(1/2): 127–134.
Hit: Burke

Baetens may be referring to Kenneth Burke by including the name 'Burke' in a list of four fundamental theoretical contributors – along with Goodman, Gombrich, and Lessing. Baetens doesn't specify which Burke this is; however, given that these four are fundamental contributors "à la théorie du combat du mot [word] et de l'image" (Baetens 1987: 129) and the fact that Baetens (1987: 129) says that the "identification des racines phonocentriques des idées politiques de Burke" [the identification of the phonocentric roots of Burke's political ideas] is accurate, it seems likely that he's talking about Kenneth Burke. Baetens, however, does not include Burke in his reference list. [Note: this article is in French.]

58. *Semiotica* 73(3/4)
Hendricks, William O. 1989. Semiotics and textual autonomy. *Semiotica* 73(3/4): 305–338.
Hit: Burke

Hendricks references Burke's *Language as Symbolic Action*, in which Burke notes "that satisfaction of internal consistency embodies three principles of form: progressive, repetitive, and conventional" (Hendricks 1989: 314). Hendricks draws this connection in arguing for an approach to textual analysis that avoids "a bifurcation of a science of texts" and favors "a concern for the internal structure of the text" (Hendricks 1989: 316). *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1966b) is included in the reference; Hendricks specifically notes that he's drawing upon the section "Formalist criticism: Its principles and limits" from pages 480–506.

59. *Semiotica* 76(3/4)
Feehan, Michael 1989. Kenneth Burke's contribution to a theory of language. *Semiotica* 76(3/4): 245–266.
Hits: Burke, dramatistic

Feehan's article is one of the most direct and extensive treatments of Burke in *Semiotica*. The title is representative of the content of this article. Feehan identifies that "Burke has consistently attempted to construct" a "comprehensive definition of human nature" by appealing to "a study of symbols and to a general outline of motives" (Feehan 1989: 245). That is, Burke defines the human in a

semiotic light. One other note of interest is that Feehan discusses Burke in relation to Peirce – specifically the "striking resemblance" between "C.S. Peirce's basic categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness" and Burke's "four categories for the study of human relations" (Feehan 1989: 258–259). This comparison should be relevant especially to those interested in the role of the negative in semiosis.

Feehan includes 6 Burke works in his reference list. One is an article, *(Non-symbolic) motion/(symbolic) action* (Burke 1978). The rest are books: *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966b); *A Grammar of Motives* (1969a[1945]); *Dramatism and Development* (1972); *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1973[1941]); and *Permanence and Change* (1984[1935]).

60. *Semiotica* 76(3/4)
Roudiez, Leon S. 1989. Scholarly fallacies and the illusion of truth. *Semiotica* 76(3/4): 321–331.
Hit: Burke
Roudiez is reviewing Geoffrey Galt Harpham's 1987 *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*,[170] with the reference to Burke being Harpham's. Roudiez says that Harpham draws on Burke for the concepts of permanence and relevance – likely with Burke's *Permanence and Change* as a source (Roudiez 1989: 323). As such, Roudiez doesn't himself discuss Burke nor include him in his reference list.

61. *Semiotica* 77(4).
Fiordo, Richard 1989. Hypersemiotic and hyposemiotic communication: More ado about nothing? *Semiotica* 77(4): 461–479.
Hits: Burke, terministic
Fiordo, who we've seen deal extensively with Burke elsewhere, here discusses Burke in relation to Charles Morris. He says that "Morris's notion of communization is related to Burke's notion of consubstantiality" (Fiordo 1989: 467). Consubstantiality as Fiordo invokes it here involves Burke's emphasis on identification in *A Rhetoric of Motives* as a key component of communication and persuasion. That is, when one person identifies themselves with another, they make themselves consubstantial with that person. From this departure point, Fiordo's paper focuses on "the event of intersomatic or face-to-face interpersonal communication" (Fiordo 1989: 468). We might also mention that Fiordo briefly draws a connection between Burke and Sebeok, claiming a shared stance between them "that semiosis is essential to communication" (Fiordo 1989: 468). Additionally, Fiordo involves the Burkean concept of terministic screens in his discussion of interpersonal communication – in the directing and deflecting of attention, filtering "the multi-faceted goings-on of the intersomatic exchange through interactive multimodal sensory channels" (Fiordo 1989: 477).

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[170] Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.

The Burke texts from which Fiordo pulls (and which are included in his reference list) are *Language as Symbolic Action* (1968c[1966])*, A Grammar of Motives* (1969a[1945]), and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969b[1950])*.

62. *Semiotica* 82(1/2)
Sontiges.
Hit: Burke
This page 2 advertisement summary for Golden 1990 (*The Narrative Symbol in Childhood Literature: Explorations in the Construction of Text*) says that the work's "principle method of analysis is derived from semiotic and structuralist approaches, employing Kenneth Burke's pentad as an organizing framework". As an advertisement, clearly no reference list is here. Note: this work would be undoubtedly relevant to semiotics scholars interested in Burke and is likely one of the more extensive treatments of that author that has been undertaken in semiotics; however, a closer look is outside of our current purpose, which is to look specifically at works within the journal proper.

63. *Semiotica* 86(1/2).
Publications received. *Semiotica* 86(1/2): 183–189.
Hit: Burke
This work appears in the list of received works:
Burke, Kenneth 1989. *On Symbols and Society*. Gusfield, Joseph R. (ed.), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
   Note: *Semiotica* 86(1/2) lists the date for *Symbols and Society* as 1990, but its publication date is 1989.

64. *Semiotica* 95(1/2)
Riggins, Stephen Harold 1993. Life as a metaphor: Current issues in dramaturgical analysis. *Semiotica* 95(1/2): 153–165.
Hits: Burke, pentad
Burke is mentioned in a list of theorists from "the less positivistic version of the social sciences" – specifically those who use "the metaphor of the theater for conceptualizing social interaction" (Riggins 1993: 153). Riggins says that Burke's dramatistic ("dramaturgical") perspective maintained that "social life was inherently dramatic because it involves conflict, uncertainty, rhetoric, choice, etc.)" – such that dramatistic analysis is not "the application of a metaphor" (Riggins 1993: 161). Reggins references Burke's concept of terministic screens and the entelechial character of human semiosis, which is described by invoking Joseph Gusfield's (1989) characterization of Burke that "all concepts 'become screens that are carried to their logical extremes […] They become ultimate endings'" (Riggins 1993: 157). Riggins also says that the pentad (especially scene) is a key aspect of dramatistic (or "dramaturgical") analysis (Riggins 1993: 159). From here, he discusses Burke's theme of container and thing contained. Riggins includes in his references Burke's *On Symbols and Society* (1989).

65. *Semiotica* 95(1/2)

Manning, Peter K. 1993. Mead on creativity. *Semiotica* 95(1/2): 147–151.

Hit: dramatistic

In his review of Gunter 1990 (*Creativity in George Herbert Mead*), Manning mentions one chapter (written by Hugh D. Duncan) which describes structure in "'dramatistic terminology'" (Manning 1993: 148). Given that this approach is then called a "sociodramatic perspective" which "'assumes that man creates his own experience through the creation of symbolic forms'", it's clear that Kenneth Burke's is at the root of these concepts (Manning 1993: 148). However, Manning doesn't directly discuss Burke nor include him in his references.

66. *Semiotica* 1994: Index to Volumes 1–100.

Hit: Burke

This index lists Michael Feehan's 1989 *Kenneth Burke's contribution to a theory of language* [*Semiotica* 76(3/4)] and Richard Fiordo's 1978 *Kenneth Burke's semiotic* [*Semiotica* 23(1/2)].

67. *Semiotica* 116(1)

Parmentier, R.J. 1997. The pragmatic semiotics of cultures. *Semiotica* 116(1): 1–114.

Hit: Burke

In this special issue, Parmentier includes Burke in a list of Clifford Geertz's influences (Parmentier 1997: 13). No other mention of Burke was found, including in Parmentier's reference list.

68. *Semiotica* 147(1/4)

Sebeok, T.A. 2003. Opening remarks, July 6, 1992, for the seminar 'Semiotics in the United States' held in Urbino, Italy. *Semiotica* 147(1/4): 75–102.

Hit: Burke

In agreeing with Eco's statement that "certain literary figures […] have said more interesting things about semiotics than many semioticians" (Sebeok 2003: 87), Sebeok mentions the "great American literary critic, Kenneth Burke, who uses very strong semiotic metaphors, imagery, terminology, and so forth" (Sebeok 2003: 88). He also mentions that one of his students, Dell Hymes, "has written about [Burke] extensively" (Sebeok 2003: 88). However, Burke is not included in the reference list.

69. *Semiotica* 155(1/4).

Pedersen, Isabel 2005. A semiotics of human actions for wearable augmented reality interfaces. *Semiotica* 155(1/4): 183–200.

Hit: Burke

In laying out her paper's methodology, Pedersen says, "This paper uses Kenneth Burke's rhetoric as a design framework, and it draws on the work of Marcel Danesi, Glenn Stillar and many others" in order to analyze the effects of "wearable augmented reality" (Pedersen 2005: 183). This means that she adapts "a selection of

Burke's rhetoric for the central theoretical focus", especially his definition of the human which "treats humans as sign makers, users, and *misusers*" (Pedersen 2005: 184). This definition is one of the four key elements of Burke's semiotic as considered by Richard Fiordo's article *Kenneth Burke's semiotic* in *Semiotica* 23(1/2). As a part of her Burkean model, Pedersen also uses Burke's positive, dialectical, and ultimate terms of order, which she relates "to three key actions of wearable AR: moving, interacting, and participating with signs of being" (Pedersen 2005: 184). This paper is thus one of the most extensive engagements with Burke in *Semiotica*.

Her reference list includes a poem (Burke 1989b) and three books: *The Rhetoric of Religion* (1961), *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966b), and *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969b[1950]).

70. *Semiotica* 158(1/4).
Griffin, Michael 2006. Mythic algebra uses: Metaphor, logic, and the semiotic sign. *Semiotica* 158(1/4): 309–318.
Hit: Burke
Griffin mentions "the fourfold classification of tropes" that "goes back to Peter Ramus in the sixteenth century" – and remarks that in the contemporary period "the strongest proponent of this system was Kenneth Burke (1945) who revitalized synecdoche" (Griffin 2006: 312–313). Griffin further states that "Burke also recognized the potential for making equations of literary relationships, including properties of association and dissociation" (Griffin 2006: 313). This is the extent of the use of Burke.

Both *A Grammar of Motives* (Burke 1945b) and *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Burke 1973[1941]) appear in the reference list. Note, however, that while the author gives the date for this work in his references as 1941, the publisher he documents (University of California Press) shows that he's actually using the 1973 edition.

71. *Semiotica* 161(1/4)
Shelestiuk, Helen V. 2006. Approaches to metaphor: Structure, classifications, cognate phenomena. *Semiotica* 161(1/4): 333–343.
Hit: Burke
Shelestiuk says that possibly "no other complex semiotic phenomenon has received such a broad theoretic coverage as metaphor" and mentions Burke as one of the scholars to have developed the concept (Shelestiuk 2006: 333). This brief reference seems to be the extent of Burke's appearance here, and Burke does not appear in the reference list.

72. *Semiotica* 162(1/4).
Kampf, Zohar 2006. Blood on their hands: The story of a photograph in the Israeli national discourse. *Semiotica* 162(1/4): 263–285.
Hit: Burke

In relation to Labov's structural model applied to "the core elements of problem-derived narratives" – a model which is comprised of "the 'complicating action' or 'complication' […] and the '*resolution*'" – Kampf refers to "Burke's four stage classification of events" which "consists of a disruption of equilibrium, and restitutory acts which attempt to eliminate the source of disruption" as operating according to a similar principle (Kampf 2006: 266). Kampf is referring to Burke's *The Rhetoric of Religion* (1970[1961]) in this instance, which seems to be the only mention of Burke and is the only work that appears in the references.

73. *Semiotica* 171(1/4).
Gaines, Elliot 2008. Media literacy and semiotics: Toward a future taxonomy of meaning. *Semiotica* 171(1/4): 239–249.
Hit: Burke
Gaines' aim here is "*to work toward a new taxonomy of semiotics by taking complex ideas from various theories that can be adapted into a simple yet practical method for media analysis*" (Gaines 2008: 239). In pursuit of this, Gaines makes a single mention of Burke – specifically in the section on the language of semiotics, wherein he includes "intellectual movements [that] follow Burke's (1966) Language as Symbolic Action [*sic*]" in addition to "the two major semiotic traditions emerging from the work of Peirce and Saussure" (Gaines 2008: 241–242). This approach, like so many others addressing human meaning-making, "develops enclaves of intellectual debate that thrive on discipline-specific languages and loyalties to the way particular phenomena are named" (Gaines 2008: 242). This is why Gaines seeks to establish a more unified terminology in which the discipline of semiotics "must be reduced to a systematic approach using language adapted from everyday speech" if "the concepts of semiotics" are to "gain popular appeal" (Gaines 2008: 242). Gaines follows this section with a discussion of Peirce's Pragmatic Maxim. *Language as Symbolic Action* (Burke 1966) appears in the reference list.

74. *Semiotica* 177(1/4).
Parmentier, Richard J. 2009. Troubles with trichotomies: Reflections on the utility of Peirce's sign trichotomies for social analysis. *Semiotica* 177(1/4): 139–155.
Hit: Dramatistic
Parmentier mentions "dramatistic models of cultural production" as one element in a hoped for "useful collaboration with several approaches in the social sciences" along with "discourse-based linguistic anthropology" and "processual and historical archaeology" (Parmentier 2009: 144). The door is opened to such a collaboration, he says, by "Peirce's careful attention to the processual dimension of semiosis" (Parmentier 2009: 144). Even though Parmentier doesn't mention Burke by name nor include him in the references, given that Parmentier has a previous work – found in *Semiotica* 116(1) – in which he mentions Burke as one of Geertz's influences, it's reasonable to conclude that the passing reference to 'dramatistic models' here points to Burke as well.

75. *Semiotica* 2016(212).
Semetsky, Inna; Stables, Andrew; Pesce, Sébastien 2016. Editorial. *Semiotica* 2016(212): 1–5.
Hit: Burke
Burke is mentioned here in relation to "Ronald Soetaert and colleagues at the University of Ghent who were working (and continue to work) with literary and filmic texts in teacher and social-work education, drawing on various theoretical frameworks, chief among which is perhaps the new rhetoric of Kenneth Burke" (Semetsky, Stables, Pesce 2016: 1). This description of the background of the special *Semiotica* issue is the focus here, not Burke, who is not mentioned again. This editorial, of course, does not have a reference list.

76. *Semiotica* 2016(212).
Pesce, Sébastien 2016. Les intuitions édusémiotiques des grand pédagogues: Engagement sémiotique, théorie de l'enquête et narrativité. *Semiotica* 2016(212): 155–178.
Hit: Burke
Pesce references Burke's (1955a) *Linguistic approaches to problems of education* in his discussion of edusemiotics. One of the aims here seems to be to use techniques that will help students become wise about symbols and their deployments: "pour reprendre les mots de Kenneth Burke, une certain sagesse symbolique" (Pesce 2016: 171). Pesce (in a footnote on the same page) notes that Burke (1995a: 260) discusses the difference between being "symbol-wise" and "symbol-foolish". This is one of Burke's consistent aims in his writings on the motivated deployments of language: that readers become more aware of the "suasive" nature of terminologies. Pesce's edusemiotic use of Burke taps into this Burkean theme. Burke 1955a is included in the list of references.

77. *Semiotica* 2018(220).
Liszka, James 2018. The problematics of truth and solidarity in Peirce's rhetoric. *Semiotica* 2018(220): 235–248.
Hit: Burke
Liszka (2018: 236) references Burke's *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), which says that persuasion in the classical sense aims to induce cooperation in others through the use of symbols – for humans by nature respond to symbols (with Liszka pointing to pages 22 and 43 of the *Rhetoric*). Liszka's focus is Peirce, however, and he refers to Burke briefly, including *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950) in the reference list.

78. *Semiotica* 2018(225).
Griffin, Jonathan 2018. A pentadic model of semiotic analysis. *Semiotica* 2018(225): 213–227.
Hits: Burke, dramatistic, pentad
This entire focuses on Burke and looks at his dramatistic pentad (act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose as irreducible components to action) as a semiotic model

focused explicitly upon action (and motives) and tailored for that emphasis. *A Grammar of Motives* (Burke 1945b) is included in the reference list.

79. *Semiotica* 2020(233).
Köksal, Fatma Nazlı; İnatçı, Ümit 2020. Visual rhetoric based on triadic approach: Intellectual knowledge, visual representation and aesthetics as modality. *Semiotica* 2020(233): 35–53.
Hit: Burke
In discussing some background of the concept of 'visual rhetoric', Köksal and İnatçı bring up Burke right away, saying that he "emphasized the idea of symbolicity and stated that rhetoric does not only involve verbal communication, but also incorporates the rich background of the use of human symbols" in a variety of areas and modes (Köksal, İnatçı 2020: 35). Their reference here comes from *Language as Symbolic Action*. (Burke 1966b), which also appears in the reference list. This opens the article, but the direct engagement with Burke apparently ends here.

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SUMMARY

The present work considers motive (or purpose) as the premier component within semiosis regarding the manner in which human agents navigate meaning indeterminacy within experience. We attempt not to reduce semiosis to motive but rather to consider motive as the key factor behind an agent's embracing some particular meaning or conclusion about reality instead of another. That is, any attempt to categorically remove the active, volitional aspect of human semiosis is impossible, and often the deciding factor for why an agent embraces a particular conclusion rather than another comes down not to any impartial character of the surrounding context but rather to a selection of the option they desire – and a deflection of options they do not.

Given that various meanings (or signs) are incompatible with one another in the sense of being mutually-exclusive in certain respects, diverse semiotic results ensue from the habitual and purposeful selection of certain signs, which has a shaping impact upon the agent's subsequent experience. Incompatibility ensures that various meaning possibilities are thereby eliminated from the field of experience: they are screened or filtered out. For instance, if one comes to the conclusion that all human beings are always entirely hateful, one cannot discover signs of human love within experience – not without revising that conclusion, which becomes more difficult over time. Kalevi Kull refers to this as a process of semiotic catalysis, whereby specific meanings are fixed into singularization – a process that Kenneth Burke refers to as the formation of terministic screens.

This dissertation turns upon an axis found at the intersection of Kenneth Burke's motivationally-focused semiotic concepts and of contemporary semiotics – understood along a shared boundary between John Deely's integrative view and Tartu-Moscow-School's analytical focus, approached largely through the work of Kalevi Kull. Thus, we employ much of Deely's overarching, historical framework and deploy certain key concepts from the Tartu approach to cultural analysis and biosemiotics; we exclude places of controversy between the two approaches (such as the question regarding meaning beyond the boundary of biological life), for this dissertation's focus obtains regardless of divergent conclusions about the nature of signs in the cosmos as a whole. Indeed, the analytical viewpoint presented here could be applied to the question of why some embrace meaning as transcending and some as reducing to biological life, but that would entail a separate study.

Conceptually, we identify a shared theme among certain of Burke's "Motivorum" concepts, which appear as explicitly semiotic when viewed in light of contemporary semiotics. Burke himself was gesturing toward a fully realized semiotic perspective, which explains the debate regarding his work's academic genre; indeed, as the Burke scholar and semiotician Richard Fiordo stated to this dissertation's author, Burke would have seen more of the overarching connections had he lived another ten years. By developing these concepts within semiotics proper, we are spinning out implications that were inherent to Burke's

own work. These implications become clearer when viewed from what Deely calls the realization of a fully semiotic viewpoint, but Burke's concepts reciprocally enrich semiotics' understanding of the potent role of motive within human semiosis.

Key concepts we employ from Burke are the distinction between motion and action; the identification of meaning-making as being *action*; Dramatism and the dramatistic pentad that identifies the irreducible components of action; terministic screens; God-terms; circumference; reduction; scope; and the entelechial/teleological principles inherent to signs and meaning choices. Among the key concepts we employ from Deely-Tartu semiotics are biosemiosis; goal-directed behavior; scaffolding; semiotic catalysis; Umwelt, Innenwelt, and worlds of experience; incompatibility; semiosis as a process of making choices about meaning; indeterminacy; modeling; and Peirce's contention that human agents (and their entire thought-lives as a whole) are themselves complex signs.

We draw out the significant overlap between these two conceptual fields throughout the work, which is organized into three main parts, with a preceding introduction and an appended survey of references to Kenneth Burke in three major semiotics journals. Part 1 (**Thesis**) contains two chapters that lay out the theoretical framework found at the intersection between Burke and semiotics. **Chapter 1** focuses on motive in the more general sense, developing the overlap between Burke and biosemiotics. We begin with the categorical distinction between motion and action and then move to the role of goal-orientation in all organismic action; this groundwork is elaborated in terms of scaffolding, the teleological principle in living systems, the Agent-Purpose ratio present at life's simplest levels, and the optimality principle. We then further tie this biosemiotic framework to Relevance Theory in pragmatic linguistics and the cognitive principles upon which it builds, which are then connected to the organismic need to automate choice. Here we link in semiotic catalysis and the creation of semiosic filters for an agent's experience and perception, which leads into a discussion of Burke's terministic screens operant in the human domain.

Chapter 2 considers motive within human semiosis, unpacking Burke's entelechial concepts in relation to that semiotic domain. After opening with remarks upon the entelechial principle, we develop the notion of terministic screens, which extend from the dramatistic (actional) principles that comprise both a method and an ontology. We then explore terministic screens as an instance of modeling; each term or sign has what Burke calls a specific circumference – a scope of the range of possible meanings that it includes and excludes – and thus each term/sign has a different modeling capacity. After giving an example, we explain the necessity of circumference selection for characterizing reality, which arises within experience when a context forces the navigation of some incompatibility (that which Kalevi Kull calls "a controversial situation"). In clarifying this necessity, we explore evidence formation as a modeling process, with evidence itself being a semiotic product that is necessarily motivated, inasmuch as all action must catalyze some motives or proceed according to previously catalyzed motives.

Chapter 2 continues by extending this principle to what Burke calls God-terms, which function the same way but operate at a higher level of organization – that is, at a high level of generality, affecting some system (or agent) as a whole. 'God-term' is not a theological but a semiotic concept that is defined by its structural function, albeit one with a broader impact upon an agent and its semiosphere. We explore the higher-stakes impact of God-terms through Burke's description of how they generate (as a matter of necessity) different metaphysics as overarching meaning paradigms. As an example, we look at the motivated nature of something so supposedly unmotivated as the conception and pursuit of parsimony, whose commitment to reduction can lead to significant metaphysical consequences for the agent and experience. Issues connected to Burkean attitude, to the Agent-Purpose ratio, and to autopoiesis become relevant, leading to the Peircean notion that the ultimate result of semiosis is the formation of the human agent as a complex sign according to principles of semiotic consistency and the necessity of catalyzing certain motives through the resolution of indeterminacy in experience (that is, choice) – as Chantal Delsol also explains. We explore the "human-as-sign" concept as the entailment of the semiotic account laid out thus far, contending that above all human agents become signs of their most fundamental motives, which is the maximal determiner for the divergence in experience and reality perception among agents. This stance, however, puts us at odds with Modernism, and inasmuch as definition means not only saying what something is but also what it is *not*, we proceed into Part 2 of the dissertation in which we describe this antithesis at length – an endeavor that also serves as an object analysis for the framework laid out in Part 1.

Part 2 (**Antithesis**) also contains two chapters, which define Modernism as a meaning paradigm and trace out its semiotic consequences. Since Part 1 articulates that a God-term is the most definitively influential factor governing some meaning structure, **Chapter 3** applies the first part's framework to develop an extended analysis of Modernism in order to clearly identify Modernism's God-term. A thorough treatment requires that we understand Modernism as an act, as an active development from within a living context, and in order to understand the meaning of an act, we must also understand the scene of that act in proper Burkean fashion. Thus, we need to understand the scene from which Modernism departed in its historical Western moment, which (as a shorthand) means the semiosphere of Christian premodernism; however, since our Modern perspective colors our perception of that prior epoch, sufficiently understanding Christian premodernism means also understanding the pre-Christian pagan world of meaning and the act of Christian departure from it.

Having elaborated that scenic background, we are able to see what is and is not novel to the Modern period, with the result of making the Modern God-term visible. 'Human Reason' the defining term, with Man Himself taking a primary position of focus. Working with Frederick Beiser's thorough analysis, we trace out the Early Modern attempt to revise certain foundational meanings in the Christian paradigm's scaffolding – without altering its overall scaffolded structure. Consequences followed quickly as the pairing of incompatible meanings resulted

in contradictions, such that supposedly postmodern breakdowns in meaning were already being proclaimed by the late 1700s. Indeed, much of this period's philosophical work was an attempt to maintain the Modern commitment while avoiding the entailments of moral nihilism and atheism (Hegel's, for instance). But the task proved difficult precisely because certain consequences were actually entailments of the Modern departure itself; its terministic selections from within its pragmatic context had a particular trajectory. At the heart of Modernism was an incompatibility it could not resolve – a contradiction.

Chapter 4 traces out the roots and the branches of this contradiction, which appears recurrently when confronted with what Burke called the paradox of substance. We explore multiple appearances of this contradiction, first identifying the ambivalent conception of being that Modernism has internalized. We then look at critical limits to induction and problems that arise given the Modern paradigm's conception of human reason, treating in particular induction's circularity, its categorical inability to produce necessity, the transformation of "logic" into a form of rhetoric where induction is transformed into deduction through authority, and resulting implications. Pushing deeper, we look closely at the unresolvable problem at the heart of Modern Realism itself, made visible in a dichotomy with its opponent that reappears under many philosophical names but is always the same: realism vs idealism; realism vs nominalism; substratum theory vs bundle; and Realism vs Anti-Realism. Close investigation of either realist or "idealist" side results in a critique of itself that leads into the opposing position; we move forward from Deely's critique of realism and idealism as the "Jekyll/Hyde" split of Modernism and argue that, in that paradigm, Realism and Idealism/Anti-Realism are the same – precisely because of the way Modernism's semiotic foundation is built upon a particular God-term. We look at examples of a realist surface hiding an idealist core, focusing on Bertrand Russell in particular. However, we clarify that this problem transcends professional philosophy by looking at the paradox of substance's surfacing in physics as well, extending from the same semiotic foundation and prompting repeated reformulations to avoid infinities as undesired metaphysical intrusions – even when the reformulations are only "the renormalization trick". The result in every case is an infinite regress that Modern Realism in all its forms cannot escape, even while its Anti-realistic opponents offer no solutions but only hold up a mirror revealing its own insufficiency. The result is inescapable because it is an entailment of Modernism's semiotic core.

Part 3 (**Synthesis**) contains only one chapter and aims first to make Modernism's implicit theology explicit in order to reveal its hidden theological commitment as motive continuing into the present. An implicit theology employs terminologies that hide its theosemiotic character – banishing the term on the surface but retaining the function while hiding it. Persuasion remains but is moved out of the explicit, conscious realm. We take the Multiverse model as an instantiating case, looking at its treatment by committed Moderns, such as Steven Pinker, whose 2018 work of Humanist apologetics defends the Multiverse model despite its being entirely beyond empirical reach and participating in theological categories supposedly proscribed; if this seems contrary to common sense, Pinker

says, that might be a reason to think it is true. Since the Multiverse would then be inaccessible both to our empirical faculty and to our pure reason (Modernism's two prongs of mind), the Multiverse is now categorically indistinguishable from God except in certain semiotic respects that an agent might or might not desire. That one meaning is excluded on the official basis of certain qualities, while another meaning is permitted despite those qualities – this suggests that the motive for the selection of one and the deflection of the other lies elsewhere. What is certain is that the Multiverse sign is categorically theosemiotic in both function and certain terministic qualities.

In our **concluding** remarks, we recommend a teleological model for resolving indeterminacy in semiotic crises and for understanding the nature of our semiosis as motivated. Following Burke's usage, we offer a "representative anecdote" of this perspective of semiosis, which we draw from an ancient text describing the connection between meaning and human experience: the Genesis 3 narrative of the Garden of Eden. We first clarify the narrative to strain out popular misconceptions of the text; then we recount the narrative and explicate it. Last, we give our final summary and recommendation.

This work is a novel contribution in the degree to which it brings together Kenneth Burke and contemporary semiotics, drawing out the motivationally focused semiotic perspective in Burke's work and presenting it as a unified model that can yield nuanced, in depth analytical insights. Previously, the most direct and thorough treatment of Burke within the semiotics field seems to have been Richard Fiordo's 1978 *Semiotica* article on Kenneth Burke's semiotic; at the article's end, Fiordo calls for more extensive work to be done on Burke within semiotics, and while the present dissertation's focus is not an attempt to lay out Burke's semiotic as such, this work stands in partial fulfillment of Fiordo's call. Further, this work also extends Burke's critique of the Modern paradigm, which stands in conflict not only with Burke's insights but also with itself – inasmuch as Modernism's semiotic foundations require it to continually produce unresolvable conflicts; enriching Burke with semiotics gives us a powerful framework for analyzing that critical problem, exposing its source, and revealing why postmodernism was only able to make the problem more visible but not to eliminate it: the foundations were left unaltered. Additionally, by translating Burke's conceptual vocabulary into that of contemporary semiotics, this work makes Burke's insights about motive's role in semiosis more easily available for semioticians to draw upon and integrate into their own research. And finally, developing Burke's work from within the semiotic tradition may prove to clarify what truly unifies his analytical perspective and to fill gaps therein – yielding not just a Grammar or Rhetoric or Symbolic of Motives but a Semiotic of Motives, which this work has admittedly only begun.

KOKKUVÕTE

Motiivide semiootika: Kenneth Burke ja Deely-Tartu semiootika

Käesolev töö peab motiivi (või eesmärki) semioosi peamiseks komponendiks, pidades silmas viisi, kuidas inimagendid kogemuse piires orienteeruvad määratlemata tähenduses. Püüame mitte redutseerida semioosi motiiviks, vaid pigem pidada motiivi võtmeteguriks, miks agent omab tegelikkuse kohta mingit konkreetset tähendust või järeldust mõne muu asemel. See tähendab, et igasugune katse eemaldada inimese semioosi aktiivne, tahteline aspekt on võimatu ja sageli ei tulene otsustav tegur, miks agent võtab omaks konkreetse järelduse ja mitte mõne teise, mitte ümbritseva konteksti erapooletusest, vaid pigem valikust, mida ta soovib – ja nende võimaluste välistamisest, mida ta ei soovi.

Kuna erinevad tähendused (või märgid) ei ole üksteisega kokkusobivad (selles mõttes, et need üksteist mõnevõrra välistavad), tulenevad teatud märkide harjumuspärasest ja sihipärasest valikust erinevad semiootilised tulemused, millel on kujundav mõju agendi hilisemale kogemusele. Kokkusobimatus tagab, et seeläbi elimineeritakse kogemuste hulgast paljud tähendusvõimalused: need sõelutakse või filtreeritakse välja. Näiteks kui keegi jõuab järeldusele, et kõik inimesed on vastikud, ei saa ta kogemuse põhjal avastada inimarmastuse märke – ilma seda järeldust muutmata, mis on aga aja jooksul järjest raskem. Kalevi Kull viitab sellele kui semiootilise katalüüsi protsessile, misläbi spetsiifilised tähendused fikseeruvad singularisatsioonina – protsessis, mida Kenneth Burke nimetab terministlike ekraanide moodustamiseks.

Käesolev väitekiri pöörab tähelepanu teljele, mis asub Kenneth Burke'i motivatsioonile keskendunud semiootiliste mõistete ja tänapäevase semiootika kokkupuutekohas – mõistetuna John Deely integratiivse vaate ja Tartu-Moskva koolkonna analüütilise fookuse vahelise jagatud piirina (millele suuresti läheneb Kalevi Kulli töö). Seega kasutame olulist osa Deely üldisest ajaloolisest raamistikust ja võtmekontseptsioone Tartu koolkonna lähenemisest kultuurianalüüsile ja biosemiootikale; välistame kahe lähenemisviisi vahelised vaidluskohad (näiteks küsimus eluvälisest tähendusest), sest selle väitekirja fookus ei sõltu lahknevatest järeldustest märkide olemuse kohta kosmoses tervikuna. Tõepoolest, siintoodud analüütiline vaatepunkt on rakendatav küsimusele, miks mõned peavad tähendust bioloogilise eluga piirnevaks, mõned aga seda ületavaks, kuid see tähendaks juba eraldi uurimistööd.

Kontseptuaalselt tuvastame Burke'i motivatsiooniliste mõistete seas ühendava teema, mis on tänapäeva semiootika valguses ilmselgelt semiootiline. Burke ise tegi kummarduse täielikult realiseeritud semiootilisele perspektiivile, mis ka lahendab vaidluse tema töö distsiplinaarse kuuluvuse üle; tõepoolest, nagu Burke'i spetsialist ja semiootik Richard Fiordo väitekirja autorile väitis, oleks Burke näinud enamgi neid seoseid, kui ta oleks elanud veel kümme aastat. Vaadeldes tema mõistestikku semiootikas raames, arendame Burke'i loomingule omaseid järeldusi. Need järeldused saavad selgemaks, kui lähtuda sellest, mida Deely nimetab täielikult semiootilise vaatenurga realiseerimiseks, ent Burke'i mõisted

rikastavad semiootikat niigi motiivi potentsiaalse rolli lahtimõtestamise kaudu inimese semioosis.

Põhilised mõisted, mida me Burke'ilt kasutame, on liikumise ja tegevuse eristamine; tähendusloome kui *tegevus*; dramatism ja dramatistlik pentaad, mis tuvastab tegevuse taandamatud komponendid; terministlikud ekraanid; nn "jumal-mõisted" ehk kõige aluseks olevad mõisted (nimetame neid allpool jumala-termineiks); ümbermõõt; reduktsioon; ulatus; ning märkide ja tähenduste valikule omased entelehhiaalsed või teleoloogilised printsiibid. Deely-Tartu semiootika põhimõistete hulgast kasutame järgmisi: biosemioos; eesmärgipärane käitumine; toestikud; semiootiline katalüüs; omailm, siseilm ja kogemuste maailmad; kokkusobimatus; semioos kui tähenduste valiku protsess; määramatus; modelleerimine; ja Peirce'i väide, et inimagendid (ning kogu nende mõtteelu kui tervik) on ise keerukad märgid.

Toome välja nende kahe kontseptuaalse välja olulise kattuvuse kogu töö ulatuses, mis on jaotatud kolmeks põhiosaks koos eelneva sissejuhatuse ja lisatud ülevaatega viidetest Kenneth Burke'ile kolmes suuremas semiootikaajakirjas. **Esimene osa** (**Tees**) sisaldab kahte peatükki, mis esitavad Burke'i ja semiootika kokkupuuteala teoreetilise raamistiku. **1. peatükk** keskendub motiivile üldisemas mõttes, vaadeldes Burke'i teooria ja biosemiootika kattuvust. Alustame liikumise ja tegevuse kategoorilisest eristamisest ning seejärel liigume eesmärgipärasuse rolli juurde kogu organismi tegevuses; selle juures kasutatavaiks mõisteteks on toestik, teleoloogiline printsiip elussüsteemides, agendi ja eesmärgi suhe kõige lihtsamatel tasanditel ja optimaalsuse printsiip. Seejärel seome selle biosemiootilise raamistiku relevantsuse teooriaga pragmaatilises lingvistikas ja kognitiivsete põhimõtetega, millele see tugineb, mis on seejärel seostatud organismi vajadusega automatiseerida valikuid. Siin toome sisse semiootilise katalüüsi ja semioosiliste filtrite loomise agendi kogemuse ja taju jaoks, mis viib aruteluni Burke'i terministlike ekraanide üle, mis opereerivad inimvaldkonnas.

2. peatükis vaadeldakse motiivi inimese semioosis, harutades lahti Burke'i entelehhiaalsed mõisted semiootika kontekstis. Alustades märkustega entelehhiaalse printsiibi kohta, arendame terministlike ekraanide mõistet, mis lähtuvad dramatistlikest (tegevuslikest) printsiipidest, hõlmates nii meetodit kui ka ontoloogiat. Seejärel uurime terministlikke ekraane kui modelleerimist; igal terminil või märgil on Burke'i järgi spetsiifiline ümbermõõt – see hõlmab võimalike tähenduste hulka, mida termin sisaldab ja välistab – ja seega on igal terminil või märgil erinev modelleerimisvõime. Pärast näite toomist selgitame ümbermõõdu valiku vajalikkust reaalsuse iseloomustamiseks, mis kujuneb kogemuses, kui kontekst sunnib navigeerima mingis kokkusobimatuses (selles, mida Kalevi Kull nimetab "vastuoluliseks olukorraks"). Selle vajaduse selgitamiseks uurime tõendite moodustumist kui modelleerimisprotsessi, kusjuures tõendid ise on semiootiline toode, mis on tingimata motiveeritud, kuivõrd kogu tegevus peab katalüüsima mõnda motiivi või toimima vastavalt varem katalüüsitud motiividele.

2. peatükk jätkub selle põhimõtte laiendamisega Burke'i poolt nimetatud jumalaterminitele, mis toimivad samamoodi, kuid kõrgemal organisatsiooni-tasandil – see tähendab kõrgemal üldisuse astmel, mõjutades mõnda süsteemi (või

agenti) tervikuna. 'Jumalatermin' ei ole teoloogiline, vaid semiootiline mõiste, mis on määratletud oma strukturaalse funktsiooniga, ehkki tal on laiem mõju agendile ja tema semiosfäärile. Uurime jumalaterminite toimet Burke'i kirjelduse kaudu selle kohta, kuidas need tekitavad (vajaduse korral) erinevaid metafüüsikaid kui üldisi tähenduse paradigmasid. Näitena vaatleme millegi motiveeritust, mis on ilmselt motiveerimata, nagu parsimoonia järgimine, mille nõue reduktsioonile võib põhjustada olulisi metafüüsilisi tagajärgi agendile ja kogemusele. Burke'i lähenemise, agendi-eesmärgi suhte ja autopoeesiga seotud küsimused viivad Peirce'i arusaamani, et semioosi lõpptulemus on inimagendi kujunemine keeruka märgina vastavalt semiootilise järjepidevuse printsiipidele ja vajadusele katalüüsida teatud motiive kogemuse määramatuse lahendamise (see tähendab valiku) kaudu – nagu selgitab ka Chantal Delsol. Uurime mõistet "inimene märgina" senitoodud semiootilise kirjelduse põhjal, väites, et inimagendid saavad ennekõike nende kõige olulisemate motiivide märkideks, mis on kogemuste ja reaalsuse tajumise erinevuse maksimaalne määraja agentide seas. See hoiak seab meid aga vastuseisu modernismiga ja kuivõrd määratlus tähendab mitte ainult ütlemist, mis midagi on, vaid ka seda, mida ta pole, jätkame väitekirja teises osas selle antiteesi pikema kirjeldusega – mis on nii ka esimeses osas sätestatud raamistiku objektianalüüsiks.

Teine osa (Antitees) koosneb samuti kahest peatükist, mis määratlevad modernismi kui tähenduse paradigma ja vaatlevad selle semiootilisi tagajärgi. Kuna esimeses osas on öeldud, et jumalatermin on kõige mõjukam tegur, mis reguleerib mingi tähenduse struktuuri, siis rakendatakse 3. peatükis esimese osa raamistikku modernismi laiendatud analüüsiks, et modernismi jumalaterminit täpsemalt välja tuua. Põhjalik käsitlus eeldab, et mõistaksime modernismi kui tegu, kui aktiivset arengut elava konteksti seest, ja et mõista tähendust kui tegu, peame mõistma ka selle teo stseeni õiges Burke'i mõttes. Seega peame mõistma stseeni, millest modernism alguse sai ajaloolises Läänes, ehk kristliku premodernismi semiosfääri; kuna aga meie modernne vaatenurk toonib meie ettekujutust sellest varasemast ajastust, tähendab kristliku premodernismi piisav mõistmine ka kristluse-eelse paganliku tähendusmaailma mõistmist ja kristluse lahkumistegu sellest.

Olles seda tausta kirjeldanud, suudame näha, mis on modernsele ajajärgule uudne ja mis pole uus ning saame sedakaudu teha modernse jumalatermini nähtavaks. 'Inimese mõistus' on seejuures määrav mõiste, kusjuures inimene ise saab peamiseks fookuspunktiks. Kasutades Frederick Beiseri põhjalikku analüüsi, vaatleme varauusaegset katset revideerida teatud põhitähendusi kristliku paradigma toestikus – muutmata selle üldist toestatud struktuuri. Tagajärjed järgnesid kiiresti, kuna kokkusobimatute tähenduste sidumine põhjustas vastuolusid, näiteks väidetavalt postmodernseid tähenduse rikkumisi võib märgata juba 18. sajandi lõpus. Tõepoolest, suur osa selle perioodi filosoofilistest töödest oli katse säilitada modernne pühendumus, vältides samal ajal moraalse nihilismi ja ateismi kaasnemist (näiteks Hegeli puhul). Kuid ülesanne osutus keeruliseks just seetõttu, et mitmed tagajärjed olid tegelikult modernse lähte endaga seotud; selle termi-

nistlikud valikud oma pragmaatilises kontekstis olid kindla trajektooriga. Modernismi keskmes oli kokkusobimatus, vastuolu, mida see ei suutnud lahendada.

4. peatükis tuuakse välja selle vastuolu juured ja harud, mis ilmnevad korduvalt, seistes silmitsi sellega, mida Burke nimetas substantsi paradoksiks. Uurime selle vastuolu mitmekordset esinemist, tuvastades kõigepealt ambivalentse olemiskäsituse, mille modernism kasutusele võttis. Seejärel vaatleme induktsiooni kriitilisi piire ja probleeme, mis tekivad, arvestades modernismi paradigma ettekujutust inimese mõtlemisest, käsitledes eelkõige induktsiooni tsirkulaarsust, selle kategoorilist võimetust toota vajalikkust, „loogika" muutumist retoorika vormiks, kus induktsioon muudetakse deduktsiooniks autoriteedi kaudu, ja sellest tulenevaid tagajärgi. Sügavamale minnes vaatleme lähemalt modernistliku realismi enda keskmes olevat lahendamatut probleemi, mis ilmub uuesti dihhotoomias paljude filosoofiliste nimede all, kuid on alati sama: realism vs idealism; realism vs nominalism; substraadi teooria vs kimp; ja realism vs antirealism. Realistliku või "idealistliku" poole lähem uurimine toob kaasa kriitika, mis viib vastaspositsioonile; liigume edasi John Deely realismi ja idealismi kriitikast kui modernismi "Jekyll / Hyde" lõhestusest ja väidame, et selles paradigmas on realism ja idealism / antirealism samad – just sellepärast, kuidas modernismi semiootiline alus on üles ehitatud konkreetsele jumalaterminile. Vaatame näiteid realismist, mis varjab idealistlikku tuuma, keskendudes eelkõige Bertrand Russellile. Kuid me näitame, et see probleem ületab professionaalse filosoofia, vaadeldes ka aine füüsikalise ilmumise paradoksi, tulenedes samast semiootilisest alusest ja kutsudes end korduvalt ümber sõnastama, et vältida lõpmatusi kui soovimatuid metafüüsilisi sissetungijaid – isegi siis, kui ümbersõnastused on ainult "renormaliseerimisse trikk". Tulemuseks on igal juhul lõpmatu regress, millest modernistlik realism üheski vormis ei suuda pääseda, isegi kui selle antirealistlikud vastased ei paku lahendusi, vaid hoiavad ainult enda puudulikkust paljastavat peeglit. Tulemus on möödapääsmatu, kuna see tuleneb modernismi semiootilisest tuumast.

Kolmas osa (**Süntees**) sisaldab ainult ühe peatüki. Selle eesmärk on kõigepealt esitada modernismi kaudne teoloogia selgesõnaliselt, et tuua esile selle varjatud teoloogiline pühendumus kui motiiv, mis jätkub tänapäevani. Kaudses teoloogias kasutatakse terminoloogiaid, mis varjavad selle teosemiootilist iseloomu – keelates termini pinnal, kuid säilitades funktsiooni, varjates seda. Veenmine püsib, kuid liigutakse selgesõnalisest teadlikust vallast välja. Me võtame multiversumi mudeli kui kiirendava juhtumi, vaadeldes selle käsitlemist pühendunud modernistide poolt, nagu Steven Pinker, kelle 2018. aasta töö humanistlikust apologeetikast kaitseb multiversumi mudelit, hoolimata sellest, et see on täiesti väljaspool empiirilist haaret ja osaleb ilmselt keelatud teoloogilistes kategooriates; kui see tundub terve mõistusega vastuolus, võib Pinker öelda, et see võikski olla põhjus, miks seda õigeks pidada. Kuna multiversum oleks siis ligipääsematu nii empiiriliselt kui ka puhtale mõtlemisele (pidades silmas modernismi kaht haru), ei ole multiversum nüüd kategooriliselt Jumalast eristatav, välja arvatud teatud semiootilistes aspektides, mida agent võib-olla ei soovi. Kindel on see, et multiversumi märk on kategooriliselt teosemiootiline nii funktsiooni kui ka teatud terministlike omaduste poolest.

Kokkuvõtvates märkustes soovitame teleoloogilist mudelit lahendamaks määramatust semiootilistes kriisides ja mõistmaks semioosi kui olemuslikult motiveeritut. Järgides Burke'i, pakume semioosi selle vaatenurga jaoks "esindus- loo", mille ammutame iidsest tekstist, mis kirjeldab tähenduse ja inimkogemuse seost: Eedeni aia narratiiv Esimese Moosese Raamatu 3. peatükist. Esmalt selgi- tame narratiivi, et välistada teksti populaarseid väärarusaamu; siis jutustame narratiivi ja selgitame seda. Viimasena esitame oma lõpliku kokkuvõtte ja soovituse.

Käesolev töö on uudne selles, milles ta ühendab Kenneth Burke'i ja kaas- aegset semiootikat, tuues Burke'i töös välja motivatsioonilise semiootilise pers- pektiivi ja esitades selle ühtse mudelina, mis võib pakkuda analüütilisi lisa- nüansse. Varasem kõige otsesem ja põhjalikum Burke'i käsitlus semiootika- valdkonnas on Richard Fiordo 1978. aasta *Semiotica* artikkel Kenneth Burke'i semiootikast; artikli lõpus kutsub Fiordo üles tegema Burke'iga seoses semiootikas ulatuslikumat tööd. Kuigi käesoleva väitekirja fookus ei ole katse Burke'i semiootikat kui sellist ülevaatlikult esitada, on see osaks Fiordo üleskutse täitmises. Lisaks laiendab käesolev töö ka Burke'i kriitikat modernismi para- digma kohta, mis ei ole vastuolus mitte ainult Burke'i arusaamadega, vaid ka iseendaga – kuivõrd modernismi semiootilised alused nõuavad, et ta tekitaks pidevalt lahendamatuid konflikte; Burke'i rikastamine semiootikaga annab meile võimsa raamistiku selle kriitilise probleemi analüüsimiseks, selle allika esile- toomiseks ja näitamiseks, miks postmodernism suutis probleemi ainult nähta- vamaks muuta, kuid mitte kõrvaldada: alused jäid muutmata. Lisaks, tõlkides Burke'i kontseptuaalse sõnavara praegusaegse semiootika omaks, muudab see töö Burke'i vaated motiivi rollist semioosis hõlpsamini kättesaadavaks semiooti- kutele, et nad saaksid oma uurimistöös sellele tugineda ja seda integreerida. Ja lõpuks võib Burke'i töö arendamine semiootilise traditsiooni raames selgitada, mis tema analüütilist perspektiivi tõeliselt ühendab ning täita selles olevad lüngad – saades mitte ainult grammatika, retoorika või motiivide sümboolika, vaid ka motiivide semiootika, mida käesolev töö on, tõsi küll, ainult alustanud.

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Publications

2021	Communal resonance of meaning as seen through Lotman, Jakobson, and Peirce. In: Sütiste, Elin; Gramigna, Remo; Griffin, Jonathan; Salupere, Silvi (eds.), *(Re)considering Roman Jakobson*. Tartu Semiotics Library 23. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 109–131.
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Conference presentations

2016	The life as the work. *Presentation at the 3rd International Congress of Numanities: Processes, Maps, Narratives. Kaunas, Lithuania*.
2016	Relevance theory and biosemiotics. *Poster presentation at the Gatherings in Biosemiotics 2016. Prague, Czech Republic*.
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